

Another Chapter, Another Song

Matthew Ward, once part of the music group 2nd Chapter of Acts, has battled cancer and life's dark times. But his music never stopped.

Thirty years ago, a 19-year-old singer named Matthew Ward and his two sisters, who made up the group 2nd Chapter of Acts, were preparing to embark on a major cross-country tour of churches and auditoriums with musicians such as guitarist Phil Keaggy and members of A Band Called David. A recording crew captured highlights of the tour for 1977's stunning three-disc (as in vinyl disc!) album *How the West Was Won*.

Today, 49-year-old Matthew Ward is in his family's home north of Colorado Springs, Colorado, throwing a few items into an overnight bag before heading off to the airport for another of his many solo performances.

Back in the 1970s Ward was singing regularly to thousands of contemporary Christian music's earliest fans, most of whom were in their teens and 20s. Now Ward has three daughters in their teens and 20s, one of whom made Ward and his wife, Deanne, grandparents last September.

After 16 years of touring and more than 1,000 concerts, 2nd Chapter of Acts called it quits in 1988. Sister (and lead songwriter) Annie Herring continued a solo music ministry, and sister Nelly Greisen quit the business altogether, though she did serve as a church worship singer for a while.

But Ward still travels and performs regularly, singing mostly to church groups. And he still meets people at these solo performances who can't wait until the concert is over so they

can tell him about the impact the band had on their lives.

“One man came up to me recently,” Ward says. “He told me, ‘I found the Lord at your concert 25 years ago, but I’m still serving Him today, being faithful to my wife and pastoring a church.’”

Ward gratefully receives reports such as these and considers such spiritual victories the band’s greatest accomplishments. But other rewards have come as well.

In 1998, “Easter Song,” the signature hit from the group’s 1974 *With Footnotes* album, was named one of the 10 best Christian songs of all time by CCM Magazine. (You can read about “Easter Song” and other classic hits in *100 Greatest Songs in Christian Music*, a book created by CCM and released in 2006.)

Occasionally Ward talks with Keaggy, Nancy Honeytree or other singers, musicians and writers from the 1960s and early 1970s who were the pioneering artists in what is now a vast—and for some, lucrative—contemporary Christian music industry.

But most of the time, he hangs out with his family, blends into his church or in other ways lives outside the illumination of the spotlight that made him and his sisters Christian superstars.

And that’s fine with him. “My gift and calling is still music ministry,” he says, “and that’s what I do. It’s a challenge to show the faithfulness of God when everything isn’t roses and ice cream, when everything isn’t perfect and when you struggle with the heartache of being a parent who worries that

sometimes his children aren't doing what they're 'supposed' to do.

"But, hey, it's not a perfect life or a perfect world. Ever since the fall, everything's broken. Sure, we strive for things. And that's good. But things here on earth are not going to be perfect until we're not here anymore. And that's OK with me."

The Consistency of Change

Ward's long, light brown hair is rapidly disappearing, leaving a fringe of short gray strands encircling a glistening bald dome. But the youthful enthusiasm remains, including a contagious sense of humor and a willingness to try new things that leads his exasperated wife to call him "Death-Wish Ward."

Ward's youthful stamina helped him deal with a diagnosis of cancer he received more than a decade ago. The cancer responded well to treatment. And though the illness caused plenty of anxiety, it didn't lead to a midlife crisis.

"Some people react to cancer by trying to get all their ducks in a row," he says. "But my ducks were already in a row. I knew I was doing what God had called me to do."

Ward's clear, alto voice doesn't harmonize with the voices of his sisters any longer. But it can still be heard on his eight post-2nd Chapter of Acts solo albums, including the 2006 release, Christmas With Matthew Ward. And although 2007 lacks some of the spiritual energy of the Jesus Movement, Ward remains faithful to his calling. "The Jesus Movement was a big deal," he says. "I put [it] on the same level as the Azusa

Street Revival. God was reaching young people in amazing ways, and was doing so not necessarily through the church but through different venues.”

