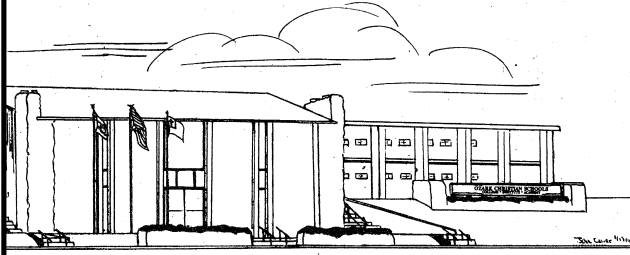


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Founder D. C. Branham

The STANDARD BEARER

Vol. 40 No. 3

May/June 2009

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

IN MEMORIAM

In the early morning hours of March 22, 2009, Brother Gary Norris entered what the Bible calls *"a rest to the people of God."* Brother Gary meant a lot to a host of people across this country and around the world. But more specifically, he meant a lot to Ozark Bible Institute and College. Gary blessed this institution in a number of ways. His consistent Christian life was a great example of what OBI would want all its graduates to be. Gary's ministry at Convocation, Decision Days, revivals, and Camp Peniel made an impact on the work in Neosho that will be remembered as long as memory lasts. And most precious of all, Gary's friendship enriched the lives of all of us at OBI. So, it is in honor of this great man that I dedicate this issue of the Standard Bearer.

Perhaps I worry too much, but if anyone mistakes my desire to honor Brother Gary as a slight toward someone else, please forgive me. Many OBI alumni and friends have gone to their reward without having a memorial in the Standard Bearer. But I felt in my heart this was the appropriate thing to do for Brother Gary. May all who read it be blessed by the memory of this Godly man's life.

President Daniel E. Taylor

Obituary

Gary Lynn Norris was born July 5, 1962 in Greenville, MS to Charles and Jeanette (Wright) Norris. He was reared in the Mississippi Delta near Rolling Fork, MS. He was saved and filled with the Holy Ghost at Bethel Assembly of God in Greenville, MS in 1982, and was shortly called into the ministry. Gary graduated from Ozark Bible Institute and College with a Bachelor of Biblical Literature in 1989. During his time at OBI, he met Darla Deisher, whom he wed on June 19, 1987.



REVEREND GARY L. NORRIS

July 5, 1962 - March 22, 2009

During his early years of ministry, Gary was a youth pastor at Bible Holiness Assembly of God in Neosho, MO, and Broadway Assembly in Lorain, OH. He also served as an associate pastor at Honolulu Assembly of God, Honolulu, HI. His first pastorate was at Lola Pentecostal Church, Lola, KY, where he served for four and one-half years. Most recently, Gary was pastor of Landmark Tabernacle from January 1995 until his death. The Lord blessed Gary and Darla with two precious children, Bethany Paige, 17, and Garret Bryce, 11. Gary was a wonderful husband and father who loved spending time with his family. Other than his family, preaching the Word of God and winning souls were Gary's passions in life. Often, during his extended hospital stay, he would voice his desire to be back at church, and mention that he already had his next sermon ready. He had a great love for his flock at Landmark Tabernacle. Gary touched many lives, even while confined to a hospital bed, and was always ready to share his faith with anyone.

After a long, hard fight, Gary succumbed to colon cancer at 12:45 a.m. on Sunday, March 22, at St.

Francis Hospital, Tulsa, OK, at the age of 46. He was a great soldier of the cross, and remained faithful even unto death. He is survived by his wife and children, his father and mother, one sister, Debbie (Mike) Cornwell of Cedar Creek, TX, one brother, John Norris of Rolling Fork, Mississippi, and two nephews, Conner and Tristan Cornwell.

Funeral services for Brother Norris were held on Tuesday, March 24, 2009 at 11:00 a.m. at the Carbondale Assembly Of God Church, Tulsa, OK. Officiating the service was Daniel E. Taylor, Mike Shelton, Roger Sheppard, Randy Perry, and Kerry Sampson. Casket bearers were Wade Jarvis, Jeff Presley, Jared Jarvis, Joshua Lemaster, Terry Mincks, and Steve Lemaster. Interment was in the Woodland Memorial Park Cemetery, Sand Springs, OK.

