

Mary Ann and her husband Jim joined Park Road Baptist Church in 1951.

Mary Ann's Celebration of Life Service was held at

Park Road Baptist Church on June 13, 1996.

Dr. Allen Laymon officiated at her Service.

Her Eulogy was given by her daughter Nancy.

MARY ANN RUSSELL HOWIE

IN MEMORIAM

JUNE 11, 1996

God chose an angel from above,
An angel sweet a fair;
He placed a halo 'round her head
To match her silver hair;

He gathered sunbeams for her smile,
From out the sky above;
He carved a heart of solid gold
Then sprinkled it with love;

He picked the stars from out the sky,
To give her eyes of blue;
He gave her courage, hope, and faith,
To last her whole life through.

God chose an angel from above,
So sweet a fair to see,
He called her Mother and He gave
This angel fair to me.

Author Unknown

In moments like these, we walk softly and speak in hushed tones for this is a tender time. But it is not a time of tragedy. Indeed, there is something very beautiful about the homegoing of one who has lived such a long and useful life, so crowded with devotion to the noblest causes which evoke our human loyalty and commitment. Mary Ann Howie lived for the noblest and the best in life. She lived for her faith, her, family, and her friends.

Life is full of mystery, and it brings many questions which elude our human answers. What shapes a life to make it great or small? Why do the righteous suffer? Why do the wicked seem to prosper? On such matters, philosophers and theologians will disagree;

skeptics and believers will disagree. But on one point, theologians and philosophers, skeptics and believers are all agreed: LIFE IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT.

Some come into the world as favored recipients of fortune's bounty, laden with the gifts of Providence—yet they make a shambles of life. There are others who come into life without such favored gifts; they walk a road marked by hardship and tragedy - and yet they make of life a symphony of beauty and meaning. They take what life offers and weave a tapestry of faith.

Mary Ann Howie was one of those. We will not dwell on her problems, for all of us who gather in this place are familiar with the burdens which she bore. But, she never asked, "Why did this happen to me?" To have asked this question would have violated two cardinal principles of her life. In the first place, to have asked that question would have meant whining in the face of difficulty, and this, she never did. Complaint was not her nature. She was a believer and an optimist. Courage is the word which epitomizes her life, and no soldier on the battlefield ever had more of it than she. It was a courage which was born of faith. Her faith kept her, but she did not keep her faith to herself. She shared it with all whose lives she touched. To have asked that question would also have meant doubting the unfailing goodness of God. And, this she never did. Undauntingly and undiscourageably, she believed in the goodness of God.

The words of Sydney Lanier most appropriately describe her faith:

"...As the marsh hen secretly builds on the watery sod,
Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of God:
I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh hen flies
In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the marsh and the skies:
By so many roots as the marsh grass sends in the sod
I will heartily lay me a-hold on the greatness of God...."

And it was in that greatness of God that Mary Ann saw life as a blessing and a privilege. To watch her children and grandchildren become adults was a joy and knowing she was a Great Grandmother was the ultimate happiness. Mary Ann believed that there was only one great adventure ahead of her - the greatest experience of all - the only perfect happenstance in life - with no strings attached - no loose ends - Absolute perfection. That was death viewed as the perfect ending to a long happy life with the knowledge that in the goodness of God she was born, in the Providence of God she was kept all her life through, and in the love of God a place was prepared for her in Heaven which she viewed as a garden where she would again find those dear ones - family and friends - who made her world.

IN BENEDICTION

Eternal God our Father, we thank thee for life and all that makes life sweet and worth living. We thank Thee for the pleasant world Thou has given us to live in and the good comrades who share our life together by ties of blood and the bonds of friendship. We

thank Thee for great friends who have come to strengthen our spirits, to enlarge our vision, and to gentle our souls. We thank Thee that so many human hearts are so kind, and that love lights more fires than hate can extinguish, and that our world grows better as the earth grows old. It is good to be alive, and we thank Thee for the joy of living.

We thank Thee, too, for death. These bodies of ours were not made to last forever. They grow tired and worn. And we thank Thee that when our work is done, and the day is spent, we may turn homeward to live with Thee - free from all the limitations and weaknesses of the body. We thank Thee that our times are in Thy hands, not our own, and that we have not the ordering of our lives, but live and move in Thee whose wisdom is love and whose love is wisdom.

We thank Thee that everyone of us is of concern to Thee, and that Thou hast a stake in us, that Thou has given us work to do and dost add our hearts and minds to the working capital of Thy Providence. We thank Thee that Thou dost not let us live in vain if we live our best.

We thank thee now for Mary Ann whose life on earth has come to its final chapter with the Heaven's opening to a time of high promotion and coronation. May her life be to us in the days to come an inspiration and a guide. May we ever do Mary Ann honor by being more like her, and may we show our love by doing the things she loved best and by being the kind of men and women in whom she always took pride. And let us believe as Mary Ann did, that :...in everything God works for good with those who love him"...so that "in all things we are more than conquerors through him who loves us"...being sure that "...neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

We give back to nature only that which is natural, for this is all that the grave can hold. To Thee, Father of us all, we give back a radiant, glowing, child-like spirit. In the remembrance that Mary Ann was so much in love with life, we can imagine how she has now burst into that larger and fuller life of Heaven. Grant unto her a triumphant and joyous entrance into the eternal kingdom. Let the trumpets of welcome sound, and the voices of angel choirs, cherubim and seraphim, sing praise to the living God. In the Savior's name we pray. Amen.