But plenty of ministry still happens in churches today. “I was ministering in Zelienople, Pennsylvania, and was about to sing my song ‘Bring Me to the Cross’ when I felt the Lord saying: ‘Here’s what I want you to do with this song tonight. I want you to touch people in their physical beings.’

“So I told the people, ‘The Lord wants to heal some of you tonight, so as I sing over you as a prayer, stand up.’

“Absolutely no one stood up. I thought to myself: OK, this is really interesting! Everyone’s fine here. But then by the time I finished the song, about a third of the people had stood up to receive whatever the Lord had for them. The presence of God was in that room in a very tangible way, and we prayed.”

Ward’s own spiritual journey has also taken some interesting turns. Raised a Roman Catholic, Ward attended Jack Hayford’s Church On The Way during the years 2nd Chapter of Acts was busiest. After moving to Colorado Springs he joined New Life Church, which was founded by Ted Haggard.

But a couple of years ago he felt a growing desire to move from the charismatic New Life to a more liturgical church. Today he is a member of Christ the King Anglican Church, which is part of the Anglican Mission in America movement and is not affiliated with the Episcopal Church.

“In a liturgical church, there is a plumb line you can use to ask, ‘Does this match up with the essentials of the faith?’

It's not about popularity; it's about [the] Word of God. And every week we share communion. And after the message we recite the Nicene Creed."

Some people who have asked Ward about his change wonder if liturgical services can easily become rote. "It can be as alive as you want it to be," he says. "But the main thing is I like the consistency of it, and the fact that we are keeping in touch with things that are very ancient."

The Giver and the Gift

Recent decades have challenged Jesus Movement musicians in a variety of ways. Some have had trouble adjusting to life outside the spotlight, while others have had to come up with creative ways to earn a living and keep body and soul together.

But Ward's solo career has been based on the same universal spiritual principle he followed when he was a member of 2nd Chapter of Acts. "If you have a gift—and we all do—when you surrender that gift to Him there's an anointing that happens. The Lord kind of lands on that gift and uses it in a more spiritual way than He would have if it hadn't been given up to Him."

Today, the mission statement for Matthew Ward Ministries () says: "I have become more and more convinced that God wants to use my voice and story to melt walls of disbelief, discouragement, bitterness and doubt within the body of Christ." And Ward believes he is being as faithful to God today as he was three decades ago.

Sure, there have been times when Ward wondered whether the fickle finger of fame would touch him again. But he doesn't worry about it. "It used to bother me more than it does now," he says. "I'm not sure what that's due to, other than the mellowing that comes with age. But as long as the Lord wants to use me, and it works and I can support my family, I'm not going to worry about jockeying for fame or position.

"If He wants to do something, my response is to say: 'I'm your man! Sign me up for that!' But I'm not worried about obscurity. That's not my job."

In recent years, Ward's gifts have been used in performances, in radio and television interviews, and in his work with Children's HopeChest, a Colorado ministry that works with Russian orphans. He also wrote an autobiography, *My 2nd Chapter: The Matthew Ward Story*, published in 2006 by WaterBrook Press.

The book recounts his family's poverty and the tragedies that befell him and his siblings when their mother died in 1968 followed by their father in 1970. Such heartbreak could have permanently destroyed the family. But in this case, tragedy led to Matthew and Nelly's living with sister Annie and her new husband, Buck, in their home. This provided the siblings with the opportunity to explore more fully the gift God had given them.

"From where I'm sitting, I have been through really, really dark times in life," he says. "And whether the darkness comes from cancer, depression, the loss of loved ones, it can begin to feel that God has lost your address.

“But the lesson I keep learning is that He’s there. And if you start calling out to Him, even if you think He’s not around, He’ll be faithful and reach back to you. At least, that’s been my experience.”

Steve Rabey has written about Christian music for 30 years. He and his wife, Lois, edit YouthWorker Journal and write books from Colorado. To read more about the Jesus Movement, log on at

The Jesus People: Where Are They Now?