WHEN A MAN OF GOD DIES

By President Daniel E. Taylor

(The funeral of Gary Norris - March 24, 2009)

"And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose and went down to the wilderness of Paran" (1 Samuel 25:1).

"Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men" (Psalm 12:1).

In legal circles, it is said that "Possession is nine-tenths of the law." Preaching is much like that—nine tenths of it is getting a grip or "possession" of what God wants you to preach; the other one-tenth is figuring out how to say it. I've got nine tenths of it. Now I need the Lord to help me with the one tenth—saying it. I am here today to preach the funeral of a preacher. That is the nine-tenths I have a grip on. I realize that "preachers," if you use the name loosely, covers people who merely wear the tag "Preacher." But Gary Norris was not one of them. Gary was like Samuel, "**A Man of God.**" Gary was part of the noblest development of mankind, **a good preacher.** Gary Norris was a part of a very small group who were as Revelation says, "*Faithful unto death,*" or as Paul described, "*kept the faith.*"

So, I know why I am here. I am here to preach a man of God's funeral. And I know what my subject is, for it is found in the two verses I read for a text. My subject is "**WHEN A MAN OF GOD DIES.**"

FIRST, WHEN A MAN OF GOD DIES, ALL THOSE WHOSE LIFE HE TOUCHES GRIEVE. *"And Samuel died and all the Israelites were gathered together and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran."*

In Ian Maclaren's book **Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush**, he describes the scene at the old kirk on the morning of Dr. MacLure's funeral. There had been a winter storm in the night, and the roads were covered with three feet of snow. The old deacons had gone to the church to build the fires for the few mourners they supposed would come out in such weather. Then Maclaren describes the surprise of one of the deacons as he looks out the church window and saw a throng of mourners making their way to the beloved doctor's funeral. The deacon said, with a tear in his voice, "Here they come, and everyone has his/their own reason." As I look at this crowd I think, here they are and everyone has their own reason.

Some of you are grieving like myself, because Gary was your friend. I have a lot of fond memories of Gary, and conversations we had. One time he called and asked me to preach a few nights for him. I was under a cloud at the time; all preachers get there once in a while. So, I told Gary, "I can think of at least five preachers that would do you a lot more good." Gary said, "Oh yeah, I know them too, but I want you to do it." Of course, Gary was ribbing me, trying to help me out from under the cloud. And he was being honest; he did know those five other preachers. But most of all, he was my friend, and he really did want me to preach for him.

Some of you are grieving like me because Gary was a fellow soldier. I read a brief account by Robert E. Lee's aide of his memories of Lee during the Civil War. He said that, during all those years of that horrible conflict, he only saw the general cry once. It was when Lee found his faithful friend and fellow officer, A. P. Hill, mortally wounded under a tress at Petersburg. All of us who are in the army of the Lord have suffered a great loss today. Just last July at Camp Peniel, I went to Gary and thanked him for the times he stood by me in battle. When I first came to OBI, I asked Gary to fill a vacancy on the teachers' staff. He drove from Tulsa twice a week to teach those classes. He told me that he would

teach during the day, and stand guard at night if I needed him to. While I was thanking him, Gary turned to Brother Randy Perry pointed at me and said, "You should have seen this guy back then, walking around with a bottle of Wal-Mart Pepto-Bismo in his pocket called Stress Liquid. Every little while you'd see him take a big drink." I said it is funny now, but it wasn't then. Gary said, "No, but God gave us the victory." We are grieving today because we've lost a good soldier. But not for long!

The Sergeant that held General Lee's horse at Appomattox while the general went in to meet Grant said, "When I saw General Lee disappear behind the door of the McLean house, I knew the next time I saw him **my war would be over.**" The next time we see Gary, our war will be over!

SECOND, WHEN A MAN OF GOD DIES, HE RESTS FROM HIS LABORS WITH KINDRED SPIRITS THAT DIED DOING THE WILL OF GOD. *"And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran."* The man of God went to rest with his kin. Good preachers do that when they die. Samuel had been lent to the Lord. I know we all belong to the Lord, but it says in 1 Samuel 1:28, "*That as long as Samuel lived, he was lent to the Lord.*" That just means that Hannah, who represents all those who loved him, knew his life was special. He was a man of God! "And when the man of God died they buried him in his house." But in a higher sense, he rested with those who were like him. When Paul expounded on the members of the Faithful Hall of Fame, he concluded by saying, "*And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak, and Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and the prophets*"—and Gary...

