



"Cross Connection"

Radio Ministry of Hope Wesleyan Church and Wells of Salvation Ministries
Ultimate Oldies Radio – FM 97.7 and 101.1, Huber Heights, Ohio



Series: Christian Messages In Secular Music

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Program 74 "Three Wooden Crosses" © Kim Williams, Doug Johnson

Along almost every major road you travel these days you can find wooden crosses placed at the sites of fatal vehicle accidents. The states seem to permit such memorials to bring home to us all the reality of dangers on the highways. The sight of these monuments gives me pause... wondering who the victims were... pondering what may have happened... thanking the Lord for His safety and protection. "Three Wooden Crosses" tells an interesting story behind three such wooden monuments – a great context for finding Cross Connections.

The Song ¹

- From Randy Travis's '02 album, *Rise and Shine*; his 16th #1 single
- Named Song of the Year by the Country Music Association in '03.
- Charted for 34 weeks on the Hot Country Singles & Tracks
- Crossed over to the Top 40 on the Billboard Hot 100 charts, peaking at #31
- Tells the story of a fatal accident involving a bus en route from USA to Mexico by night
 - 4 passengers on board; a farmer, teacher, hooker and a preacher
 - 3 of them die; then 3 wooden memorial crosses are erected
 - Lyrics weave a compelling story that reveals which one lived, and how that life was changed forever at the scene of the accident



The Artist – Randy Travis (1959-) ²

- Randy Bruce Traywick, from N. Carolina, is a Grammy Award- and Dove Award-winning American country Christian singer-songwriter
- Ranked #13 on *Country Music Television's 40 Greatest Men of Country Music* in '03
- Has recorded more than a dozen studio albums since '85
- Has charted more than 30 singles on the *Billboard* Hot Country Songs charts
- Switched focus to gospel music in 1997; then earned several Dove Awards
- Holds several acting credits – a TV special in '92; has appeared in several movie and television roles (including *Touched By An Angel*), sometimes as himself
- Rough road – performing at 8, drinking at 12, using marijuana at 14, then harder drugs
- HS dropout, juvenile delinquent; arrested for auto theft, burglary, probation violations
- As a teen, he won a talent contest sponsored by a nightclub in Charlotte, NC
 - Nightclub owner took an interest in him, she helped him get career going
 - Travis fell in love with her in '82; married her in '91
- Warner Bros. records changed his stage name from "Randy Ray" to Randy Travis
- Hits include – "On The Other Hand", "No Place Like Home", "Diggin' Up Bones", "Forever And Ever, Amen", and "Whisper My Name"



A farmer and a teacher, a hooker and a preacher
Riding on a midnight bus bound for Mexico
One was heading for vacation
One for higher education
And two of them were searching for lost souls

- Lyrics set the stage by describing a mix of people and backgrounds riding a bus
- Only four passengers -- perhaps they got to know each other

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Wooden_Crosses

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Randy_Travis

That driver never ever saw the stop sign
And 18 wheelers can't stop on a dime

- Each of us must be ready to face eternity
"...keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come" – Matt 24:42

There are three wooden crosses
on the right side of the highway
Why there's not four of them heaven only knows
I guess it's not what you take
When you leave this world behind you
It's what you leave behind you when you go

- In the Lenten season our attention is typically drawn to the cross of Jesus Christ
- What did the cross mean in Bible times?
- How is it portrayed today?
- What should it mean to Christians today?
"Then he said to them all: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me...'" – Luke 9:23
 - How do we do that?

That farmer left a harvest, a home and 80 acres
The faith and love for growing things
In his young son's heart
And that teacher left her wisdom
In the minds of lots of children
Did her best to give 'em all a better start
And that preacher whispered
Can't you see the promised land?
As he lay his blood stained Bible
in that hooker's hand

- Lyrics describe the importance of what we leave behind when we depart this world
 - Primarily in the lives of children
- Evangelist Ed Wells, founder of Wells of Salvation Ministries, would often pray this verse in his waning years –
"Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come" – Psalm 71:18, NIV
- What and how are you investing in lives?
- What will you leave behind?

There are three wooden crosses
on the right side of the highway
Why there's not four of them heaven only knows
I guess it's not what you take
When you leave this world behind you
It's what you leave behind you when you go

That's the story that our preacher told last Sunday
As he held that blood stained Bible up
For all of us to see
He said, Bless the farmer, and the teacher,
And the preacher who gave this Bible to my momma
Who read it to me

As the late Paul Harvey often quipped, *"And now you know the rest of the story!"*

- The preacher and the hooker also left something to the next generation... faith!

There are three wooden crosses
on the right side of the highway
Why there's not four of them now I guess we know
It's not what you take
When you leave this world behind you
It's what you leave behind you when you go
There are three wooden crosses
on the right side of the highway.....

- Jesus explained life's travels in terms of roads and which one we choose (Matthew 7:13)
- The refrain in this song places the wooden crosses on the *"right"* side of the highway
 - Do you see any significance in that?

Final Thoughts –

I have to wonder what happened to the bus driver in this scenario. He or she likely passed numerous wooden crosses along the bus routes – probably knew where every one of them was placed. When you see these wooden monuments along the way, take a moment to recall the message in this song. Then choose, or reaffirm your choice, to take up your cross daily for our Lord Jesus Christ.

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