

January 2012

sgn **Scoops** digital

Ernie Haase

& Signature Sound



Also In This Issue:

2012
DIAMOND
Awards



The Lesters, Isaacs, Brian Free & Assurance and Diamond Awards

Publisher's Point

by Rob Patz



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January 2012



Letter from the Editor

by Rhonda Frye
"Hello 2012"

Happy New Year! Words can't express how excited I am about my first full year at SGNscoops. For the past few months I've been "getting my feet wet" and now I'm ready to dive on in!

One of my first goals as the Editor was to fine tune and take possession of who we are and what we're all about. For weeks, we worked on our mission statement until we felt like we had God's vision for us down in writing. Over the last two months, our staff has been working together to break down the mission statement point by point and strategically plan our intentions for 2012. I can honestly say, our staff consists of professionals with hearts of gold when it comes to ministry. Our staff also has great faith in God to use us as a team to further His Kingdom!

We've become creative in conducting staff meetings—thank you FACEBOOK Group Pages and Google Docs! It's been amazing to see our staff unite and express their desires to do "HUGE" things for God. Lorraine Walker spoke for us all when she commented that she wanted to be "bigger than the music," "bigger than the industry" and how she wanted our efforts to count for the Lord in a tangible way. Our desire is to accomplish great things for God according to His definition of great.

Our focus this year will be on the power of the seed. Our intention is to be diligent and intentional in spreading the seed of the gospel deliberately and to highlight and support others in the industry doing the same. The verse we claim, as we march through 2012, is found in 2 Corinthians 9:10. "For God is the One who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, He will provide and increase your resources and then pro-

duce a great harvest of generosity in you." We are praying for God to increase our opportunities to be generous with the love of Christ in the year 2012.

We will continue to highlight Southern Gospel and Christian Country Music and to strengthen Christians. As we continue to highlight the people that are fulfilling a call to minister, we aim to highlight ministry happenings in our world, and not just our corner of it. Many of our artists are involved in humanitarian relief efforts, mission work as well as inner city missions and we plan to cover those stories this year as well as get involved with our own Out-Reach projects.

I truly believe that we are called to go into all the world to preach the gospel to people everywhere. Our responsibility is to scatter the seed, God's responsibility is to take over from there. I want to be faithful to his call. Please pray for SGNscoops as we seek God's direction so that we can do our part as the media to carry out this task. Gospel Music is a mighty tool and our artists and fans united can be a mighty force of hope to a hopeless world.

We are excited to get out and meet you this year as we cover more concerts and events. We are also planning fun ways to really connect with you, our reading audience. We want our readers to feel a sense of ownership, therefore we are looking for ways to interact and encourage participation throughout the year. Be watching for give-a-ways, contests and requests for input. And... If you have any comments or suggestions, please email us at connect@sgnscoops.com.

We're looking forward to a GREAT year! There is power in the seed and we're looking forward to sowing seeds with YOU! You can help us in our effort to accomplish great things for God by praying for us and telling your friends about our magazine. OH! And... we would really appreciate you linking our website to yours and for posting the magazine each month on your social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter and now Pinterest.

May 2012 be filled with the joy of the Lord, the peace of Christ and the love of God. My prayer is that we all see a significant increase of opportunities to share that joy, peace and love! If I can serve you in anyway, email me at rhonda@sgnscoops.com.

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Our Mission

SGNScoops exists to promote the gospel by unveiling what is intriguing and real about Southern Gospel and Christian Country music. With integrity, we aspire to strengthen Christians, highlight people who are fulfilling a call to minister and emphasize the music that inspires audiences and glorifies God.

Publisher- Rob Patz
Editor in Chief- Rhonda Frye
Feature Editors- Sandi Duncan Clark, Lorraine Walker
Layout/Design- Pete Schwager
Cover Design- Stephanie Kelley
Founder- Dr. Allen Smith

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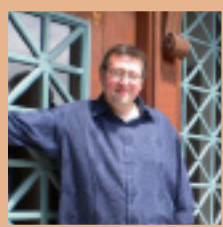
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Rob Patz is the President and CEO of Coastal Media Group. Rob has an 18 year history in radio hosting the nationally syndicated radio show, "The Southern Styles Show" since its beginning in 1993. Rob is also the owner of the internet's #1 Southern Gospel station, SGMRadio.com. In 2009, Rob Patz acquired SGNScoops.com, including the all- digital Scoops Magazine and the Diamond Awards. Rob has taken part in several Christian television projects working in front of the camera and also has helped create several syndicated television programs as well. Rob does voice work for various outlets including fortune 500 companies as well as emceeing concerts and special events. Email Rob at rob@sgnscoops.com.



Rhonda Frye is an ordained minister serving as the Associate and Worship Pastor at Rock Pointe Church in Fort Oglethorpe, GA. She is a recording artist, songwriter, preschool music teacher and sings with family trio, "Rhonda Frye & RiverSide." Rhonda is from Ringgold, GA and is supported by her husband and their 3 children. To learn more about Rhonda Frye Music Ministries, visit: <http://rhondafrye.com>



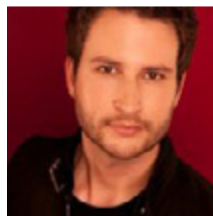
Lou Wills Hildreth appears on the Gaither Homecoming Videos, and is a founding member of Texas First Family Of Gospel Music, the "Singing Wills Family." She helped pioneer Christian television as host of "Wills Family Inspirational TV." After moving to Nashville in the sixties, she was the first woman to own an artist management agency. Lou is an inductee of the Texas Gospel Music Hall Of Fame, GMA Gospel Music Hall Of Fame, SGMA Hall Of Fame at Dollywood, and the Christian Music Hall Of Fame. She is a recipient of an Honorary Doctorate Of Sacred Music from Louisiana Baptist University. Recently, Gaither Homecoming Magazine named Lou in the "Hall Of Honor" series, and the Southern Gospel Music Guild gave her a "Lifetime Achievement Award." Lou is celebrating a 65th wedding anniversary in 2011 with Howard, and they live in Houston near son Dr. David Hildreth and daughter Kathryn Mumaw, and 4 grandchildren. Visit Lou at: <http://louhildreth.com>



Victoria Shirey first took the stage at 3 years old. Strong vocal abilities and harmonies are a God given talent that started in her at a very young age. Along with writing for SGN Scoops, she designs websites, is a Producer and Background Vocalist for Homeland Records out of Gallatin, TN and is a part-time cruise director for Paradise Tours & Travel. Victoria writes and arranges most of The Shirey's music as well. Most importantly, she loves the Lord with all of her heart and makes it her goal to let the love of God shine through her. Visit victoria at: <http://theshireysministries.com>



Sandi Duncan Clark and Cliff Clark make their home in Easley, S.C. where they enjoy traveling, gardening, and the beautiful South Carolina weather. Sandi has worked in journalism for more than thirty years, and she is thankful that her love for God and Gospel music provides a great opportunity to positively impact the careers of so many in Gospel music. Email Sandi at sandi@sgnscoops.com.



Through a series of events, Jeff Hawes has moved from the classroom where he taught high school English in Jackson county, Alabama to the tour bus of gospel great Karen Peck & New River. Jeff chronicles the fulfillment of his gospel music dreams and his road life exclusively for SGN Scoops. Learn more about him at <http://www.karenpeckandnewriver.com>



Christian Health & Fitness Expert Laurette Willis is an author with Harvest House Publishers, and the Director of PraiseMoves Fitness Ministry with DVDs, a training program and PraiseMoves Instructors on four continents (<http://PraiseMoves.com>), on Facebook <http://on.fb.me/PraiseMoves>. Laurette invites readers to get started on the road to better health and fitness for spirit, soul and body. For a free, easy- to- follow 21 day program visit: <http://ChristianFitnessKit.com>

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Stephanie Kelley is a public speaker and owner of Queen-O-Q, a blog featuring coupon match-ups, freebies, samples and information on frugal living. She is married, has three children and lives in Washington State. Queen-noq.blogspot.com



John Mathis Jr's life and musical influences have given him years of experience in the music industry in the areas of songwriting and music publishing, radio, publicity, A&R and recording. Another influence in John's life has been ministry. His grand-father was a church-planter and minister for

43 years, his father was a national evangelist. John has spent a number of years as an evangelist, pastor, worship director and public speaker. Currently, John works with Mansion Entertainment in the aspects of media promotions, publishing and recording while continuing to write, manage his own music catalog and occasionally speak.

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Jennifer Campbell is a singer, songwriter, musician, and middle school English teacher from McAlpin, Florida. Along with her passion for teaching, she has an even greater passion for ministering to others, spreading the message that there is joy around the bend. She serves as a group leader for

Women of Faith, designs websites, and writes an inspirational

blog at <http://jenniferjoycampbell.blogspot.com> Learn more about Jennifer at

<http://jennifercampbell.net>



Rob Estep is a vital part of the ministry of the popular group, BEYOND THE ASHES. Currently serving as the Office and Road Manager, his wealth of experience in office management skills makes him a true asset to the group.

His expertise of handling daily operations and road responsibilities go unsurpassed in quality. Rob has worked full time alongside of Anthony Facello for the past two years. Rob's Music Pastor Father exposed him to all genres of music growing up, therefore since childhood; he has had a rich love for Southern Gospel Music. Rob studied business at Columbus State Community College, is a HUGE Buckeye Football fan, and is single- but open to dating when the right one comes along. Email Rob at: robestep@sgnscoops.com



Canadian-born Lorraine Walker has a love for Jesus Christ, music and writing. The combination of these passions has produced artist features and monthly columns for Southern Gospel publications including SGM Radio website and SGN Scoops Digital

magazine. Lorraine desires that the power of the written word will glorify her Lord and bring readers closer to the love, peace and majesty of the Almighty. Email Lorraine at lorraine@sgnscoops.com



Jonathan was saved at the age of 5 in Humboldt TN where his dad was Pastor. He has served as Youth pastor, Music pastor and Senior Pastor, but his love for Southern Gospel Music keeps bringing him back to radio and Quartet singing. Jonathan contributes audio interviews for SGN Scoops and

serves on the Diamond Awards Planning Board



Angela Griffin is an International Field Representative for Love A Child, Inc., a 501 c 3 humanitarian organization to the island of Haiti. A rich Christian family heritage guided her path to minister in song to the broken, to feed the hungry, and lead others to Christ.

On December 31, 2002 she married Tim Griffin, an accomplished Southern Gospel pianist. Tim and Angela then combined their musical talents and formed the group "The Griffin's." They have traveled throughout the Southeast spreading the love of Christ.

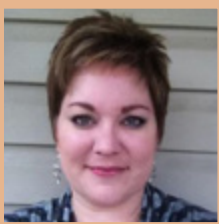
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Denise Salchow grew up singing southern gospel music with her family group and continues to have a passion for the music and ministry. Denise works with the video production team for SGN Scoops and is the artist coordinator for The Diamond

Awards. Born and still making her home in Springfield, MO she works as an elementary school secretary and is the proud mom of two wonderful daughters, Colby & Kate.



Music moves me. Christ's loves inspires me. Mixing the two together in the beautiful array of the message of the gospel through Southern Gospel music is the purest of joys to me. Raised in Charlotte, North Carolina around the 5th Sunday night sings

at church; that hand clappin', foot stompin', spirit flowing rhythm of harmony stirs me to moments of Heaven on Earth.

Believing it is still about the music, God has given me a heart for writing and a platform to learn from my heroes as well as sharing their ministry to expand their touch to others. Listen with your heart and hear the gentle, yet assured voice of our Father speaking to your heart, and be blessed!



Pete Schwager is a full-time web developer and also owns his freelance design business, Cre8able Media. He enjoys all things technology related and also loves learning more about Christ through Bible study and other reading material. He is married and has two small children. They live in

Ringgold, GA. Find him on the web at <http://cre8able.com>

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Life, Love & LEGENDS

by Lou Wills Hildreth

My fervent prayer for this New Year is to glorify the Heavenly Father at every opportunity. In 2012, I am celebrating seventy five years of passionate involvement in Southern Gospel music---singing, hosting television, songwriting, publishing, serving on industry boards, speaking, authoring books, writing articles, and making personal appearances to encourage our next generation of gospel music lovers. Carrying the torch so powerfully this past year, and the year ahead, is our Scoops publisher Rob Patz, our editor Rhonda Frye, and an excellent staff of contributors. I thank God for their efforts.

A few weeks ago, I flew to Nashville to be a guest on a new television series. It was exciting to tape "Blast From The Past" a segment of "Gospel Music Down South" owned and produced by Jim Hefner. Host group, the Southmen, Buddy Burton, Larry Beck, Buddy Poe, and Hefner, with Eddie Crook at the piano, sang the great gospel classics superbly. Some of the others at this taping were Ed Hill, Joel & LaBreeska Hemphill, Woody Beatty, Jerry & Jan Goff. It was fun to tape an introduction segment with Danny Jones, Singing News editor. I felt right at home with the television crew, David and Diana Thomas, Freshwell Media, and their son Aaron. Watch for "Singing Down South" on Family Friendly Entertainment and several cable systems.

As part of my celebration of 75 years in gospel music, with the encouragement of Judy Nelon, I taped the first session of a documentary about Southern Gospel music. We described the first Dove Awards in 1969, and Bill Gaither winning the first Songwriter's Award. John T. Benson and I were the co-presenters. A young crew-cut Bill came to the stage and said to us "I'm scared to death." Since that time, Bill Gaither has won so many awards, we stopped counting. Moving on to another event, as I looked into the TV camera to talk about the GMA Hall Of Fame, I thought about the



GMA Hall Of Fame Inductees 2005—Evie Tornquist, Lewis Family, Mylon LeFevre, Don Light, Ron Huff, Walter Hawkins, and Lou Hildreth

generosity of Bill Gaither who made a special trip to Nashville to present my induction into this hallowed Hall Of Fame in 2005. With the Gaither sense of humor, he began with this comment: "Lou Hildreth signed Mark Lowry to his first booking contract, and we are still going to induct her into the GMA Hall Of Fame??" After the audience stopped laughing, he proceeded with a precious tribute. Remembering this event for the TV documentary was emotional, and I moved quickly to another subject, the SGMA Hall Of Fame in Dollywood, describing opening day in 1999 and painting a vivid picture of that event. Several legends are scheduled to contribute to this worthy project, and we will keep you informed at SGNscoops. Looking into the TV camera and recalling the excitement of being involved in these events reminded me again of the blessing of God on my life in Southern Gospel Music. This scripture speaks to all of us as we work together for our beloved music--Matthew 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and GLORIFY your FATHER in Heaven."

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Scan the QRcode
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Bill Gaither presiding at Lou Hildreth's 2005 Induction into the GMA Hall Of Fame, Nashville



People Behind the Music:

Donna Beauvais

by Rob Estep

Many times in the music industry you come across those people that make “it” happen. If there was ever one person that I could say has that quality it would be the one and only Ms. Donna Beauvais. Take a minute and read this very candid interview with Donna and get to know her.

