

Ethna Faye Billings

A five-year-old girl recently strutted around with a new birthday shirt imprinted with “One of a Kind” on the front. It was one of her favorite gifts.

Here in Springfield, Missouri, we thought Ethna Faye was also one of a kind. And it appears that friends from College of the Ozarks and at her home in Arkansas also view her as one of a kind.

Ethna joined the work force of the Gospel Publishing House in 1958 and stayed on the job for the next nearly 37 years—one of the longest terms of service in her department.

Anyone who began working in the department soon learned that Ethna could tell them exactly what they wanted to know about product inventory. But she wanted nobody messing around with her files. She would do the looking.

In the early years she would open her old-time flat files that predated computers, for example, and come up with the number of copies the company had in stock of a particular book, hymnbook, communion set, or a thousand other items. And she could tell how long the stock would last. She did her job well. And she did it long, from the presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower until that of Bill Clinton.

And she protected those files as if they were her very own. Maybe she considered the files did belong to her. But it showed her dedication to the job and the Lord’s work.

A co-worker, Wayne Warner, said he did not know about Ethna’s activities outside of the office until his daughter graduated from high school. At the honors ceremony, the school principal introduced Ethna to the seniors. Ethna came to the podium and greeted the seniors on behalf of a local professional women’s club. Warner added that he was pleased to learn that Ethna was president of the group--a distinct honor.

Everyone who met Ethna would soon learn of her sense of humor. One day she told an employee, who attended one of the largest churches in Springfield, that his church would be the first to go up in the Rapture. When the employee looked puzzled, Ethna chuckled and with a big smile said, “The Bible says the dead in Christ shall rise first.” With twinkling eyes, she chuckled a little louder.

That was Ethna Faye Billings, a friend of many. And they are sad to say goodbye but are assured they will meet again in heaven where there are no sicknesses nor goodbyes.

Wayne Warner