

*Spring is an Angel, A Poem*  
Mama Linda's Chapbook  
The Peale, Baltimore  
Recorded in May 2021

**Mama Linda Goss (00:32):**

Sometimes, I feel so alone. Although I've done no wrong. Oh Lord, stand by me, stand by me.  
Sometimes, I feel so alone. Although I've done no wrong. Oh Lord, stand by me, stand by me.

**Mama Linda Goss (00:34):** Praise Song for the Caregiver. This poem is for all caregivers who are taking care of someone, whether it's their parents, whether it's an auntie or a cousin. We take the caregivers for granted. And so I wrote this poem as a tribute to the caregiver, Sister Betty [Mayhan 00:00:57], who took such loving care of my mother. Praise Song for the Caregiver. Praise song for Sister Betty [Mayhan 00:01:08].

**Mama Linda Goss (01:09):** Sister Betty carries the whole race of her people on her hip. Legend has it, that as a baby, Sister Betty leaked from her mama's womb and nursed her back to health. When the steel-driving man, John Henry, was a crying baby, Sister Betty, put him on her knee and cradled him to sleep. Sister Betty's back is broad like a lioness. Her legs are sturdy like a mama bear. Her body is tall and long like a black walnut tree. Sister Betty got more arms than an octopus. She can cornrow [Kesha's 00:01:51] hair, helm Jerome's pants, iron clothes, water the plants, read the newspaper to [Nana 00:01:57], talk on the phone to [Sally Bell 00:01:59], shuck corn, and watch [Carol's 00:02:01] kids all at the same time. Sister Betty is faithful to her church. She's got a pretty sounding voice. She sings in the choir.

**Mama Linda Goss (02:38):** (singing)

**Mama Linda Goss (02:40):** Oh, she's a good cook. She manages the church kitchen. She is a Sunday school teacher. Sister Betty goes to prayer meeting every week. She takes food to the sick and shut-in. She takes folks to the grocery store and yet sister Betty is able to watch her TV shows and play her numbers. Sister Betty has raised her children, helped raise her grandchildren, her great grandchildren, and a lot of other folks' children. She took care of my mama and just about everybody else's mama and father who have been in need of care in this neighborhood. Sister Betty is the caregiver of her people. Even though she got rheumatism in her knees and arthritis in her shoulders, yet she still carries the race of her people on her hip.

**Mama Linda Goss (03:30):** Fast-forward. Sister Betty got cancer in her hip y'all. She can't take care of folks like she used to. She told me, "Oh, how I wish the Lord would just let me get up out of this bed so I could take care of somebody." Her favorite song is Stand By Me. Now, Sister Betty has stood by her community. And now the community is standing by her years later.

**Mama Linda Goss (04:16):** I've talked to Sister Betty the other day. I called and wished her a blessed birthday. She said to me, "Linda, I'm in here cooking. My pot roast is ready. I'm working on the chicken salad and the tuna salad. And my sweet potato pie is in the oven and the collards on the stove. Child, I'm 10 years out of being diagnosed and taking all them treatments. The Lord still got me here." Lord, what are we going to do without the Sister Bettys of this world? You don't make them like you used to. How come, Lord? How come? Sister Betty, we love you. We thank you for you have carried our people on your hip.

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**Myles Banks** ([05:35](#)): Oh, yeah!

**Mama Linda Goss** ([05:49](#)): Oh, thank you. Thank you.

**Myles Banks** ([05:50](#)): That was good.

**Mama Linda Goss** ([05:50](#)): Thank you.

**Myles Banks** ([05:54](#)): I thought I was sitting here in the front row of Broadway.

**Mama Linda Goss** ([05:56](#)): All right now. I heard that.

**Myles Banks** ([05:57](#)): Man, that was awesome. That was awesome.

**Mama Linda Goss** ([06:01](#)): Thank you. Thank you.

**Myles Banks** ([06:01](#)): And I love that song. I don't know if it's this exact same song, but it's the song that's called Stand By Me. Is that the one that goes-