I do not exaggerate when I say that Gary Norris has joined that cloud of faithful witnesses, "*of whom the world was not worthy!*" And while we lament our loss, let us rejoice in heaven's gain. For Brother Gary has done as Paul said all the faithful would, "*He has come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect*" (Hebrews 12:22-23).

And Gary found himself along side those just men and women who went before. He no doubt saw Robert Holmes that pointed to heaven's multitude and said, "For the Ethne." Brother Branham probably told him, "No more nasty now and now, this is the sweet bye and bye." I can almost hear Brother Godi from Randy Snow's church say to Gary, "It's real!" Gary probably did like Jasper Rawlins, the old black preacher from Richmond, Virginia said he would do. Jasper was born a slave, and the war ended when he was still a baby. He grew to be a mountain of a man and a great preacher. Sometimes when the Spirit moved him to preach on heaven, he would stand behind the pulpit and weep, and he'd say, "When I get to heaven the mighty angel will say, 'Jasper you want your starry crown?' And I'll say, 'Yes, mighty angel, but I want to see Master Jesus first of all.'" Gary's daughter, Bethany said, "After Dad sees Jesus he'll probably talk to Job." Yes, but the good thing about that conversation is the suffering is over NOW!

(Continued on page 3)

Daniel E. Taylor, Editor-in-Chief
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“We speak of the realm of the blest,
 A country so bright and so fair,
 And oft are its glories confessed,
 But what must it be to be there!
 We speak of its pathways of gold,
 Its walls decked with jewels so rare,
 Its wonders and pleasures untold,
 But what must it be to be there!”

THIRD, WHEN A MAN OF GOD DIES, HE LEAVES BEHIND IN THE WILDERNESS WE CALL THE WORLD, THOSE OF US THAT MUST GO ON AND DO THE WILL OF GOD. *“And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.”* David wasn’t able to go to Samuel’s funeral in Ramah because Saul was there, and Saul was after him. When David heard about it, he went to a deserted place near Paran, **and there he grieved.**

And so David meditated in the wilderness of Paran. He did what he often did—he prayed! He prayed and thought about Samuel. Some of you young folks probably feel a lot like David did in Paran. “What am I going to do without Samuel?” “What am I going to do without Brother Gary?”

You see, Samuel was the only one besides David that knew David was supposed to be king. Saul suspected it, but only Samuel knew it. The Lord has shown him at Jesse’s house. Some of you young folks—only you and Gary know what your dreams were! You

only shared them with the man of God because he wouldn’t laugh at a shepherd’s boy’s dreams. That’s how David felt in the wilderness of Paran when he prayed and wrote a Psalm. And this is what David wrote as he thought of Samuel, *“Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.”* “Help Lord, this godly man has left us, and the world’s a darker place since he’s gone!” I’m sure that some of you feel like David did here—but remember, it is not just a Psalm, it’s a prayer, for he says, **“HELP LORD!”** And help He did! Have you ever wondered why there are two books named Samuel? Yet, in 2 Samuel, the prophet Samuel doesn’t appear. He dies in 1 Samuel 25. He is heard at Endor in 1 Samuel 28 and that’s it. Then why is there a 2 Samuel? Because his influence lived on in David. Just like Gary’s will live on in you! And though he died young, you whom he influenced will write the book of Second Gary.

I don’t think it was a coincidence in Hebrews eleven, that Paul places David and Samuel side by side in the Faithful Hall of Fame. *“And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and of Barak and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel and of the prophets.”*

I believe if we could see them now in that *“cloud of witnesses,”* David would be standing with Samuel! And someday those of you whose lives were influenced by this man of God will stand beside him again. And like Paul said of *“David and Samuel,”* it will be, “Todd also and Gary, Ryan also and Gary, Doug also and Gary, Brice also and Gary, Bethany also and Gary . . .”

Let us never forget Gary.

OBI Guatemala Update—A Missionary’s Friend

A GOOD MAN—GARY NORRIS *A Missionary's Friend*

“...not self-willed, not soon angry, But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate” (Titus 1:7, 8).

