

EDUCATIONAL PIONEER
Nancy Carolyn Spradling Brown
(August 8, 1946-March 12, 2010)

Normally when one thinks of a pioneer, the image of a rugged trailblazer with hardened sinews and weather-etched features springs to mind, but Nancy Brown is a pioneer of another kind. She weighed barely 100 pounds, and she was anything but an intimidating physical presence, but she blazed a trail for many families through the difficult, and sometimes hostile, wilderness in the early days of home school education in East Tennessee. She persevered through disappointment and frustration to lay the foundation for the Berean Home School network, which began in 1993 with 40 students. When she retired in 2003, the program had grown to include 700 students from 400 families. Today, with Eddie Lee as the administrator, the network serves roughly 500 families and 950 students from 175 churches in 18 counties.

Her passion for home schooling grew out of her desire to see her own children nurtured in their faith and equipped in their education. She struggled against the current of public opinion at the time, even among some segments of the Christian community, and supported others who were willing to experiment with this new approach to the challenges of preparing the next generation for faith and life. She mentored many weary mothers and frustrated fathers who were ready to chuck the whole idea of home schooling and coached hundreds through to the happy day when they stood with their new graduates on the commencement platform.

It was her idea to bring the home school network under the umbrella of Berean Christian School for greater stability and accountability. She worked alongside Wade Ewing, the Berean Christian School administrator at the time, to make the blending of Christian day school and Christian home school philosophies a rare, but happy marriage. Today this spirit of cooperation has become a model for many other programs across the state. In the current situation families may have one student in the day school and another in the home school, or even a high school student who takes some classes in the home school program and another class in the day school program. To her it seemed reasonable in the body of Christ, that the church, school, and home should work together in harmony for the greater good. Her gracious spirit and skillful administration have helped to make this theory a proven reality.

After eight years of battling a debilitating condition, Nancy Brown went home to be with her Lord on March 12, 2010. This has been a heart-wrenching struggle for the whole family, but especially for her devoted husband, Dick. At last the struggle has ended, and Nancy's journey is complete, but her legacy is likely to continue for generations to come. Others have been impacted by her ministry far beyond what may be obvious at the present time. Surely she would say with the Apostle Paul, "I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

John Stone