

Albert E. Burmley

Published: Wednesday, 02 November 2011 01:00

Hits: 4645

A few weeks ago I wrote about one of the all time great song writers. This week's feature is about another writer who has penned some of the classic Southern Gospel Music songs. His name is Albert E. Brumley and he spent most of his adult life in the small town of Powell, Missouri.

Although Albert was born in Spiro, Oklahoma, which in 1905 was Indian Territory. From Oklahoma, Albert made his way to Hartford, Arkansas in 1926 looking to enhance his knowledge of music. Mr. Brace Key, who had taught Albert some music, encouraged him to attend the Hartford Musical Institute. This school was managed by E. M. Bartlett. Mr. Bartlett had helped several young folks receive an education and get a start in the music world. Mr. Bartlett, a song writer himself, had written such great songs as "Everybody Will Be Happy Over There" and "I heard My Mother Call My Name."

When Albert met Mr. Bartlett he expressed his desire to learn to sing and write music. Mr. Bartlett asked if he had the \$5 tuition or money for room and board; the answer to both was "No." Albert was then invited to stay at the Bartlett home.

In 1937 Albert and Mr. Bartlett co-wrote a song which is certainly a classic today entitled, "Camping In Canaan Land." Albert wrote during his time with Mr. Bartlett the song which has become his most published one "I'll Fly Away." He began this song in 1928 but did not finish it until some years later because he would not complete a song until he had gotten it perfect in his mind. The story behind this song was that as Albert picked cotton his mind began to wander. He being to think about the song entitled, "The Prisoner's Song." He began to change words in the song as well as thinking about flying away from the cotton field. So from this thought "I'll Fly Away" was born.

Another break for Albert came when Mr. Bartlett formed a quartet in 1929 of which Albert was a part and sang bass. The other members were Burgess Bell, W. A. McNinch and Marvin Dalton. Dalton's name may sound familiar for he penned "Looking For A City" and what I believe to be one of the greatest songs ever "What A Savior." As you recall, this song was a trademark for Rosie Rozell of The Statesmen Quartet in the 60's. Albert stopped traveling with the quartet when he and Goldie had their first child.

Albert Brumley was without question a musical genius. He spent many hours learning to write and

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compose music. He had a burning desire to be the best at what he did, which was write songs. If I may insert that today many folks in the music business do not seem to have that burning desire and it shows on stage and off. If you are a part of the Southern Gospel Music business be the best you can be.

Albert was inspired by many folks in different roles within the music industry. Some of the names I am sure you know such as the Stamps, James D. Vaughn and maybe others who are not as familiar but you know their work, such as J. A. McClung who wrote "Just A Rose Will Do." After the death of E. M. Bartlett Albert acquired the Hartford Music Company who held the rights of all Albert's songs including "I'll Fly Away." Over the years "I'll Fly Away" was recorded hundreds of times.

Another break for Albert came when V. O. Stamps started using his songs in his song books. This got Albert exposure all across the country. This opened the door for folks in all kinds of music to record Albert's songs including many of the country artists and Elvis.

This article could go on for pages but will close with a list of some of Albert's most popular songs, as well as some of the groups that recorded his music. Some of his songs in addition to the ones which have already been mentioned are: Turn Your Radio On, I'll Meet You In The Morning, If We Never Meet Again.

Almost everyone in Southern Gospel Music has recorded an Albert Brumley song. The Chuck Wagon Gang recorded 30 songs and was the first group to record "I'll Fly Away." The Blackwood Brothers, Statesmen, Lewis Family and the upstate's own Trav'lers is a sampling of those who recorded Mr. Brumley's music. In August (19th through 21st) at the Grand Ole Gospel Reunion you can see and hear some of the groups which made this man's music popular.

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