

Fall 2015

# Keystone Quarterly

*From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets,  
the Name of the Lord is to be praised!*

Psalm 113:3



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## THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Hello Everyone!

Thank you so much for picking up a copy of the 2015, Fall Edition, of The Keystone Quarterly! We appreciate you all so much and your continued support of the PSGMA. Take a look inside! You won't be disappointed! Take time to read about these great artists who don't just sing great, but most importantly, spread the Word of God through their music and testimony. Also, don't forget to purchase your tickets for the PSGMA Induction Banquet! See details in our AD. Time is of the essence, don't delay! We look forward to hearing from you! You can find us on our website at [www.psgma.com](http://www.psgma.com) or on FACEBOOK. May God Bless You and Keep You in the upcoming holiday season.

Sincerely,

*John Lythgoe*

PSGMA President

## THE EDITORS NOTE

**The Fall Edition**, of the Keystone Quarterly, is here! Can you believe that this quarter marks an entire year since we've started printing the magazine again? Time is flying!

This means that the 1st Quarter of 2016 is coming up next! WOW! It will be here before we know it! Those months are January, February and March.

If you are submitting anything at all, PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE make sure that you have the information sent to me by Friday, November 27, 2015. (Earlier is always better) Please note that anything submitted after this date, will delay the magazine from being published and distributed by January 1st. Check out the "Contact Information and Pricing Section" on this page if you would like to submit an ad.

I hope you all have a Happy Thanksgiving and very Merry Christmas! God Bless You!

Sincerely,

*Lois Gongloff*

## CONTACT INFORMATION & PRICING

AD Prices: \$ 15.00/ *Business Card*

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Magazine AD

Checks made payable to: **PSGMA**

Send all other correspondence associated with the magazine, via E-Mail, to  
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# THE LESTERS LEGACY

If you ask people what comes to mind when they think of St. Louis, the typical response would be the iconic Gateway Arch, the Cardinals or the mighty Mississippi River that runs through this mid-western city. If you ask a gospel music fan or anyone who grew up there, their list would most likely include The Lester family. St. Louis is often referred to as the “Gateway to the West” because of the major role it played in the expansion of America as explorers, early settlers and immigrants from around the world, made their way west. The history of The Lester’s ministry easily fits into their hometown’s rich legacy of expansion, as they helped introduce Gospel Music to the mid-west and beyond.

As you drive through the south side of St. Louis, you will see landmarks of the community including the Botanical Gardens or the Fox Theater. On the corner of Castleman and 39th, you will see one of gospel music’s landmarks, the Lesters Music Store. Even though the store closed in 2004, the classic neon sign still hangs out front, a reminder of the impact this family had to their neighborhood. For ninety years, four generations of the Lester’s have and still live there by the store, proclaiming the gospel through music.

The Lester Family Ministries began in 1925 when Harvey and Opal Lester moved from Hayti, Missouri to St. Louis. Opal taught music at their music store and felt the calling from God to start a music ministry. “How my grandma started is actually very funny. My grandpa gave her money to buy a car and instead she went and bought a piano. That was her, she was a real spitfire,” recalled Brian Lester. They would sing at small churches, revivals and anywhere the doors opened. Over the years many of her students would find their way onto the bus, joining the family on stage. “To this day I have people come up to me at concerts with stories of taking lessons from my grandmother and my father. That’s very special,” Brian added.

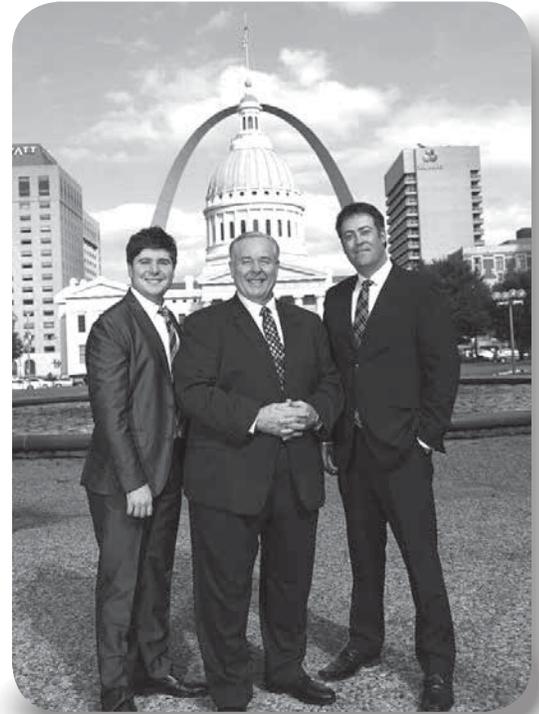
When Harvey’s son Hershel came back from WWII, he took over the family ministry and also began teaching music in St. Louis. It wasn’t long after this, that the Lesters gained nationwide attention from their appearance on the television show, The Ted Mack Amateur Hour, in 1956. As their ministry grew, so did their family, each joining them on stage at an early age. “I made my first TV appearance at age 4. My parents believed in involving us at an early age,” added Brian. Brian’s older sister Donna and younger sister Ginger, were also