Rob: Donna, as most people know every story has a beginning so let’s start there and tell us a little history behind the wonderful person that is Donna!

Donna: Hmm... Wonderful...? You’re too kind, but here’s a little history: I was born in Detroit, Michigan, so I am

starting with a confession. I am a Yankee! But, I’m a Yankee who loves Southern Gospel music and southern people and northern and eastern and western and so on. I love people. I love that GOD gave us blessings like music to connect each other and draw us closer to Him. The interesting thing for me is that “the chicken came before the egg” so to speak. I was not raised in a Christian home, but I have always LOVED music. From the time I was a little girl, I sang non-stop. I sang at breakfast, lunch, and dinner, I sang in the car, I sang everywhere. To be honest, my mom and brother used to ask me to hush, until I started to

finally carry a tune, I guess. Then the whole family was always asking me to sing. That was nice of them, but not always very pretty! HA! But I just loved it. All my school years were completely engulfed in my music education. I actually went on to study opera and opera theatre as a young adult. My relationship with Jesus, the most important of all the relationships in my life, began when I was 18 years old. I actually read a Gospel tract. I had already been seeking and wondering about who God was and where He is. All I had to do was wrap my heart and mind around His Word and I realized HE was, is, and will always be the answer. I think having

a love for music, prior to accepting Christ, actually increased my faith, because I realized that something so beautiful couldn’t possibly have been created by simple human beings. I will never forget the day I asked Jesus to be my Savior. My life has never been the same since. He is a gift beyond description, and, once I came to know Him, He brought music to a whole new level for me. He defined its role in my life, from that moment and into the future, and the beauty of the message came to life for me.

I was a young wife and mother, married at the age of 18. We were blessed with four beautiful

children; Jessica, Jason, Josh, and Jenna. (Notice a trend...HA). Life rushed by, but music always went right along side it. I began music ministry in my 20's. I also began song writing. Many years later came a season that God used so powerfully. It was a music ministry that began with me and my daughter, Jessica, and eventually included my wonderful son-in-law, Eddie, named Hope's Call. This was a precious time in my life, and at times, a challenging one, but I'm quite sure this magazine only allows for so many pages per article, so I will wrap this up by saying how grateful I am, that in all seasons, God walks with us and HE talks with us and He tells us WE ARE HIS OWN. He has been faithful to me and the gift of music is the thread that sows HIS love around my heart every day.

Today, I own the company Vertical Sky. I have the privilege of helping others in music to reach for God's dreams for their lives through production, promotion, publicity and so on. I am honored by the opportunity to work in this way. I went through quite a life transition in 2007. It's a word that many find hard to talk about, and I am no exception, but I experienced divorce. It was a very tough time, but also a time of learning, growing, and seeing God in a new and

loving way. And, now, five years later, in just the way He does, God has brought love, hope, and restoration to my life. Just a couple of weeks ago, the most amazing man God has ever placed in my journey of life, Zane King, asked me to be his wife. I am absolutely beyond blessed! Oh, and can I throw in that I am a NANA?! Jessica and Eddie had my perfect little grandson, Bennett, over two years ago. I am in love with that little guy! God is GOOD!

Rob: Wow, so much life experience! You mentioned that you are a songwriter, how old were you when you wrote your first song and what was called?

Donna: I was about 22 years old when I wrote my first song. I sang all my life, and I loved to write poetry, etc., I just never put two and two together until I came to Christ and realized that singing and writing were not hobbies. They were actually a calling on my life.

The first song I wrote was called "New Life" and although the premise was good (coming to new life through Christ), the song was terrible. But, HEY, you gotta start somewhere!

Rob: Where do you derive your inspiration for writing from?

Donna: There are so many things that inspire me, but my main source of inspiration is truly life experience. I believe God takes us through life's struggles, joys, hopes, and trials to teach us and to give us opportunity to encourage others. He instills different, yet equally valuable, gifts in all of us. Songwriting is a way for me to put into word and song who God is to me and how He has worked in my heart and life, and often, in the lives of amazing people around me. It will always astound me that God chose to move in us in so many incredible ways. I am so grateful music is one of those ways.

Rob: If you could ever have a co-writer past or present who would it be?

Donna: Every songwriter I have had the blessing of writing with has been and continues to be an honor! I'd like to mention all of them by name, but since I am writing a novel with each answer, I should probably fight that urge!

There are two people I want to mention specifically though. I LOVE the heart and energy of Kenna West, and although she is my dear friend, I've never actually gotten to write with her. So, Kenna, if you're reading this- LET'S WRITE!

The other person I am

truly overwhelmed with the opportunity to write with may not come as a surprise to everyone, but it is the love of my life, Mr. Zane King, who is soon to be my husband. We did actually co-write our first song in this last few months and it felt completely comfortable and right. (I guess that should be the case, huh?) The simplicity and realness of his lyrics and beautiful melodies have always just blown me away. (I've known Zane for 18 years!) I am excited to see what God does as we write together. I suspect it'll be that Zane will write these great songs and I'll get my name on them for adding an "it" or an "and!" HA!

Rob: What artist has had the biggest influence on you as a song-writer?

Donna: I am quite sure I couldn't answer that with one artist in particular. I have tremendous love for many Christian musicians. My biggest influences are really other songwriters who turn a common thought into a masterpiece. I am constantly learning from people who are a whole lot more talented than I am!

Rob: You have many other roles in the Southern Gospel industry; tell us a little about what all you do.

Donna: I am overwhelmed by the opportunity to work in this industry. Probably my first love, besides songwriting, is production. To get to join hearts with other artists and help them make an album, filled with songs that will impact the lives of others, is just unreal. I feel like a kid in a candy store. I also LOVE the radio promotion side of what I do because it is another mode to bring Jesus to someone who needs to hear about Him. I am also very thankful for the friendships with program directors, music directors, and djs at radio stations all over the world. What a gift they are to me! I also enjoy helping artists with staging and presentation of their ministry, vocal coaching, publicity and promotion, and consultation. The bottom line is, whatever it

is, if it involves music and furthering the message of HOPE that Jesus has given us, I am completely blessed to get to be a part of it.

I'd also love to mention that when I came off the road in 2007, I was blessed with the opportunity to work with Daywind Records and some of the best of the best in our industry. I will be forever grateful to Daywind for that experience. Dottie Leonard Miller, Ed Leonard, Norman Holland, Tana Lonon, Dani Lintzenich, Michael Turner, and others at the company taught me so much about the how business and ministry can walk hand in hand. I am honored to have had such a wonderful association over the years.

The thing that caught

my attention many years ago as a young adult (new) Christian, having never heard a Christian song in all my life as a child, is that the message in Gospel music is so biblically focused and so God honoring. I love that we don't have to search for the meaning in a song. I believe this music hits people where it counts, in the heart. So, to get to work among my peers and others to help it to grow and continue forward is a true privilege.

Rob: Besides writing and all the your other responsibilities, what are some other hobbies that you love?

Donna: I honestly can't say I have another hobby...My hobby is my work. What a blessing! However, if you ask me my favorite thing to do outside of my

work, I'd have to say, it's playing with my grandson, Bennett, when I am able spend time with him, and golfing with Zane. I cannot claim golf as my hobby yet, because I'm not good enough at it for it to qualify as a hobby!

Rob: What drives you to do what you do?

Donna: The HOPE of Jesus and a LOVE for people and the art of music.

Rob: I know this may be a difficult question to answer but if you had to pick one of the songs you've written as your favorite, which one would it be?

Donna: It's a song called "In Jesus' Name." I co-wrote it with my amazing daughter, Jessica, and her husband, Eddie. We wrote this song just before we



went on our first trip with Compassion International; A child hunger relief organization whose focus is on ministering to the entire scope of needs in an underprivileged child. They not only focus on the physical needs of children, but also, on their spiritual needs. Over 100,000 children came to salvation in Christ, through Compassion, last year.

Becoming involved in Compassion changed our lives and our ministry, Hope's Call, for the better. From the moment we began sharing Compassion with churches and concert attendees all over the United States and Canada, we saw God move in very powerful ways.

As a body of believers, we not only need, but have a responsibility to look for

ways to reach others for Christ; we can reach out to our neighbor down the street and a child across the ocean at the same time. Compassion taught us to look beyond this corner of the world, where we live, in a country where there are more blessings than we can contain, and see the faces of those who need our love, help, and spiritual encouragement.

I actually had the opportunity to meet the child I sponsor. Her name is Ana Maria Flores and she lives in Bolivia, South America. There are really no words to express what seeing this precious little soul did to me. In all of her lack, she was the very picture of gratitude. We continue to communicate regularly, through letters and pictures. This is a wonderful way that

Compassion provides to help EVERYONE who sponsors a child to have a one on one relationship with their child.

I can't say enough about how great Compassion is, and, the interesting thing is, we came to be involved, as an artist, through Zane, who works directly with the organization, helping to educate and equip artists to share this hope as a very important aspect of ministry. He himself was deeply impacted through the ministry of Compassion, and, he continues to help others to be a part of it, to this day.

I want to encourage everyone reading this article to visit compassion.com to learn more about what they do and who they help.

Rob: A song that you co-wrote with your daughter and son-in-law, "In Jesus Name," is a very well written song about how we can reach out to people down the street and around the world. Tell us the story behind that song.

Donna: Well, what a perfect final question! The answer is in the previous question! And, by the way, thank you for allowing me to share my heart. It's an honor. I deeply appreciate your magazine and each and every one of you. God bless YOU!

To learn more about Donna Beauvais, visit <http://www.verticalskyonline.com/>

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The Big Break

By Jennifer Campbell

Have you made your New Year's Resolutions? Do you have a vision for your life in 2012? Perhaps you are waiting for that "big break." Or maybe you spend every waking moment dreaming about that moment when you win the lottery, land a role in the next box office hit, or finally get the job you have been waiting for all of your life. In your zest to radically change your life, do you often overlook the daily joys because of your focus on the single moment that you hope changes everything? While it is easy to center your life on one lofty goal, make sure you take time to enjoy the small victories in life. As one wise person once said, "Take time to smell the roses." Otherwise, you may easily miss out on what is happening right now, simply because you are waiting for something to happen.

Personally, I often find myself thinking of the future, as opposed to delighting in the present. There are times when my Dad and I will be anticipating an exotic voyage on a cruise, or other adventurous vacation, and it seems all of my thoughts revolve around that one trip. At times, I can scarcely concentrate on my daily tasks, due to thoughts regarding our adventure... What clothes should I pack? How many SD cards should I format for my camera? I need to make sure I take my curling iron. Oh, and I certainly cannot forget to take my iPod! And most importantly, I need to pack my Bible. The list

goes on and on. I know there are times I spend a much greater number of minutes planning what to pack than I spend actually packing. But, it is the anticipation of the joyful journey that lures me in, and causes me to center my thoughts on all of the tiniest details, often to the exclusion of what is going on in the immediate present.

Other times, I find myself dreaming of the moment that I am blessed to have my first book published, a dream I have had since I was a little girl. I write and write, anticipating this very day. The desire to write becomes so great at times that nothing but writing will provide contentment. The words come flowing forth, and I find such relaxation when I am writing them all down, sure to not miss even one. Does this mean I don't like to do anything but write? Certainly not! But, there are times when I want to focus all of my thoughts and energy on this one passion. At the same time, there are moments when I put all of my resources into singing or speaking to women about my journey to finding joy around the bend. Even so, I realize that I have so many opportunities to minister to others, whether I am writing, singing, speaking, or simply performing my normal daily routine as a middle school teacher.

We may want to be the next big superstar or we may wish we were a millionaire. And our goals may be to shed a few pounds, be more organized, or spend more time with our family. These goals are valuable; yet, there is one goal that can bring us to the place of contentment and true, everlasting joy. It doesn't matter if we become household names, win a million dollars, lose ten pounds, or even get all of our ducks in a row. The most important thing we can do in 2012 is to seek the will of God. In His timing, He will move us to the next phase of our life.

We are called to give 100% of ourselves to the Lord's work, knowing that everything we do as unto the Lord is valuable. I Corinthians 15:58 (NIV) says, "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." God calls us to stand firm. In other words, we should not waver. We should put our complete trust in the Lord that He will give us the ability to complete every task with the knowledge that we are on a journey to a destination much bigger than Hollywood or Broadway. Ultimately, our vision should be much greater than a resolution made at the beginning of a new year. We are working toward a Heavenly goal. And what is the best part? This "big break" is given freely to all who will believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God.

So, if you're constantly resolving to strike it big or taking steps to improve your life, remember this: the most important step you will ever take is to ask Jesus to be the Lord of your life. Once you begin this personal relationship with Him, you will be able to immediately say that you are a servant of the Lord of Lords, a child of the King of Kings, and a friend of the Savior of the World. Worldly successes may be enjoyable, but only for a season. The successes you find in Jesus Christ, however, last forever.

The next time you think about your next "big break," think about the ultimate "big break." If you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you will experience a life beyond any you could ever imagine on this earth below. One day, you'll have that mansion you've always dreamed of, and you'll be walking on streets of gold surrounded by gates of pearl. Everyone will know your name, and you'll know their names as well. Best of all, Jesus Christ will be walking right beside you, just as He's done all of your life. Why wait? Take the first step today. Your "big break" has arrived...



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WHY?

The Isaacs Are Brave Enough To Ask

By Rhonda Frye



Born in Germany to holocaust survivors and raised in a Jewish home, Lily Isaacs later encountered Jesus Christ in a small church (actually- a converted garage) in the middle of the country. Lily Isaacs walked away from that little country church, in 1971, a new creature with a new work budding in her heart. At the time, little did she know of the enormous calling on her life and the plans God had in store for her and her family.

Becoming a Christian in and of itself presented an obstacle. Lily's parents and family rejected her and her new-found faith in those early years of following Christ. Nonetheless, she pursued a meaningful relationship with Jesus and became the matriarch of a multi-award winning gospel group known as "The Isaacs" as a result.

The Isaacs are known for their rich family harmony, exceptional song-writing and for their talents using acoustic instrumentation. The art of blending those dynamics along with Holy Spirit anointing has made them tremendously successful

throughout their ministry. The Isaacs are regulars at the Grand Ole Opry and Gaither Homecoming Events/Videos/Concerts. They perform in various venues internationally each year and have been recognized by their peers, the industry and fans for their work. They have received numerous nominations and awards including, GMA Dove Awards, The Singing News Fan Awards, ICGMA and Grammy Awards plus many more honors.

The Isaacs consists of Lily and her three children, Ben, Sonya and Rebecca. All of them sing and play a variety of instruments. Ben is known for studio production in addition to his playing upright bass and his vocal talents. Sonya Isaacs Yearly plays mandolin, sings and collaborates with sister and guitarist, Rebecca Isaacs Bowman with song-writing. There are only two words that can describe the combination of their voices, songs and music: "Simply Gorgeous!"

