

*Barbara Jean Mitchell*

Tribute to  
A New  
Musician in  
Heaven's  
Band  
*(1931-2006)*

Narrative by Cinita (Davis) Brown — Layout by Kenneth Brown



## Tribute to Barbara Jean Mitchell (1931—2006)



December 25 in 1931 was an extra special day for Neal and Bertha Brown Davis and their four children. Wilma, the oldest of the Davis children, would soon turn sixteen and had already married the love of her life, Kenneth Flynn. Lloyd (age 11) and Jesse (age 9) were both busy being "Nebraska farm boys"; and little Geraldine (Gerry) had not quite turned three.

Since it was December 25, you know it was Christmas Day, but that alone did not make the day so special for this little farm family in Valley, Nebraska. Barbara Jean, a real live baby-doll, and the last child to be born in this family, made her arrival on that Christmas Day in 1931.

Those of us who can remember the family can imagine the scene—Neal Segal Davis, husband and father, was busy and was quietly going about his work. We can picture this because Neal was a man who was always busy, always working and had little time for foolishness or leisure. At the time of Barbara's birth the country was in the depths of the Great Depression. Neal and Bertha had moved their family to Valley, Nebraska, in the late 1920s.

Neal was farming, mostly raising corn and hogs. In the fall of the year Neal sometimes picked corn for "big farmers" in the area. Neal was noted for his corn picking ability. He didn't tell you about it, but his brothers bragged that Neal could pick as much as a hundred bushels of corn a day! Neal worked and the entire family worked -- had to at that time to just feed and clothe the family.

Again imagining the scene in 1931 when Santa Claus, with the stork's help, delivered Barbara Jean to the Davis home, one cannot think of Bertha as just lying in



bed for the customary "recovery period of two weeks." I surmise that she had prepared Christmas dinner before she took time out to give birth, made sure that the house was clean, washing, ironing, and mending all done, and was fully in charge of keeping everyone in line during her "down time." Don't you know that she gave orders and keep everything and everybody organized and on task!

The Davis family continued to live in Nebraska until Barbara was twelve years old. In 1943, Neal and Bertha bought their Cowskin Creek farm in Douglas County and moved "back home" to the area where they were both born and reared. Barbara and her sister, Gerry, started school in Ava, and Gerry graduated the following year at Ava High School.

Barbara continued as a very studious and popular student in Ava High School where she, like her peers, was asking the question, "what do I do with my life?" (Excuse me, younger readers, for editorializing, but in the 1940s, we high school students were seriously asking this question -- seems as if we were older than our years, more mature, and more focused than students of today. Could be because our lives had begun during the Great Depression and our country had been in World War II until 1945. We had never seen television, a computer, or a cell phone -- a "blackberry" was something that was picked during the summer and our mothers canned them or if we were lucky, we sold them for \$0.15 a gallon. Following the berry picking, we then scratched chiggers for at least a week.)

In the fall of 1947 Barbara's answer to

her question about her life's journey came. I don't think that she thought of it as an "epiphany" or even as a "calling". She was young and beautiful. The young man was handsome, focused, and smart. Perhaps for both of them it probably could be called an epiphany—a moment of profound insight, a time that would change their lives forever. Or more simply explained, these two young people, Barbara Jean Davis and Clint Mitchell, "fell in love." And yet, as one looks back over the lives of these two people, as individuals and as a couple, you can have no doubt that God was there in the midst and directing their paths just as He promised.

One cannot write about Barbara's life without writing about Clint -- they were inseparable for over fifty-eight years—from May 22, 1948 when they were married until September 4, 2006 when Barbara moved on to Heaven. She would want us to tell you about "her" Clint and their meeting and early years, or as I'm sure they would both say, "God's bringing them to-



Neal & Bertha's House on Cowskin Farm



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gether."

Clint Hugh Mitchell was born in Madison County, Arkansas in 1928. Clint was the first of the two children born to Payne and Ida Mitchell. His sister, Argie Faye, was eight years younger. The Mitchells farmed in Arkansas, but in 1941 the family moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma where Mr. Mitchell began working as a mechanic for an oil company. The Mitchells had always been a church-going family and after the move to Tulsa they began attending to Church of the Nazarene.

Clint recalls that in fall of 1947 our home church, the West Tulsa Church of the Nazarene, had a revival. Seems as if we went into revivals back then with great expectations, but I experienced God in an entirely new dimension. Clint states "One night God got a hold on me and shook me up real good! The following Sunday in church services I announced my calling to the ministry specifically to the field of evangelism."



