

The Story of the Mount Lyn Lowry Cross



The Cross sits atop Mt. Lyn Lowry at an elevation of 6,240 feet. Mt. Lyn Lowry is one of the tallest mountains in the Appalachian chain (ranked at number 15).

Tampa native Lyn Lowry was a mere fifteen years old when she died of leukemia in 1962. Her parents, retired Army Lt. Gen. Sumter Lowry and Ivilyn Lowry, were wracked with sorrow but determined to create a legacy for Lyn. They picked one of her favorite vacation spots, a mountain peak in western North Carolina, to build a permanent memorial to their departed daughter.

On the night of August 6, 1964, they flipped a switch and turned on the lights that have lit up the cross on "Mount Lyn Lowry" ever since. It's 60 feet tall, is illuminated at night, and can be seen from as far away as 30 miles, if you're looking from the right direction.

One year later, the famed western North Carolina-based evangelist Billy Graham traveled to the cross to offer a dedication. "I am sure we all have mixed emotions as we stand on this glorious mountaintop," he said. "We have tears in our eyes as we miss the loved one who was taken from us. On the other hand, we rejoice that out of her death has come this symbol of the pure and wonderful life she led."

Most folks see the cross, which is maintained by a family foundation, from one of two vantage points. You can hike there, although the road to the cross and the "Singing Grounds" is private. Vehicles are not permitted.

"The climb is but a small price to pay to be among the sky, the trees, the surrounding peaks and valleys below, the great cross above," notes a pamphlet published by the Haywood County Chamber of Commerce shortly after the cross went up. "It's glorious."

Another, less strenuous way to take in the soft-glowing cross is to drive a night along US 19/74 between Waynesville and Balsam Gap. One a clear night it's hard to miss. An overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway, at Milepost 445.2, offers a nice, if remote, view."

More Information...

In a booklet written by General Lowry, he lays out the role God played in guiding him to establish the cross:

First, let me tell you why it all started. When the good Lord decided that He needed another angel in heaven and took our little daughter, Lyn, to be with Him, we felt that we had suffered a loss from which we could never recover. For Lyn was truly an unusual girl. She was a dedicated Christian with complete faith. She was beautiful and smart, tender and loving – yet she had a great deal of courage and fire. Lyn was an inspiration to all who knew her.

But as time went on we realized that the only thing we could do was accept the loss as the Lord's will and be grateful for the 15 years we had her.

After considering a variety of projects, the couple decided to place a lighted cross on top of their 6,280-foot mountain in recognition of their daughter's faith and her love for the high country.

Lowry's booklet describes what he terms the series of miracles that resulted in the lighted cross that's still shining 45 years after its 1965 dedication by the Rev. Billy Graham.

First was the purchase of the Jacksonville, Fla., steel fabrication plant where the 60-foot steel cross was constructed. Lowry bought the plant on an impulse some seven years before Lyn was born.

“I had no possible use for a steel plant, but I had a strong feeling that I ought to buy the plant anyway,” Lowry writes.

The general also saw God’s hand in his impulsive acquisition of Jones Knob when Lyn was around 7 years old.

“At that time I did not understand why I took this action as I certainly did not need a mountain,” Lowry wrote. “This was years before Lyn’s death and we, of course, did not know what God had in mind. We now realize that it was all part of His plan.”

Subsequent miracles chronicled by Lowry include a 1957 escape from a grizzly bear that was averted by a bear cub that distracted its father from attacking Lowry,

“This was truly a miracle, for 3-foot baby bears don’t usually bite 7-foot papa bears unless motivated by God to do so,” Lowry wrote.

Another miracle saved Lowry from a rock during blasting to prepare the site, and one more occurred as the cross was dedicated on a day when dark clouds filled the sky and rain appeared imminent.

“Then a miracle took place! Just as Dr. Graham got up to speak, the clouds overhead parted and a shaft of sunlight came through the opening in the clouds and rested on Billy’s head,” Lowry wrote. “It was just as if the Lord had opened the clouds and sent this ray of light as a beacon of hope for all to see and to let us know that we had erected this cross to his glory on this high mountain.”