

Ruth Graham Remembered As a Woman of Faith

Hundreds paid tribute to the wife of evangelist Billy Graham

Ruth Bell Graham, wife of evangelist Billy Graham, died June 14 at her home in Montreat, N.C., where she had been bedridden for some time with degenerative osteoarthritis. She was 87.

Graham was remembered at a public funeral held in the 2,000-seat Anderson Auditorium at the Montreat Conference Center. Her five children participated in the service, and her 19 grandchildren served as pallbearers. A private family burial took place the next day in the Prayer Garden of the recently dedicated Billy Graham Library in Charlotte, N.C.

"I'm so grateful to the Lord that He gave me Ruth, especially for these last few years we've had in the mountains together," Billy Graham said. "We've rekindled the romance of our youth, and my love for her continued to grow deeper every day. I will miss her terribly and look forward even more to the day I can join her in heaven."

Religious and political leaders around the world extended their condolences. President and Mrs. Bush referred to Ruth Graham as a "remarkable woman of faith." Christian Broadcasting Network founder Pat Robertson described her as "a tower of strength to her husband."

Graham was born June 10, 1920, in Qingjiang, China, where her parents served as medical missionaries. She determined early in life that she would serve God as a pioneer missionary to Tibet, but when she met Billy Graham at Wheaton College, she

told God, "If I could spend the rest of my life serving You with Bill, I would consider it the greatest privilege imaginable."

She and Billy Graham were married on Aug. 13, 1943, and for the next 64 years Ruth Graham devoted her life to supporting her husband and raising their five children. "My father would not have been what he is today if it wasn't for my mother," said Franklin Graham, the couple's eldest son and head of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

The author of numerous books, Ruth Graham traveled with her husband when she could, but was never awed by glamour and fame, preferring to mingle in the crowd during the large evangelistic events rather than sit on the platform, wrote Patricia Cornwell in her 1997 book, *Ruth, a Portrait: The Story of Ruth Bell Graham*.

Among Graham's many projects were the Ruth and Billy Graham Children's Health Center (now the Mission Children's Hospital) she started in 1966 in Asheville, N.C., and The Cove, which is the site of the Billy Graham Training Center. Her vision was to have a place where Christian workers could find a respite and renew their energy.

Graham is survived by her husband, sister, five children, 19 grandchildren and several great-grandchildren.

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