

# Mercer's Magazine

## BILLY GRAHAM... EVANGELIST TO THE WORLD

By Lois Mateus  
Contributing Writer

Reverend Billy Graham's death last week brought back a precious memory. I was once part of a discussion with a friend, the late Johnny Apple of The New York Times, when he was asked to talk about the power of religious figures like Billy Graham, Mother Teresa, and the Pope to influence people and politics.

The conversation turned to evangelist Billy Graham's amazing ability to bridge political parties and offer advice and assistance to various presidents when they were faced with terrible crises. Apple told a story about a time when an Emory University professor had just made the cover of TIME Magazine for declaring that "God is Dead." This had caused a rage across the Bible belt.

At the time, Graham was about to preach in Atlanta, and when his plane landed, a brash young reporter rushed up to him and stuck out a microphone and said Rev. Graham, "is God really dead?" Rev. Graham said, "no young man, God is not dead." Persistent to a fault, the reporter said, "how do you know?" Rev. Graham replied, "I talked to him this morning."

Like so many, I have revered Billy Graham through the years, first as a youngster attending his crusades and at camp Ridgecrest near his home in North Carolina. At his 1971 crusade in Lexington I had the opportunity to talk with him face to face at a news confer-

ence.

What I remember most vividly was his sermons weren't all hell fire and brimstone or platitudes, but that Rev. Graham spoke with simple and clear messages about the kind of faith and trust and personal relationship with Christ that can accompany a person throughout life.

He was the finest and most formidable figure I have ever met. As a young person, I was impressed that he too was raised on a family farm. He spoke convincingly, offering answers to questions my young mind had not yet been even able to form, making sense of sometimes confusing scriptures. The powerful thread throughout his message was hope with a reminder to keep in mind that each day is a gift from God, a gift one cannot take for granted.

The signature closing hymn of all his crusades was "Just As I Am." This too resonated with me as I hold old hymns close. I believe people remember songs more than scriptures. The theological sturdiness of an old time religion hymn like "Just As I Am" can move a soul to action.

For all his 99 years, Billy Graham held forth to the same great hope in God, a message that he shared with the millions who responded in person and via his televised crusades--altogether more than 210 million people in more than 185 countries on six continents during hundreds of his evangelical crusades and missions. He was a natural communica-

tor who always understood the power of the media. He lassoed minds with his knowledge of the scriptures, his gift as an orator and story-telling humor. His language was both rich in scripture and folk idioms, laced with humility, kindness, and compassion.

Brought up in a Presbyterian church, he was ordained as a Baptist minister, but preached a nondenominational message common to all religions. Regardless of which church one might belong to, he said, "Believe that God loves you. Christ has died on the cross for you, and your sins will be forgiven, and you will know with certainty you are going to heaven."

His message was clear: God as our refuge and strength, an ever present help in time of trouble even at times when our world seems to be falling apart. An avowed optimist, his political influence was about faith that transcended politics. Even in our country's most difficult moments, he preached God is still able to change the human heart. God the Creator is able to recreate us, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27)

As a Christian, his hope was not just for this life, but for heaven and the life to come. He lived on earth as I am confident he is in heaven. At peace, his death not an ending but a point of unending continuum of joy in life everlasting.

This week as the final credits roll in the life of this extraordi-



Photo by Steve Mitchell  
Rev. Billy Graham chats with Lois Mateus at a news conference before his 1971 Crusade for Christ in Lexington.

narily gifted man, Russell Moore penned a powerful eulogy in the Wall Street Journal, saying that "Billy Graham was the most significant Christian evangelist since the Apostle Paul." We must be thankful for Billy Graham, and though our world is broken, for his enduring message that Christ is alive.

## The Old Ironing Board

By Edith Durr Reed  
Contributing Writer

The oldest ironing board I remember did not have legs nor did it unfold from the wall.

It was made from a wide plank of lumber rounded at the right end. The left end of the board was not as wide; it tapered to a width that allowed the board to fit between the back posts of a kitchen chair. We placed the rounded end of the board on the corner of our kitchen table. This was where the hot flat iron rested on its heel while the ironer adjusted the material being pressed.

We always folded a few thicknesses of material over the handle of the flat iron because it was hot—but not as hot as the bottom of the iron.

On ironing day, we heated two flat irons on the wood cooking stove. By the time one iron was too cool to do the ironing properly, the other iron was hot and ready to use. The irons were exchanged and the ironing continued.

During ironing, the back of the chair which held the smaller end of the board was turned toward the ironer thus leaving the chair seat free for the ironed and folded objects. Things that needed to be placed on a hanger were taken to their storage area as soon as they were ironed.

With the exception of about twelve inches at each end, the ironing board was padded and covered. The padding and cov-



Photo Submitted  
Emily Esh takes advantage of a sunny day to dry sheets with the tried but true method of clothes pins and a line.

ering were sewn and fastened to the underside of the board. The top was smooth and secure. (The ironing boards were not sold with padding; the buyer added the padding after the board was purchased.)

When it was not in use, the ironing board stood on its tapered end behind an open door inside the house.

My mother, Evie Darland Durr, said she ironed everything including men's everyday socks.

She would go outside and find a little branch of cedar to lay on the big end of the ironing board. When she brought a fresh hot iron from the stove, she would run the iron over the cedar. The cedar made the iron slick on the bottom so it would glide more easily

over the clothes she was ironing. And the cedar made the house smell so good.

Mother liked that ironing board; she was in no hurry to buy a new ironing board with collapsible legs when they became fashionable.

Some women preferred to do their ironing on the dining room table. They spread the padding and covering over the table then heated the irons. I always thought it would be hard to keep the padding and covering smooth when it was on a table since there was no way to secure them underneath, but I guess they figured out a way to manage it.

As I remember, everyone's clothes always looked well-pressed.

With the newer fabrics that require less or no ironing, not as much ironing is needed now. We still have our ironing boards with folding legs; they haven't changed much over the years.

We no longer have irons made of cast iron nor do we have to heat

(Editor's Note: Edith Durr Reed attended Bohon School and graduated from Cornishville High School in 1939. She enjoys writing about growing up and living in Mercer County for many years. She currently lives in Danville. Kandi Adkinson assists Mrs. Reed with her stories.)



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today's irons on a stove. We have electric irons that we plug into a socket and turn to the heat setting for the fabric we are ironing. In a few minutes they are ready to work for us. They maintain a steady temperature. They do not get too hot and they do not cool off before we are finished with our ironing. When we are finished, we simply turn the button to "off," and unplug the iron. We still leave the iron standing on its heel until it is completely cool before we put the iron away.

Note from Kandie: I still remember my mother, Josephine Prather, hand dipping pillowcases & shirts in starch granules she had mixed with water then letting the wet items

dry on a laundry rack she had gotten with Top Value Stamps. She used a sprinkling bottle to dampen the pillowcases and shirts before she placed the items in a see-through zippered plastic bag; the plastic bag ensured the articles were completely dampened before she started ironing. Those freshly starched and pressed pillowcases literally "snapped" to attention when she gave them a hard shake to separate the fabric before she returned the pillowcases to the laundry rack so they could dry completely. Only then did the cases go back on the pillows.

Yesterdays that make us smile are always worth remembering.

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