Sonya and Rebecca have written many number one hit songs for their

family, but also for other artists such as The Bowlings, Gold City Quartet, Mark Lowry, Jeff and Sheri Easter and more. Their hits have expanded past the gospel community and into the world of country music as well. Country greats such as Vince Gill, Trisha Yearwood and Martina McBride have recorded their songs.

The Isaacs have released many amazing records through the years, but there is something absolutely special about their latest release, WHY CAN'T WE. The message of this album asks questions of God that perhaps most of us think, but don't have the courage to ask out loud. The Isaacs have written, sung and recorded about some of the toughest questions in life and have given us strength by their message of hope. The reason? Although they are Christians and despite their success, the Isaacs have experienced loss, pain and suffering like everyone else in the world. In a sense, the album contains the Isaacs' personal emotions and their voices of experience from their personal

lives.

During the National Quartet Convention, Lily and son, Ben Isaacs sat down with us at the SGN Scoops booth and discussed the thoughts behind WHY CAN'T WE. "Our new album is on the Gaither Music Label," Ben shares. "My sisters Sonya, Becky and Sonya's husband Jimmy wrote probably 80% of the album and then we went back and re-visited 'I Believe in a Hill Called Mount Calvary' by the Gaither Vocal Band and one written by James McFall called 'I Still Trust You.'"

"Ben produced this new album for us," Lily explains just like a proud mom (and rightly so!) "And he has been so busy this year in the studio. He just recently produced the Gaither Vocal Band's new record and he just finished with the Oak Ridge Boys."

"And," Ben continues, "I have Charlotte Ritchie's new project and Wilburn and Wilburn's. I've been busy!"

Ben laughs and shares: "We could have easily called this album the WHY album because we have a lot of questions! As you get older you find out the things that were really important to you when you were young don't really matter as much anymore... You know, It's {life is} really all about the family, dealing with age, with kids and problems. So I would call this probably the "life" album. It deals with life questions and it's our interpretation of answers. We tend to shy away from God, but He already knows what we're thinking."

Lily adds: "There's actually a song on there called 'Why.' It asks the tough questions. Why do some die before their time? Why do the old outlive their minds? Why is there abuse? The way the song is worded is amazing, but at the very end of the song it says, 'God I know you have a reason why... One day when we get to heaven and we talk about this life, You will help me understand why,

'cause I know You have a reason.'"

At times, the subject matter in the album is heavy. The Isaacs explain WHY they recorded an album tackling tough issues: "There are a few people that have lived through a miracle and are on the other side of it," Ben explains, "but there are a lot of people that are in a situation that still need a touch."

"This album is just good," Lily adds. "I don't know how the industry is going to receive it because there are so many subjects that are deep, but you know-we just go into the studio and whatever God gives us to do is exactly what we do! With the day and time in which we live with the economy and suffering, I think people need to hear it! We are all human and these are all questions we all have."

As Lily and Ben discussed their favorite selections on the album, their passion was evident by their tones and expressions- even to the point of Ben singing some of the lyrics right there on the spot in our Scoops Booth. It was nearly overwhelming to experience a mother and son's passion and mission to touch a hurting world. Their confidence in this album really touching lives was convincing. One selection in particular that captures raw emotions from

continued on next page



personal experience is "I'm Gonna Love You Through It." Lily's personal bout with breast cancer 27 years ago prompted her children to write a deeply personal song about this experience. Martina McBride recorded and climbed the country charts with it as well.

Lily shares: "This one is personal and really touching. I love it because it's so personal...so VERY personal! The second verse talks about forced smiles and baggy shirts to hide what the cancer took from her. Only anybody that has ever been through that type of disfigurement knows what that feels like! So just to address that issue and for people to identify with that (and it doesn't have to be just about breast cancer because a lot of people suffer from disfigurement from disease or surgery) and the suffering you go through is important. It takes family, friends, and church family to support you and to just be there to give you strength. I could have never made it without my family. I don't know how people do it without that and the Lord. My family and the Lord are my two strongholds today."

"That's probably my favorite song," Ben reflects, "but I also love 'Why Can't We?'" Ben tried to explain what the first verse was about and just broke out singing the lyrics. "He lies awake there all alone most every night lookin' back on all of his mistakes wishin' through the tears that he could just go back 'cause there's a lot of things he'd like to change. He just can't forgive himself and forget even though God already did. If he can love someone and find the good within- in spite of what they've done no matter where they've been. If He can let it go and set the debtor free-If He can keep forgiving you and me, Why Can't We?"

"That's a killer," Ben said with tears in his eyes as if he knew exactly when to stop singing to keep tears from spilling all over the Scoops booth. "It's a great song; it talks about how people won't let things go. I'm telling you- this album to me is the question album."

Another favorite is "Waiting In The Water." Ben explains: "This song talks about when Jesus healed the blind man- the one where He put the mud on his eyes. Looking at the map from what Bible Scholars say, it was a 2 mile journey for the blind man to make it to the specified pool of water. Could you imagine how much he stumbled and fell and the faith that it took for him to get there?" Ben asks. "It wasn't until he did his part before the miracle took place!"

"He just told him to go and wash," Lily adds. "Jesus could have healed him like that (snap)! He didn't have to put the mud on his eyes. Jesus wanted him to trust Him and that's why Becky had the idea of the song. She received her healing that way and she's been 7 months off all of her medications that she has been taking for two years. It's about that little space of time that she had to walk those dates with God to the water."

Ben adds: "The hook line of the song is- 'the miracle that's promised by our Father is waiting in the water.' It's all about the process of getting to the water."

The Isaacs write songs that grip the heart, for sure! Their inspiration comes in a variety of avenues. "I'm a little bit of a writer," Ben admits, "nothing compared to my sisters- they are incredible! Inspiration comes from sermons, things people say, and just ideas. I think they're God-given."

"Their dad is an amazing song-writer," Lily says, "they got their gift

inherited from him."

During our interview, Lily and Ben discussed how they stay spiritually refreshed. "There are two ways I get fed," says Ben. "Number one, I love my church! I'm very faithful to my church. I get to go on Wednesdays and my pastor preaches every Wednesday night. We have class, so every week I get Sunday school and church." Ben's face lit up as he continued: "My kids refresh me. I feel that my number one calling in life is to show my kids the way. The right way. That's my obligation. In the ministry- I just show it {the Christian life} to people, but I live it in front of my kids. My kids refresh me! I love being home. I love my family."

"I have a different perspective on that," Lily adds. "My kids are grown, away from home and I live by myself. I enjoy being with my family, I love my children, my grandchildren but a lot of times my refreshing, other than church, is just self-examination and having quiet time with the Lord in the privacy of my home. Home is where I can reflect. We are around people so much a lot of the time. Those quiet moments alone that you spend with the Lord sitting in your family room with a cup of coffee reading the Bible or just kneeling down by the bed in the evening or even being outside in the sunshine are refreshing times to talk to God one on one. Personal time with the Lord is what I thrive on."

For more information on the Isaacs and to order their latest project, WHY CAN'T WE, visit: www.theisaacs.com.



2012 DIAMOND Awards

*FAN based, FAN driven, at the Diamond Awards,
... the FANS speak out!*

by Laura Kennedy

As a Pastor with over 40 years in the ministry, Reverend Allen Smith became involved in Southern Gospel music through concert promotion in the churches where he was ministering. In the mid-90's he began to DJ at a radio station in DeSoto, Missouri. He and his church started a southern gospel magazine, which grew quickly and became the Southern Gospel News Magazine. A weekly email newsletter followed, SGN Scoops Ezine. Today the publication is known as SGN Scoops Magazine- Home of the Prestigious Diamond Awards.

The Diamond Awards were originally started by Gospel Voice Magazine 20 years ago. After a time of seeking God's provision, the ceremony was handed over to Smith, a soft-spoken gentleman who loves Southern Gospel music and whose innovative direction has led the Diamond Awards to their current status.

In an industry that currently has many award ceremonies occurring throughout the year, the heart of why the Diamonds are special lies within the fans. Fan Based, Fan Driven, the fans even select the nominees. The decision

was made to let every Southern Gospel fan vote if they wanted to. So, in addition to a printed ballot, there is also an electronic ballot available on the website. We, at the Diamond Awards, were the first to do this, and it has worked quite well in allowing the fans the opportunity to speak out and be heard.

In 2009, Rob Patz, CEO of Coastal Medial Group, parent company of SGMRadio, acquired SGN Scoops and the Diamond Awards from Smith. Since that time, Patz has been amazed at the growth in popularity for both the magazine and the Diamond Awards. Last year's voting participation broke all records to date. Due to substantial growth of SGN Scoops magazine, this year's voting is projected to top that of last year's.

The 20th Anniversary of the Diamond Awards ceremony was held this past June, 2011. Feature Editor, Lorraine Walker recalls, "The Tri-Lakes Centre was a lovely setting, where the crowd gathered in anticipation of an engaging and worshipful evening." True to Allen Smith's vision, spreading the gospel in song was the key to the entire

evening. Christ-centered and Fan Driven, the crowds enthusiastically greeted each artist, which included; Beyond the Ashes, The Williamsons, McMillian and Life, Praise Inc., The Tacketts, Ann Downing, Christy Sutherland, 2nd Generation, The Shireys, Jay Stone Singers and Driven Quartet. Other industry professionals appearing included Lou Wills Hildreth, Hearts of Faith, Deon Unthank, Bev McCann, and Chris Unthank. Coastal Media founder and Diamond Awards head, Rob Patz, remarked that the evening was truly special. He added, "We are so excited that another Diamond Awards is in the history books. We had a blast this year, and know that everyone involved loved being a part of the show as well!"

The ever resounding excitement of true southern gospel music fans is sure to keep the Diamond Awards an exciting ceremony for many years to come. The culminating efforts of industry professionals with many years of experience as well as some newer ones will bring their combined efforts to a diverse planning and advisory board. Rob Patz, Rhonda Frye, Eric Frye, Lorraine Walker, Sandi Duncan Clark, Lou Wills Hildreth, Denise Salchow, Jonathan Edwards, Matt Dudney, Anthony Facello, and Stephanie Kelley are working diligently in making decisions and planning a memorable night for 2012's Award Show. Even now as they have begun their efforts, we ask you to remember them in prayer for the sake of encouragement and for God's ultimate praise and glory.

The nomination and voting process is currently underway. Visit <http://www.sgnscoops.com/> to cast your vote. Below you will find detail dates and the Official Rules for voting, as well as a detailed list of the available categories.

OFFICIAL RULES:

- One vote per email address.
- Email address will be required to place a vote.
- Printable ballots are available for mail-in votes, but photocopies of completed ballots will not be accepted.
- SGN Scoops Digital and Coastal Media Group reserves the right to discard any vote believed to be fraudulent (ie, using a fake email address for mass voting) and reserves the right to determine eligibility in all categories.
- Votes should be based on an artist's work within the calendar year of 2011.
- Ballots must be filled out for at least 18 of the 21 categories to be counted.
- All fans are eligible to nominate.

Categories (in alphabetical order) are:

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

ANTHONY BURGER INSTRUMENTALIST OF THE YEAR

BLUEGRASS GOSPEL ARTIST OF THE YEAR

CHRISTIAN COUNTRY ALBUM OF THE YEAR

CHRISTIAN COUNTRY FEMALE ARTIST OF THE YEAR

CHRISTIAN COUNTRY GROUP OF THE YEAR

CHRISTIAN COUNTRY MALE ARTIST OF THE YEAR

DOTTIE RAMBO SONGWRITER OF THE YEAR

DUET OF THE YEAR is a group consisting of two singers.

FEMALE SOLOIST OF THE YEAR for artist recording as a soloist.

J.D. SUMNER LIVING LEGEND AWARD is a once-in-a-lifetime honor to recognize the living performer for whom the fans feel has made the greatest contribution to Southern Gospel music spanning a career of 25 years or more. (Please note these PREVIOUS WINNERS who are no longer eligible for this award; Bill Gaither, Gloria Gaither, Connie Hopper, Eva Mae LaFevre, Dottie Rambo, Lu Lu Roman, Naomi Sego, & Ben Speer)

MALE SOLOIST OF THE YEAR for artist recording as a soloist.

MIXED GROUP OF THE YEAR is a group of any number with male & female members.

QUARTET OF THE YEAR consists of a traditional group with 4-part harmony.

SONG OF THE YEAR

SUNRISE AWARD is for a new or developing artist who has seen growth in their career over the past year. Nominees in this category will not yet have released their debut single, two years prior to eligibility date, (January 1, 2012.) This award is also a once-in-a-lifetime honor.

TRIO OF THE YEAR is a traditional group with 3-part harmony.

VIDEO/DVD OF THE YEAR is a short form video or a DVD

Let your heart lead you, believing in the fullness of the message of Christ so lovingly displayed in song. To God be the Glory!

~ Laura Kennedy

"I can't begin to tell you how excited I am to begin our work on the 2012 Diamond Awards! It's an exciting time for me behind the scenes as well as the joy it brings to the artists & fans. 2012 Diamond Awards, ready or not here we come!"

~Denise Salchow

"The Diamond Awards are unique in that they are 100% fan voted. I am so proud to be a part of an awards system with such a rich history for the third year in a row and to be part of an awards system that celebrates the message of the Gospel through song. The fans have a chance to express the blessings they've received through the music by making their vote count!"

~Matt Dudney

"It has been a joy to be a part of the Diamond awards the last 2 years and am looking forward to another great program and seeing the special surprises that always seem to happen during this awards ceremony."

~Jonathan Edwards

"This is my first year to officially be involved with the Diamond Awards. I've helped Rob behind the scenes, but I'm so excited to have a more hands-on role this year. I love our industry, our music and especially our message. We will make sure the Diamond Awards will be an unforgettable night!"

~Rhonda Frye

[Click Here to Vote](#)

***Special Thanks to Julie Groves and Denise Salchow for photos!



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FINISH WELL

THE RACE IS ON



by Rhonda Frye

No doubt, most of us are staring into the mirror of the past trying to figure out how well we performed in our ministry assignments in 2011. Isn't it great to know that only God is the fair judge? He knows us and our motives better than we even know ourselves. It doesn't matter how far off course we have strayed nor does it matter how miserably we've failed. It doesn't matter how impossible the task seems to be. Nothing matters except that we keep pressing toward the finish line! Today is a new day. This is a new year. The slate is clean. The leaf has been turned over. It's a new season. If God has placed a dream in your heart, never give

up because....THE RACE IS ON!

The enemy wants us to give up! It gets wearisome to drown out the voice of discouragement as we run toward the finish line. The enemy is out to kill, steal, destroy and when he isn't up to that, he is busy distracting us. The apostle Paul was no stranger to obstacles and adversity! Charles Stanley says in his devotional, *I LIFT UP MY SOUL*, this about the beloved missionary: "Paul's goal was to take the gospel message to Asia. Three completed missionary journeys proved he had a plan and a purpose. Personal testimonies bear witness that he achieved his goal,

but not without cost. No one completes the race of life without facing many trials and tribulations."

