



In his smooth drawl, Tony Russ '76 explains that his favorite 12-string guitar was purchased around 1978. "This is the one I live with," the evangelist says.

Singer-songwriter Tony Russ praises God through his music

With a wink of his eye, Tony Russ '76 reveals how he carried his first guitar to school, at age ten, to impress the girls. When Mrs. Wilson eventually asked Richard Anthony Russ to play for her class, he skipped his own recess and strummed a few embarrassing notes for his classmates.

By the eighth grade, Russ had joined his friend on drums to play in the school talent show. Not realizing the importance of practice and totally unprepared for the acoustic demands of an auditorium, Russ confidently strode onto the stage with his guitar. Told that the audience would never be able to hear his own instrument, he accepted the use of a friend's electric model even though he had never played one.

The curtain rose, he strummed a chord and froze. Shocking sounds emanating from the system took him by surprise. The curtain closed and an adjustment was made on the sound system. When the curtain reopened, he strummed another chord and produced no sound at all. The curtain closed again.

"We got all of our practice out of the way during a live performance," he laughs. A great smile opens across his face and Russ explains, "You know, it was an embarrassing time growing up and trying to play the guitar. Everyone thinks they can sing opera when they're alone in the shower."

Following graduation from West Edgcomb High School in Rocky Mount, N.C., Russ enrolled at Chowan and played with several rock and roll bands around Murfreesboro. Performing music from Credece Clearwater Revival and Steppenwolf, Russ began to dream of a career on the road.

Then, at the age of 21, his life changed dramatically. The victim of a freak accident that literally

blew him across the room, second and third-degree burns covered more than one-fourth of his body. "I was burned from my eyebrows to my waist," he explains, "and when I looked into the mirror, I saw the skin on my face hanging an inch below where it should have been."

In excruciating pain, he recalls his father loading him into the family station wagon for a terrifying trip to the hospital. "I remember singing *How Great Thou Art*, over and over, to take my mind off the burns and gain a focus," Russ recalls.

"When they told me at the hospital that I had a one-in-four chance of living, I had twelve days to lie on my back and think about it."

Miraculously, the young musician fully recovered. Totally void of any scarring, he gratefully turned his life to Christ. "To me, it was a situation of unconditional love," he says. "I didn't ask for the healing, it just happened. I believe He had a reason for me to be alive. Today, I try to carry that message of unconditional love to others."

Following his recovery, he began carrying his message through contemporary Christian music by singing with the vocal group Spirit and later with the highly-traveled band, Born Again. He later hosted the TNT Christian television talk show "Harvest Time" and recorded two albums for Key Records, "Hand in Hand" and "Crossroads."

Performing a solo ministry for the last thirteen years, the singer, songwriter and recording artist performs nearly 100 concerts each year. Although engagements have taken him as far as Cairo, Egypt, he performs primarily in the southeastern United States at conventions, conferences and youth rallies and for high schools, colleges and churches. In addition to touring, Russ is very active in the drama ministry of Englewood Baptist Church in Rocky Mount, N.C.

"My mission field is the church, whether it is Baptist, Church of God, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Methodist, whatever it may be," the musician states. "I carry a message of challenge, joy, and worship of the Lord, not doctrine."

Completely self-taught on the guitar, Russ freely admits that he cannot read music. "I don't know music," he says, "but, I know how it sounds. I can hear it and I know pitch. When I'm writing, if I don't have a chord that works, I'll strike the chord. Although I know it's a real chord, I don't know what the chord is."

Writing about one-fourth to one-half of what he records and performs, Russ declares, "I believe that if you go to a concert, you enjoy hearing familiar stuff, but I don't do any southern gospel or aggressive contemporary. My style is a combination of what I grew up on. It's probably contemporary folk more than anything."

Russ, his wife Sonja and son Brandon reside in Rocky Mount. He returned to Chowan's campus during Family Weekend for a performance sponsored by the Christian Student Union and Mt. Tabor Baptist Church Youth Group.

Class of 2002 now being enrolled

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leadership experience prior to enrollment, Chowan will offer a full-tuition scholarship to any student in North Carolina or Virginia who meets admissions criteria and has served a full year as president of a high school student government or student body.

The department would like to increase the number of visitors to campus and improve the services and the visual impact for guests by constructing an attractive welcome sign at the intersection of Union Street and the 158 Bypass along with a scenic overlook near Lake Vann.

As Chowan becomes increasingly infused with technology, the office of enrollment management plans to utilize both state-of-the-art equipment and methods along with the best of personal attention to demonstrate Chowan's dual personality of both hi-tech and hi-touch to prospective students!

In her own words

Junior Denise Deam prepares for inaugural London semester

Fifteen students to study in England during spring semester

Have you ever had a dream about traveling to Europe? I have, but I never really thought I would have the opportunity to go, let alone attend the University of London and live there for an entire semester. Now, my dream has come true!

When I first heard about the new London Program last fall, I really did not take it very seriously because I never imagined that I would actually be selected to go. When I heard that I had been accepted for the program, it was one of the happiest days of my life. The news was even better when I learned that three of my close friends were going as well.

Such decisions as, how much money to take, what to pack, how to pack, what kind of identification would be needed, etc. required lots of planning. During the summer, I worked long hours to

increase my bank account and applied for my International Identification Card, passport and Hostel Card.

Although the process has been stressful at times, it has been fun and exciting. With only a couple of months left before I leave, I'm counting down the days. I know this will be an experience of a lifetime and one that I will never forget. It will give me the opportunity to learn about cultures different from my own and learn a lot about myself as well.

I feel excited and anxious at the same time. Along with several friends, I will be staying another week after our study, to travel to France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. This will give us a wonderful opportunity to explore other countries, meet new people and have a great time doing it!

Denise Deam (left) along with close friends Neely McCully (center) and Tennile McCurmin (right) discuss what to pack for The London Semester.

They will join Chowan students Cookie Beyah, Tiffany Christner, Amanda Cover, David Hartline, Joe LaPlante, Chris Price, Libby Roper, Sari Sawyer, Betsye Slades, Edwin Staples, Antwyne Tyson and David White, in addition to 16 students from Louisiana College, for study at the University of London beginning in January. Dr. Nancy Duke of Chowan and Dr. Connie Douglas of Louisiana College are coordinating the learning experience.

