

**News and Current Events :: Billy Graham's Wife Ruth Dies at 87****Billy Graham's Wife Ruth Dies at 87 - posted by BenBrockway, on: 2007/6/15 7:44**

Just in case anyone hasn't heard....

Associated Press

Billy Graham's Wife Ruth Dies at 87

By MIKE BAKER 06.15.07, 6:32 AM ET

Ruth Graham, who surrendered dreams of missionary work in Tibet to marry a suitor who became the world's most renowned evangelist, died Thursday. She was 87. Graham died at 5:05 p.m. at her home at Little Piney Cove, surrounded by her husband and all five of their children, said a statement released by Larry Ross, Billy Graham's spokesman.

"Ruth was my life partner, and we were called by God as a team," Billy Graham said in a statement. "No one else could have borne the load that she carried. She was a vital and integral part of our ministry, and my work through the years would have been impossible without her encouragement and support.

"I am so grateful to the Lord that He gave me Ruth, and especially for these last few years we've had in the mountains together. We've rekindled the romance of our youth, and my love for her continued to grow deeper every day. I will miss her terribly, and look forward even more to the day I can join her in Heaven."

Ruth Graham had been bedridden for months with degenerative osteoarthritis of the back and neck - the result of a serious fall from a tree in 1974 while fixing a swing for grandchildren - and underwent treatment for pneumonia two weeks ago. At her request, and in consultation with her family, she had stopped receiving nutrients through a feeding tube for the last few days, Ross said.

A public memorial service is scheduled for 2 p.m. Saturday at the Montreat Conference Center. A private interment service will be held the next day in Charlotte.

As Mrs. Billy Graham, Ruth Graham could lay claim to being the first lady of evangelical Protestantism, but neither exploited that unique status nor lusted for the limelight.

Behind the scenes, however, she was considered her husband's closest confidant during his spectacular global career - one rivaled only by her father, L. Nelson Bell, until his death in 1973.

"She would help my father prepare his messages, listening with an attentive ear, and if she saw something that wasn't right or heard something that she felt wasn't as strong as it could be, she was a voice to strengthen this or eliminate that," said her son, Franklin, who is now the head of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

"Every person needs that kind of input in their life and she was that to my father."

Bell, a missionary doctor, headed the Presbyterian hospital in Qingjiang, China, that had been founded by the father of a author Pearl Buck. Ruth grew up there and spent three high school years in what's now North Korea.

"What she witnessed in her family home, she practiced for herself - dependence on God in every circumstance, love for his word, concern for others above self, and an indomitable spirit displayed with a smile," said the Grahams' youngest daughter, also named Ruth.

Despite her reluctance to be a public personality herself, Ruth Graham met many of the powerful and famous through her husband - who was a spiritual adviser to presidents for decades. President Bush and first lady Laura Bush called her a "remarkable woman of faith" who "inspired people around the world with her humor, intelligence, elegance, and kindness."

She met Billy Graham at Wheaton College in Illinois. He recalled in 1997 memoirs, "If I had not been smitten with love at first sight of Ruth Bell I would certainly have been the exception. Many of the men at Wheaton thought she was stunning."

Billy Graham courted her, managing to coax her away from the foreign missions calling and into marriage after both graduated in 1943. In 1945, after a brief stint pastoring a suburban Chicago congregation, he became a roving speaker for the fledgling Youth for Christ organization.

From that point onward she had to endure her husband's frequent absences, remarking, "I'd rather have a little of Bill than a lot of any other man."

Ruth Graham moved the couple into her parents' home in Montreat, where they had relocated after fleeing wartime China. She stayed in western North Carolina mountain town the rest of her life.

The young couple later bought their own house across the street from the Bells. Then in 1956, needing protection from gawkers, the Grahams moved into Little Piney Cove, a comfortably rustic mountainside home she designed using logs from abandoned cabins. It became Billy's retreat between evangelistic forays.

Though the wife of a famous Baptist minister, the independent-minded Ruth Graham declined to undergo baptism by im

mersion and remained a loyal, lifelong Presbyterian. When in Montreat, a town built around a Presbyterian conference center, Billy Graham would attend the local Presbyterian church where his wife often taught the college-age Sunday School class.

Due to her husband's travels, she bore major responsibility for raising the couple's five children: Franklin (William Franklin III), Nelson, Virginia, Anne and Ruth.

Ruth Graham was the author or co-author of 14 books, including collections of poetry and the autobiographical scrapbook "Footprints of a Pilgrim."

In 1996, the Grahams were each awarded the Congressional Gold Medal for "outstanding and lasting contributions to morality, racial equality, family, philanthropy, and religion."

Crime novelist Patricia Cornwell began her writing career with a Ruth Graham biography that depicted many deeds of personal charity. Cornwell said as a youth in Montreat she thought Ruth Graham "was the loveliest, kindest person ever born. I still do."

She helped establish the Ruth and Billy Graham Children's Health Center in Asheville, and the Billy Graham Training Center near Montreat.

Ruth Graham will be buried at the new Billy Graham Library in Charlotte - a source of apparent discord within the family last year. This week, Billy Graham said he and Ruth had decided "after much prayer and discussion" they would be laid to rest at the foot of a cross-shaped walkway in the library's prayer garden.

Retired Associated Press Religion Writer Richard N. Ostling contributed to this report.

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Re: Billy Graham's Wife Ruth Dies at 87, on: 2007/6/15 8:20

Please see my thread: **Flowers for Ruth Graham** over in the General Topics room.

Krispy