As we carry out our tasks, we will face opposition, adversity and obstacles. Over the next few months, I want to address obstacles to finishing well. Obstacles such as interruptions, discouragement, hidden sin, lack of spiritual discipline and more. I want us to run this race together because God needs us on His team. Yes! He needs us!

It's amazing to think the God who created and sustains the entire universe knows exactly where we are, what we're doing, what we're thinking

even before we think it! God is certainly aware of our circumstances, situations and our future. God knows everything. God owns everything. God was. God is. God is the first, the last. He is the author and the finisher and the list goes on. God is sufficient, yet He needs us. Throughout generations, God has consistently used ordinary people to be His hands and His feet on earth.

I ran across a verse several months ago that helped me understand the concept of God needing me. Honestly, I lingered at the verse for a while; it just didn't fit into my theology. God is completely sufficient isn't He? Well...

the verse that jumped off the page from Eugene Peterson's paraphrased version, "The Message," was Proverbs 19:17. "Mercy to the needy is a loan to God, and God pays back those loans in full." I read it slowly again and again. "Mercy... to the needy... is a loan... to God." "Mercy to the Needy is a LOAN to God." Honestly, I didn't like the concept of "loaning" anything to God, so I read it again and again. Being that I'm somewhat of a skeptic- my next thoughts were: "This isn't the REAL Bible- it's just a paraphrased version" so I went to the internet and looked at actual translations. The Bible no matter which version suits your fancy says when we show mercy to someone in need, we are loaning (or we "lendeth if you prefer) to God! God knows it really takes a "hands-on" lesson for me to get certain truths,

and He proved Himself personal and faithful to me later in the day. I was visiting my father-in-law in the nursing home just before he passed away. I stepped out of the room to give my husband and his brother a little privacy. I walked the halls and then noticed a precious little lady nestled in her bed reading her GIANT Bible. Oblivious to me standing near her doorway, I watched her struggle to put her heavy Bible on the night stand. The moment I saw she needed help, I darted through the door and said, "Can I help you with that?" She appreciated my help as I told her how it blessed my heart to see her curled up with God's word- obviously still cherishing it. We talked a minute and she asked me to remember her in prayer. I told her I would and asked if there was anything I could do for her before I

left. She said she was really thirsty. I noticed her cup waaaaay across the room, so I offered to get it for her. The little lady sipped and sipped like she had been thirsty for hours. As I held her cup and she drank, Jesus so sweetly reminded me... "Mercy to the needy is a loan to God." It dawned on me that I had just loaned (or "lendeth") unto the Lord and needless to say, tears filled my eyes, I felt His presence so near. I asked her if it would be ok for me to pray for her right there and she was most appreciative. Just as I said "amen," the lady said, "Now I'm going to pray for you!" Boldness and authority from within boosted her frail voice as she prayed for me and my family and specifically for protection and for God's blessings. Needless to say, the tears spilled over because the second half of the Bible verse that I had barely noticed earlier

had now pretty much hit me over the head... "And God pays back those loans in full!" Oh how I needed someone to pray over me that day!!! God delivered full payment on the spot!

God needs us to be His agents of mercy and grace. He needs us to be vessels of His love. He is counting on you and me to lay aside our agendas and accomplish HIS will! Ministry is tough and when we're making progress, you better believe we are a target for the enemy. Friends, don't lose hope, don't give up! We have a calling on our lives! I challenge you to go back to the day when God made your assignment clear in your heart and mind. Ask Him to renew your passion, re-kindle a new flame. Rely on His faithfulness to accomplish His purpose through you! We will walk through the ministry obstacles



together in the months ahead, but know no matter where you are, it's never too late to get back on track! God is counting on you and is ready to help you with everything He expects and asks! This

January, let's commit to FINISHING WELL! Why is it so important? We never know when our "finish" will be. This past year, we buried my father-in-law. James Frye was a wonderful man of God.

He served faithfully for years in the local church. I'm sure most of you lost family and/or friends in 2011. Our industry lost several giants too. The truth is, none of us know when we'll stand before

the Lord face to face. So let's take a deep breath and hold on because... THE RACE IS ON!



WSTS 100.9 "The Cross" Fairmont, North Carolina
By Angela Griffin

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. HE'S EVERYTHING I NEED | KINGSMEN |
| 2. YOU DO NOT OWE ME | PHIL CROSS |
| 3. HOW BLESSED | BOWLING FAMILY |
| 4. LIVE LIKE I WISH I'D LIVED | GREATER VISION |
| 5. I JUST WANT TO THANK YOU LORD | ROCHESTERS |
| 6. THE ARMS OF THE SHEPHERD | NEHRKORNS |
| 7. PETER, JAMES & JOHN | GOLD CITY |
| 8. WHEN FAITH STEPS IN | MCKAMEYS |
| 9. SHE STILL REMEMBERS JESUS NAME | BOOTH BROTHERS |
| 10. WHAT WILL MY CROSS TESTIFY | BLED SOES |
| 11. JUST AS I AM | LAUREN TALLEY |
| 12. PRAY WITHOUT CEASING | DERRICK COLLINS & DEEPER FAITH |
| 13. WHAT REALLY MATTERS | ERWINS |
| 14. I AIN'T GIVING UP ON JESUS | WILBURN & WILBURN |
| 15. EVERY SCAR | DARIN & BROOKE ALDRIDGE |
| 16. VESSEL OF HONOR | JON COLE |
| 17. THE EYE OF THE STORM | OLD PATHS QT |
| 18. I GET TO | JEFF & SHERI EASTER |
| 19. HE'S LIVING TODAY | WHISNANTS |
| 20. ARE YOU READY | EIGHTH DAY |



Ready, Aim, Fire!

Ernie Haase + Signature Sound

by Rhonda Frye

Many adjectives could describe Ernie Haase and Signature Sound, but throw “conventional” out the window! “Original” fits best. Known for stylish appearance and energized performances, Ernie Haase and Signature Sound ascend charts, claim accolades and tour the world with music that transcends genre, age and culture. Since the journey began in 2003, EH&SS have been honored by numerous awards and nominations. They have won Dove Awards, achieved gold status in record sales, and have even been nominated for a Grammy! The word “zealous” perhaps matches “original” in description. Beyond passionate when it comes to God, music and people, Ernie Haase is advancing into new territory with the love of Christ. With a new album in hand, Sig Sound could be described as “armed and dangerous”- a serious threat to the enemy camp!

Twenty-five years ago, Ernie started out with the quartet of his dreams! “I was very blessed and very fortunate to have as one of my very first jobs to be with what I consider to be the Cadillac of all quartets- The Cathedrals,” Ernie recalls. “George Younce and Glenn Payne hired me in April 1990 and man I was young! I was

skinny, green, wet behind the ears and just so excited to be singing with THE group that God used to bless my heart and make me fall in love with this music.” Shortly after joining the group, Ernie became Younce’s son-in-law and was greatly influenced by the life he lived. George Younce lived out the common-sense advice and life lessons he passed to Ernie.

The Cathedrals retired, but passion drove Haase to assemble a group of like-minded men to form a Signature Sound. (AND a Signature Sight!) The sound consisted of tight harmonies and time-tested songs and the sight included trendy clothes, dazzling lights and thrilling action! Ernie Haase, Ian Owens, Doug Anderson and Devin McGlamery blend their unique style with deep gospel roots and add the love for God and people as fuel.

When Ernie formed Signature Sound, being different just for “different’s” sake was never part of the plan. “It wasn’t a calculated thing,” Ernie explains. “It’s got to be IN you... part of you at some level for it to be believable and for people to believe you have some level of authenticity. People see what Signature Sound has become and some of it is planned- but a lot of it is this: I love flashy clothes.

I love a nice suit and I love having a good time and performing when I sing."

And...Ernie always has, but his spirited personality wasn't always a good fit for the other groups he sang with.

"There were times as an employee (and I wasn't beaten over the brow or anything), but there were times I was called to the back of the bus and told, 'Hey Ernie, I think you're being a little over exuberant with your hands on that particular song-bring it back a little bit,'" Ernie grins.

"I remember there were three or four times that Glen said to me 'I hate to do this, but as owner of the group-the suit that you're wearing isn't Cathedral you need to go change clothes- You just wasted your money' and then he'd laugh at me," Ernie laughs. "Had it not been IN ME a little bit, I don't think I would have explored new boundaries and tried to bring my personality to what the group is."

Sig Sound blurred the line dividing Southern Gospel and Contemporary Christian Music topping both charts simultaneously with their first DVD. The quartet knocked down the fence dividing the Christian and Secular worlds by singing the National Anthem at the Atlanta 500 two years in a row. Ernie Haase and Signature Sound are now smashing the borders separating America from the rest of the world. NASCAR to Europe- now that's a broad audience! How did that happen? It's a "God-Thing!"

Ernie shares: "You always get invitations and nine times out of ten you just don't think they're ever going to come about because of logistics, conflicts in the calendar, or sometimes the finances can't afford to take a crew of twelve or fifteen guys. When the invite comes in you're not cynical, but you're like... if this is meant to be, we're going to go there, but not everything happens. It must be led of the Lord. You get an invite, pray about it and you kind of let it simmer on the stove, let it ferment on the vine so to speak and you just wait and see if the Lord brings it to fruition." Sometimes it takes two or even three years to plan events. "You just have to plan your calendar the same way you plan your life- and that's by faith," Ernie adds.

Recently, EH&SS completed a European tour playing in nine different countries. The invitations to perform abroad continue to roll in. Currently, a three-day campaign in India is in the making. Also- In March, Sig Sound will be performing at one of the largest outdoor Christian concerts- Easterfest in Australia. Sig Sound is on the same program with Casting Crowns, Michael W. Smith and Third Day.

EH & SS completed their most recent tour and the time has come to fire new bullets. (yes, bullets!) Ernie explains: "We've been together ten years and the last two we've

been paying our tribute to the Great Cathedrals finishing our tour last month....So- we needed some new bullets to shoot!"

New music and a new tour are on the way, but the guys are not forsaking the classics. "We've got the older songs that people come and love to hear and we will always sing those like 'O What A Savior' and 'Get Away Jordan,' but our people who follow us are ready for another SIGNATURE sound. They're ready for us to give them what brought us to the party," says Ernie.

"With 120 concerts a year- 80 of them are in northern America and those other 40 dates of the year, we're literally around the world," Ernie shares. The international crowd is young- less than age 40. "I feel old at a concert in the international market," Ernie laughs and continues, "You've got to be able to give them something that is going to keep their attention. We don't change who we are, how we dress or our approach, but you have to have some content. To be able to reach a broader audience, you have to give them what THEY expect and hopefully we have and will exceed that."

HERE WE ARE AGAIN, hits stores February 7, 2012 with pre-order sales beginning January 10th. The album is destined to delight current and new fans here and overseas, but it is also bound to change lives! "Out of the twelve songs, we did three remakes- three classics," Ernie explains. "I love going back and grabbing a classic and giving it our feel." Sig Sound brought back "Stand By Me," "Swing Low Sweet Chariot," and Ian brought back the classic, "I Believe."

"We have nine brand new songs of which I had the opportunity to help on seven of them," Ernie says. "They were written with scripture in mind, our crowd in mind and they were written out of life experiences- Out of our fears, hurts, failures, questions and our victories."

Everyone has their own personal taste in music, but some songs have the ability to rise above genres and culture. Ernie explains: "You may not be a praise and worship fan, but when you hear a song like 'I Can Only Imagine,' you realize that it is something that transcends Southern Gospel and Contemporary Christian Music and speaks to the world. That song spoke to the world. And that's probably one thing that I can brag on the most about this record that hopefully it will transcend without divorcing from our fan base to a whole new wider world of people."

"Some of the clichés we say in the Southern Gospel world didn't work in Romania, in Berlin, Germany or in the Netherlands." Ernie continues, "It's been an eye-opening experience going around the world realizing some of the stuff we do here that works in Atlanta, GA doesn't work

there. It doesn't mean Atlanta, GA is less educated, it just means that several things we do on a record are just very cultural and only our culture understands it. I didn't ask for it, but it looks like the Lord has opened the doors for us to go to a broader audience, so therefore I needed more ammunition to reach the audience that we're singing to."

Bullets? Ammunition? How about a grenade- well maybe a bomb?! With track twelve, "Any Other Man" the word "traditional" joined "conventional" and got tossed out the window! This explosive number captures a live performance complete with an introduction by interpreters and a Romanian crowd gone wild! Energy can be felt seeping from the speakers on this one! Ernie explains: "We were in Bucharest, Romania and the crowd was just going crazy! It's Signature Sound doing what we do best and that's performing live! The song itself is probably one of the strongest lyrics I've ever written and it came out of a circumstance in my life. You're either in the front or in the back. If you're in the front sometimes you've got a bulls-eye on your back! There was a time period a while back that I just felt like there was a bulls-eye on my back whether or not that was warranted, but it got to me and I got mad. I struggle just like anybody

who struggle with their temper, injustice, road-rage or whatever.' So- we made it a southern rock kind of song and it's been resonating and probably, in my opinion, is going to take us to a broader audience."

Another song destined to change lives was birthed out of a deep understanding of the biblical truth- "The goodness of God leads to repentance!" A while back, Ernie invited 200-300 friends to a retreat. Once there, the guests realized the invitation was conditional. Ernie boldly told the audience to leave if they planned to pass judgment on anyone for anything. "If you're perfect and you've got it all figured out, please leave... because I don't," he said. Those who weren't perfect were invited to stay and the location was claimed as a safe place-as a hospital for the sick. Ernie's moving message fell onto the ears of Wayne Haun and resonated with his spirit. Up from the heart and off his fingertips came the song, "You Are Welcome Here."

"The church has to be held accountable for the culture and what's happening is... it's becoming less and less godly because we don't want to be challenged with the people who come to our church," Ernie explains. "It's not my job to condemn and try to figure everybody out and set them straight. My job is to write songs in such



else with my temper. I told Wayne {Haun} 'I would like to say what I think, but I can't because Jesus didn't do that and I want to pattern my life after Him.' We kept talking... 'Any other man would have done this... or that, but Jesus wasn't any other man!' We wrote the lyrics and music and it first it was nice and fluffy. After listening to it, I went back to Wayne and said, 'This is not going to work. I cannot drive home this message with red- blooded men

a manner that leads to God's Spirit." The song, "You Are Welcome Here" does just that.

There is something for everyone on this album. It includes styles with thick orchestration to big ballads, to big band and even one that's a little country with an acoustic feel. Doug's favorite is "Any Other Man." Doug says, "It is SO different than anything we have ever done and has a message that speaks across generations." Ian

has a harder time naming a favorite but says he'll go with "Sometimes I Wonder." Devin's pick is "I've Been Here Before" simply because it speaks to his heart. Ernie's favorite? Well... probably all of them! Ernie says, "I'm excited about the new record. I could tell you things like

house. We have been together a long time and this is all we know. Family comes first. We make the most out of the time we have together. We also make the most out of all the opportunities that God has given us." All the guys are making the most of these amazing



how we went to Los Angeles and finished our mix in the famous Capitol Records building and more. There are a lot of talking points that could make this seem even bigger than it is, but I've gotta tell you, ALL of these songs are going to change lives! I've never been more convinced about what I'm doing. In my heart I think that the message in these songs will take this record to a whole new level for Sig Sound."

