

# Remembering J. G. Whitfield

Written by: Sandi Duncan Clark



Another early phone call brought news of the passing of yet another Gospel music personality. J. G. Whitfield, one of Southern Gospel music true legends, went home to be with the Lord on Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, having suffered a stroke earlier in the week.

Very few people in the Southern Gospel industry knew the “Ole Gospel Man” by his given name, Jesse Gillis Whitfield. We either called him “Whit” or J.G. He was our friend, our mentor, our cheerleader and our example, and we are all honored to have known him and the legend he wove from early in his childhood throughout his 90 plus years.

## Tribute To JG Whitfield

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Saturday, 20 September 2008 17:52 - Last Updated Thursday, 25 September 2008 19:59

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Whit's passing ended more than nine decades of giving from the heart. That was Whit's trademark; he was a giver. Of course he learned that from his childhood growing up in a Christian family in south Florida. Throughout his life, he gave more to the Southern Gospel industry than anyone I know.

J. G. was the founder of the Florida Boys, The Dixie Echoes and the SINGING NEWS Magazine. During his ownership of the National Quartet Convention, changes were made that enhanced the management of Southern Gospel's greatest event.

My first memory of Whit is as a young girl attending Southern Gospel events in the south. I remember a tall, debonair gentleman standing on stage talking of all the "wares" he carried on his product table, and I remember hundreds of people gathered around that table buying song books, sheet music, Bibles, records and much more, all pertaining to Gospel music or to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Later during my first years in journalism, Whit became a friend I cherished. I always looked forward to a concert where he took part. We could visit and catch up with all that was happening in Southern Gospel music and the world.

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During NQC in 2000, Whit gave me an autographed copy of his official biography. What a delightful insight to this southern gentleman. Not only did I enjoy the read, I was able to review it for several publications during the following months. Growing up in the early 1900's, Whit learned the worth of working for a living. He learned the value of a dollar, and he learned the true value of friends.

His love for Gospel music began early in life, and not one time did he ever depart from his intention to be a part of the music he loved.

My friend's funereal was today, April 12<sup>th</sup> at his home church, Calvary Way Full Gospel Church in Pensacola, Florida. I couldn't be there, but my thoughts and heart were there.

Jerry Kirksey, who worked with White on his concert promotions and on the founding of the SINGING NEWS, once talked of all the contributions Whit made to the Southern Gospel industry. Jerry said that we all should thank Whit for being our privilege

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of being able to enjoy, sing and be a part of Southern Gospel music. Jerry was right. We all owe J. G. "Whit" Whitfield many thanks for leading the way in many avenues of Southern Gospel music.

Another bass singer has joined that heavenly choir. Whit is very much at home singing with those who have gone on before and enjoying the fellowship of the Savior whom he loved. While our hearts are sad, we know he is in a better land. Thank you, again, Whit, for all you contributed to this music we love so much!