These words from Scripture came to mind when we heard of Brother Norris’ homegoing. His life and ministry were a blessing to many, ourselves included, in his wide circle of positive influence and gracious benevolence.

William Wordsworth said, “The best portion of a good man’s life is his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love.” In this memorial issue we want to share some memories of Brother Norris and his “unremembered acts of kindness and love.”

In 1992, while returning home from managing the kitchen at Bluegrass Pentecostal Youth Camp in Elizabethtown, KY, we stopped to visit my sister’s family (Robert and Christal Blake) in Princeton, KY. They were attending Lola Pentecostal Church, where Brother and Sister Norris were pastoring. I remember the generous “Pentecostal handshake,” though I had not ministered that Sunday morning, and the words of encouragement to our family, even though I’m sure Brother Norris was under a lot of personal stress (he was going to resign his position as pastor in the evening service).

In the summer of 2002, while my son Jason and I were helping to lay up the front wall of the south wing of the Kesler building, Brother Norris came from Sand Springs and kept blocks supplied to us all day, though he had a cold and wasn’t feeling very well.

On January 13, 2008, we had our most recent mission service at Landmark Tabernacle in Sand Springs, OK. My wife noticed a set of Rada Cutlery knives on display in the foyer that the church was selling as a fundraiser. She commented about their quality and Brother Norris said, “Sister Pennington, if you like

those knives, they’re yours!” and promptly placed them in her hands despite her remonstrations. Those knives are now in daily use in Guatemala.

On Sunday, November 23, 2008, we stopped by the hospital in Tulsa while traveling to a preaching engagement, to visit Brother Norris. We went to lift his spirits and encourage him, but the opposite happened. We left that room uplifted in spirit and encouraged, not to mention that our pockets were full of the candy bars he kept pawning off on us by his insistent urgings. Come to think of it, there was a lot of candy and Rib Crib involved in our relationship.

Daniel Webster said, “Real goodness does not attach itself merely to this life—it points to another world ... a conscience void of offence before God and man is an inheritance for eternity.”

Far and away, the most important thing Brother Norris bestowed upon us by his goodness was the spiritual enrichment that came to us through his timely messages. I can’t recall all the times I’ve wept, rejoiced, repented or thrilled after being under the anointed ministry of this choice servant of God. Though we miss him here, he is more alive now than ever in the presence of Him whom he served as heartbeat and mouthpiece. I am reminded of the words to an old song:

If you have friends in gloryland
 Who’ve left because of pain;
 Thank God, up there they’ll die no more
 They’ll suffer not again.
 Then weep not friends, I’m going home
 Up there we’ll die no more;
 No coffins will be made up there
 No graves on that bright shore.

Our prayers are with the immediate family of Brother Norris, and the larger church family who remember a lot more of those “unremembered acts of kindness and love.” God keep and comfort you in coming days.

Love, The Penningtons

A GOOD SOLDIER

By Randall Perry

“Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (2 Timothy 2:3, 4).

Brother Norris must have read these two verses shortly after he got saved, because he took them to heart. We have lost a good soldier who fought for what’s right. There are three things about a good soldier I want to emphasize.

FIRST, A GOOD SOLDIER IS NEVER SELFISH. He is always thinking of others. He knows they are in the same battle as he is. He is trying to help others to understand the battle is not ours but the Lord’s. He is always attentive to other peoples needs. Brother Norris was always giving whether it was food, money, or godly advice. You knew it came from a soldier’s heart who had been tested in battle.

SECOND, A GOOD SOLDIER IS FULL OF ENCOURAGEMENT. I, along with many others, would visit Brother Norris in the hospital to comfort and encourage him. We all left encouraged and challenged by this brave soldier. He

would ask, “How is your family? How are your children?” I give Brother Norris a great amount of credit for my children being saved today. When I was pastoring a small church in Sapulpa, my children were in those critical teenage years. My children were then attending Landmark Christian Academy where they were in contact with Brother Norris on a daily basis. His godly influence and concern helped my children through those trying times as teenagers. They loved Brother Norris.