As Clint further explained, another young man, Earl Carter, also announced his calling into the ministry. An older minister who attended their church, Jake Miller, took an interest in these two young boys and advised them, "You boys need to get out in the field for training, right now. You need to see the ministry from both sides of the pulpit." So Rev. Miller arranged for the boys to preach at two revivals in Missouri. The first one was at Halltown and the second one at the Gentry Church (actually a schoolhouse that was used for church services) in Douglas

County, Missouri.

The Gentry church was located on K Highway just across the road from Neal and Bertha's farm. Here the young evangelist, Clint Mitchell, did some of his very first preaching, and yes, you guessed it -- Barbara Jean Davis was there every night. She sang and played the piano for the services. I'm not sure that Brother Miller thought of this meeting of these two young people as part of Clint's "on the field training." Perhaps it was just young love budding, or more logically, it was God's working. He knows how important it is for a minister to have a help-mate—the right kind of wife.

Clint went back to Tulsa and finished his senior year of high school. Then on May 22, 1948, just a few days before Clint's graduation, he and Barbara were married at The Highway Church of the Nazarene north of Ava. After graduation Clint attended Bible School at Bethany, Oklahoma. While he was in school, Barbara worked for Blue Cross-Blue Shield, and Clint preached at any empty pulpit where he was welcome.

The year 1950 started a new decade and a new chapter in Barbara and Clint's life. Clint finished his studies at Bethany Bible School and the little family that now included their first child, Diana, born in

1950, moved to Hiwasse, Arkansas where Clint became the pastor of the Church of the Nazarene.

Barbara assumed the role of "the pastor's wife." No job description was written for her but she knew her place. She served as musician playing both the piano and organ, sang duets with Clint, taught Sunday School and Bible School, kept a perfect house and her husband's shirts snowy white, fed the family and others with lots of beans and 'taters, served as counselor especially for women and young people, and probably served as the mediator in squabbles that seem to occur in churches.

Barbara and Clint stayed at the church in Hiwasse, Arkansas for two years. The salary for the pastor and his wife was a stupendous \$35.00 per week! As Clint talked of Barbara and her many and varied abilities and attributes he said, "Barbara knew how to make ends meet. She could stretch a dollar."

Clint tells of how Barbara made dresses for her daughters and for herself. (This sewing ability seemed to be common characteristic among the Davis and Brown women and girls.) Their daughter, Diana, was born in 1950 in Hiwasse, followed by Linda in 1954, Joyce in 1958, and a son, Curtis, in 1961. Clint said that Barbara had an amazing ability to fit into any situation that came up. She could deal with the poor, even poverty stricken, meet them on their level and help them in their situation. Then she could reverse roles and fit in with society's best and richest. Truly



50th Wedding Anniversary for Neal Davis and Bertha Brown -- 1965

Back: Joyce, Linda, Diana, Barbara and Clint Mitchell

Front: Curtis Mitchell, Neal and Bertha Davis



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Bertha (Brown) & Neal Davis Family in their Cowskin Creek home

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the phrase "not a respector of persons" fit Barbara as she filled her role as pastor's wife.

Clint and Barbara's years of serving as church pastor spanned forty-five years and many different congregations. Some of the churches they served were in Miami, Oklahoma, Tyler, Texas and Parsons, Kansas. Clint retired from the Church of the Nazarene in Grove, Oklahoma in 1993. This was a church that he and Barbara had started, nursed through the growing period, and finally saw a new church built before their retirement as "the pastor and his wife" in 1993. Barbara did not retire from her Blue Cross-Blue Shield employment until 1996. She had worked a total of seventeen years for this company.

Clint said after retirement they seemed to get busier than ever. (Those of us who have retired understand this.) We can only imagine how true this would be for a minister and his wife who were "on call and available." By this time seven grandchildren were a part of the family. So until 2002 Barbara and Clint kept busy doing what they had done for over fifty years—doing the work of the Lord as He guided and led them.

In 2002 Barbara's health began to fail. Clint also developed lupus. They relied on each other and on God until Barbara's death occurred on September 4, 2006. We all rest in the assurance that she heard the Master say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Enter into your deserved rest." Her family will always miss her.



1997- Clint & Barbara Mitchell



Back:(L-R) -- Barbara, Jesse, Geraldine, Lloyd, and Wilma

