

Three presidents praise Rev. Billy Graham

Written by Lauren Ohnesorge
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It was an afternoon of praise and fellowship in Charlotte yesterday, as the Billy Graham Library was dedicated. Three former U.S. presidents were present for the occasion: Jimmy Carter, George Bush Sr. and Bill Clinton.

Governor Mike Easley was among the first to recognize Billy Graham's influence and importance in North Carolina and around the world. Grammy award winner Ricky Skaggs even sang a ballad to the reverend.

President Jimmy Carter praised Graham's dedication to equality during the civil rights era.

President Bill Clinton praised Graham for his personal ministry. When Graham prayed for him, he was not praying for him as president he said, but as a person.

In President George Bush's speech, he called Graham "America's pastor." Bush appeared moved to tears at the end of his keynote address.

How did the man himself react to all the attention?

Graham said it felt like being at his own funeral.

According to son Franklin, the humble Graham had one complaint about the library.

"It has too much Billy Graham." In fact, Graham was reluctant about the library at the beginning.

Billy Graham came around, however, convinced the library itself could be a tool.

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He expressed hope that those who enter the facility will be inspired towards their own faiths.

Graham's wife, Ruth Bell Graham, was greatly missed at the dedication. Bedridden for the past six months, she is in need of prayer, Graham said.

The Library, which opens Tuesday, contains a history of Graham's evangelical accomplishments, as well as his powerful message of salvation. Graham's closeness with the people of Western North Carolina is reflected in its exhibits and photographs. The front of the library represents Graham's old Dairy Farm, embedded with a cross to reflect Graham's message of faith.