Although the guys practice at least an hour a day and usually more, they reserve time for fun! Doug enjoys going to the lake, running and going to family sporting events, reading and watching movies while Ian reads science fiction novels and comic books. Devin loves what most people dread or totally neglect and that's working out!

Even with a crowded calendar and international travel, juggling family and ministry doesn't seem to be much of an issue. These guys have been singing for so long it's just a normal lifestyle. Ian says, "Megan and I met while I was singing/traveling. It's all we've ever really known as a family. I guess I'd say juggling family and ministry is just lots of face time with the kiddos when I am home and really high cell phone bills when I'm not."

"My family is my life and I feel when that is in order, the ministry will be where it needs to be! And my family loves what I do as much as I do," Devin adds.

Doug continues: "There is not much juggling at our

opportunities and making memories as they make history! Devin will never forget singing "We Shall See Jesus" for the first time with Glen Payne on the video in front of his family. Ian will always remember singing on the Gaither stage with Signature Sound for the first time surrounded by people he grew up listening to, and Doug will hold tightly to the memory of singing the National Anthem at the Atlanta Motor Speedway!

Ernie Haase and Signature Sound love what they do and don't take the privilege lightly. They are excited that the best is about to come, but need continued prayer as they venture out- armed and ready to unload the love of God around the world! Pray as Signature Sound Gets Ready to ... Aim... and Fire! May those targeted be shot straight in the heart with the overwhelming message of God's love and be forever changed!

January, 2012 Ernie Haase celebrates twenty-five years in full time music ministry. As part of the celebration, Signature Sound invites everyone to share their special stories and memories of Ernie Haase. Read about it here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KY5j1fVnsQc&list=UUY75i5an53cRrjkNEq520wA&index=3&feature=plcp> Also, keep up with the adventures of Sig Sound and reserve your copy of HERE WE ARE AGAIN at <http://erniehaase.com/>. EH&SS can be followed on Twitter and FaceBook.

A MATHIS MOMENT

**"Are you a squirrel?"
RESOLVE To Be
Faithful & Diligent
in 2012**

by John Mathis, Jr.



'Tis the season after the season. We've made our mad dashes through the holidays and its hectic times and now it's a brand new year. Many of us reflect on the previous year and look to the new one resolving to make some changes and do some things different. Here is a question to ask yourself as you approach the New Year and make your resolutions: "Have I been a squirrel?"

During the past few years my wife and I have determined we are both squirrels. Yep, those little rodents that for some reason run into the middle of the road and when faced with oncoming traffic can't decide which side of the road to run to. So they just stay in the middle and zig-zag back and forth, overcome with the indecision of which side of the road to run to. Car coming! Car coming! Go left...wait...go right...wait.... left...no right! And sometimes, much to the squirrel's demise, he finds himself still zig-zagging in the middle of road and suffering the consequences. Just pick a side and COMMIT!

Crossing a road for a squirrel is obviously a very uncomfortable position for them. They were made to climb the very highest heights of the tallest trees and leap fearlessly from limb to limb. They're untouchable WHEN they're in their element. Yet, for some reason

when faced with the moment of having to cross the pavement of great divide and staring at impending danger (approaching at high speeds with roaring engines), they can't just commit. They forget where they were heading and obviously where they were coming from and are stuck in the middle. There are only two choices, okay, I guess there are three. Go left, go right, or just go back and forth and have the consequences of indecision bring an abrupt lesson of noncommittal. They sure are quick little creatures, but being hasty doesn't get them anywhere if all they do is go back and forth!

As I look back in my life, I've definitely had my squirrel moments. I've climbed down out of my current tree to cross roads into new territories in life heading to a taller, more fruitful tree. And just like my little rodent "cousin" (I'm compelled to claim some type of kinship), I have found myself scampering back and forth over the white line of indecision. I think if we look back at humanity, it's a common trait we share with the squirrel. I can't think of any two mammals besides humans and squirrels that won't run directly to safety when in danger! The children of Israel, once free from slavery, left Egypt to zig-zag across the wilderness in constant indecision of whether to continue to the Promised Land or return to Egypt. Peter was an eyewitness to many miracles from Christ and even walked on water, yet denied even knowing Jesus when asked if he was "one of them." Paul said in Ephesians 4:14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.

Being FAITHFUL and DILIGENT is one of those messages that have been popping up in my life for the past few years. As I look back over the years of my life, I have had many 'shoulda', 'coulda', 'woulda' moments. I can now see that there have been times if I would have just stayed the course, if I would have just been faithful and diligent, many of my previous circumstances and consequences would have been different.

Not only has the message of being faithful and diligent been presented to me over and over again, but I've been blessed to see living examples of others who have been faithful and diligent for a long time. I have friends I've known for years, I've known them during their tough times and lean times and watched them pushing ahead in life. Enough years have passed that I see where they come from, what they went through, and where they are now. They didn't have one great moment or



Rhonda Frye

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great event that put them in the position they are now in, they had a simple philosophy they adhered to. They got up and did the same thing each day, day in and day out, regardless of circumstance, troubles or trials. They were simply faithful and diligent and it eventually led them to the destination they originally set out for.

It's easy to decide to cross the road and move onto a new tree in life UNTIL you feel like you're a two pound squirrel playing chicken with a two ton truck! This is where the test comes in for us all when it comes to being faithful and diligent. I think too many times in life we find ourselves running around in the middle of the road, wringing our hands, and screaming "there is a truck coming!" Panic is a faith killer! Panic and fear will wipe your mind clean of commitment and leave you with no compass to prepare for that moment in life when you find yourself in uncomfortable territory and your very thoughts are being drowned out by the roaring engine of trouble that is closing in on you.

Before we are in the middle of the road, before we are facing circumstance, before we have the onset of panic and fear, before we give opportunity to indecision our commitment level has to have been established.

We have to know what we're committed to and have our heart and mind set to stay the course REGARDLESS of what comes out way. We have to have the foundation of being FAITHFUL and DILIGENT already put in place and continually remember who we are. It seems the poor squirrel forgets that God made him with the ability to quickly climb the tallest trees and gracefully leap from limb to limbwhen he is faced with oncoming traffic. I guess he gets tunnel vision and all he focuses on is that vehicle barreling down on him instead of focusing on the nearest tree and doing what a squirrel was created to do!

In 2012, know what your foundation is, know where you are going, and remember who you are. Commit to loving God with all your heart, soul and mind and commit to loving others as you do yourself. Seek the kingdom of God first. Always remember that you are a child of God and that He loves and cares for you immensely and that He believes in YOU! Keep those things in mind as you take on your other commitments. Make those principles your foundation!

James probably said it best: James 1: 5-8 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and



without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Paraphrased: "Don't be a squirrel!" Be FAITHFUL! Be DILIGENT! Practice being FAITHFUL and DILIGENT in 2012 and you'll be amazed at where it takes you!

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NEW MUSIC JANUARY 2012

By Sandi Duncan Clark

A New Year...365 days to make a difference in so many ways! Many of us make resolutions and promises, and while our intentions are good, it doesn't take long until we've forgotten them and life is back to normal. My goal this year is just to be the woman God can use to the fullest. Happy New Year to all!



THE SONG LIVES ON

Jason Crabb

Gaither Music Group

Producers: Jason Crabb, Lorie Sikes, Michael Shade Rowsey, Blaine Johnson

From start to finish this recording is a winner! The excitement and enthusiasm Jason Crabb brings to a song is greatly enhanced when performed before a live audience! THE SONG LIVES ON was recorded at the Loveless Barn in Nashville, Tennessee, with guest appearances by some of Jason's special friends. The musicians are "on fire" for this recording! With a rousing start on "I'm On The Battlefield," the entire recording leaves us anticipating what's coming next.

Jason selected a number of our favorite church hymns, and picked

other songs that have been hits over the past few years, combining them for a great listening experience. His Hymn Medley is a combination of "The Everlasting Arms," "Meeting In The Air," and "I'll Fly Away" and is an audience favorite.

Jason's emotional, heart-felt delivery of songs that we've known and loved through the years is an awesome blessing. He does an incredible job on an old song written by Randy Shelnut of the Dixie Echoes; "I'll Take Jesus," and from there it just gets better! His family joined him on stage singing "Through The Fire," and he sings one of my all-time favorites, "Sometimes I Cry."

Sonya Isaacs Yeary and Becky Isaacs Bowman join Jason singing "Who Am I," a song written by the late, great Rusty Goodman. Bill Gaither, William Lee Golden and Jason bring another old song to life. They do a great job on "Why Me?"

These wonderful songs lead to Jason's interpretation of "Midnight Cry" with the audience joining him in praise and worship. Rounding out one of the best recordings I've enjoyed recently is Jason, The Crabb Family, Sonya Isaacs Yeary and Becky Isaacs Bowman singing "I've Never Been This Homesick Before." With the Hymn Medley and seventeen other songs, you will enjoy over an hour of awe-inspiring music and the blessings of God as Jason allows God to use him. This recording is available through www.jasoncrabb.com or www.gaither.com



SOMEBODY'S COMING

Gold City

New Haven Records

Producers: Michael English, Daniel Riley.

Gold City has experienced several changes over the past few years, however their strength and perseverance comes from the Lord and from the dedicated fans that enjoy their music and continually support them in concert. Those fans are never disappointed, and this new recording will garner interest from many new fans. It will also give all of us a chance to enjoy Gold City's new front line! Almost two years in the making, this CD is well worth the wait!

Tim Riley is without a doubt, one of the most recognizable bass vocalists in the industry today. His strong resonant bass provides the foundation for the solid vocals of Dan Keeton (tenor,) Jerry Pelfrey (lead,) and Danny Riley (Baritone.) Their sound is smooth and consistent and every song on the CD is exciting. Featuring songs written by a number of the industry's top songwriters, this album is "chock full" of great material. Each quartet

member is featured on one or more songs and it is a blessing to hear Gold City at the top of their game.

While "Somebody's Coming" is the title song from the project, "Peter, James and John," written by noted writer and special friend, Dianne Wilkinson is the song chosen for Gospel radio. This tune debuted at number 3 in THE SINGING NEWS Top 80 for January 2012. There are several other songs that could easily play on Gospel radio.

Years ago, Lari Goss made the statement that Mark Trammell was the industry's best baritone. I think we can now safely say that Danny Riley is right there along-side Mark! Danny does an awesome job on "Peter, James and John," and this looks to be Gold City's next number one song!

Other picks from the recording are "Footprints On The Water," "Lord Of Life," (Amen!) "Somebody's Coming" "Showers Of Blessings" and Tim Riley's bass feature; "I Get Down."

To be honest, every song on the project is a blessing, and I urge you to get your personal copy. Visit www.goldcityqt.com to order yours today!



HYMNS

The Hoppers

Hopper Music

Producers: Connie Hopper, Dean Hopper, Kim Hopper, Mike Hopper

There is nothing sweeter than the old fashioned church hymns we all grew up with, and although the arrangements may change with the years, they still remain precious to each of us. I have enjoyed this recording over and over, remembering with fondness, hearing these hymns and songs in our little country church when I was growing up!

Kim Hopper's beautiful soprano kicks off the recording with "Down By The Riverside" (Ain't Gonna Study War No More) acapella and the harmonies are beautiful! It was a thrill to hear Claude and Connie each sing a verse of the old favorite, "Until Then," and Connie touched my heart with "The Love Of God!"

The Hoppers sing several of my favorite hymns; "Rock Of Ages..." (I remember my grandmother rocking my little boy to sleep, singing this one,) and "It Is Well." Sweet memories.....

Every song has a special meaning to the Hoppers, and as you hear them, you will recall each one, and where you first heard and learned to sing it. This recording is a precious part of the heritage of the Hoppers, and as we listen and remember, they are part of our salvation heritage as well. As our family enjoyed the recording during the holidays, one family member mentioned that we use to sing that song in the church Granddaddy pastored. What a sweet memory!

The CD is available by contacting the Hoppers at www.thehoppers.com.



WHY CAN'T WE

The Isaacs

Gaither Music

Producer: Ben Isaacs

Just after the Isaacs finished this recording, I was speaking with Lily Isaacs and she was extremely excited with this new recording and the fact that Ben produced it. Becky Isaacs Bowman, Sonya Isaacs Yearly and her husband, Jimmy, wrote or co-wrote many of the songs that are recorded on WHY CAN'T WE. The recording has a total of thirteen songs for our enjoyment.

In the liner notes on this recording, the Isaacs share that "each song digs down into the soul of our emotions and deals with some of life's hardest questions. We all have them, and sometimes we just have to make a decision to keep trusting and walking by faith even when we don't understand why..."

Each song has a message that touched my heart and as always, the music tracks and the vocals carried that message home. The Isaacs are gifted with close family harmony and blend that is filled with emotion. Lily, Ben, Becky and Sonya trust the Lord to speak through their music, and they enjoy sharing their testimonies through their songs.

"Hallelujah Turnpike" is a fast paced, up-beat song and features the

bluegrass music we love from the Isaacs. The mandolin and fiddle set the pace for this happy song. The title song says if our Lord can forgive, then "Why Can't We." Another one of my favorites is a song written by James McFall, declaring "I Still Trust You."

Other songs are "I'm Gonna Love You Through It," "Why" and Bill and Gloria Gaither's "I Believe In A Hill Called Mount Calvary." There are stories, reactions, transformations, questions and declarations on this album which will challenge you to keep the faith, trust God, and stand strong in your convictions. I'm happy to add this recording to my collection for the strength needed to address our daily walk.

You may contact the Isaacs for your copy of WHY CAN'T WE at www.theisaacs.com, and to learn more about the ministry of the Isaacs.

vocals to accommodate a song or an arrangement. This uniqueness allows for a variety of arrangements on a great selection of songs.

Richard Fulton, another son of Frances and her husband, Kenneth, wrote two new songs for this recording, "He Wore A Curse That I Might Wear a Crown," and "Here Comes The Groom." The remaining eight selections are some all-time favorites we've enjoyed over the years.

New Grace does a great job on Jeff Gibson's "Canaanland Is Just In Sight," and one of my all-time favorites, "He Didn't Throw The Clay Away," written by Gene Reasoner. "That Sounds Like Home To Me" from the pen of Eddie Crooke and Aaron Wilburn, along with "He's My Hiding Place" from Dee Gaskin, have impressive arrangements that suit the trio's style. Each of these songs is a blessing to the listener.



Frances, Brad and Sonja are all strong vocalists and each is featured on several songs. These features allow us to enjoy the talent and strength of each individual, as well as the strong harmony and blend they share as a family.

I strongly suggest that you get to know New Grace Trio by adding this album to your collection. Contact New Grace Trio at www.newgracetrio.com or 903-677-2492.

