



**Faye Ihrig Speer**, a member of the legendary Speer Family, graduated to her heavenly home on October 13 at age 86. Surrounded by family, she passed away at her home in Nashville, Tennessee. Faye was born in Augusta, Kentucky, and attended Trevecca Nazarene University in Nashville before marrying her beloved Brock in 1948. They were married for 51 years and raised three children. Brock Speer passed away in 1999 at age 79, from complications related to Alzheimer's.



After they were married, Mrs. Speer joined her husband's family, the Speer Family, as their alto singer. She traveled the country with the group, leaving only briefly to be home with her young children. When their youngest child graduated from high school, Faye rejoined the group, which was then under Brock's management following the passing of Dad and Mom Speer.

Throughout the '60s and '70s, the Speer Family was seen on televisions across the nation as part of the "Gospel Singing Jubilee" program, as well as shows such as the "Gospel Singing Caravan." They enjoyed success on the Singing News radio chart with songs such as "What Sins Are You Talking About," "Saved to the Uttermost" and "He's Still in the Fire."

Many Speer Family projects were awarded Grammy nominations, as well as Dove Awards. The group was invited into the Gospel Music Association Hall of Fame in 1998 and were the first to receive the GMA's Lifetime Achievement Award. They were also inducted into the Southern Gospel Music Association Hall of Fame. Most notably, the family was honored with the opportunity to perform for President Jimmy Carter at the White House during his presidency, and they were entered into the Congressional Record on the group's 60th anniversary. At the Grand Ole Gospel Reunion in 1997, Faye was given the Lifetime Achievement Award.

After 75 years, Brock's declining health led to the Speer Family's retirement at the National Quartet Convention in 1998. Following the group's retirement and Brock's death the next year, Faye continued to make occasional appearances on the Gaither Homecoming stage and videos with the remaining members of the family. In 2015, Faye was awarded an honorary doctorate degree from Trevecca Nazarene University in recognition of her years of service and support of the university.

Faye Speer is survived by her three children: Suzan, Marc (Joyce) Speer, and Brian (Allison) Speer, as well as a host of other friends and family who loved her dearly.



**From Faye's son Brian:** I come from a long line of Nazarenes with deep roots. Mom's dad was a Nazarene pastor and her mom was an ordained elder in the Church. My dad's family moved from Alabama to Nashville after World War II so that Brock could attend Trevecca Nazarene College.

Both my dad and mom were given honorary doctorate degrees from Trevecca, Dad in 1997 and Mom just this year. Mom wouldn't tell people about it because she was embarrassed and felt totally unworthy and undeserving. She would say, "Why me? I've done nothing to deserve this."

At her homegoing celebration, something that impressed me, and that would have shocked Mom, was the letter from the Generals Superintendent read by Dr. Kevin Ulmet. They sent their condolences to her family and praised her life and influence.

Right after Daddy died, we had to convince her to go to General Assembly with us. Nazarenes hold their worldwide meeting every four years, and this one was in 2001, two years after her beloved Brock died. She thought nobody would remember her, but we convinced her to go. I'll never forget how we got out of the truck to check in at the Westin in Indianapolis, and we couldn't even get to the desk without her getting stopped and hugged. The whole weekend was that way; we couldn't go two steps without



someone stopping her. The time there was a kind of epiphany for her. She realized that she had an identity apart from Brock, and people admired and appreciated her individually and not just as a part of the Speer Family or as Brock's wife.


The thing that would have amazed her and made her shake her head in wonderment was that the Generals didn't send anything like that to Brock, but just for her. She was a very special lady. Our hearts will grieve for a very long time. We thank you for all your prayers and messages. You are our family and we love and appreciate all of you.

**From Gloria Gaither:** Probably the first couple I met in gospel music was Faye and Brock Speer, and I shall forever be thankful for that. They invited Bill and me to their home and I found them to be real, smart, kind, and welcoming. They had small children and, like us, were juggling the life that demanded travel with the life at home. Faye, at that point, was a stay-at-home mom while Brock sang with his family. Later, when the children were older, she joined him on the road. From that first supper in their home until the end, Faye was a warm and faithful friend. I treasured the moments together we were able to steal over the years to talk in some corner at conventions, concert backstage dressing rooms, or at our house when the Speers were coming through. Faye was a constant in the lives of so many: steady, true, and committed to her Lord. I miss her. I always will.



**From Bill Gaither:** About two months before Faye Speer passed away, I went with Brian and Allison to visit her home. She still lived in the same house I had first visited 45 years earlier when I brought my new song "The King Is Coming" to

the Speer family. When I sat down at Faye's piano, I asked her if this was the same piano we gathered around all those years ago and she confirmed, "Yes, same piano." I recalled starting Brock out on the first verse, "The market place is empty, no more traffic in the streets..." Then Faye took the second verse, and the whole family came in on the third verse with Ben exhorting on, "The King Is Coming!"

A big smile came to Faye's face as we relived the memory that took place at that very piano decades ago. Whatever else happened that day, the moment I can't forget is seeing that beautiful smile come back to her face for a few moments. We sure will miss this sweet lady, but we know she is happy to be reunited with Brock and her folks, and so many of the wonderful people she loved. 

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