



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 21, 2011

102-Year-Old Gospel Singer Bev Shea Honored at Grammys

Last week's Grammy Awards ceremony was most noteworthy for its celebration of an entire year of perhaps the most vapid, senseless, and immoral catalog of music in the history of popular culture. But even as a silly and irrelevant Lady Gaga preened, an aging Eminem showcased his worn-out urban anger, and the music industry honored a rag-tag collection of nominally-talented and self-important recording stars, another, more modest and self-effacing artist was honored for his 60-plus-year career as one of the world's most beloved gospel vocalists.



On February 12 George Beverly Shea, who is now 102 years old, joined Julie Andrews, the Kingston Trio, Dolly Parton, and a handful of other notable artists to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences.

Best known as the longtime soloist for evangelist Billy Graham, Shea received a standing ovation from the gala crowd assembled at the Wilshire Ebell Theater in Los Angeles as he became the oldest artist to receive a Grammy, which is his second.

"It's been a long time since I won a Grammy," Shea quipped, who received his last in 1966 for best gospel recording, which he shared with Anita Kerr.

Shea, who holds the Guinness World Record for singing to an estimated 210 million listeners throughout his career as Graham's premier crusade soloist, said that he had never even planned to be a gospel singer. But as Graham's preaching career took off in the mid-1940s, "he asked if I could go along and sing a quiet hymn or gospel song just before he would speak," Shea recalled to the [Christian Post](#).

That invitation turned into more than a half-century of ministry, 70 sacred albums, 10 Grammy nominations, and inductions into both the Gospel Music Association and National Religious Broadcasters halls of fame.

But most importantly, noted Shea, it allowed him to spend his life telling the world about the love and mercy of God.

"I am so thankful that at my age the Academy has given me this special tribute, and was surprised and humbled by their action," the beloved singer responded on receiving the award. "I thank God for giving me so many years of musical ministry, and am grateful for the countless opportunities around the world to sing about our precious Lord."

Shea recalled his nearly six-decade partnership with Graham, and recounted a particularly moving moment when he accompanied the evangelist to Vietnam to hold meetings for the troops during the war. "They took us on the day before Christmas into a compound," the singer recalled. "There were a



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lot of boys sitting under the trees, having just come in from off the line. They were getting haircuts. And somebody yelled, 'Hey, Shea, sing How Great Thou Art.' I put my hand to my mouth, and sang it. And then I heard 'Thank you.'"

Representative of the comments and congratulations offered to Shea on receiving the honor was the short tribute given by another popular inspirational singer and songwriter, Michael W. Smith, who said of his close friend, "Bev has been a source of inspiration to millions, and especially to me. He is a gifted man, with a great heart, who has lived life as a faithful friend, and in doing so has changed the world."

Photo: George Beverly Shea talks at his home in Montreat, N.C., Jan. 13, 2009: AP Images



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