A mom to remember

By Deena C. Bouknight

There are those who reflect the love of Christ in almost every facet of life. Author C.S. Lewis described such people this way: “... that Christ is actually operating through them; that the whole mass of Christians are the physical organism through which Christ acts – that we are His fingers and muscles, the cells of His body.”

Many speak of Claudia Moore Walker McCain in that way:

“Claudia was all about mercy, encouragement, and drawing children and adults to Christ,” says her husband, Rick. “She cherished each of us and often sacrificed her needs for our needs.”

“She set the bar on how to live by Proverbs ... everything that Solomon wrote about in chapter 31,” says Terri Moseley, assistant office administrator at Rick McCain’s orthopedic practice. “She was the most humble, carefree, sweet-spirited person I have ever been privileged to know.”

Patti Giles, who often prayed with Claudia for the youth, says her exuberance for Christ was intimidating. “I don’t mean that in a negative way. It’s just that when she prayed, she was in His presence. Prayer was something she did not take lightly.”

“She was a ray of sunshine, the Lord’s light, every time she came through that door,” says Cindy Shirey, an x-ray technician at Rick McCain’s practice. “I don’t think she knew how many lives she touched.”

Even as Claudia’s own life came to an abrupt end last February, she left an inspirational trail for others to follow, especially her children: Sara Ann, a sophomore at USC; Richard, a junior at Ben Lippen; and Matthew, a middle-schooler at Ben Lippen. Leaving evening services at First Presbyterian Church in downtown Columbia, Claudia and her son Richard were hit by a car as they crossed the street. While Richard suffered a broken leg, Claudia succumbed to a severe head injury two days later.

At her funeral, Dr. Sinclair Ferguson of First Presbyterian

declared, “If Claudia could talk to you today, I think she would tell you this: ‘I’m in heaven and I want you to be here. But you will never be able to see me again unless you know my Savior.’”

That’s what she wanted most, especially for the children. Many witnessed Claudia McCain living out Matthew 18:3-6: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.”
Claudia welcomed all she could. “When she hosted a Child Evangelism Good News Club in her home, she did not just open her door to the ministry team,” says her friend Liz Stonecipher. “Claudia made fliers, hung balloons, and distributed them to the children. Children of every age were precious to her. ‘Precious,’ was a Claudia word. That is how she saw children.”

Claudia taught at Heathwood Hall Episcopal School until she had children. They, their friends, and all the other children she could gather became Claudia’s focus. As director of Ben Lippen’s Middle School drama club, she organized a spring play each year, scouring the community for props and costumes. She read to the classes when her children were in elementary school. She was a perennial homeroom mom. She supported teachers whenever and wherever they needed help, most often as a “prayer warrior,” says Faye Weigle, assistant to the director of corporate marketing and communications at Ben Lippen.

At First Presbyterian Church, Claudia helped teach the seventh grade Sunday school class, served as a deacon, and helped with vacation Bible school.

She was fully engaged in her children’s sports activities. “As our tenacious team mom, she kindly organized the snack schedule, faithfully attended all the matches, continually kept the parents informed, and eagerly cheered each young man on the (wrestling) mat to victory,” says Dana Walters, a fellow Ben Lippen mom.

“The Lord allowed my final memory of Claudia to be an especially sweet one,” Walters adds. “Awards were given out that night, including the highest award of state champion. Then the coach said, ‘Anywhere else, the state champion award would be the best award of the night, but not here. The most important award is that of exemplifying Christ. The “Most Christ-Like Award” this year goes to Richard McCain (Claudia’s son).’ Claudia wept for joy. As the tears streamed down her face, she said, ‘There is no greater joy than to know that your children are walking with the Lord.’ God gave Claudia that sweet assurance before He took her a few days later.”

Ben Lippen swim coach Hank Wright says of Claudia, “She always could be heard telling the swimmers how proud she was of them. She congratulated them when they did well, and consoled and encouraged them when they did not. After the meets, she was always one of the first who would e-mail out her feelings about how things went and how thankful she was to God for what He was accomplishing with the team … not just as athletes, but as growing young men and women. I cannot recall a conversation or an e-mail where she did not praise the Lord.”

On the Sunday of the accident, Claudia ministered to college students, including daughter Sara Ann, at a First Presbyterian luncheon. “God gave me the gift of being with His light just a few hours before He took her,” says Christie Unthank, a friend. “She was so excited that Sara Ann and her boyfriend came to the luncheon, and she expressed that gratitude in our prayer time together later that afternoon. She praised God and she asked Him to bring about revival in the young, from cradle to college. She might have been 56 years old, but she could relate to children and young people like I’ve never seen. She was a youthful heart who loved children fiercely.”

Happy Mother’s Day, Claudia McCain.  

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