

JOAN BOWEN

Member Since 1942

Background:

Birth Date:

October 15, 1931

Place of Birth:

Chambersburg, PA

Favorite Hymn:

To God Be the Glory



Did You Know?

Joan's great-grandparents used to own the home just across the alley from our church sanctuary (the red building that recently had to be torn down). They were living in this home when the Confederate Army marched through on July 30, 1864. While large portions of the town were destroyed by the fire set in response to Chambersburg's refusal to pay the required ransom, the rebel officer in charge of the southeastern section of the town, gallantly refused to follow orders, saving the buildings on 2nd Street that were south of Queen Street. This included Joan's family's home and our church.

From a very early age, Joan always knew that she wanted to be a schoolteacher. She remembers playing school as a child, always in the role of the teacher, and of helping a friend's mother prepare copies for her classroom over the summer. As a teenager, Joan became the pianist for the Primary Department of the Sunday School. And she began working as a counselor at Camp Penn, after attending for many years as a camper.

In 1955, Joan realized her dream of becoming a teacher. She began her career teaching 3rd Grade at Thaddeus Stevens Elementary, also working later at Mary B. Sharpe, Buchanan, Coldbrook, New Franklin, Duffield, King Street, and Guilford Hills. She remembers enjoying working with children and getting to know them.

Joan was also very involved with the Girl Scouts of America. She joined the church-sponsored Girl Scout Troop #3 when it started in 1942 and had her first airplane flight with Senior Troop #2 as a Wing Scout. She continued in scouting for more than 50 years as a troop leader, camp counselor, and trainer of patrols that attended four of the National Round Ups, a week-long gathering which was held every three years at different locations around the country. Before attending, the girls had to learn how to pitch a tent, start a charcoal fire, and cook camp meals. Joan attended three of these Round Ups as a staff camper.

Thinking back to her own childhood, Joan remembers the difficulties of growing up during the Great Depression and WWII. Her dad was luckier than many other men because he had a

steady job at T. B. Woods. But employees there were on a restricted schedule of 1-2 work days per week. Money was tight in their family during those years. Joan remembers being disappointed one year when she had to wear a coat that was repurposed from one of her great-aunt's old coats.

Then came WWII with its air raid drills and shortages of items such as gasoline, sugar, and butter. Joan remembers the invention of margarine as a butter substitute. She had the job of mixing the capsule of orange food dye thoroughly into the bag of margarine so that it would at least *look* like butter. And she remembers the air raid drills, when her family would have to pull down the window blinds and turn off all of their lights, in case a German bomber was flying overhead looking for a target.

Joan remembers life being very good in the years following the war. The country began to build and grow and improve. But she sees that more recently things have gotten watered down in our country. She says you see it in things as small as the pencil—which is now made so thin that half of it gets chewed up in a good old pencil sharpener—to things as significant as our faith.

Joan remembers the days in the beginning of her teaching career when she led her students in opening exercises each morning. She would read a Scripture text, followed by recitation of the Lord's Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance, and then she would walk around the room checking for clean hands and nails and brushed teeth. Things have dramatically changed, and not always for the better.

Joan would very much like to see the American church return to a place of prominence. She talks about the importance of faith in her own life, remembering key moments in her spiritual journey: the revival she attended as a child when she went to the altar in a public decision to follow Jesus, taking the Catechism and joining the church at age twelve, attending Sunday school and signing a card in the Junior Department to abstain from drinking alcohol, and participating in the Interdenominational Youth Movement and Christian Endeavor as a teenager.

It's interesting to me that Joan testifies to a thriving American church during a time in our history filled with daily struggle and raging conflict. And yet now, during a time of wealth and security, the church seems to be struggling.

Perhaps the words of "I'd Rather Have Jesus," one of Joan's favorite songs from her summers at church camp, provide a guiding wisdom:

*I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold,
I'd rather be His than have riches untold;
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land,
Yes, I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand.*

*Than to be king of a vast domain
And be held in sin's dread sway,
I'd rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today.*