

New Ruth Bell Graham Exhibit Opens

All Ruth Bell Graham could find was a package of Kleenex in her handbag.

It would have to do.

She was at Earls Court Arena in London, site of the 1966 Billy Graham Crusade, and someone had passed her a note from a girl named Wendy, who was asking for her help.

Ruth had first found Wendy, a heavy drug user, nearly unconscious by the stadium entrance and wanted to help.

Over the previous nights, Ruth had been talking to Wendy about committing her life to Christ, but Wendy was hesitant to make that decision. Crusade staff members decided to take Wendy home, but before they did, Ruth wanted to write her a message.

With only a Kleenex package to write on, she took out the cardboard backing and quickly wrote three lines of encouragement:

"God loves me.

Jesus died for me.

No matter what I've done, if I confess to Him, He will forgive me."

Ruth then tucked the note into Wendy's pocket just before she left.

A year later, Ruth met Wendy again in London and she told Ruth how that impromptu cardboard note had been her lifeline to God.

Wendy corresponded with Ruth and this memorabilia is just part

of the display at the Billy Graham Library's newest exhibit which opens July 1 and runs through Aug. 31.

The exhibit's title: "Ruth Bell Graham: The Heart of a Missionary."

Focusing on a side of Ruth that many may not know about, this exhibit displays her deep desire to share the love of Christ with the world, one person at a time.

"Ruth always dreamed that she would be a missionary to Tibet," said Diane Wise, promotions manager for The Billy Graham Library. "Those plans were transformed when she met Billy Graham and realized God had a different call on her life.

"Her heart for serving others never faded though and the many lives she touched over the years are a testimony to that fact."

Born in China to missionary parents, Ruth developed a strong heart for the Chinese people and an even greater love for the Lord, which was evident as she stood beside America's most well-known evangelist for more than 60 years.

"Our team has spent hours looking through Ruth's writings, photos and memorabilia to compile this exhibit," said Debra Cordial, director of the library. "While we have a room in our Journey of Faith dedicated to Ruth, this new exhibit offers a great opportunity for visitors to see a different side of her remarkable life."

One example of Ruth's passion for all people was Velma Barfield, a convicted murderer who lived on death row for six years.

Velma accepted Christ shortly after her arrest and Ruth started writing her in prison and talking to her by phone. On display you'll see a poem that Ruth dedicated to Velma in her book "Clouds Are The Dust of His Feet."

Ruth's love for others and passion to share Christ can be seen by visitors through handwritten personal journal entries, including one from a small book she jotted notes in during a London visit that included this brief itinerary:

Little boy with cancer (June 28)

Lunch at Buckingham Palace (June 29)

Other letters, newspaper clippings, awards and firsthand accounts of how she touched the lives of others can be found in the glass display cases, along with this hand-written poem she wrote on a card given to Billy in 1978:

"A dream fulfilled ...
To walk with you
Through all these years,
Through every kind of weather,
And walk into
The setting sun
Still loving and ... together."

"The Heart of a Missionary" also details Ruth's impact on building The Billy Graham Training Center (The Cove) near Asheville, which was built more than 20 years ago.

Ruth had prayed The Cove would be a place for retreat, rest, relaxation and renewal. She took a personal interest in many of the construction details, including the use of stone from that property for the outside of the Chatlos Memorial Chapel and the height of the steeple.

Used with permission of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.