THIRD, A GOOD SOLDIER IS NOT AFRAID TO DIE! The Apostle Paul said *“to die is gain.”* He said he had *“a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.”* He said, *“to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”* Dr. David Nelson, a 19th century physician, became a Christian largely by watching Christians on their death beds. He said when Christians passed away they would say, “Do you hear that music, oh were ever notes so celestial.” When hymnist Frances Ridley Havergal learned she was dying, she said, “Oh, Doctor, do I really have a chance of going? It’s too good to be true.” Brother Norris seemed to be in his prime. He had a great ministry, a great church, and greatest of all, a great family. But he lived like a soldier, and he died like a soldier. He left behind his sword, and laid down his armor in exchange for his robe and crown. We sure miss him. God Bless you!

Memories of a Servant

A SERVANT

By Kerry Sampson

The words that come to my mind when I think of Gary Norris, are the words of the Apostle Luke in Acts 13:36: *“For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on asleep.”*

When we were in Bible College, I picked up on the phrase he often used, “I just want to know and do what is right!” By the grace of the Lord, he **did** what was right!

GARY–

- ◆ Was a leader in our generation.
- ◆ Loved our generation.
- ◆ Will never be forgotten by our generation.
- ◆ Served our generation well!

YOU TALK ABOUT AN EXAMPLE.

If you would like to be a better:

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| ◆ Spouse | ◆ Leader |
| ◆ Daddy | ◆ Friend |
| ◆ Pastor | ◆ Example |

I’m not trying to make our friend out to be a “god.” I’m just bragging on him for being a servant of the true and living God, and the Lord Jesus.

GARY–

- ◆ A People person–Look at how many are here today. He made you feel like you were his best friend.
- ◆ A Parent–He and Darla raised two of the best kids you’ll ever find.
- ◆ A Pastor–A great shepherd; He had a great church, and great things are to come at Landmark.
- ◆ A Preacher–With a passion for Pentecost
- ◆ Positive–Always saw the glass half-full while others saw it as half empty.
- ◆ A Prankster–He got me good while he was pastoring in Lola, Kentucky. He put me in a guest bedroom way back in the back of the house. I was half asleep when my window started coming up. I said, “All right, Norris!” The window went higher and

I said, “Gary, I know its you!” I saw a gun come through the window and I raised my voice loudly and said, “Gary Norris!” About that time, Gary came through the bedroom door and said, “What’s up?” and the gun went off. Gary hit the floor, and before I knew it I was beside the bed in my P.J.’s, and was instantly in the Spirit, praying! My next thought was, “I’m going to heaven from Lola, Kentucky!” All of the sudden, He started rolling around on the floor laughing, and I said, “Norris, I ought to kill you!” Come to find out, Gary had set things up with a guy at his church to pull one over on me.

He preferred his brother–Never pushed for his rights, especially if a lost soul was involved.

He was a peacemaker–He could talk with, and express kindness even to those he completely disagreed with.

The truth being known, he’s been a bridge to many of the brethren, and I’m persuaded that all of our lives have been challenged and made better because of his testimony and walk with the Lord. Henry Ford said, “The best friend a person could ever have is one that can bring the best out of him.”

GARY–

- Confronted crisis.
- Was quick to get over offenses.
- Prayed through troubles.
- Gave the devil disturbances.
- Loved reaching lost souls and helping people.

GARY–

Wanted to impact our generation with the power of Pentecost and did.

For example, I have heard many testimonies from preachers who have said their lives have been changed and strengthened because of his messages at Convocation over the past few years.

I know many of you feel the same way, and could say this–“He was a personal friend that I will miss dearly, but intend to see again by the grace of God.”

What an honor to have met, and to have known this man of God who served this generation well!

FUNERAL REMARKS

By Mike Shelton

“Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord” (Acts 11:22-24).

Brother Gary was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost, and only eternity will reveal how many people right here in this congregation are on their way to heaven because of the ministry of Gary Norris.

His Personality was such that he was well liked by everyone as is evidenced by this great gathering today.

He was a man of **prayer**. He was a man of **principle** and he was a man of **power**. He preached forcefully and he always had time for the moving of the Holy Ghost in the services that he conducted.

Gary was a very humorous person. I could tell stories all day about some of the things that he really thought was funny. One of the stories that he liked the most was when he came to visit me when I lived in Richmond, Indiana, and I had a motorcycle. I got on it and started revving it up and Brother Gary said, “I am scared to death of those things.” I said, “Brother, you have got to be a man to ride one of these things. About that time the clutch slipped out of my hands, and that motorcycle leaped forward into the back of a parked truck, and went down on the ground and spun up under a chain link fence with me still on it.