HERE COMES THE GROOM

New Grace Trio
Pinnacle Records
Producer: Jeff Collins

When it comes to family harmony, New Grace Trio...the Fultons of Athens, Texas is right up there with the very best! Mom Frances, Daughter Sonja and Son Brad all sing harmony, so they easily switch



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Voices Won Celebrating Ten Years

Anniversary Singing Concert Review Part Two

by Rhonda Frye



We're picking up where we left off from last month! In November, Voices Won hosted their 10th Anniversary Singing in Dalton, Georgia. Because the event lasted two nights and featured many groups, we presented the Friday night happenings in the December issue and now we'll cover the Saturday event in this one. To read the concert review for Friday, featuring Voices Won, Karen Peck and New River and Triumphant Quartet, visit the December 2011 archived issue at sgnscoops.com.

A large crowd returned for the second night of Voices Won's Anniversary Singing. Voices Won, Greater Vision, Mark Bishop and the Perrys were the featured groups.

Voices Won took the stage first with enthusiasm and welcomed the crowd. The guys then brought up their families, introduced them and thanked them publicly for their love and support throughout the years of music ministry. The crowd jumped right in with clapping as Voices Won sang "Morning Glory Jubilee." A few in the crowd let out loud cheers and the guys went straight in to "Road Less Traveled," which was a crowd pleaser as well. "It's a joy to stand beside my brothers and sing, they ain't much to look at, but they sure can sing," Jaron joked. "I just want to thank so many people. Our mom and dad work harder than anyone! God has performed a miracle in their



family- the healing of throat cancer!" The crowd cheered! "Just over ten years ago, we stood on the platform of our home church and this is the first song we ever sang never dreaming we would be standing here singing this with Rodney Griffin in the audience." The guys sang with mostly piano accompaniment on the track. The crowd enjoyed the sweet ballad.

Compassion International played a heart-stirring video on the large screen, and then Gerald Wolfe of Greater Vision came to the stage. Wolfe casually sat and shared a personal letter he received from his 12- year- old child he sponsors. "Dear Gerald and Donna," the letter read. "How are you? I hope you are doing well and enjoying the blessings of the Lord"... "I want you to know that I have decided to become a doctor. What do you think of that idea?" the little girl had asked. She closed the letter with, "I leave you with the protection of the Lord." Gerald commended the little girl for her spiritual maturity and then shared the story of getting to meet her in person. He explained how her house was more like a "lawnmower shed," but the little girl had come to Christ through the work of Compassion. The little girl then won her entire family to the Lord. Gerald became very soft spoken and said: "Let me put this in perspective. I have three kids at home and it takes...about \$37 for all of us to eat at Chick-fil-A. It cost me about a dollar and a half to buy her clothes, insurance and everything". The audience was given the opportunity to sponsor a child and several responded to the need.

The amazing songwriter/singer/story-teller, Mark Bishop took the stage. As Bishop sang songs like, "I'm Listening For The Call" and "Your Easter Sunday Is On Its Way" a sweet little lady sitting in a wheel-chair took it all in! She must have been his number one fan. She waved her little

hand, sang along to every song in his whole set! Bishop shared stories, such as "Lazarus Coming Forth" in Kodak, TN and had everyone laughing. "I love singing gospel music," he said. "I love all these groups! I love the gospel. Gospel Music has the GOSPEL in it and that's the message this dying world needs to hear!"

Bishop sang old and new songs and even got the crowd in the Christmas spirit by singing a Christmas song. He kept the audience captivated during his time on stage. Perhaps the most powerful performance of the set was, "One Drop of Blood Became A River." Many hands lifted in praise.

Greater Vision came on stage and opened with "He Didn't When He Could Have Passed By." The audience received them well and lifted hands as they sang, "I Could Never Praise Him Enough." When the guys sang "He'd Still Been God," the crowd really came to life. They tapped feet, clapped and sang along.

Gerald introduced the guys and commented about how nice it was to walk around and actually be recognized! There were many friends and family in the audience that night. Gerald went on to introduce the next song. He told the story about how they were in a little town close to San Diego, CA, someone in the audience asked if they knew a particular song. They did know of the song, but had never practiced or performed it, ever. They person requesting was persistent, so on-the- fly the guys sang it on the spot. Little did they know their concert was being broadcast on the Internet as they fulfilled the request! Turns out-"I know A Man Who Can" is now their most requested song. With the story told, Gerald transitioned to the piano, Rodney to the bass and Chris took the lead. The audience responded enthusiastically. After Gerald recognized Rodney and Chris for their

amazing song-writing abilities, the guys sang "The Only Way," and "No Longer Chained." Greater Vision was amazing- and perhaps the most loved performance was "My Name is Lazarus." The crowd got more lively with every key change!

The crowd gave a warm welcome to the Perrys as they opened with "Blue Skies." The crowd clapped along and cheered when Libbi took over the lead. Tracy testified, and then took the lead on the next number. Following his solo, he asked the audience to show appreciation for the previous groups on stage. When the Perrys sang, "I Rest My Case At The Cross," many in the crowd lifted their hands in praise.

The next group member to sing was introduced as "The Singing Policeman!" Bryan Walker, a.k.a "The Singing Policeman" from American Idol sang an amazing acapella version of "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." Tracy interrupted the solo by telling him to "cut loose!" Tracy interrupted the second time, this time attempting to mock Bryan's fancy vocal lick. Bryan nailed the song by holding out the note on the word "faithfulness" for what seemed to be forever! The crowd was amazed with his vocal abilities and the powerful truth of the song. The crowd rose to their feet in response.

Singing News Fan Favorite Alto of the Year, Libbi Perry Stuffle was introduced next and she blew everyone away with a bluegrass number from her new solo project! Yes- A bluegrass tune! Some in the crowd jumped to their feet and Tracy pretended to play the mandolin with his microphone. Libbi gave him a quick elbow to keep him in line, and kept at it! It was awesome!

The Perrys' powerhouse vocalist, Joseph Habedank thrilled the crowd and did an outstanding job on "If You Knew Him." Some in the audience stood and many lifted their hands in praise. It was a powerful performance of a powerful song.

All the groups greeted fans and mingled with friends during a short intermission. Each group came back and sang a few more hit songs- some saving "the best 'til last!" All the groups gathered together as a choir with Gerald Wolfe on piano. They sang a lively medley including "I Wouldn't Take Nothin' For My Journey Now" and "Canaanland." It's hard to say who had the most fun- those on stage or those in the audience! There were smiles, cheers and hand clapping, foot stomping and the crowd sang along.

Both nights were truly a treat to not only Dalton fans, but to many Southern Gospel fans beyond North Georgia! Many states were represented each night. It was indeed an unforgettable weekend. Voices Won will be hosting their 11th Anniversary Singing November 2012.



Keep up with the latest developments on the website at:
<http://voiceswon.com/>

Focus On The Young

A Conversation With Rachael Shirey

By Victoria Shirey

What better way to start off the New Year than to interview your own family? So, I decided for January I'd write about my younger sister, Rachael Shirey. She's got a lot going on right now that she's excited about. Here's the scoop.

Victoria: "Rachael, do you have a New Year's resolution? If so, what is it?"

Rachael: My new year's resolution would probably be to travel more and reach places The Shireys haven't been!

Victoria: What is it like traveling with your family's group, The Shireys? Be careful though, I am your sister and do travel with you haha.

Rachael: Well, considering your my sister, I can't say much! I'm just kidding! It's an adventure! Every family has their moments, but it also brings you closer together!

Victoria: You have really gotten into photography lately and do a great job at it. This started as a hobby but has become a potential side profession. Tell us about that.

Rachael: I love and enjoy doing photography! God created beautiful things for us to take in, and I love to take photos to show and remind other people how beautiful God's



creation is!

Victoria: Is there anything new going on with you right now, musically?

Rachael: As of now, I'm working on a solo project that should be out soon! It will have mostly black gospel and acoustic songs on it! I'm super excited to get it out and let everyone hear it!

Victoria: What is your favorite thing to do on the road?

Rachael: Listen to ipod, or SLEEP! Yeah, SLEEP :)

Victoria: Tell the readers how old you are right now.

Rachael: I'm 19, and next year I'll be 20! LOL

Victoria: Who is your biggest Southern Gospel influence?

Rachael: DEFINITELY Sonya Isaacs!

She is such an inspiration to me! I love her awesome testimony and her "out of this world" voice!

Victoria: What could you see yourself doing in the next five years?

Rachael: I'm not REALLY sure, but I would like to start traveling with my

brother and sister-in-law singing worship music and traveling around the world! Also, doing part time photography of course!

Victoria: Where would someone go to hear the latest about The Shireys and keep up with your schedule?

Rachael: You can visit our website, www.theshireysministries.com!

Thank you, Rachael for giving us the scoop on you for this month's article. The readers will love to get to know you more, I'm sure. Be looking for next month's article, where I'll be interviewing more of your favorite,



2012 and The Lesters

by Sandi Duncan Clark

For more than 85 years, the Lesters have presented an example of servitude and Christ-like attitude with their Southern Gospel music ministry. Beginning in 1925, shortly after their marriage in late 1924, Harvey and Opal Lester began singing and playing Gospel music. When their son Herschel was old enough, he joined Harvey and Opal (Bobo) singing at all the local missions, retirement homes, churches and nursing homes in and around St. Louis, Missouri. Thus began the ministry of the Gospel singing family, the Lesters, and one of the industry's most respected and dedicated Gospel groups, often called the Missouri's First Family of Gospel Music.

The Lesters acquired a music store and began teaching music in St. Louis. They promoted the need for professionalism and correctness in playing and singing, especially in Gospel music. They worked hard to help other singers and urged many to sing Gospel music. One thing the Lesters taught and stressed were the old fashioned singing schools and learning to sing shaped notes. Before his passing, Herschel was disappointed that the singing schools seemed to be a thing of the past, very seldom taught today.

Today's group; Brian Lester and his sister Ginger Pitchers are joined by their sons, Jonathan Lester and Evan Pitchers, carrying on the legacy of Harvey and "Bobo" Lester and their father, Herschel. Brian Lester and Ginger Pitchers are fourth generation Lesters, and their sons are fifth generation keeping the family heritage alive.

Over the years, various personnel changes have brought some very gifted singers to the group. These talented singers added their own style and testimony to the front line of the Lesters, and as each one moved on to individual pursuits, they took with them part of the Lesters' ministry.

Brian said, "We have been so very blessed down through the years to have some of the best singers in any genre of music. Every one of them brought something special to the Lesters and we are forever grateful to them."

Ginger agreed, and commented, "I have been pleased to know each of the people who came to us for a season. I call each of them friend, and they were so much a part of our family."

Both Brian and Ginger are grateful for the fact that their children are part of the family ministry. "My daughter,

Jenny, was on the road with us for several years and felt that with two small children, she needed to be at home," Ginger shared. "She is an awesome singer, and we miss her, but God has given us Jonathan and Evan, who have the talent and desire to carry on the family ministry." The Lesters are

Him, He will supply the need." Brian continued, "Churches across the country have been touched by the situation, since people are without jobs, they find it difficult to afford to take care of family, give to the church then give to other ministries." He finished by saying, "I will say that our concert promotion events

never to do anything half-heartedly, and we follow their advice." ROOTED IN LOVE has two bonus tracks; a recording their grandfather had recorded over 40 years ago, "I Will See You Again." Through modern technology they presented him singing a chorus of the song, followed by the group singing the entire

She knows the style that best suits the group, and what fans enjoy hearing from the Lesters. "It's so much easier to go into the studio when we feel comfortable with the music," Ginger said. "When we did ROOTED IN LOVE, Tim Parton, who played piano for us several years ago, produced with us. Tim knows what works best



anticipating what the New Year will bring for their music ministry. "Like everyone else, we felt the sting of the economic situation in 2011," Brian noted. "With the price of fuel going up and other things being impacted by the unemployment rate, it has touched everyone in some manner. The Lesters are blessed to have a core group of people who support us on a regular basis, and without that we would have felt the issue more strongly. These people support us in prayer and love offerings. When we first organized this core group, we had to learn to trust God for everything, and God showed us if we do trust

were very well attended, and especially the Fall Festival event at Meramec Caverns. Every seat was filled for the concerts and for that we have been thankful." The Lesters have always recorded a new project every year, but did not go into the studio for a new recording in 2011. Ginger explained, "We felt we still have some songs on ROOTED IN LOVE that we want to send to Gospel radio, and since we had made a change in personnel since we recorded that album, we decided to wait till we had a budget that would allow the quality recording we want to do. Our father and grandfather taught us

song. Ginger stated, "When Pop was inducted into the Southern Gospel Music Hall of Fame, we sang that song. Everyone, even people in the industry, told us we should record it, so we did." Speaking of recognition and awards, on November 4th 2011, The Mid America Gospel Music Association recognized Brian Lester with the Lifetime Achievement Award during their annual convention. Fans and industry personnel all agree this was a much deserved recognition. The Lesters are already looking for songs for a new recording this year. Ginger does the arrangements on the Lesters' music.

for us, and certainly knows how to get the best from each of us. We're really looking forward to getting in the studio again." Brian stated, "We're trying to stay in God's will, and take baby steps, trusting the Lord and having the faith to let Him lead us. We learned from our Father and Grandfather that if God is leading, you can't go wrong." When Brian and Ginger were growing up, their Father and Grandfather always included them in the music. "Pop would load up the car or the bus and once we learned to sing, he would let all of us be part of the group," Ginger said. "He always made the music fun, and his motto

was 'Serve The Lord With Gladness.'"

Brian picked up the commentary, "Pop knew that everyone had trials and troubles, including us, and he wanted the music of the Lesters and the time the people spent with us in the service, to be time they could smile and be happy with the music. He always showed us love and being together as a family was important, even when we had other singers as part of the group; he

have been many changes, but I believe the most important thing for us to remember as a group and as an industry is that the Gospel never changes because it IS the good news. I pray that we would always be mindful that the message stay clear and bold. No doubt we are living in troubled times and Satan is doing his very best to destroy the church, starting from the inside out, so we must do our part to stay focused

every word. Sing praise unto the Lord God Almighty!

2 Chronicles 7:14- "If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; Then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

Brian concludes, "We really want the people to know that this is not just how we were raised, but it's what we believe."

As we anticipate what the next 365 days hold in store for Gospel music and for the Christian population of the world, we are blessed to know that there are people...artists, who love the Lord with all their heart and do not hesitate to let it be known. When they honor Him and recognize His direct will, He will in turn, bless their music ministry.



wanted them to feel like part of our family, and to feel like they were loved. If we'd had a bad day, we would share our music and by the time we left, we were feeling better and so was the crowd."

With 2012 looming ahead, we asked Brian and Ginger to give us their thoughts on the New Year. Brian shared this quote: "Gospel music has been my life, and through the years as in most things, there

on the Word in song and our Father will take care of seeing us through to go tell the message of Jesus Christ."