raised singing on stage. Through the years the lineup has changed but the reason they sing has not. “Our goal is to see people’s lives changed, whether they give their heart to the Lord, or maybe they were just encouraged by the message we presented,” said Jonathan Lester. That mission has taken them all across America and into numerous countries including India, Switzerland and also into the Holy Lands.

It’s impossible to talk about The Lesters and not talk about Meramec Caverns, located just outside of St. Louis. In 1966, the family began presenting an Easter pageant inside the grand ballroom, deep within the cave. A few years later they began hosting a festival of Gospel music with the biggest names in Christian music including the Cathedrals, the Blackwood Brothers, the Statesmen Quartet, the Speer Family and many more. Both of these events are still going strong today with the Fall Festival having become one of Gospel Music’s largest events. “It’s without a doubt the most unique place you will ever sing,” said Matt Felts. Later on the Lesters purchased the Kingsland Theater in St. Louis, where they expanded their concert promotions. God continued to bless the family by opening more doors. For 27 years, the Lesters had a weekly television show called “The Lester Family Sings” that aired on NBC out of St. Louis. The show reached millions and helped spread the Gospel to countless people.

Today, The Lester’s heritage is carried on by a third and fourth generation. Brian Lester leads the group. Brian has been singing for over 55 years and is one of Gospel music’s most beloved artists. Known as one of the best emcees in Gospel music, Brian was asked to emcee the National Quartet Convention for many years. Night after night the group gets requests for Brian to sing the Lesters biggest hit, ‘He Didn’t Throw The Clay Away.’ “I’ve been blessed to sing that song for over 26 years. It never gets old,” Brian added.

Brian’s son, Jonathan, has picked up the torch and is ensuring that the Lester’s legacy will go on for many more years. Jon played soccer in college and never dreamed that he would end up on the road singing. “I had my life all planned out, but God had other plans. I was injured my junior year and my soccer days were over. I traveled with my Dad that



summer and God began to reveal a new path for my life. I am honored to carry on my family’s rich legacy,” Brian added “It’s such a blessing to stand on stage with my son and see how he has grown in the ministry.”

Over the many years on the road, The Lester’s have been blessed to have many talented people travel with them and become “adopted” members of the family. The most recent addition to the family may be new to them, but not new to the fans of gospel music. Matt Felts has sung for groups such as Perfect Heart, Monument Quartet and most recently, The Dixie Melody Boys. Bringing Matt on with the group added a special connection that they had not had in a while. “Although I live in Nashville, I’m originally from St. Louis. My first house was only two miles from Brian’s house. I grew up hearing the Lester’s and have always loved their music. It’s such an honor to join them. It’s like coming home,” stated Matt. “We are blessed to have someone like Matt join the group. He has been a great addition,” added Brian.

The current lineup has turned heads and caught attention for their incredible sound but also for its uniqueness in the history of the Lesters. “We have always been a mixed group. Through the years my sisters and even my niece, Jenny, have shared the stage with us. Even though we are a male trio now, the girls still play a huge role. Ginger

*continued on page 5*

# THE LESTERS LEGACY

*continued from page 4*

does all of our arrangements helping us keep the “Lester’s” style and Donna helps out in the office. Every once in a while, some of the family will join us on stage for special events,” added Brian.

