

Ms. Lillie Knauls, 'The Hat Lady'



"I am asking God to use me this year, any way He wants to use me. I am a yielded vessel and am listening to His voice to give me new songs, new sermons and new places to minister. I am excited and looking for great things in 2014." ⁽¹⁾

In our ongoing effort to pay tribute to long-time Gospel singers, allow me to introduce Ms. Lillie Knauls. This beautiful, never married, woman of God has been singing and preaching Jesus for over 35 years. Ms. Lillie (as she likes to be addressed) is a regular on the Gaither videos. If you are a viewer of the Gaither videos, Ms. Lillie is not hard to spot. Her beautiful smile seems to illuminate those around her. Ms. Lillie is also known for the many hats she wears. She is respectfully known as the *hat lady*. The reason for these hats is not just for style as Ms. Lillie explains, "I grew up in the church and as a little girl I played the piano and tambourine and sang in the choir. The first Sunday of the month was Communion Day. All the women wore hats to the services."

Being respectfully recognized as the hat lady has opened many doors for Ms. Lillie. She has had countless opportunities to speak and sing at ladies breakfast and luncheon meetings. There is much more to Ms. Lillie Knauls than her hat ministry, which can be traced back to the '60's, where she was a soloist for her home church in San Jose, California.



In 1969, she became part of the **Edwin Hawkins Singers** and traveled the world. The Edwin Hawkins Singers are perhaps best known for their arrangement of "**Oh Happy Day**." "That was a great time in my life, being able to sing with that fabulous choir. It opened so many doors for me, but since I had a full time job working at a telephone company, I did not have the time to work all the bookings that came my way, so in August of 1978, I resigned and a whole new world opened up to me!"

One of the first assignments from God to Ms. Lillie was to travel to Hawaii to work with a beach ministry that conducted a Sunday church service for the tourists. Ms. Lillie says, “We ministered at the most beautiful church in the world!” Hawaii has become Ms. Lillie’s most favorite place.

I had the good fortune to speak with Ms. Lillie on the phone from her California home. During our conversation, I learned that Ms. Lillie has been a part of the Gaither videos for over 20 years! I asked her if she had any favorite moments from the videos and she replied, “Quite honestly, every moment I’m there is a favorite moment. Just being with all those legends and singing the songs I grew up with that still move me. I am so grateful for Bill and Gloria Gaither for blessing the world, with these videos.”

I asked Ms. Lillie if she recalled how old she was when she first started singing and if she remembered her first song. “I think I was 5 or 6 years old” she recalled. “The first song I sang was, “*Yes Jesus loves me.*” During the interview, I asked her if there was anything she would want the readers to know about her, that perhaps is not public knowledge. After a girlish giggle, she answered, “I’m a very shy person. I am an introvert and not wanting to draw attention to myself.”



Like many a great singer, Ms. Lillie had her influences growing up. I asked her if she had any role models. “Well, **Mahalia Jackson** for sure, but **Rosetta Tharpe** was a great influence on me.” Rosetta Tharpe was a popular singer, songwriter, guitarist and recording artist. Tharpe attained great popularity in the '30's and '40's with her Gospel recordings.⁽²⁾ Mahalia Jackson was hailed as the queen of Gospel, and became one of the most influential gospel singers in the world.⁽³⁾



If anyone wonders whether Ms. Lillie will ever retire, they need to consider this advice from the late, great, Vestal Goodman and good friend of Ms. Lillie's. “‘Listen Lillie,’ she said, ‘don’t ever quit singing, no matter how old you live to be. You have an anointing on your life, so promise me you will keep going’.”⁽⁴⁾

Sitting in that restaurant with Vestal Goodman moved Ms. Lillie to tears and she promised Vestal that she would never retire, but would keep going; or as Ms. Lillie says, “I plan to do what Ms. Vestal advised and never retire! I’ll just move to my new home in Glory and remove my hat as I receive my crown!” I asked Ms. Lillie if she is working on any new projects. “Yes!” was her excited answer. “We’re almost in the studio.”



I asked Ms. Lillie, if there was a favorite moment that stands out in her long career. She replied, “Oh my, there are so many! One would be the opportunity I had to sing on the Grand Old Opry stage for one of their weekend shows. I sang, what is considered my signature song, that old hymn, ‘The Comforter Has Come’. How exciting! I guess also, singing to 250,000 happy folk in Rio De Janeiro would also have to be considered one of my favorite moments.” Among the many

acknowledgements of her craft Ms. Lillie has received is a Dove award for her *Traditional Gospel Album of The Year*.



There is so much this talented woman of God has accomplished that I do not have the space allotted to write about. I suggest and highly recommend that you visit Ms. Lillie's webpage listed below where there is much to read and take advantage of some excellent music. **Speaking personally, I have come to learn and appreciate the ministry of Ms. Lillie Knauls. I have said this before and it still remains true, as I write these articles about these long time ministry minded saints of God, I seem to grow a little more, spiritually speaking.** I know Ms. Lillie would love to hear from you. Please contact her at one of the methods below and tell her you agree with Vestal Goodman that she should "keep on singing"!

Email singer@misslillie.com

Website www.misslillie.com

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGP-nRQYWjE> My God Is Real, Lillie Knauls

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZbaXRPajCY> His Eye Is On the Sparrow, Lillie Knauls

<https://www.facebook.com/lillieknauls>

- (1) Lillie Knauls blog on website
- (2) Wikipedia
- (3) Wikipedia
- (4) Homecoming magazine September/ October 2013

By Phil Foster