

CONVERSATION *with*

Allison Speer

By Rick Francis



Singing News (SN):

Let's talk about your last name. What is your connection to The Speer Family?

Allison Speer (AS):

I married into the family of Brock and Faye Speer. Their youngest son is Brian. We have been married for 25 years. It has been an adventure and joy to be around the Speers. They are lovely folks, who have made me feel like I am their own.

SN: How did you and Brian meet?

AS: Brian and I met at Homeland Records in 1989. I was recording for Homeland, and Brian was their controller. Bill Traylor introduced us and has been responsible for all of these last 25 years! Should I kiss him or kick his shins? I don't know! Brian is a lot like Brock [Speer]. Honestly, I don't deserve him.

SN: Recently, I heard you tell the story about your first time to visit Brock and Faye's house for dinner. Can you share that story?

AS: I went to Brock and Faye's home for dinner about a month after Brian and I began dating. I had not met them yet and was anxious and excited. I sat across from Brian and could not keep from staring at him. He is so handsome!

I thought I would take my shoe and rub his foot under the table. I did, and he smiled at me a while. Then I slipped my shoe off and pulled his sock down and rubbed his ankle with my foot. He didn't respond this time, though.

About three minutes later, Faye leaned over and whispered to me, "You know that's my leg, don't you?" They still let me in the family though!

This summer, I was invited to set up a *Singing News* booth at a three-day women's conference called "Something Beautiful," which was hosted by *Singing News* contributing editor Melissa Brady. Yes, there were a few (brave) men there, too; but mostly, the place was full of women desiring to worship together and to re-connect with God in a special way.

All three days were packed with excellent speakers and singers. One who really stood out was Allison Speer. On stage, she was hilarious!

But off stage, she still lit up the room every time she walked in. Even during the times she was not supposed to be on stage, she had the entire room laughing. Her comedic timing and delivery were perfect, and the life lessons she taught through everyday humor was powerful—even life-changing.

I visited with Allison after that conference. Here's an excerpt from that visit.

SN: Tell us a little more about your background. Where did you grow up?

AS: I was raised in central Kentucky. The town was Parksville, and it is a farm community just outside of Danville. Early in life I learned to tend cattle, grow gardens, raise tobacco, cut wood, and have rotten-apple fights with my cousins. It was a typical southern farm, where each member of the family had chores and was vitally interconnected.

SN: What did growing up on a farm teach you about life?

AS: It instilled in my heart a “team-work” mentality. The upbringing I had gave me a strong work ethic and a great desire to serve God. My grandmother taught us about giving to others from the garden rows. She would have us pick beans and take them to neighbors. She taught us to dry apples on the roof and share bags of them with the people at church who didn’t have fruit trees.

We learned the sacrificial essence of fellowship just as they had in the New Testament, with each one giving to the needs of others in the Body of Christ. Church attendance is not just meant to be a surface dynamic of acquaintances, but a deep trust that bearing one another’s burdens and sharing is something we can count on.

SN: You are known as a versatile and powerful vocalist! When did you realize you had this gift for singing?

AS: I have a gift for singing? Oh, well... Ok. When did I realize it? Ugh, about four minutes ago! (laughs)

No, really... I have never given much thought to my gift as a singer. I do, however, have a gift of “communication.”

I love people, and audiences are made up of people who desire to hear about the things of God! This is the joy of my life, to re-tell stories of the Bible. I use music as a vehicle for that. I have never considered myself to be a great singer. I do strive to be better at vocalization; but my real goal is to be a better, and more honest, communicator!

SN: Do you play any musical instruments?

AS: I used to play a mean trombone! I figured out that there is not much call these days for a Gospel trombonist. I play the Irish whistle—poorly—and I am learning to play the guitar. I have a great teacher named Willy Dryer,



These photos were taken during the filming of Allison’s latest comedy DVD, *Woo Hoo, What A Ride!*





Allison sharing more funny stories from the stage.



who is brilliant! In most of my lessons you can hear Willy say, “Oh, almost... almost! Try it again...”

SN: Did you ever sing as part of a vocal group, or have you always been a soloist?

AS: I have done some singing with a group called John’s Call. This was a quartet with Johnny Minick, Aaron Minick, and Mike Allen. We traveled some together, but never recorded a CD. We didn’t really travel enough to justify making a recording. But... we were really good—when I could find my part!

SN: You have a new CD out. Tell us about that.

AS: My new recording is titled *Writer*, and it is all songs that I have co-written. I believe it is necessary to have goals in life; and once you have accomplished those goals, you set new ones! It was a goal of mine to be a part of writing an entire CD. It probably has more of an eclectic mix of songs than most of my recordings, but it shows the versatility of the writers I worked with.

SN: What is something about Allison Speer that most people do not know?

AS: I love laughing. Most folks see me on the Gaither Homecoming videos and have considered me “prim and proper” because of the type songs that I sing, but I am very “countrified” and a “goofball” most of the time. I love to poke fun and have others return the fun. I am like my grandmother in that I love to cut up with people.

SN: It’s something I didn’t know about you.... I didn’t realize how hilarious you were on stage, and what a great communicator of “life lessons” you were, until I saw you at a women’s conference recently.

AS: The *Something Beautiful* Conference was a fun retreat! Yes, I do love comedy. Those ladies there were wonderful... Why were you there, Rick? It was a women's conference! Hmmm?

SN: Your latest DVD has a lot of comedy on it. Why a comedy DVD? And why at this stage of your life and career?

AS: I have always done some stand-up comedy in my concerts, so my recent step into comedy events has been a dream come true. I really spent two years studying comedy and writing material for my own sketches, before I recorded a DVD of just comedy. I love hearing an audience laugh. That is only second to hearing an audience sing together. Good, clean fun is needed and so lightens the heart!

I feel like it is time for me to really be who God made me to be. It seems like all my life I have tried to be the person people expected me to be, and have almost hidden the comedic part of my personality, thinking that maybe it was "unladylike" or "unbecoming." I have found so many things in my upbringing to be hilarious, and sharing them with others has allowed me to see that God made me like I am and gave me the path that He did so that I can share HIS abundant joy with others!

Finding the freedom to see the funny things in life and point it out to others requires a continual search for God's blessings. What better life than to dedicate yourself to searching for the gifts of joy from God. I feel like I have a new point of view on life. God is not a serious, somber creator. He belly laughs at us! We can be sure of this because we are made in His image, and we belly laugh at ourselves! Laughter is like an antidepressant pill for the soul. God said that, not me!

SN: Can I get you to share one of the stories you tell onstage?

AS: Sure! At age 82, Grandmother moved in with my mom. She wanted to keep her independence as much as

possible, so she cooked some and wanted to drive sometimes—to stay in practice. The last time I took a ride with Granny behind the wheel, we headed for the Wal-Mart in Danville, Kentucky.

We got to the edge of town, and Granny ran a red light! She never looked up, never slowed down, just shot straight through the light. I said, "Granny, that was a red light, you were supposed to stop back there!"

She exclaimed, "Oh! Was I driving?"

I rededicated my life to Jesus three times in one afternoon! God rest her speeding soul.

SN: We have to wrap this up. I've enjoyed visiting with you, Allison.

AS: What a treat it was, Rick. Next time, let's go to Waffle House! ●

EDITOR'S NOTE:

For more info, you can go to www.allisonspeer.com. If you have enjoyed this visit with Allison Speer, be sure to look for her new monthly feature, beginning in the November issue of *Singing News*.



Allison enjoying a dose of laughter.