

The Eulogy given for Emma Lee “Kitty” Smalley McCrummen

by Norman H. McCrummen III on February 27, 2016

By the unfathomable genius of God, each one of us is amazingly unique; and by His gracious providence we bear in our image His divine imprint. But it is *not only* God’s likeness that is in us, it is our parents’ images that we carry as well; and that too is by God’s design.

Like her *own* mother, Emma Lee Smalley McCrummen was gifted musically; and like her mother, Mama was determined from a young age to excel in music, to play the piano superbly and later to play the organ exceptionally. Like her father, Mama was unafraid of challenges and saw life as an exciting adventure. Like her mother, Mama loved all things that were beautiful, from flowers to open fields to an immaculately kept house to an exquisitely set table. Like her father, she painted the canvas of life with big, bold strokes; and like her mother – who was herself an artist – Mama didn’t leave any canvas until the details were artfully and fully filled in. Like her father, Mama loved telling stories and entertaining people. Like her mother, she wanted to know everything about your interests and involvements; and like her father, she wanted you to know about her latest activities, her family, above all, how great she thought her grandchildren were. Like her mother, Mama was orderly, meticulous, disciplined and thorough. Like her father, she had too much energy; she could exhaust Hercules himself. Like her mother, she was a woman of deep Christian faith, and like her mother, she loved the Scriptures. (Meg and I were looking through Mama’s Bible and found that she had underlined in red almost every chapter in both Old and New Testament. When I commented on the great amount of time Mama obviously had spent in the Old Testament, Meg said, “It’s because she liked seeing people get what they deserved.”) Like her mother, Mama believed strongly in the power of prayer; and like her father, she believed one had the duty to do one’s own part to bring about the desired results of life; in other words to pray and to believe that everything depended on God, but to work as though everything depended on oneself. Like her mother, the home was Mama’s sanctuary; and like her father, especially her father’s sister, Mama wanted to experience what was beyond the horizon. Like her mother, Mama was most inspired when in church; and like her father, she had the ability to communicate what she felt in a way that enthralled, dazzled, stunned and inspired.

What was Mama’s *alone* was the path God gave her to walk, only Mama *didn’t walk* that path, she ran it like American Pharaoh at the Derby. Speed was in her DNA. Even at 90 she out-walked most people decades younger. What made this problematic was that she wasn’t just fast, she had no patience. Mama had many strengths and talents, but patience was not among them; neither was the ability to keep her opinions to herself. For like her father, she perhaps had too much confidence. In that confidence, Mama never hesitated to share with family or friend or stranger the way things *ought* to be, whether in politics or religion or in manners or in the way one should dress. No one ever wondered for long what Mama was thinking because she would let you know. What sometimes irritated us about that particular trait was how often she was right.

She was extremely intuitive, and after quickly sizing up a dilemma she would give a solution in a few short sentences. Sometimes Lynn and Warren and I wished Mama had not so quickly and squarely hit bull's eye, but that's simply the way she was.

All of the trappings of Mama's life were that of a traditionalist because she was a traditionalist by conviction and taste. But that was only half of who she was. Long ago we knew that Mama marched to her own drummer, and the drumbeat was that of independence, confidence and faith.

Now the funny things Mama did could fill volumes. For instance, she loved to drive, but not surprisingly she drove like a bat out of Hades. When she was 85 she drove from Lynn's house in Birmingham to Montgomery in an hour and explained herself by saying, "Well, I just didn't let anyone pass me." When she rode with me, she would often make a motion for me to drive faster by flipping her hand forward and saying, "Come on, Norman, you're going too slow." How she avoided jail I'll never know.

What we will remember about Mama is not just the speed with which she lived, but the beauty with which she lived. We'll remember her love for music, for the organ and piano and for singing. We'll remember that she was a great teacher, not just of music, but of the Bible. We'll remember her aversion for what she called "sloppiness" and "laziness." We'll remember that she believed *every* person should master at least one of the gifts God gave them. We'll remember her love for Nature, especially for flowers. We'll never forget her love for family, especially for grandchildren. We'll remember her devotion to our father and the joy they found in their marriage. We'll remember their shared faith, their devotion to the churches they served and their love for Judson College. We'll never forget Mama's enthusiasm for life, her beautiful smile, her ability to light up a room and to make people happy. Above all, we'll remember her faith in Jesus and her confidence that He would bring good out of bad and life out of death; and that we should *never* give in to our fears, because in Jesus we live and move and have our being. That is what we will remember.