A rolling stone gathers no moss. Nor do these 20 pioneering Christian artists of the 1960s and 1970s, most of whom are still serving God and the church with their talents and voices.

Paul Clark

Back then: Midwestern singer-songwriter who released a powerful string of solo albums, some featuring Phil Keaggy and members of Love Song.

Now: Still making music.

Latest stuff: Seventeen albums, both old and new, along with Clark’s fine art photos, are available at [paul](#) .

Tommy Coomes

Back then: Founding member of Love Song, the first supergroup from Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, California, and Maranatha! Records.

Now: Founded Tommy Coomes Praise Band in 1989 and played for major events organized by Promise Keepers, Billy Graham and other ministries.

Latest stuff: Band released My Hope in 2002 (integritymusic .com).

Andraé Crouch

Back then: Groundbreaking contemporary gospel artist who wrote and recorded “My Tribute” and “Through It All.”

Now: After working with Madonna, Quincy Jones, Diana Ross and Elton John, Crouch is focusing on making gospel music and pastoring New Christ Memorial Church in San Fernando, California, with his sister, Sandra.

Latest stuff: 2006’s Mighty Wind is a celebration of 40 years in music (andraecrouch .com).

Terry Scott Taylor

Back then: A member of the cutting-edge Calvary Chapel quartet Daniel Amos, which released their country-rock debut in 1976.

Now: Daniel Amos broke up long ago but released a two-CD 30th anniversary reissue of their first album in 1996. Taylor continues to perform with his all-star band The Lost Dogs.

Latest stuff: In 2006 The Lost Dogs released their latest new album, The Lost Cabin and the Mystery Trees, and more recently a DVD/CD set titled The Lost Dogs Via Chicago ... (All We Left Unsaid), which are available at .

Don Francisco

Back then: Writer, singer (and narrator) of hits such as “He’s Alive,” “Jesus Is Lord of the Way I Feel” and “Jehoshaphat.”

Now: Still performing and recording with his wife, Wendy.

Latest stuff: His 2004 release The Package Collection Vol III and other items (including Francisco’s testimony of overcoming an addiction to pornography) are available at rocky mountain ministries .org.

Richie Furay

Back then: Founding member of Buffalo Springfield (recently inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame) and Poco. He later launched a crossover Christian music career.

Now: Longtime pastor of Calvary Chapel of Broomfield, Colorado.

Latest stuff: A new recording, Heartbeat of Love, and autobiographical book, Pickin' Up the Pieces, were released last year ().

John Fischer

Back then: Recorded 12 albums between 1969 and 1998 and wrote 12 nonfiction and fiction books between 1988 and 2002.

Now: Still singing and writing.

Latest stuff: Recently served as a senior writer for Rick Warren's PurposeDrivenLife .com (fischtankcom).

Chuck Girard

Back then: After recording two Top 20 hits with the Castells, Girard became a Christian, helped form Love Song and later began a prolific solo career.

Now: Living in Nashville, Tennessee, and still recording and performing.

Latest stuff: Recordings, seminar CDs and even a joke page available at .

Phil Keaggy

Back then: Guitar virtuoso who played on dozens of his own and others' acclaimed albums.

Now: A visit to Keaggy's Web site proves that he remains the busiest contemporary Christian music (CCM) pioneer around. He is still touring, recording, recruiting sponsors for Compassion International and granting interviews to magazines such as Guitar Player.

Latest stuff: The recently released CD Dream Again, and other products, info and podcasts are available at philkeaggy .com.

Plus, albums by Keaggy's earlier Glass Harp band have been reissued on CD.

Nancy Honeytree

Back then: 1973 debut album led to a lengthy career.

Now: Still recording, performing and participating in international ministry events.

Latest stuff: 2005's Call of the Harvest and other recordings available at

Joel Chernoff

Back then: Co-founder of Lamb, a pioneering Messianic Jewish band.

Now: Lamb disbanded in 1992 and reformed in 2005. Today, Chernoff is also president of the International Messianic Jewish Alliance.