Ginger states: "My prayer for Southern Gospel music is simple. I pray for a fresh touch of desire for all who sing and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I pray for the music and message to reach a new audience and they will embrace it and support it. Let truth ring through

Eating Clean:** **It's in The Bible!

by Laurette Willis



“Bless the Lord, O my soul...who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (Proverbs 103:1, 5)

Jesus, being a devout Jew, did not eat pork. In fact He used pigs as receptacles for the demons within the Gadarene demoniac (Luke 8:22-39). The man was set free when Jesus evicted the demons from him and sent them into a herd of swine. The pigs were destroyed when they plunged off a cliff into the lake and drowned.

God didn’t arbitrarily forbid the Jews from eating certain foods. God doesn’t operate under the law of “whim.” Every meat deemed unclean by God is unfit for human consumption. In 1953 science caught up with that truth when Dr. David Macht of Johns Hopkins University published a study on the toxicity of animals listed as clean and unclean in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. He ran tests to determine their toxic effects on a controlled growth culture in his laboratory (“An Experimental Pharmacological Appreciation of Leviticus XI and Deuteronomy XIV,” Bulletin of Historical Medicine, Johns Hopkins University).

Not surprisingly, every animal God calls toxic science finds toxic, too. Unclean animals include: swine, horse, rabbit, squirrel, dog, cat, bear, opossum, groundhog and rat. The clean animals (cloven-hoofed and chew the cud) include cattle, goats,

sheep, oxen and deer. Interestingly, the blood of all animals is more toxic than the flesh. God commands us not to eat the blood of animals (Leviticus 19:26).

Many of the animals God calls unclean eat flesh or have parasites that would sicken or kill humans. Pigs, bears and vultures eat decaying flesh. Wolves, lions and other predators often prey on the weakest, sickliest animals in a herd. Clean birds include poultry (chicken, turkey, geese), ducks, pigeons and quail. Many supermarkets now carry chicken raised without antibiotics or hormones such as the MBA Brand Smart Chicken® or Beyond Organic products. We certainly don’t need to be ingesting synthetic estrogen (a hormone typically given to chickens). Pre-menopausal, peri-menopausal and menopausal women need to be especially aware that hormonal imbalances may be linked to synthetic estrogen and estrogen-producing foods.

Instead of pork, how about turkey franks or kosher beef hot dogs once in a while? There are many good soy products available now from soy sausages and burgers to taco “meat” and chili. A stir fry with fresh vegetables, crumbled soy burger, slivered almonds and

water chestnuts is a quick and easy dinner your family will love. If you’re concerned about estrogen-producing foods, try fermented soy products such as tempeh instead of regular soy.

Archeological Evidence of Benefits of Eating Clean

Moses, who received the dietary and hygiene system from God, had been trained as a prince of Egypt in the most advanced medical system of his day. Yet Moses did not advocate the Egyptian way of avoiding disease. Forensic examinations of mummified Egyptians show that the wealthiest Egyptians didn’t seem to benefit from the best that their physicians had to offer. They suffered from many of the same diseases of our day. Many researchers believe this is due to their taste for unhealthful foods and disregard for hygiene, contrary to God’s directive to the Hebrews through Moses. In short: Eat clean, eat lean and always eat green (lots of veggies!).

Christian Fitness Expert Laurette Willis is the Director of PraiseMoves Fitness Ministry (<http://PraiseMoves.com> and on Facebook <http://facebook.com/PraiseMovesFan>). Get your free fitness kit at <http://ChristianFitnessKit.com> ©2012

Heaven On Earth

Concert Review

Jubilate 2011

by Rhonda Frye

At least five minutes have passed since opening this word document, and this writer is still at a loss for words to describe New Year's Eve 2011 at the Gwinnett Center in Duluth, GA. Perhaps Mrs. Pat Boatmen's comments on Facebook the night of the concert are the best words for an introduction: "There's nothing like a Gaither concert until we get to heaven!" These feet definitely tapped the floor just to make sure they were grounded on planet earth several times throughout the night. The night was filled with worship, excellent music, laughter and the presence of Christ. Yes- a little Heaven on Earth! A buzz of excitement occupied the atmosphere before the concert actually began. The choir from Johnson Ferry Baptist Church sang a couple of anthems and Kevin Williams played a foot-tapping version of "Nothing But The Blood."

Ben Isaacs joined him with the upright bass for "My Savior's Love," and "Blessed Assurance." The choral praise and acoustic set definitely set the tone for an unforgettable night. The clock struck 7:00 and right on time, Bill Gaither led the audience in a hymn, and then introduced TaRanda Greene. TaRanda performed a fun version of "Sky Full Of Angels" with a spring in her step. Gaither called her back to repeat the last few lines and joined her with a few... doo-wap- type "do's!" She definitely charmed the crowd getting the night off to a great start. Karen Peck and New River made their appearance and opened with, "I Want To Thank You" followed by an enthusiastic "Robe and Crown" with Gordon Mote jazzing it up even more on the piano. Gaither asked the trio to sing their number one hit, "Banks of the Promised Land." Hands lifted all over the building.

The Gaithers are brilliant- especially when it comes to entertainment. Every detail is planned in advance from the stage lighting to the sound, to excellence in vocal and musical performance to blocking and staging, but they make sure they allow room for humor- both planned and spontaneous. Laughter is good medicine, therefore expressionless and wide-eyed Rory kept the audience in stitches throughout the night. He made his first appearance following Karen Peck and New River. Gospel legend, 81 year old Ben Speer proved he still "has it!" Speer's voice is as strong today as it was years ago. He blessed the audience and took them down memory lane with "Til the Storm Passes By." Mr. Speer asked the crowd to sing along as did Karen Peck and New River.

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Next up... The Martins! The Martins may have taken a few years off, but wow- they've stormed back onto the scene with amazing harmony and what seems to be renewed passion to witness for Christ. Joyce spoke boldly about disappointment and



how God is above all things. She convinced the crowd to give God glory and reminded the audience that nothing separates us from the love of God. Their harmony was simply gorgeous and the crowd responded heartily.

Singer Gene McDonald impressed the crowd as he slid lower and lower and lower with his deep bass voice with the encouragement of Gaither. Many in the crowd rocked back and forth to his tune. Rory mouthed the back-up vocals making the number a crowd pleaser!

The beloved family group, The Isaacs appeared next pumping the energy back up in the building with their bluegrass tune, "Get On Board." They sang another number, and then Lily Isaacs spoke. "Every year is very special because I am a 27 year Breast Cancer Survivor." The crowd applauded, and then she continued, "I am thankful for second chances!" She dedicated the next heart-wrenching song, "I'm Gonna Love You Through It" to support teams

that support friends and family with cancer. As the Isaacs performed, a video was shown of cancer survivors holding signs of the number of years of being cancer free. Some posters in the clip requested prayer indicating a current cancer battle. Tears shed as

hearts were touched.

A holy hush came over the audience as Ben, Sonya and Becky sang the hymn, "I Will Praise Him" acapella and the crowd sang along. Small flash-lights, which had been given away at the door, pierced the darkness. It



was beautiful.

Gordon Mote quickly changed the mood at the appropriate time and spiced things up a notch with "Gospel Ship" then had the crowd

participating with the classic, "Through It All." Gaither, The Johnson Ferry Baptist Church Choir, Karen Peck and New River and the Isaacs joined in as well. Bill commented that we can trust Jesus and in His word. "You can take that to the bank," he said.

Following Gordon Mote, Ernie Haase and Signature Sound burst onto the stage and energy could almost be seen as it exploded and infiltrated the building. Yes... Signature Sound was in the house singing "Glory To God in the Highest." The song "Moving Up To Glory Land" prompted foot tapping and hand clapping and then the guys introduced the crowd to a new song. The new one featured heavy electric guitar and definitely stretched the resonances of a traditional quartet! The crowd received it well, but for those who may not have liked it, Sig Sound nailed the next number, "Then Came The Morning" and blessed everyone. Worship was the response. Signature Sound closed their set as energetically as they started with an encore of "Glory In The Highest."

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Lynda Randle's soothing soulful voice brought calmness as she sang "Walk With Me" and performed an amazing "One Day At A Time." Ms. Randle graced the stage with confidence and style.

When Ms. Randle exited the stage, it seemed the crowd scooted to the edge of their seats, there was only one group scheduled that had yet to be seen. The music began as dark figures made their way to the front and center. The voices of Wes Hampton, Michael English, David Phelps, Mark Lowry, and Bill Gaither merged tightly in unison as they sang: "I heard a great voice out of heaven saying behold the tabernacle of God is with men..." Needless to say, by the time the men added intensity and split into parts on the line..."It is Done," the crowd had jumped to their feet singing and worshipping to "Alpha and Omega." Next, GVB sang the light hearted "Fishing Song" and then Mark Lowry cut loose! His jokes and hilarious gestures, expressions and actions were happening so fast, it was impossible to take notes! Lowry unleashed his sense of humor tickling every funny bone in the house. This fact was noted: Only Mark Lowry can get away with saying things that.... only Mark Lowry can come up with!

Each member of the Vocal Band thrilled with their signature songs and the crowd simply "ate it up!" They sang classics like "He's Alive," "Mary Did You Know" and "Rock of Ages," "There's Just Something About That Name" and "He Touched Me." During their set, Gaither introduced their newer hit, "Greatly Blessed and Highly Favored" and English created a tender moment with "Please Forgive Me." Leading the audience to sing the chorus, Gaither reminded the crowd that everyone needs to pray that prayer daily.

A party was started and all church broke loose following the intermission! Each group came back to sing a little more- and Gaither combined the groups to sing a few numbers. GVB and EH& SS sang a couple including "Love is Like A



River," Karen Peck and New River sang "I Can See Clearly Now." A Pentecostal Fire ignited with the old convention song, "Sweetest Song I Know." Ben Speer kicked it off and was later joined by the late Howard Goodman on screen. The spirit was too good to let the song end! Just when the song seemed to be over, someone would "get beside themselves" and couldn't stop singing, thus taking the song for another round. English and Mote ripped it for all it was worth with everyone on stage backing them. Just when it seemed the song was coming to a close.... guess who had their Pentecostal fit with it? Yes- Mark Lowry took it for a whirl and it was amazing. The crowd went wild! Also during the second half, there was a sweet, sweet presence of the Holy Spirit. As each artist performed, the other artists seated on the stage lifted their hands and wiped tears. It was a beautiful site to see their spirits being ministered to. Their faces told the truth -they believe what they sing! Listening to each other perform was obviously an encouragement to their own hearts.

There were many more unforgettable performances, but too many to name specifically and adequately describe- this was a 5 hour concert! Each individual talent was showcased, but God was glorified. There were classics, hymns

and other moving songs performed and all were astounding. At one point, the hilarious Mark Lowry became serious and was the first on his feet with hands lifted during the Isaacs' performance of "Waiting In The Water." Also, the elegant Gloria Gaither spoke directly to the Father and was visibly awe-stricken with who He is! As she prayed, time stood still- but not for long!

As the clock advanced to midnight, The Gaither Vocal Band sang in the New Year with "Let Freedom Ring!" The party continued with balloons descending and Homecoming Family members flooding the stage. With an excitement level maxed out, music tipping the top and joy overflowing- One can only imagine what Heaven will be like! Thank you, Mrs. Boatman, you're right! A Gaither Concert perhaps is the closest thing to heaven that we'll experience on this side!

Although Jubilate takes place only on New Year's Eve, be sure to check the Gaither website for other concerts and events at <http://gaither.com>.



Brian Free & Assurance

Brian Free and Assurance:

It's Not My Job, It's My Life

Part One: The Music

By Lorraine Walker

Brian Free and Assurance is a multi-talented, award-winning Southern Gospel group with a unique sound and a drive for excellence. Any listener unfamiliar with this genre of music will quickly learn two things when Assurance takes the stage. First, all accolades are highly deserved. Second, none of this group's rise in popularity and musical distinction was achieved through dilution of the message. For Brian Free and Assurance, being a Christian music artist is not just a job. It is their life and a reflection of a lifestyle and strong, abiding faith. The recent release of the vinyl LP *A Season To Remember*, is a showcase of the group's highlights of eighteen years of making music. This walk down memory lane is not a type of project containing only one or two must-hear tracks. For the Assurance aficionado, the recording contains all your favorites. For the uninitiated, the project is a recording of all that is Southern Gospel: strong lyrics,

unforgettable harmonies and music that will keep you humming for hours. For the members of the group, *A Season To Remember* takes them down memory lane and the changes that have happened within the industry.

Tenor and owner Brian Free, along with Bill Shivers, lead for the group, have both seen an evolution within Southern Gospel. Other than the disappearance of platform shoes and bell-bottoms, Free says there are other positive changes as well. "If I had to narrow it down to one thing, for the most part, it's the ministry. It is more ministry-oriented now than it was 35 or 40 years ago, which is very, very good. It's been a long time coming, but it's here."

Shivers agrees that Southern Gospel artists have become more cognizant of their responsibility to present the Gospel. "I've been with Brian for ten and a half years, and before that I was with Heaven Bound for four and a half years. So I've been around

about 16 years, and I've seen quite a few changes in that area in the short amount of time I've been here." Free laughingly adds, "People come and go in this industry every six months, so sixteen years is a long time."

When asked to describe to someone what is Southern Gospel, and to define the sound of Brian Free and Assurance, both men find it difficult to respond. Free says, "You can't describe 'Southern Gospel.' That's like saying, 'Narrow down Contemporary Christian Music.' You can't do it because there are so many different categories. When they hand out the Dove Awards, there are more than 15 different categories." Brian Free and Assurance has been a recipient of the prestigious Dove Award, given to them for the song, 'Long As I Got King Jesus.'

"We don't fall under the umbrella of hard-core Southern Gospel, but we are in the industry," states Free. "We are not Contemporary, but we

are not Traditional Southern. We are somewhere in-between. We do the traditional quartet music and some traditional songs."

Shivers says, "I like to think that we have created our own niche. And that's a good thing."

"Absolutely," continues Free. "If someone hears us on the radio, I want them to know that's us. We don't want to sound like one of twenty other quartets. We like music that is a little more progressive. The more creative you are, the more progressive it is. And if you aren't going to create, then what fun is music anyway."

"That's the artistic side of music."

Shivers adds, "It makes it more enjoyable for us as singers."

The creative process comes into play in the recording process.

When creating a new project, the group members spend a lot of time choosing songs that will fit the group. Their previous recording, *Never Walk Alone*, has many incredible tunes with enjoyable melodies and lyrics that touch the mind and emotions of the listener.

Free notes that regardless of the melody, the words are the most important part of a Gospel song.

"That is 99% of it. We have to remember it is 'Gospel' music and that comes first. The music is just the vehicle to carry the Gospel."

"The music is important and you want to do the very best you can, spending time arranging and producing, making it what it needs to be..." Shivers adds, "...But it all should enhance the Gospel lyrics."

"Because without the words, what have you got?" says Free.

"When we sing the song, the message is most important," continues Shivers. "As Brian says every night on stage, each one is like a mini-sermon. You want that three-to four-minutes to count for every song. You don't want it to be wasted."

The songs recorded by Brian Free and Assurance can become very personal to group members. Free says, "With each songwriter, the music they write reflects where they are at that time. That is not necessarily the case with groups like us who don't write our own music.