**Mama Linda Goss** ([06:08](#)): No, it's not the same. You're talking about Stand By Me. (singing) No, it's not that one. I asked Betty about it. The song that most people know is Stand By Me by Ben E. King. And then there was another song called Stand By Me by Reverend Charles Tindley from Tindley chapel, from Tindley Methodist Church in Philadelphia. He's one of the pioneers, one of the founders of black hymnal and black gospel music along with Thomas Dorsey in this country. But she said this was-

**Myles Banks** ([06:43](#)): But let me ask you this.

**Mama Linda Goss** ([06:43](#)): Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Myles Banks** ([06:43](#)): Which one is the one that goes (singing)

**Mama Linda Goss** ([06:49](#)): That's by Ben E. King. That's Ben E. king. That's a R&B song by Ben E. King. See, no, it's not that one. This song Betty told me is a gospel song that a gospel choir used to sing. So she doesn't know who wrote it. And her voice is not strong enough to sing me the whole song, so she sang part of it last night to me. And so that's the part I remember. So that's how it goes.

**Myles Banks** ([07:17](#)): Yeah. So tell me what inspired you to write this poem? I'm wondering.

**Mama Linda Goss** ([07:22](#)): Sister Betty deserves it. She's in her 80s now and she's taken care of just about everybody in my little town of Alcoa. When she took care of my mama, people will call to the house, said, "Betty, please come and take care of my father. Please come and take care of my mother." But she said, "I can't do it because I'm taking care of Ms. McNear." That's what she called my mother. Because my mother was a great teacher there in Alcoa. And my mama taught Betty's children, grandchildren, Betty's sisters and brothers. My mama taught her, just about everybody in the town. So

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she was really loyal to my mother. I don't have to worry about a thing. Betty would be there taking care of her. She had her grandchildren helping her take care of my mama.

**Mama Linda Goss (08:08):** And that part is true when I said that Betty had hands like an octopus because I called her one day and Betty was doing about eight things at once. I remember one time... Because I was living in Philadelphia at the time. So I would drive down from Philly to Alcoa, Tennessee sometimes once, sometimes twice a month. And I would take over, so Betty could get a break, and stay with my mother for a while. And then I would take care of her. And I will get there and Betty had stuff cooking in the oven, on top of the stove and she would be baking cakes and pies. And I remember one time she cooked about... Oh my goodness. She must've cooked about five or six pies. So she was always cooking and she did straighten people's hair. Because where I come from, people get their hair pressed in the kitchen or in the bedrooms, somewhere. And then sometimes, when she would leave, when it was time for me to take over, she'd go across the street and she cleaned up [Leonard's 00:09:09] house.

**Mama Linda Goss (09:10):** So she would do cleaning and she did all kinds of things. And for years, she worked for Dr. [Burns 00:09:16]. He was the white eye doctor there in the town. And he had about 10,000 patients. I guess he was the only eye doctor in town. He was my mother's eye doctor too. He was a white man, but he took care of everybody's eyes in the town. So she worked for him for a while. And then after she retired from working for him, she just started working, helping others on her street or at her church and in the neighborhood. She was so talented. And her sister became a nurse and one of her granddaughters works in the health field as well. So Betty trained them really.

**Mama Linda Goss (09:57):** And Betty had enough talent where she could have been a doctor. She could have been a registered nurse. She had that kind of talent. So I'm just crazy about Betty. And she is tall. Betty about six feet tall. And very strong. Very strong. And she comes from a family... I think it was 12 children. I think she had seven children. She got a ton of grandchildren and a ton of great grandchildren. So Betty is well blessed. She's well blessed.

**Mama Linda Goss (10:27):** And so I wrote that as a tribute to Betty and also, again, as a tribute to all caregivers, all those who are taking care of people. And sometimes when you taking care of people, you feel that people just take you for granted. So I don't want caregivers to feel that they're being taken for granted because I appreciate everything that Betty did for my mama and all those who have taken care of me when I was in the hospital. My family. My family are my caregivers now. My husband, my daughters and my son, they take very good care of me. So I appreciate it. I really do.

**Myles Banks (11:15):** That's so beautiful mama. There is nothing like to have a mother. I can relate to that in a sense where you have a mother that takes care of you so well. And you finally return the favor and take care of her. It's like the circle of life.

**Mama Linda Goss (11:30):** Yes. Yes, it is. The circle of life. You were right about that Brother Myles, the circle of life.