Latest stuff: The 2005 release The Sacrifice is available from galileeof .

Jamie Owens Collins

Back then: Daughter of artists Jimmy and Carol Owens who made her solo debut with 1973's Laughter in Your Soul.

Now: Still making music.

Latest stuff: 1998's Seasons (and reissued CD version of Laughter in Your Soul, 1978's Love Eyes and 1981's Straight Ahead) are available at new .

Petra

Back then: Indiana quartet that combined rock and religion in its 1974 debut.

Now: After numerous personnel changes in recent years, the band has retired.

Latest stuff: Farewell concert CD came out in 2005. Recent information available at petrameansrock .com fan site.

Barry McGuire

Back then: Husky-voiced hit singer and writer who had hits with the folk group The New Christy Minstrels and reached No. 1 with his apocalyptic 1965 anthem, "Eve of Destruction." After his conversion to Christianity, McGuire recorded many Christian albums and introduced his audiences to artists such as 2nd Chapter of Acts.

Now: Still performing and recording.

Latest stuff: More than 20 classic and recent releases, plus blogs, available at [barry](#) .

Larry Norman

Back then: Undisputed "father of Christian rock," producer, record company founder and author of classic songs such as "Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music," "One Way," "Six Sixty Six" and "." In 2001 CCM Magazine named Norman's 1972 album, Only Visiting This Planet, the second-best Christian album of all time.

Now: Still performing but dealing with mounting health problems.

Latest stuff: You can buy dozens of products (or make a contribution to Norman's medical fund) at [.](#)

Michael Omartian

Back then: Grammy Award-winning master of the keyboard and the recording studio who worked with Steely Dan, Loggins & Messina, Christopher Cross, Rod Stewart, Donna Summer and others, and brought professional production values to Christian music through acclaimed solo albums and work on projects of others, including Amy Grant.

Now: Lives in Nashville with his wife and best-selling author, Stormie.

Latest stuff: No major new solo albums or production work

since 1990s, but classic solo albums White Horse and Adam Again were re-released on CD.

Resurrection Band

Back then: Led by Glenn Kaiser, the Resurrection Band were hard-rocking musical ambassadors of Chicago's Jesus People USA (JPUSA) community.

Now: JPUSA is still going strong, but Rez Band's last album was 1997's Ampendectomy. Kaiser is still singing the blues.

Latest stuff: Kaiser's Blues Heaven II album and School of Blues DVD project were released in 2006 ().

Randy Stonehill

Back then: Tragi-comic troubadour and associate of Larry Norman who released more than a dozen acclaimed albums beginning with 1971's Born Twice.

Now: Still touring and recording.

Latest stuff: His 2002 release Edge of the World CD features CCM pioneers such as Phil Keaggy, Barry McGuire, Annie Herring, Noel Paul Stookey, members of Love Song, Russ Taff and even Larry Norman, who had been estranged from Stonehill for years (randystone).

John Michael Talbot

Back then: Folk rocker turned Christian artist who converted to Catholicism and recorded dozens of beautiful, liturgically based albums of praise and worship music.

Now: Talbot, who married a former nun, still tours, records and oversees Little Portion Hermitage, the Arkansas-based Catholic community he founded in 1983.

Latest stuff: After returning to the electric guitar for the Monk Rock and Beautiful City albums, Talbot is using acoustic form to record his 50th album, which will be released this month. His latest book is The Way of the Mystics: Ancient Wisdom for Experiencing God Today, published by Jossey-Bass

(john).

Evie Tornquist

Back then: Best-selling Christian pop artist.

Now: Living in Florida with her husband, Pelle Karlsson, formerly of Sky Angel Dominion Network, and occasionally touring with contemporary Christian singer Rebecca St. James in a mother-daughter outreach series called SHE (Safe, Healthy, Empowered).

Latest stuff: Songs for His Family album by “Evie and the Karlssons” was released in 1996.

Many of these artists met to record First Love: A Historic Gathering of Jesus Music Pioneers, a double DVD/CD project available at [explo](#) .