He waited to see if I was still alive, and then he started laughing so hard that he was crying. He said, “Brother, I cannot wait to use that for an illustration, *“Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.”*

Many times he would say, “You do not know how often that I have thought about that, and just started laughing.”

On several occasions, he would leave a message on my answering machine, “Hey motorcycle king, just calling to check on you.”

If it is true, that at the end of life’s journey, that all we will ever have in our hands are the things that we have given away, then Gary Norris entered the glory world with more than he could carry. He was a giver of time, talents, wisdom, and finances. He never worried about himself, he was always concerned with others. There were very few times that our paths crossed that he didn’t try to give me something. He would preach a revival, and give most of the offering away before he would get back home. He preached convocation, and on his way out of town I heard a knock on my door. It was Brother Gary with over a hundred dollars worth of Rib eyes and expensive steaks. He was like the stars that are so far away from earth that it took a thousand years for their light to reach the earth but if those stars were to suddenly go out of existence their light would still light our world for a thousand more years.

He was like the force of the Amazon river whose power can still be felt and measured at over 300 miles after it ends. The influence of Brother Gary Norris will continue to be felt. The influence may lose its form, but it will never lose its force.

He is free from sin, sorrow, sickness, and satan. He is now with the Savior. He will never feel pain again. He is done with the devil.

He is done with the **doubters**, and he is up there with the **shouters**. One night we were in a shouting service and Brother Gary said, “why didn’t you run tonight?” I told him that I was afraid that I would fall down because I had slick soled shoes on. I told him that I would wear my hush puppies tomorrow night and then I could run. Brother Gary thought that was funny. Every time we would see each other at Convocation or a large gathering of the saints he would say, “Have you got your hush puppies on tonight?” Well, Brother Gary, I plan on seeing you before long, and I will have my hushpuppies on.

“Weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

I don’t know of anything that would make Brother Gary Norris any happier than if someone would bow their head in this service and make a fresh commitment to God. Let’s turn our minds and our hearts toward eternity and let this be a fit memorial for a man of God.

A Good Pastor

A GOOD PASTOR

By Roger Sheppard

Brother Gary Norris was my pastor, my friend, and like a brother to me. He was always a wonderful encourager to my family during difficult times. Many of my family’s fondest memories include Brother Norris. Anytime I needed guidance, support, or just comic relief, Brother Gary was just a phone call away. It was always as if God had prepared him for my call and had just the right words for the occasion.

He remained steadfast in his convictions, and proclaimed the Pentecostal message in a way that caused the listener to keep

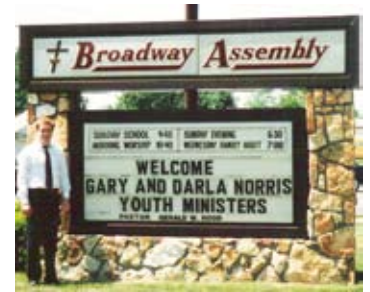
hungering for more. He was a godly man who took seriously his responsibility to watch over our souls. Though I was well aware I would never come close to filling his shoes, it was an honor and privilege to share his pulpit while we contended for his healing. His confidence in me meant more to my family than he could know.

Bro Gary ministered to the entire family units of Landmark. He could relate to the young children and teens, as well as the parents. Having the respect of the teens, he was very successful in turning their hearts toward their parents during troubled times, which resulted in strong godly families within the church.

I thank God for the truth that Brother Norris stood for, and the wonderful influence and example he was in my life.

To know God’s will is life’s greatest treasure. To do God’s will is life’s greatest pleasure.

Some Treasured Moments of Brother Norris





Rev David W. Bills

August 21, 1945 - March 7, 2009

1976 - Ordained minister 1977 - O.B.I graduate

Since my dear husband's passing I have come to realize like never before the way we live our life tells family, friends, and the world who we really are and "who or what" we really love.

Brother Bills' life spoke volumes of who he loved. He loved God, God's Word, his wife (of 45 years), his daughters, family, his church, and friends and his country.