With a legacy so rich, it would be easy to sit back and relax but that’s not the case for one of Gospel Music’s most storied groups. They entered into 2015, celebrating their 90th year in the ministry. If reaching that milestone wasn’t enough to refuel them for another 90 years, the city of St. Louis honored them on January 1st by declaring it “Lesters Day” in honor of their historic accomplishment. Shortly after that, they learned through working with the Guinness Book of Records, that they were officially the longest running musical group of any genre in the world. “Most groups that have been around this long usually are comfortable riding on their past accomplishments, but not the Lesters. There is an excitement here that is usually found in a new group,” stated Matt. The group is planning several self-promoted events that will include other guest artists.

The Lesters recorded a live album in Boston, last fall, which was a first for a Gospel music group. The group was one of the first gospel artists to make the New England states a regular part of their tour schedule, helping to open doors in that region for more groups. “People really seem to love the live albums,” stated Jonathan. Due to the success of that album, they recorded another live album as a quartet, with special guest artist, Mike Allen, long time Gaither Homecoming artist. This album will be released in the fall of 2015. Two more live albums are scheduled, one at Silver Dollar City and one at Meramec Caverns. The group will also be in the studio working on a new major release album. Adding to the excitement of their 90th anniversary celebration, the Lesters recently added a full lights and video presentation to select dates. “It’s a very exciting time for us. God has blessed us with a great past but the future is even more thrilling,” said Jonathan.

It’s easy to see why the Lester’s have lasted for nine decades and why they are accredited with the growth of Gospel

music across America and beyond. They have had a major impact in so many ways from their music, their TV show and also their concert promotions. They have three members currently in the Southern Gospel Hall of Fame, with more that are sure to follow. They have been honored by Mayors, Governors and even the St. Louis Cardinals. Their songs have become classics that will last the test of time. They have appeared on countless television shows including the Gaither Homecoming Series and have toured around the world. Just as the Arch towers above the St. Louis skyline reminding viewers of the cities impact, each time the Lesters sing on a stage, they are a testimony to the faithfulness of their calling. In closing, Brian added, “I know that when my grandparents started this ministry, they never dreamed it would still be going 90 years later! I think if they could see the impact our family has made, they would be so proud and greatly blessed. The awards and honors are nice, but if they knew that lives were changed, that would be what satisfied them the most.”

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# IN MY OWN WORDS

by Annie Morgan

Hi. I'm Annie. To many of you, I'm the new girl on the block. I've actually been singing and playing since I was about 9 years old. I've been working my whole life for the opportunity to share my music. I spent my early years competitively ice skating and training for what I thought was going to be a long-term career. I was no stranger to the spotlight; people would ask me if I ever got scared to go out on the ice and perform and I remember looking at them wondering why I was supposed to be scared.

I believe the confidence and dedication I learned at a young age while skating carried through as I found the new gifts I never knew I had.

One day in church my pastor asked me if I would sing a special. I was only about 9 and even then I knew it was something that I wanted to do.

I knew that I needed to practice, so I used my hairbrush as a microphone when I thought no one was listening. I would practice watching myself sing in the bathroom mirror to gain confidence. I sang in church plays and also continued to ask to sing specials for Sunday evening service and eventually gained a spot on the church worship team. It was then that I took real interest in playing the piano. I learned three chords the first night that we practiced for worship service and began playing every song that I could with those three chords. My Mom saw the interest I had in learning more and immediately enrolled me in piano lessons. I advanced quickly and helped as backup pianist for our worship team. I enjoyed not only playing the piano but also writing songs. It opened up a whole new door for me to express myself.

I started to write songs when I was about 12. My songs focused on topics that most people couldn't believe were coming from the perspective of a 12 year old. They always asked me how I could write lyrics that were seemingly beyond my years. Of course, I didn't know, I just liked to write!

Several years passed and I learned so much from researching different writers, one of my favorites being Marty Funderburk. I just didn't think my music would ever leave my piano shelf, I needed people to actually hear them!

When I was 16, I was thrilled when my Mom enrolled me in a two-week summer school at Stamps Baxter School

of Music which was then held at Trevecca Nazarene University, Nashville, TN. We took a 12 hour drive to TN and I spent two weeks soaking in everything that I possibly could. I had the privilege of receiving songwriting lessons with Darrell Williams, a renowned songwriter and well respected in the gospel music industry. I took everything I learned home with me and it changed my life. I returned to that school two more summers and even made it into the grand finale closing program.

After auditioning with over a hundred other people, I was one of the 10 chosen to perform one of my original songs at the closing ceremony. I couldn't believe I made it! I sang and played 'I'll Carry You', which is on my debut CD coming out soon. It's a song that I wrote for a good friend of mine who passed away after battling Leukemia at a young age; he never got to hear it, but I know that he would be happy that it is touching so many lives through the lyrics of encouragement.

