

Tribute To The Cathedrals

Written by Scott Evans

Saturday, 20 September 2008 17:04 - Last Updated Thursday, 25 September 2008 20:11

The Cathedral Quartet A Model Of Consistency



And so it is. An era has ended. Back in late 1999, Glen Payne went home to be with the Lord. Just last week, George Younce, made that final journey as well. Growing up throughout the 1970's and early 1980's you could say that the Cathedrals had a profound effect on me and my love for Southern Gospel Music. In fact, they were my favorite group. I liked several other groups but my favorite was always the Cathedrals. Why? It wasn't just one thing. Sure it was various group members that came and went and of course, Glen Payne and George Younce were a big part of the reason. It was also the music. In my opinion the Cathedrals were the best to ever walk on stage. It was also the fact that it never looked like they were working! I never saw the Cathedrals when they didn't look like they were having the time of their life. In fact, I think they were!

The Cathedrals really got their start as a trio in the Cathedral Of Tomorrow in Akron, OH. In 1963 the Cathedral Trio consisted of Glen Payne, Danny Koker and Bobby Clark. It was in 1964 that George Younce joined them as a bass singer and Southern Gospel Music was about to change forever.

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Of course, the Cathedrals are known for George Younce and Glen Payne. Both of those men were with the group until the retirement of the group in 1999. Before joining the Cathedrals, both of these men already had a lot of singing experience, Glen with the Stamps-Baxter Quartet, various other Stamps Quartets and the Weatherfords, George with the Watchmen, the Weatherfords and the Blue Ridge Quartet. Glen married Van Harris in 1958. George married Clara in the mid-1950's. Both George and Glen were extremely dedicated to their families throughout the years.

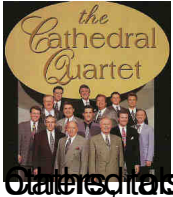
Talent wise they were unbeatable! Glen has one of the greatest lead voices ever. I always loved to hear him sing "We Shall See Jesus" and he always seemed to jump like he was going right then! George, of course, is considered one the greatest bass singers ever as well. George was also a masterful master of ceremonies. I never saw anyone who could tell the same joke for 30 years and still get laughs ... except George! You always knew somewhere in the program George would look at Glen and exclaim "I just love old people!" They worked together on stage as well as any other group members ever have, each feeding off the other. George could also take an audience from laughter to tears in a matter of seconds. George always had a way of listening to the Holy Spirit and doing or saying exactly the right thing for the moment!

A number of other singers have sung with the Cathedrals over the years as well. In fact, many of today's top names in the industry gained notoriety with the Cathedrals. Some of the people who have been a member of the Cathedrals are: Bobby Clark, Danny Koker, Mack Taunton, George Amon Webster, Roy Tremble, Haskell Cooley, Kirk Talley, Roger Bennett, Mark Trammell, Danny Funderburk, Gerald Wolfe, Ernie Haase and Scott Fowler. These men represent such groups as Legacy Five, Signature Sound Quartet, Mercy's Way, Greater Vision, The Mark Trammell Trio and

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Others, like my friend Ed, will also tell you that being a member of the

My memories of the Cathedrals are many. I first saw them in person as a teenager. I remember being speechless at the table as I was suddenly face to face with my heroes! Finally, Kirk Tally got me to talk and I was thrilled that I actually had met and talked to the Cathedrals! I also remember that they were genuinely nice to a very nervous kid!

My favorite Cathedral was Glen Payne! I remember in 1990, I was at the Kings Kids Camp in Dillsburg, PA and the Cathedrals were in town. My mom and dad were the two biggest Glen Payne fans that you would ever want to meet. However, they were not they type of people to just go up and talk with him. My dad had recently recovered from an accident and he was in a wheelchair. We got to the concert early, as we always did, and got situated. I headed for the artists tables, as I always did! The Cathedrals finished up a sound check on stage and Glen Payne walked straight off the stage and up to my parents and began talking with them. Never, in my entire life, had I ever seen my parents more excited about meeting someone! They talked about it for weeks and my mom even mentioned to me once shortly before her death 14 years later! That was the kind of effect Glen had on people.

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At that same concert, I noticed something else about George and Glen that impressed me. They would go into the outdoor tabernacle and sit and listen to the other groups sing. They were the only artist I have ever seen do that. I also noticed later that George would go behind the other groups table encouraging them and telling them to keep it up. George was always a great cheerleader for others.

Finally, Glen Payne encouraged me when I was getting started with the Southern Gospel Music Forum. I saw the Cathedrals in May 1999, the last time I would ever hear Glen sing. At the table that day, I was talking with Roger Bennett and Scott Fowler about their plans for their new group. I was also working on article about the final tour of the Cathedrals. Sitting behind the table and taking it all in was Glen Payne. I finished talking with Roger and Scott and went over to quickly say hello to Glen and to say thanks for the wonderful years of music. Glen began to ask me about my website. I was shocked. Here is a guy that has done it all talking with a guy that was barely getting started and really had very little of a clue about what he was doing. We talked for close to a half hour about my plans for the website. He took the website address and joked that he would have his grandson show him the website. About two weeks later, I got a short email from Glen telling me that it was a great effort and to keep it up! What an encouragement for someone just getting started!

There are hundreds of more stories that can be told about George, Glen and the Cathedrals. I know that even six years after the retirement of the group, I still play a Cathedral recording nearly every week. Their music and their legacy will live on for a very long time.

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This feature has been something I wanted to do for a long time. It is a little bit different from our normal feature but the timing seemed right. My parents have both passed away and now, George and Glen have both passed away. I would like to think that when George arrived in Heaven he grabbed Glen, a tenor singer and a baritone and started singing. I'd also like to think that my mom and dad had front row seats!

The Cathedrals will, without a doubt, go into the history books as one of the greatest groups ever. They maintained a standard for over 30 years of professionalism and quality and won countless awards and accolades for their efforts. Their recordings will live on in CD and video/DVD format for years to come. Perhaps the real proof of their legacy are people like me. People that they likely had no idea the effect that they were having on them. My guess is, there are thousands more like me out there!

I'd love to hear your favorite Cathedral memory. In fact, we may post them here on the website so email me your favorite memory of America's favorite quartet, the Cathedrals.

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