After pastoring our first church, Brother Bills came to Neosho in 1974 to attend Ozark Bible Institute, where he graduated in the spring of 1977. He always held to a life of Biblical holiness that he was taught at O.B.I., and did his best to pass the truth of holiness on to his children and congregations.

Many have said, "whenever you see the 'Bills' they are still the same." Brother Bills would just say, "I serve a God that never changes."

A favorite saying of my husband was, "it's the **Holy Bible**, it's God's **Holy Word**, to make us **Holy** people."

After graduating from O.B.I., Brother Bills pastored three churches and started two Christian schools. Although he never went to a foreign field, his heartbeat was missions, and he sent many around the world.

The Life of Reverend David W. Bills is told in the following brief statements of those who were so vitally a part of his life:

From his sons-in-law

"To me, he was the 'man of more than enough.' He always wanted to know if there was enough for everyone, whether it was food, drinks, chairs, or whatever. At Holidays, if there were O.B.I. students who were unable to go home, they were always invited to join the Bills family dinners, as well as a hitchhiker at the side of the road. There was always room because he served a God who is a God of more than enough."

"I am thankful for the wise counsel and advice you had and also for the many prayers you prayed for me. The numerous acts of your generosity will always be part of my life; I was proud to be called 'Son' by you."

My father-in-law was a man of great wealth, but not in earthly riches. His greatest treasures were in God and his wife. He wanted everyone to know how much he treasured her, often complimenting her from pulpit or pew. He was like a father to me. I remember a sermon he preached titled "Every man be ready to give an answer."

From his Daughters

"Though life was never easy as the daughter of a preacher, I am so grateful for the legacy dad left to me. Thank you for teaching me the blessing of giving; because of you, I love to give. Also, thanks for teaching us the importance of daily prayer and Bible study."

To me one of the best characteristics of dad was his commitment to stay consistent to his family; he was always complimenting us. He was committed to his church family, and almost any question asked, he would refer back to the scripture. My dad may not have known how to build a house but he did know how to build a home, and although he had only three daughters, he had a world of family.

My dad often quoted "Only one life twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last." I am confident that because of all the hours and labors of love to help others, some in need of groceries, missionary vehicles, contributing to build churches over seas, and various other ministries, that his rewards are many.

From his Pastor: Dr. James Link

I first became acquainted with David Bills when he was the pastor of the Noel Assembly of God Church. At that time my wife and I were students at OBI, and we always enjoyed visiting their church for revivals and special occasions. From those early memories, I always considered Brother Bills to be a true man of God, and I had a great love and respect for him as a holiness preacher.

David Bills' great dedication to the Lord was obvious by his spirit of special surrender, sacrifice, and focus on missions. Brother Bills was one of the most giving men I have ever known. He was always concerned about missionaries and the work they were doing. He not only gave sacrificially financially, but was known to have been a mentor to many young Christians in their walk of faith. He served as a role model to those whose lives he touched.

The last few years of Brother Bills' life and ministry were spent working as our Senior Adult Pastor at Victory Assembly of God Church here in Neosho, MO, where he ministered regularly on Friday mornings in a ministry he titled "Revivers Meetings." He and Sister Bills did a great work in our church. Brother Bills was my faithful prayer partner and is greatly missed by all.

"Only one life, twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last."

CAMP PENIEL 2009

Meeting God Face to Face

June 29 - July 3

Camp Evangelist
Rev. David Brimm

Bible Teacher
Rev. Danny Swinnea

Children's Workers
To be announced



Alumni In Action

"The friendly red-headed Pastor with freckles?" The young lady asked. "Yes, that's him." I replied. I always knew when I got to Camp Peniel that Brother Gary Norris would be there. He loved seeing young people meet God face to face! I still hear the words he often said around the altar...."What a Savior!....Yes! Yes!....Help him Jesus!".... with heartfelt compassion in that ol' Mississippi drawl. Brother Norris has been my friend since our college days. A faithful and true example of a Man of God. A powerful and anointed preacher of the Cross of Calvary.

Last year while we were playing softball with the Kid's Campers, I remember our laughter as some of the kids hit the ball, then excitedly ran the wrong way and others made it to first base, then kept right on running. But I especially remember the coaching and loving encouragement toward his son, Bryce.

