

Cliff Barrows, Billy Graham's song leader for six decades, dies at 93

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CHARLOTTE, N.C. (RNS)—Cliff Barrows, who led songs for evangelist Billy Graham six decades, died under hospice care in Charlotte, N.C. He was 93 years old.



Cliff Barrows leads the music for evangelist Billy Graham's crusade in New York in 2005. (File photo / Michael Falco) "Cliff and I were together more than 60 years, and in all that time, we never had an argument," Graham said. "We had a few disagreements, but I can't even remember those. It's been a wonderful fellowship in our whole organization. There wouldn't be a Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in the way it is today without him."

Barrows, a native of Ceres, Calif., earned a degree in sacred music at Bob Jones University and was an assistant pastor at Temple Baptist Church in St. Paul, Minn. On his honeymoon with his wife, Wilma "Billie" Newell, the couple met Billy Graham, and handled music for the evangelist's Grand

Rapids, Mich., crusade in 1947.

After that, Graham, Barrows and soloist George Beverly Shea—who died at age 104 in 2013—were inseparable. The trio, backed by associate evangelists and guest musical artists, held campaigns across the United States and around the world. Their largest audience, 1.1 million, was during the 1973 crusade at Yoido Plaza in Seoul, Korea.



Veteran members of the Billy Graham team who were with the evangelist during his 1952 campaign in Jackson, Miss., pause for a visit before beginning their 1975 Mississippi Crusade. Left to right: Tedd Smith, pianist; Cliff Barrows, song leader and program director; Graham; George Beverly Shea, soloist; and Grady Wilson, associate evangelist. (RNS file photo) Barrows led the mass choirs at Graham's crusades, sang on occasion with Shea and was the weekly host/announcer for Graham's "Hour of Decision" radio broadcast. Barrows was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 1988 and into the National Religious Broadcasters Hall of Fame in 1996.

"His uncanny ability to lead a crusade choir of thousands of voices or an audience of a hundred thousand voices in a great hymn or gospel chorus is absolutely unparalleled," Graham wrote in his autobiography, *Just As I Am*.

A public funeral service will be held Nov. 22 at Calvary Church in Charlotte. Barrows will be interred at a private ceremony at the Billy Graham Library.