



Alabama State Auditor Beth Chapman, at the podium, speaks from the steps of the state capitol at a "Support the Troops" rally in 2003. Her words were taken from an earlier speech that was the inspiration for her book, *The Power of Patriotism*.

A Call To Service

I regret that I have but one life to give to my country.

That well-known sentiment of patriot Nathan Hale could well serve as the credo for Alabama State Auditor Beth Chapman, who has spent her adult life in service to others.

Even as a young child, Beth felt a strong desire to make a difference in the lives of others. At age eight she organized her first fundraiser, collecting \$300 for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Other such projects defined her teenage and college years, leading to a ten-year career with the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, first as director of special events and ultimately serving as state executive director. She left that position in

1995 to accept a seat on the cabinet of Governor Fob James as his appointments secretary, the first and only woman in state history at the time to hold that position.

Beth assisted the governor with the appointment of over 1,500 state board and commission members, judges, and other state officials before she returned to the private sector to start her own public relations and political consulting firm. She has worked with such notable figures as Charlton Heston, Rudy Giuliani, and several senators, congressmen, and Supreme Court justices, in addition to a variety of charitable organizations.

One of my heroes, Sir Winston Churchill, once said, "To every person there comes that special moment when he is tapped on the shoulder to do a very special thing unique to him. What a tragedy if that moment finds him unprepared for the work that will be his finest hour." All my life I had been waiting for that moment to be "tapped on the shoulder."

—Beth Chapman, *The Power of Patriotism*



But despite the success of Beth's business, her call to public service would not be hushed. She returned to the political arena in 2000 to serve first as press secretary for then-Lieutenant Governor Steve Windom and later as campaign manager in his gubernatorial bid. That is, until she decided to launch her own campaign for the office of state auditor. She was elected in 2002. "I had one campaign promise: that I would give the people honesty and integrity in government," Beth says. "Then everything else would fall into place." True to her word, Beth has already achieved a ninety-seven-percent perfect audit of the \$1.6 billion worth of assets owned by the state—a nearly unheard-of accomplishment. "I take great pride in that," she says.

That commitment to honest, hard work stems from the values instilled in Beth growing up in rural Alabama. At the core lies her faith. "I have a desire to help and impact the lives of other people," she explains. "It's a desire that's very personal and very spiritual. If God gives us skills and talents, it's only proper that we use them to help others and bring glory to Him. He doesn't expect us to use the skills He gives us with perfection, but we owe it to Him to use them with great passion."

Such feelings inspired Beth to agree to be among the speakers at a patriotic rally held in her home county in February 2003. The simple, straightforward four-minute speech she gave to the crowd of 1,000 gathered there that evening came to be known as "the speech heard around the world." Controversial to some, Beth's words nevertheless struck a chord in the hearts of many. So much so that by the next day, she started receiving a barrage of emails that didn't lessen for months. "I stopped counting at 8,000," she says. The telephone wouldn't stop ringing. Within days,

she learned that her speech, which is now entered in the Congressional Record, had made its way across all fifty states of the United States, eighteen foreign countries, aboard Navy ships, and even to the Pentagon.

The far-reaching response fulfilled Beth's lifelong desire to leave an indelible impression on her world. It also fueled another passion—writing. "My hobby and my joy is writing. It's what I love to do," Beth says. She published *The Power of Patriotism*, which recounts her experiences following the delivery of her speech, and her second book, *She Was My Sister*, is a devotional book influenced by gospel singer Vestal Goodman.

Away from the political arena, people see another, surprising side of Beth Chapman: her comic persona. For she has worked professionally as a stand-up comedienne, opening for such well-known comic stars as Rita Rudner, James Gregory, and Jeff Foxworthy. "I loved writing and performing stand-up comedy," Beth writes in her book. "It came natural for me, and it was an absolute blast. One of the greatest thrills of my life was the first time I stood on stage and made people laugh. I enjoyed making them laugh as much as they enjoyed laughing. My comedy moved people and had a positive effect on them. I liked that."

And still another facet of Beth is the role she cherishes as wife to James, and mother to Taylor and Thatcher. "I'm a Christian, a wife, and a mother," she says. "Then I'm an elected official and a writer." Family time revolves around church activities, sports, and beach trips. "That's when I'm at my best," Beth says. "It's a great joy."

Whether the future will find Beth still active in politics is unknown, but her commitment to public service is certain. "I want to make a difference, to impact lives," she explains. ♣