

The Park Road Pulpit  
*Sermons from Park Road Baptist Church*  
Russ and Amy Jacks Dean, Pastors

*A Joyful Noise*  
*A Eulogy for John Kelso Moore*  
Russ Dean, March 4, 2003

I will miss John Moore's voice.

John had a *big* voice, you know -- I mean this as a compliment. This is not exactly the same thing as saying he had a "big mouth!" John had a big *voice*, and his family, his church, his pastors will miss that *joyful noise*.

As a child, John became famous in his small, Virginia hometown. His mother would carry him around to various churches, where she put him on stage as a sort of child prodigy, a budding young tenor soloist. She was proud of her son and that *sound*, which was mature beyond his years. Eight decades later, just last summer in a visit to his home, that community still remembered his voice.

But John's voice was not just a showpiece of childhood talent shows. In his young adulthood that resonant sound claimed attention, even from the world-renown Juilliard School of Music in New York. Because of the particular direction of his life's journey, John did not graduate from Juilliard, but the lack of a conservatory *diploma* did nothing to quiet the music in his soul. For all of his life, John sang, and this *joyful noise* did bring joy – joy to himself, and joy to the hearts of countless others.

A funeral is no time to tell lies about someone, so let's just say plainly, though he had a wonderful voice, John was *not* much of a *chorister*. In politically correct musical terms, let's just say that he was *Mezzo Challenged!* "Mezzo" is the Latin word, used in musical notation, which means "moderately." (*Mezzo piano* is moderately soft; *mezzo*

*forte*, moderately loud.) Anyone who has heard John sing knows that there was not a “moderate” bone in his musical body. John’s voice was made to *solo* – not to *mezzo*! He was politely asked to leave more than one choir, because John just could not tone it down!

I do not believe that John’s volume came from any arrogance or any self-promoting ego-centrism; I think he simply believed in *making a joyful noise to the Lord* – not a joyful “moderation!”

Over his career, John sang many revival services – *music* was his preaching. He traveled to countless nursing and retirement facilities where his music was a *friend* to the lonely, a *comfort* to the fearful, a final *gift* to many weary souls. Even after a tumor was removed from his brain in 1985, a surgery which disfigured his mouth and affected his diction, the richness of his voice was not diminished. Even for the last two and a half years of his life, well into his 80’s – years when many vocalists have long-since lost their quality or their power – John’s voice still carried over the singing of this entire congregation.

Not many months ago, John sang on a Wednesday night in our Fellowship Hall, and I could tell it was a moment of bitter-sweet pride for him – it was a reminder of a thousand solos gone by, a longing for a thousand more to sing. The moment also provided inspiration for our congregation. That inspiration was one of the gifts of John’s life.

John’s voice always made *A Joyful Noise*.

Someone has said that music is “love in search of a word.” This, more than anything else, explains why John’s music was so genuine and his voice so big – for his music resonated from deep within, swelling from a true *heart* which was John’s core.

In 1945 John lay recovering from a life-threatening illness, which he had developed while faithfully defending his country as an officer in the United States Navy. From a hospital bed in Washington, D.C., John laid eyes on a beautiful young nurse, and he must have heard music. Less than a year later, wedding bells sounded, and John and Doris have lived the cliché for 57 years – “making beautiful music,” ever since. Doris accompanied John many times on the piano, and their lives’ music was multiplied four-times over in the birth of their children: John, Jr. and Eileen, Shelley and Brian.

John’s love *sounded* not only in his music, but it could also be heard in his love for his family. They all agree – he was *not* a disciplinarian – that just wasn’t the way he loved! *John* loved through the many “adventures” which he planned for his children, which made them all laugh. John loved with the funny faces he made, which John Jr. wanted to take to school to share with his young classmates. John loved by becoming a wonderful father-*in-law* (a gift that is not always easy to give!). John loved by loving his grandchildren.

John’s love also sounded in his love for people in general. He never met a stranger. Shelley told me that one of his theme songs was “the more, the merrier!” Darwin recalled that John even loved to go to funerals, because it was a chance to see old friends and to talk together. John and Doris spent much of their time in retirement traveling the country, staying with *friends* everywhere they went.

John was genuinely kind; he loved to please other people; he always expressed appreciation. Though John had battled depression a few times in his life, this was a fact that his pastors had to be *told* – for, to us, he was always a *picture* of aging health, and a *sound-bite* for grateful and graceful living. I always enjoyed speaking to John on Wednesdays and Sundays, because he was hearty and jovial. He *always* had a good word for his church and a kind word for his pastors.

John made a joyful noise in music *and* in the merriment of fellowship with family and friends. What a sound legacy to leave!

Another anonymous prophet has said, “He who sings, prays twice.” I believe it was so with John Moore, who sang not just because he loved *music* – John *sang* because he believed the song...

*His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me.*

When I asked his family to tell me about John, it was interesting to me that in more than an hour’s worth of conversation, John’s *vocation* was never mentioned. I think this is a remarkable testimony to a life well-lived. Far too many people are defined and confined by their work. Who they *are* is just what they do –to earn a living. Though John was successful in the insurance industry, he was not a salesman, this is just what he *did*.

John Moore was a child of God who found goodness in friends and family, in good books, in a large, good meal, and a well-made piece of furniture, in the vastness and beauty of nature, and in the simplicity of faithful believing.

For John Kelso Moore, every song was a prayer.

His praying will be missed among us.

*Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth...*

For John Moore, thanks be to God.

Amen!