It is, in certain ways, for our ministry because the songs we choose and that really appeal to us reflect where we are. God has never failed to send great songs. We have some great writers that write for us who are very consistent."

Shivers adds, "We have been blessed with some wonderful, anointed songs. Where the message of one song might hit Brian one way, it might affect me differently. The Lord speaks to us in different ways."

The title track of *Never Walk Alone* was one song that touched the group deeply. Shivers says, "That song ministered to us majorly because we had been going through a tough time. Three of the guys in the group have lost parents recently. Brian lost his mom and his dad within six months. I lost my dad back in January and Jeremy lost his dad two years ago. So God really knew what He was doing when that song came along. It ministered and blessed us. The song was definitely intended for Brian Free and Assurance and it is amazing how God can work through that."



The last two releases by Brian Free and Assurance have been especially well-received by audiences and radio alike. Melissa Flores, General Manager of He's Alive Radio, says, "The Southern Gospel industry is enhanced by artists such as Brian Free and Assurance. Because [they] are fearless in their progressive approach to quartet music, they have coaxed in an appreciable number of listeners to the genre. Their latest single, 'The Part Where You Come In' is a glorious hybrid of country instrumentation and quartet vocal harmonies. A number of He's Alive listeners have commented how they appreciate artists who are willing to modernize."

Some people are under the mistaken idea that Southern Gospel listeners are, as a whole, very selective and staid in the style of music that they find appropriate. The audience of He's Alive Radio have proven otherwise by these comments regarding Brian Free and Assurance. Flores continues, "Although we love the traditional sounds that Southern Gospel is known for, people like

Brian Free and Assurance give us hope that the genre will live on for another generation. Brian Free has pushed the envelope, creating space for other avant garde groups to express their creativity. Southern Gospel music is not at the risk of losing its identity over artists like Brian Free and Assurance. As the genre has evolved, it has produced a number of talents that possess certain expected key qualities, but a characteristic sound. Brian Free and Assurance embodies the heart and soul of Southern Gospel: rich harmonies, solid gospel lyrics, and a radio presence that draws in listenership."

As the group continues to 'push the envelop,' Brian Free is conscious of retaining that certain indefinable it factor that makes Assurance the unique quartet with a sound that people recognize. Free notes, "We are always looking to reach out into different areas and people we haven't reached yet with our music. If something doesn't grow, it eventually dies. So we want growth. Stylistically, we plan to stay where

we are. We have found our niche. Not everybody is going to love it, but every style doesn't appeal to every body."

Shivers adds, "That's why there's bluegrass and country and other styles. It would be boring if everyone was the same."

"If everybody liked the same thing, there would only be one kind of automobile made or one type of house," laughs Free. "But we need to keep fresh for our supporters. Our fans and friends are the most dedicated ones. We love them more than anything in this world. They are the reason we are out here."

Shivers agrees: "They take care of us like family."

Free adds, "So we continue to do what we do and pray that God will continue to use us more effectively and that we don't grow stale or stagnant. We don't want to sit still."

Even though Free notes that the group's style isn't everyone's forte, the increasing fan base and continued award nominations prove that Assurance is appreciated nation-wide. Free comments, "Our





music allows us to go into a lot of places that will not have traditional Southern Gospel. What we do may be more appealing to the church crowd and I guess we are more of a 'church crowd'-type ministry. We are not a dancing-fluff, fair-date, putting-on-a-show, type of group. We are more at home in the church, and we are more focused and more effective when we can present our ministry from our hearts, present our songs and testimonies and who we are."

"Our heart is in the church market," continues Free. "We do a lot of concerts and we have a good time and we do the same program in a church or an auditorium or a fair." Shivers affirms, "We love to do those too!"

Free laughs, "We do the same thing, so if they don't like it, they know what they are getting so they'd better look out!"

Shivers adds, "You don't have to wonder what you are getting with Brian Free and Assurance. We let the people know where we stand and what we stand for, by our music."

For these artists, singing the Gospel is not just a job. As the title of one of the tracks on *Never Walk Alone* states, it's their 'life.'

Brian Free and Assurance is an example of a group of artists committed to their calling, their faith and their music. Stay tuned for Part Two, in which Bill Shivers and Brian Free discuss the ministry of Southern Gospel and standing strong in the message of God.

For more information on Brian Free and Assurance, click on <http://brianfreeandassurance.com/>



Soups On!

by
Scoops Staff & Readers

Did you know January is "National Soup Month?" We've collected a few Soup Recipes for our readers to enjoy during the cold wintery months ahead!

Cindy's Turkey/Chicken Soup

Lorraine Walker Shares:

"One charity in our City, City Kidz, has a "Soup Fest" on Feb 2 every year. Dozens of local restaurants cook wonderful soups, and every one who goes gets three tickets with their entry fee to try 3 different soups. Rolls are free, lol. It's very awesome, always packed and a great way to let people know about the work they do."

Directions:

Take Chicken Broth (from cooked turkey/chicken and add 4 cartons of Campbell's chicken broth) (** if starting from scratch: cook 6 chicken thighs in 8 cups of water, 1 tsp. poultry seasoning, ½ tsp salt, ¼ tsp pepper: cook on medium heat for 1 hour, remove skin & bones, cube chicken) (** or for a simple start: use 6 cartons of Campbell's chicken broth) 2 -3 cups of cooked & cubed Chicken/ Turkey 1 large onion, diced 1 ½ cups diced celery 2 or 3 large carrots, peeled & sliced 1 ½ cups pasta noodles **or 1 ½ cups of rice or 3 large potatoes, cubed Salt & pepper to taste Poultry seasoning to taste Simmer on low until pasta/rice/potatoes are tender. **Note: for extra calcium, you can leave the chicken/turkey bones in the soup for each re-heating

"Tastes Like Lasagna Soup"

Pete Schwager's wife, Staci Shares:

"A favorite soup at our house is Paula Dean's Tastes Like "Lasagna" Soup! This is GREAT to have at home on a cold wintery day and is

also great to take to pot-luck type church activities as well. Make sure you have plenty of French bread or Texas Toast. I actually caught this recipe on TV, but it's also on Paula Dean's website at: <http://www.pauladeen.com/>. This is a sure family favorite and crowd winner!"

Ingredients

1 lb ground chuck
1 onion, chopped
1 green bell pepper, chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon thyme
1 tablespoon firmly packed brown sugar
1 (32 ounce) box chicken broth
2 (14.5 ounce) can petite diced tomatoes
1 (15 ounce) can tomato sauce
2 teaspoon Italian seasoning
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 cup broken lasagna noodles
1 (5 ounce) package grated parmesan cheese
2 cup shredded mozzarella cheese garlic crostini,(if wanted-recipe follows)
Garlic Crostini:
1 thin French baguette
1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 cloves smashed garlic
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

In a large pot, brown beef (ground chuck), onion, bell pepper and garlic. Drain well.

Stir in thyme, brown sugar, broth, diced tomatoes, tomato sauce, Italian seasoning, and salt. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat; reduce heat and simmer 20 minutes. Add noodles and simmer until noodles are tender. Stir in Parmesan cheese.

Staci says: "I leave mozzarella out and let each person put in the amount they want-OR- you can make it fancy like Paula Dean does:" Preheat broiler. Ladle soup into 8 to 10 ovenproof bowls. Evenly sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Broil soups, 6-inches from heat, 3 to 4 minutes, until cheese is browned and bubbly. Add a garlic crostini slice on top. Serve immediately.

For the garlic crostini:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Cut bread into 1/4-inch round slices. Place on baking sheet and brush each slice with olive oil. Season with salt and pepper; place in oven and bake until golden and crisp, about 15 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool slightly. Rub each side with smashed garlic cloves.

David's Kickin' Chili

David Keel Shares: "Not only does my family love this recipe, but my church family loves it as well. Whenever we have an event it certainly is a crowd favorite. We like to serve it with Frito Scoops, sour cream and shredded cheese. I certainly hope you enjoy. God bless you all."

Ingredients:

1lb medium sausage
1lb hot sausage
4(8oz) cans garlic roasted tomato sauce
1 c. finely chopped onion
2 cans pinto beans in chili sauce(undrained)
2 pkg. chili mix
1 T. garlic powder
1 T. Chili powder

1 tsp. basil
 1 tsp. chives
 1 tsp. Cheyenne pepper
 4-5 dashes of Texas Pete
 Salt and Black pepper to taste
 2-3 c. water

Directions:

Cook sausage until it is no longer pink, crumble and drain. In a 5 quart crock pot, mix tomato sauce, chili mix, garlic powder, chili poser, basil, chives, salt and black pepper. Whisk together with a metal whisk or wooden spoon. (I usually build the base while the sausage is cooking.) Turn crock pot on high and add sausage, chopped onion, and undrained beans. Stir these ingredients to get a good mixture. Add 2-3 cups of water. You can stop at this point for a mild rich blend chili. For a little heat, add the cheyenne pepper and the Texas Pete. Stir with a wooden spoon. Cook in crock pot for desired heat.

“Creamy Potato Soup”

Chari Watson shares:

Ingredients:

1 can cream of chicken soup
 8 oz. cream cheese
 4 cans chicken broth
 1 lb. bacon, cooked and crumbled
 8-10 c. potatoes, cubed
 Salt and pepper to tasted
 Grated cheese

Directions:

Boil potatoes. Cream together soup and cream cheese until smooth; make sure all lumps are gone. Drain potatoes when done, and then add chicken broth. Pour soup/cheese mixture on top and add bacon. Bring to a boil so soup/cheese mixture melts, stirring frequently. Let simmer 20 minutes. Serve with grated cheese on top.

Southwest White Chicken Chili

Angela Griffin Shares: “When temperatures begin to fall outside, it’s time to mix up a bowl of my favorite Southwest White Chicken Chili. It is a delicious way to make me feel all warm & cozy on the inside.”

Ingredients:

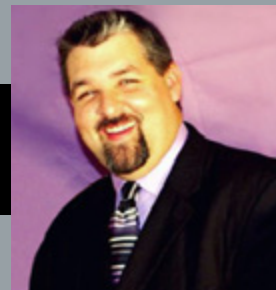
1 tbs. Vegetable oil
 4 (1 oz) skinless boneless chicken breast halves cut into cubes
 4 tsp chili powder
 2 tsp ground cumin
 1 large onion, chopped (about 1 cup)
 1 medium sized green pepper chopped
 1 can of condensed cream of chicken soup
 3/4 cup water
 1 1/2 cups frozen whole kernel corn
 2 cans white kidney beans rinsed and drained (cans - 15 ounces each)

Directions:

Heat the oil in a 4 quart saucepan over medium-high heat. Add chicken, Chili powder, cumin, onion and pepper. Cook and stir often until the chicken is cooked through and vegetables are tender. Stir soup, water, corn, and beans in the saucepan and heat to a boil. Reduce heat to low. Cover and cook for 5 minutes stirring occasionally.

TALK TO ME

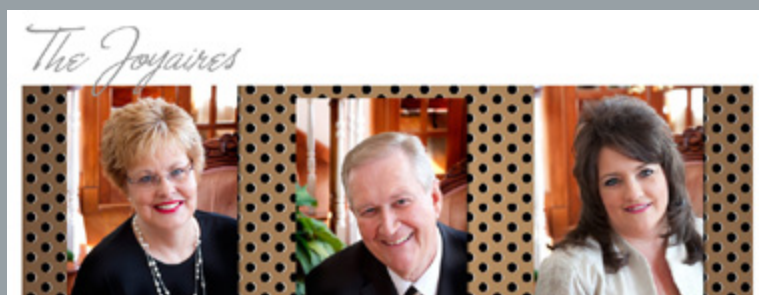
with Jonathan Edwards



Audio Interview of The Joyaires



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Sprinkle with cheese and serve.

Prep time - about 10 minutes * Cook time - about 20 mins * Servings - 6

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Chronicles of a Singing English Teacher

by Jeff Hawes



It's hard to believe that 2011 has come and gone. What a year!!! As a young boy I remember thinking what life would be like in 2012, and now, I'm about to find out. When you're living in 1990, 2012 seems unimaginable. Just the other night several of my friends were all talking about how we imagined the Lord would have returned by now, but we know our work here isn't finished.

Looking back on 2011, Karen Peck and New River had a very blessed year. I recorded my first album with the group in which our first single "On the Banks of the Promised Land" went to number 1 for the month of December. Wow! Not only is it exciting that the song reached to the top of the charts, but so much more that new audiences are hearing the song every day. We all knew the song was special the very first time we heard the demo. The song remains especially close to my heart because we played the song at the funeral of my grandmother, just a month after we recorded the song. "Even our brokenness and great pain can be poured out on the feet of Jesus as an offering of worship." (Jentezen Franklin, The Fasting Edge).

February was a month to remember. At the beginning of the month, my grandmother passed away, which was a difficult time for my family, but through my traveling, God used so many of you to help me along the way. Just a week after her passing, I boarded the Singing at Sea cruise and it was one of the highlights of my year. I had a great time singing and just sitting back and listening to my favorite gospel artists; I was ministered to in ways I will never forget. Before boarding the ship, though, I had the opportunity of a life-time. I traveled with the group to the Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, California, and had an amazing time. It was neat to hear all the different genres of music, but more so to realize that Christian music is the greatest on earth. There is

hope in the lyrics of gospel music.

In March 2011, Karen began filming her role in the upcoming faith-based film Joyful Noise. The film will be released January 13. For Karen this was an exciting new avenue for her to take and she is extremely grateful that God has opened this door of opportunity. Susan and I stand beside Karen and are very excited for this new journey. Karen hopes that this door will allow Karen Peck and New River to reach an entirely new audience, bringing southern gospel to new listeners.

In the summer months we traveled twice to Alaska and witnessed the beauty and majesty of God's handiwork. As I woke each morning, I couldn't believe that the God who



created every glacier, mountain, and creature, knows my name--my every thought. He loves me!! In August, we experienced his divine design again as we traveled to Paris and Sweden. I cannot begin to express how much I wanted to stay in Paris. It was simply gorgeous. Sweden was filled with some of the sweetest and kindest people I have ever met. The friendships I made while singing there will last forever. I will never forget the feeling I had while we sang the first song that night in Sweden. Even though they sang in Swedish, I still recognized the precious melody to "Blessed Assurance."

Throughout 2012, I want to look toward the future

as to what gloriously impossible works the Lord will accomplish, and I want New River to be right there for every step. The scriptures tell us it is not wise to look only toward our past, and I look for many more souls to spread His love to. Over the Christmas holiday, I received a Christmas card from a special family whom I attend church with. Inside, very simply it read: "May God use your voice to save souls." The truth is: that is all that matters. No matter where we are in our walk of life, God can use us to win souls to his name if we will just be willing. I would like to leave you with another quote by one of my favorite preachers, Jentezen Franklin. He



writes in his book, *The Fasting Edge*: "It is not our giftings and education that set the course for our lives, but our choices and responses to God."



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