

Struggling with Tragedy

Jewell never fully overcame her mother's sudden death on Sept. 24, 1957, at age 70. A week earlier, Mama Minnie had spent the night with her next-to-oldest daughter, Alma Lou, a longtime Assembly of God preacher. Lou told Jewell what Mama Minnie had said to her the next morning:

“Lou, you’ve got to take me home. The Good Lord came to me last night and said he was going to take me in a week.” Mama Minnie’s home was a small, one-bedroom frame house on her son Caleb’s farm in heavily wooded Sulphur River bottoms south of Texarkana.



Jewell's mother, Mama Minnie, was the beloved matriarch of her family. Her death at age 70 delivered a crushing blow to Jewell.

Mama Minnie had full faith in her dream. Once home, she began canning vegetables and tending to other final preparations. Jewell

visited her, believing the dream was only a dream. But in a week to the day of her dream, Mama Minnie died of a ruptured appendix.

In the years leading up to Jewell's own death at her home on Sept. 3, 1971, she continued to write and to sell songs to artists and publishing houses in Nashville, and she would take promising young artists to Music City to meet her contacts as she had done for years. One longtime colleague and close friend there was Hubert Long who had opened a talent agency, Stable of Stars, in 1955.



The Rev. Alma Lou HancockTurnage was greatly respected as "an anointed and spirit-filled " Assembly of God preacher.

Jewell and her family moved in 1961 from the little frame house and all of its memories to a pretty home on an acre in a wooded area west of Texarkana. Charley had a 50 by 50-foot workshop out back where he pursued a new hobby – welding and creating wrought iron fixtures for homes and apartment complexes.

Jewell's sons grew up, married and moved away – further losses that hung heavy on her heart.

Now and then, the Wilburn Brothers and Buck Owens would send a special hello to “our good friend Jewell House” on their Saturday TV programs. They and others would call and write to Jewell. Aspiring singers and stage mothers would call her to ask her to help them make the right connections in Nashville.

Her highest point in the '60s came when in 1962, Jewell finally realized her dream of pursuing higher education. She entered Texarkana College's Licensed Vocational Nursing (LVN) program, eventually acing the state board examination and becoming an LVN.

Nursing was a natural – and timely – outlet for her caring spirit. She was always drawn to people who were either hurting or in need. She wanted to nurture them and help them to find healing. She told freelancer Presley that she had hit the driest spell ever in her songwriting and Country music work, but nursing got her mind off of that.

“The happiest work I've ever done was as a nurse,” she said. “It's hard work. When you're nursing, you're too busy and you don't have time to give attention to anything else.”



Jewell's Country music career stalled in the '60s, but she found her greatest happiness as a Licensed Vocational Nurse after graduation from Texarkana College's nursing school – a moment she celebrated at home on that Sunday afternoon with Charles and family.