When I was 18, my family decided that it was time to take a leap of faith and move to Nashville. It was there that my Dad perfected his recording skills and I got a taste of what it's like to run with the big fish. Coming from a small town in PA, I wasn't expecting everyone to be able to sing and play. I wondered how I would ever 'make it' when I was the new girl in a city where musicians are so plentiful.

I knew the only thing that would set me apart was my writing. I started to focus on getting my songs more structured and taking any opportunity I could to improve. After being in Nashville for a few years, I was more determined than ever to continue my love for music. That ambition took me to a weekend writing workshop called 'Write About Jesus', held by Sue Smith in Springfield, MO. I entered a new song that I had written called, 'I Fell In Love' into their Gospel song writing competition; even though it was primarily a love song, it still placed third. I was blown away that I could place top three in a place where it seemed like everyone knew how to write the perfect song. It was a confirmation



for me that I was, in fact, developing one of my gifts. Other conferences I attended were Allison Durham Speer's 'Elijah Conference', where I gained an extensive amount of performance technique training and was also accepted into NSAI Nashville's Advanced Song Camp.

An amazing opportunity and lasting impression was to have my songs critiqued by R. C. Bannon – known for his songs 'Reunited', made popular by Barbara Mandrell and 'I Don't Have To Be Me Till Monday', among others. He listened to some of my songs and took a particular liking to 'I Can't Stop the Rain', which will also be on my CD. It was so exciting just to be on Music Row in Nashville, talking with someone who is living his dream and who is also encouraging me to go after mine. He is so kind and down to earth, you'd never know he is one of the faces behind the masterful lyrics of some of the best songs of all time. It was truly a remarkable moment for me.

Another breathless moment for me came when I got to sit next to Gloria Gaither at a tea luncheon at their home studios in Indiana. Just having the privilege of sitting next to someone who has written some of the most recorded songs in the history of music itself was incredible. I wish that I could have sat with her for days just to hear the stories behind some of our most beloved songs, such as 'Because He Lives'. Then, the time came that I never imagined would happen to me. I received a message from Marty Funderburk asking me if I would be interested in

*continued on page 7*

# Annie Morgan



## Recording Artist

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For Scheduling call: [\(615\) 830-4552](tel:6158304552)

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## IN MY OWN WORDS

*continued from page 6*

writing at Daywind Studios with him in Hendersonville, TN. I couldn't believe one of my childhood writing heroes wanted to write with ME! Of course it took me about two seconds to say "YES". We ended up co-writing a beautiful powerhouse song called 'The Best Is Yet to Come'. After the publishing process was complete, he sent me the mp3 of the finished product. As I listened to the words and music that we wrote together from scratch, I just sat there and cried. It was as if all of my hard work and effort were finally coming together and making sense. Since then, I have performed numerous concerts, made it to front page newspaper articles, opened for such groups as The Nelons, Steel City, and New Journey, and per-formed on TN and radio.

I am very please to announce that I have recently signed a recording contract

with Gold Rush Music Group out of Nashville, TN. My debut CD titled, 'Like My Grandma Did' will be released soon. It is a mix of country and gospel songs I've written and includes a few songs that have been an inspiration to me.

I'm blown away at how far I've come and excited to see where the future will lead me. Some days, I can almost feel the lyrics coming down from God Himself. I think my biggest success is allowing God to be heard through me and being an open vessel to pen His words so that others an listen to what He has to say. I know now, without a shadow of a doubt, I wouldn't be where I'm at today without His hand of guidance.

Of course after I accomplish one thing I have to make new dreams. One of them is to sing at the Grand Ole Opry and the

Ryman Auditorium in Nashville. I am a firm believer that with God, all things are possible.

Don't ever give up on your dreams. If you work hard and keep the faith, there is no dream that is too far out of reach.

Be sure to look for my new CD release. Take a moment to re-quest my songs on the radio, visit my Facebook music page 'Annie Morgan', and visit my website [www.anniemorganmusic.com](http://www.anniemorganmusic.com) to stay up to date with my concerts, photos, and new music. I can't wait to see you all and to meet the people who allow me to keep making music. Without you, my dreams wouldn't even be possible, and The Best Is Yet to Come! Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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