

Tribute To Betty Evans

Written by Scott Evans

Saturday, 20 September 2008 17:58 - Last Updated Thursday, 25 September 2008 19:58



Happy New Year from the Southern Gospel Music Forum! As 2003 comes to a close and 2004 begins our hearts are heavy. We recently lost two legends in Southern Gospel Music when Vestal Goodman and Jake Hess passed away about a week apart. Both of them will be missed in our industry as they were leaders of the industry and pioneers of this style of music. On other pages of this website we document what those two meant to our industry through various tributes.

I read the accounts of the funerals of Vestal and Jake and how hundreds and even a thousand people showed up. I want to write about another funeral that took place in December of 2003. Only about 100 people showed up for this one but this one meant more to me than any of the rest. It was for Betty Evans, my mom.

My mom was not a well known Southern Gospel singer or involved in the industry in any way. However, my mom was a great Christian lady who loved the Lord and trusted Him completely with her life. She was born on September 27, 1927 in Hornell, NY. She came from a large

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family of five brothers and five sisters. She came to know the Lord in a personal way at a young age.

My mom married my dad in November of 1947 and they had five children. I am the youngest of those five. I grew up in a Christian Home and I thank the Lord for that. My parents were in no way perfect but they did the best they could do to provide for us and to remind us that we served a powerful God. As I got older I came to appreciate even more the values they instilled in us. My mom led me to the Lord at the ripe old age of 6!

My mom was a huge Southern Gospel Music Fan. While I was growing up there was always music in the house! It was usually Doug Oldham, or maybe the Bill Gaither Trio. The ones that I really loved though were the Blackwood Brothers, the Statler Brothers, the Oak Ridge Boys and the Jacobs Brothers. Four-part male harmony! My mom, during my growing up years, had no idea that this style was called Southern Gospel but she knew what she liked.

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As I got older, my mom and I talked a lot about music. She and I learned together about groups called the Cathedrals, the Kingsmen, the Goodmans, the Florida Boys, the Talleys and many others. We purchased recordings and went to concerts to hear our favorite groups and developed a closeness because of the music that, really, no one else understood. My mom was also involved in music in our home church. She played the piano for services and for an occasional special number. She was not an expert piano player but she was always willing to serve God any way she could. She also taught Sunday School and served in several other ways in the church.

Mom was also a cheerleader for me! I am sure that over the years as I was "finding myself" I gave her a great deal to worry about! As far as that goes, I probably gave her great cause to worry right up until she passed away. When I made major life decisions my mom always supported them. She didn't always think they were right but she always knew they were my decisions. She ended almost everyone of our conversations with, "I'm praying for you" and I knew she was!

When I got involved in the Southern Gospel industry my mom was my greatest supporter when, in reality, most of my family and friends thought I was wasting my time. My mom and I prayed about it and it flourished! She always remained interested in what I was doing and how it was going. My only regrets are the times it sometimes took me

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away from time that I could have spent with her. One thing I do have is tons of memories of watching videos, listening to recordings and going to concerts with my mom! Her eyes would light up like you could not imagine when one of her favorite groups hit the stage! Southern Gospel Music lost one of its most loyal fans when my mom passed away. I would like to think that as soon as she got to Heaven she and my dad went to hear Glen Payne sing a song. Glen was a favorite of both my mom and my dad here on earth and I remember the day they met him and how excited they were! Both of my parents were in their 60's when they finally met Glen Payne but it was a very special moment for them. Ironically enough, Jake Hess and Vestal Goodman were two of her favorite singers and they followed her into Heaven just a couple of weeks later.

About three months ago, I was struggling personally with some issues and I had nearly made the decision to leave the Southern Gospel Music Industry. I was talking to my mom about it and asking her advice she said "don't do anything rash, pray about it and I will too." Almost immediately, things began to turn around and the things that were making me consider leaving began to get better! As usual, Mom was right!

My mom suffered from a disease for 30 years. She suffered a lot of pain and her life was not always easy. She never complained though!

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During her final days, the doctors and the nurses at the hospital all marveled at her outlook and attitude and they loved to be around her! She was diagnosed with a terminal illness and knew she only had days, or at the most months, to live but she was the one cheering people up! I said, "Yep, that's my mom."

My final verbal conversation with my mom was on the Saturday before her death. She would later that day slip into a coma that she never fully recovered from. In our conversation she told me three things that she always told me. She told me to be careful (I was getting ready to go some where in the car), she told me that she was praying for me and she told me that she loved me. Oh my, how I'd love to hear her say those words once again!

The funeral was held at her church of many years in New York, Hillcrest Baptist Church in Elmira, NY. The service was very nice and featured the normal things that you find in a funeral service. We sang some of my mom's favorite songs and the pastor shared some of her favorite scriptures and a message. Different combinations of my nieces and nephews sang "The Love Of God" and "Supper Time," two of my mom's favorite songs. The service ended and we said a final goodbye to mom at the cemetery.

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Since that day, I've begun to adjust to life without mom. I still see her smile in a lot of things. I still hear her voice when I am trying to figure out what to do and I can still hear those words, "I'm praying for you and I love you." So mom, for now we say goodbye on this earth but please don't ever doubt that I love you and I miss you and I can't wait until that day when God calls me home to Heaven and, as the song says "we can spend a lifetime, reminiscing on the past."

I love you mom!

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