Gary Norris was a wonderful friend, a loving husband and father, a compassionate pastor. But the greatest of all the things said about Brother Gary Norris is like that of Abraham, he was.... "a Friend of God"and it showed.

Randy Snow, OBI Alumni President

A Burning and a Shining Light

"He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light." (John 5:35).

The passing of a man of God. Gary Norris was, to me like a shooting star. He passed by too fast, but oh!, the brightness of that passing light. That light was such an encouragement to me when I really needed it. I can remember when we graduated from Bible school in 1989. Gary went right into the full time ministry. God led me into a different path. I worked in my home church and on a job as well. While I was climbing the ladder in the corporate world, Gary would call me and encourage me in the Lord. I preached and worked at my home church, but it seemed like it was so easy to get my interests divided. Finally, after I had started my own business, I was really getting deeper into the money-making business. Gary would call and encourage me. He would have me to preach for him at Landmark Tabernacle. He could have gotten any number of people to come and preach the church's homecoming services but he did it just to help me. That encouragement turned into a recommendation of me to Brother Danny Taylor to come and teach at Ozark Bible Institute. The rest is history, a history that was made possible by one of my best friends in the ministry.

It was a light that I thought had passed and gone out, but God spoke to me and said, "the light did not go out. It is burning brighter than it ever has. That light has lit the torch of all who came into contact with it. Young preachers, a great Church, a beautiful family, friends in the ministry and just every day people that he came into contact with.

My son, Eric, preached his first message on April the 8th. He preached on the subject of influence. He closed his message by thanking God for good men like Gary Norris. He said that being around Brother Gary without feeling his in-

Alumni Announcements

Many have asked where to send gifts to the Norris Family, so we would like to provide an address. Please send all contributions to the *Gary Norris Benefit Fund, PO Box 1246, Sand Springs, OK 74063.*

Memorial contributions for Rev. David W. Bills can be sent to *Ozark Christian Missions, PO Box 398, Neosho, MO 64850.*

Urgent Prayer Request A tragic accident happened near Oklahoma City. The driver of the car, Carrie Vanzant, was killed. Carrie's husband was treated and released. Two of **Mike** and **Denise (Sanders) Crafton's** daughters, **Bethany (OBI student)** and her sister, Calie, were injured in the accident. **Bethany** was critically injured and remains in the hospital in Oklahoma City. Calie has been dismissed from the hospital. Please remember all the families involved, and pray for the injured.

fluence would be like being in a rain storm and not getting wet. Indeed, it was impossible to be around him at all and not be influenced to be a better Christian.

I wrote this through the tears, because that light brightened my life. He was my friend, and I feel like a part of the happiness that I get out of living on this earth is gone. I guess that is part of the way the Lord gets us to loosen our grip on this world and tighten it on the world to come. I know Brother Gary would not want his home going to be a thing that slowed me down so I am going to try to speed up a little faster, burn a little brighter, and try to encourage another preacher to keep on the firing line. If I go by the way of the grave or meet you in the air, my brother, I just want you to know that burning and shining light that you showed to this friend is still helping to light the way for me to keep on burning until that glorious day when all lesser lights will be swallowed up in that great light of the Lamb. I will be glad when we sit down and talk about it by the Crystal River. If I know you, you will probably come out of your pocket with something to give me. Giving made you happy. Maybe you can just give me a tour. You beat me in my brother, so get us an itinerary ready.

Mike Shelton, OBI instructor

CHOIR SCHEDULE:

- May 2 -Trinity Tabernacle, Jasper, GA
Rev. Tim Logan
- May 3 - Lesslie Ch of God, Catawba, SC
Rev. Jess Vogan
- May 4 - Faith Temple Church, Chappels, SC
Rev. Danny Swinnea
- May 5 - Destin A/G, Destin, FL
Rev. Jason Poole
- May 6 - 1st A/G, Phoenix City, AL
Rev. Barry Danner
- May 7 - Forts Lake A/G, Pascagoula, MS
Rev. Tim Cauley
- May 8 - Little Rock A/G, Waynesboro, MS
Rev. Ken Johnson
- May 9 - Full Gospel Revival Center, Oakdale, LA
Rev. Daniel Swinnea
- May 10 - Beech Creek A/G, Livingston, TX
Rev. Donnie Goodwin