

Billy Graham Named 'NC's Favorite Son'

Billy Graham has spent most of his life in North Carolina.

He grew up in Charlotte and shortly after college moved back to Montreat, N.C., where he has lived since 1945.

But the son of a N.C. dairy farmer received recognition on Wednesday largely for how God used him around the world, preaching in more than 185 countries and territories.

By a unanimous vote from both the House and the Senate, Mr. Graham was honored as "North Carolina's Favorite Son" by the General Assembly, the first **resolution** of its kind. The state legislation also honored the memory of Mr. Graham's late wife, Ruth Bell Graham, for the "partnership with her husband in marriage and ministry."

Lines 46-48 of the resolution reads: *"Whereas, Billy Graham, having served our State and country as a faithful and fearless soldier of the cross, having carried the Gospel of Christ for more than 70 years throughout the world, is proud to call himself a Tar Heel and to make North Carolina his home..."*

Two of Mr. Graham's children—Franklin Graham, the CEO and president of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, and Anne Graham Lotz—were in attendance.

Many in the General Assembly shared personal stories of how Mr. Graham influenced either their own lives or a close family member.

Earlier last month, N.C. Gov. Pat McCrory visited Mr. Graham at his home in Montreat and presented him with a proclamation, naming him "The Favorite Son of North Carolina."

McCrory, who had served as Charlotte mayor for 14 years,

talked about the impact of his 1996 Charlotte Crusade and was also involved in bringing the BGEA headquarters and the Billy Graham Library to Charlotte – both located on Billy Graham Parkway.

And while Mr. Graham has preached to more than 215 million people worldwide, and either met or counseled every U.S. President since Harry Truman in 1950, he never lost focus on his home state.

Besides California and Texas, North Carolina hosted more Crusades (12) than any other state in the U.S. Crusade stops included Asheville ('53, '77), Chapel Hill ('82), Charlotte ('47, '58, '72, '96), Greensboro ('51), Jacksonville ('62) and Raleigh ('51, '62, '73).

In 2012, Mr. Graham made his 56th appearance on the Gallup's "Ten Most Admired Men in the World" list. The worldwide evangelist was also influential as an author, writing 31 books, including many landing on best-seller lists, most recently "Nearing Home" in 2011.

Ruth Bell Graham, who grew up in China as a daughter of medical missionaries, was also an accomplished author, writing or co-writing 14 books of her own, including "Footprints of a Pilgrim" and "Sitting By My Laughing Fire."

"When it comes to spiritual things, my wife has had the greatest influence on my memory," Mr. Graham said about his wife who passed away in 2007.

Mr. Graham still has a burden for both North Carolina and the United States and asks Christians to get involved with *My Hope America with Billy Graham*, which culminates in November.

Said Mr. Graham recently: "There is only one message in any generation and that's Jesus."

To learn more about Mr. Graham's early years on the dairy farm

in North Carolina, including a tour of his childhood home, consider a visit to The Billy Library in Charlotte, N.C. Admission is free. Open Monday-Saturday.

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