



Testimonials Are Us

TESTIMONY TO TRUE GRIT...

By Duanne Puckett

When your boss (Gary Walls of Shelby County LIFE magazine) says he wants you to attend the Chamber of Commerce awards luncheon, you obviously say “sure!” since you are his chief writer.

I am busy taking notes of all the announcements when Mayor Tom Hardesty begins to talk about the recipient of the annual Citizen of the Year title. He says, “You probably know the movie *True Grit* with John Wayne. Well, our winner certainly has true grit... She grew up on Kentucky Street...” I immediately stopped writing and realized he had to be talking about me!!!

Shocked. Surprised. Speechless.

Then I saw my sister Marsha (second from right in photo) waving from the back of the room at Claudia Sanders Dinner House. I had no idea my family was there (cousin Mary Lloyd Farmer, left, niece Dawn Harrod and three of her four children: Sam, Jesse and Emme). I had seen members of my church Redwoods group as I came in but Bonnie Burks Gray said they had discussed attending at the last Redwoods meeting, which I had to miss, and they were using her brother Mark’s tickets.

That is another reason I was Shocked. Surprised. Speechless. – Bonnie didn’t tell me all the facts.

She is forgiven, though, because she certainly did reveal all the facts more than 25 years ago when she invited me to Centenary United Methodist Church and said “you will love it!”

I have.

My first testament goes to Bonnie for having the passion for the Lord and for her church to extend the invitation at a newspaper staff Christmas party.

My second salute goes to the late Lucile Smith who won me over in Sunday school class that very first day. She was so sincere and shared the most wonderful Christmas miracle story (<http://www.snopes.com/glurge/tablecloth.asp>), one that I have used often and even mailed out to friends as my holiday card.

My third encounter was with the late Clarence “Buck” Frazier who didn’t let a person slip into the sanctuary without a hug... and later a kiss on the cheek. He “adopted” me when my Dad died in 1995 and spearheaded a campaign at the church and in the community to buy me my first wheelchair-converted van. Independence was a word I had not used since my car accident in 1967. I cannot imagine the tears of joy my parents shed in heaven, thanking “Buck” for loving me.

Clyde Tharp had crossed my paths throughout the years through newspaper work. Thank goodness, though, they criss-crossed at Centenary because I cannot think of a more devoted Christian and church worker. He certainly lives by the hymn “Thou are the potter, I am the clay” because he does what He needs.

In other words, many people who I have called friends at church could be Citizen of the Year... besides Jane Bailey, who has already earned the distinction. Note their characteristics in **bold**: Jennifer Decker *shared*

her children with me... Jane Bailey *inspired* me to try and memorize scripture passages... The Lucile Smith Circle and later the Redwoods Group *encouraged* me to continue sharing devotional programs... Annie Gardner and Sue Brewster *never hesitated* when I needed a last-minute volunteer as a caregiver... The Rev. Buddy Coleman *made me laugh* in church... Will Husband, Lindy Bush, Tristen and Kayden Schooler, Conner Goodwin, and countless other children *made me love* church as their Children's Moment leader...

People say that throughout my life, careers and volunteer work that I have shared, inspired, encouraged, never hesitated, laughed and loved. I do not disagree but it's been easy to do because of my family and friends... and faith. It was humbling when the Mayor named me Shelbyville's Citizen of the Year for being a good and faithful public servant. However, think how humbling it will be for all of us when "the" Mayor names us Christian of the Year and says, "well done, my good and faithful servant!"

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A **testimonial** is a public declaration certifying someone's character and qualifications. The dictionary gives the synonyms for testimonial: recommendation, reference, endorsement, tribute.

A **testimony** is a statement, often a sworn statement given in a court of law, of proof or evidence that something is true. It's a first-hand authentication. Synonyms for testimony are: evidence, witness, testament, and testimonial.

Over the past five months we've featured members' testimonies which have been loving testimonials of God's work in their lives. We've used the words testimony and testimonial interchangeably because our members' stories have been their witness to God's grace and love, and their endorsement of a life with Jesus.

We hope you have had a chance to catch all of the inspirational stories that have run in CrossTalk and have been featured on Centenary's website: <http://shelbyvillemethodist.com/#/new-here/testimonials>. If you missed any of them you can find them all by visiting this link.

Please consider sharing your testimonial in a testimony for CrossTalk. It is a perfect way to demonstrate our mission: ***Love God. Love People. Make Disciples.*** Through our testimonies we can bring others to know the love of God and the love found only in a community of believers.

Testify to your experience so others may be enlightened or elevated. You do not have to write your testimony to share it. Let us know the God-incident you want to tell and someone will help you capture the experience. Call the office and leave your contact information so we can help you share your testimony or email us at centenary.testimonials@twc.com.

