



Dear Friend,

I am pleased to send you this copy of *How Sweet the Sound* by George Beverly Shea, who has been a good friend of my father's and mine for many years.

This is your chance to sit down with Bev as he shares warm memories and inspiring stories about his favorite hymns and gospel songs. You'll find that his love for the Lord shines through as he reflects on some of the greatest songs of our faith. The scriptural truths behind the lyrics and the devotional thoughts for each one will provide you with wonderful material for your daily quiet time.

If you would like to know more about the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, please contact us toll-free at 1-877-247-2426 or via our Web site, www.billygraham.org. We would appreciate knowing how this book or our ministry has touched your life.

May God bless you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Franklin Graham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Franklin Graham
President

How Sweet the Sound

GEORGE BEVERLY SHEA

WITH

BETTY FREE SWANBERG

AND JEFFERY MCKENZIE

This Billy Graham Library Selection special edition is
published for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

Published for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

A *Billy Graham Library Selection* designates materials that are appropriate to a well-rounded collection of quality Christian literature, including both classic and contemporary reading and reference materials.

TYNDALE is a registered trademark of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

The Tyndale quill logo is a trademark of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Visit Tyndale's exciting Web site at www.tyndale.com

Copyright © 2004 by George Beverly Shea. All rights reserved.

Cover photographs copyright © by Russ Busby. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise indicated, all interior photos are by Russ Busby or Earl Davidson, courtesy of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. All rights reserved.

The memories recorded in this book are based on original interviews with George Beverly Shea by Jeffery McKenzie and Betty Free Swanberg, and on original written text from Mr. Shea.

The devotional interludes are by Betty Free Swanberg as approved by Mr. Shea.

Contributing writer: Betty Free Swanberg

Edited by Lisa A. Jackson

Designed by Ron Kaufmann and Julie Chen

The primary source for the wording, punctuation, and order of stanzas is *The One Year Book of Hymns* copyright © 1995 by Robert K. Brown and Mark R. Norton, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the *Holy Bible*, King James Version.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

ISBN 0-8423-7042-0 (Tyndale)

ISBN 1-59328-031-9 (book with CD)

ISBN 1-59328-032-7 (book only)

Printed in the United States of America

09 08 07 06 05
7 6 5 4 3



Timeless Hymns

*W*hat a way to learn great theology! That's what comes to mind whenever I sing one of the old hymns. "And Can It Be" is like putting the doctrine of salvation to music. "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" is a melodic lesson in grace. No wonder good hymns make for strong faith!

—JONI EARECKSON TADA

*H*ymns are part of my devotional life. . . . The hymns continue to inspire, instruct, and give the church a vehicle to express adoration.

—STEVE GREEN

*I Will Sing the
Wondrous Story*

I will sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me—
How He left His home in glory
For the cross of Calvary.

*Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me,
Sing it with the saints in glory,
Gathered by the crystal sea.*

I was lost but Jesus found me—
Found the sheep that went astray,
Threw His loving arms around me,
Drew me back into His way.

Days of darkness still come o'er me,
Sorrow's paths I often tread;
But the Savior still is with me—
By His hand I'm safely led.

He will keep me till the river
Rolls its waters at my feet;
Then He'll bear me safely over,
Where the loved ones I shall meet.

Words: Francis H. Rowley (1854–1952)

Music: Peter P. Bilhorn (1865–1936)

I Will Sing the Wondrous Story

How we all love to be cheered by the voices of encouragement! Reflecting back, we remember those who uplifted our spirits and were used by God for direction in our lives.

I remember back to the time when I was at radio station WMBI. We had a men's octet that traveled to New York with the president of Moody Bible Institute, Dr. Will H. Houghton. There was a great Christian gathering, with one of the finest Salvation Army bands I have ever heard playing in the first part of the service.

Coming to the close of their presentation, John Fowler, the legendary tuba player, placed his instrument on the floor. He picked up a microphone, and in his marvelous, rich basso voice began, "I will sing the wondrous story of the Christ who died for me." As Mr. Fowler paused from time to time, you could hear the band members humming quietly in the background. When Mr. Fowler came to the refrain, sung so tenderly, about "the Christ who died for me," Dr. Houghton was seen wiping tears away. We were all deeply moved.



Mother Graham—Billy Graham's mother—attended the very first of her son's meetings, held in November of 1947 at the Armory in Charlotte, North Carolina.

I will never forget hearing for the first time the beautiful singing of the congregation and choir. All too soon it was my turn. Mr. Graham had written asking that I join him and Cliff Barrows there as the soloist, singing a quiet gospel

song just before the message each evening. I warmly thanked him for the invitation but mentioned that most gospel singers seemed to sing a verse or two, then paused to bring a brief sermon. Would I have to do that?

“I hope not!” said Mr. Graham with a chuckle.

“Then I’d like to come with you,” I said.

The first solo was from an old hymnbook; it was “I Will Sing the Wondrous Story,” a truly fitting introduction to the privilege I would have of lifting up the Savior’s name in song in years to come. When things began there in Charlotte, we had no inkling of what was to come: evangelistic crusades in great stadiums here and in far-off places. Yes, coming to the microphone that first night I was more than a little nervous. But I gained confidence as I heard Mr. Graham behind me, “Bless you, Bev.”

On the final chorus of “I Will Sing the Wondrous Story,” I raised my voice an octave. Completing the refrain *sotto voce*, these precious words came slowly, “Sing it with the saints in glory, gathered by the crystal sea.”

Mother Graham wrote to me afterwards, “This is becoming one of my very favorite hymns, sung slowly and in your bass voice. We will be thinking about you and praying for you at all the meetings as you continue to sing ‘The Wondrous Story.’”

To this day I haven’t forgotten Mother Graham’s words of encouragement. Two or three times a year I would receive a little handwritten note from her, which I carried in my wallet for quite some time. And of course, I have Mr. John Fowler, the Salvation Army tuba player, to thank for that inspiring rendition.





DEVOTIONAL INTERLUDE

Singing about the Wonderful Story

EVERYONE WILL SHARE THE STORY OF [GOD'S] WONDERFUL GOODNESS; THEY WILL SING WITH JOY OF [HIS] RIGHTEOUSNESS. PSALM 145:7, NLT

There are many ways to share “the wondrous story.” Some speak it, some sing it, and some paint it; but God asks all of us, with His help, to live it. When we show our love for Christ through our daily activities, we are truly singing the story “with the saints in glory.”

To sing the story, we need the gift of our Savior’s presence. Even though He is back in glory, Christ continues—through the Holy Spirit—to be with those He came to save. He takes us by the hand and leads us safely through the “days of darkness” that come now and then.

Christ is not only with us but has also remained righteous, just like His heavenly Father. What joy that puts into our song! As Jesus’ righteousness shines through us, we can point others to the Father.

Dear God, I praise You for Scriptures and songs about Your love. Thank You for the opportunity to sing Your story through my daily living. Thank You, Jesus, for holding me by the hand, especially when everything seems dark and unsafe. Keep me singing about You and Your righteousness.

Betty Free Swanberg

