

# Robert “Bob” Whitaker Passes Away Quietly

With Mary, his wife of 62 years by his side, and family members quietly singing “Because He Lives,” Whitaker Corporation founder and president Robert E. “Bob” Whitaker Sr., 83, peacefully passed away in his Pittsburgh area home on May 3.

“This world has lost a champion for Christ,” said son Robert E. Whitaker Jr. who succeeds his father as Whitaker corporate president. “Our loss is heaven’s gain—we take comfort knowing dad is safe in the arms of Jesus.”

While Whitaker lived out his entire life not far from Pittsburgh where he was born in 1928, the ministry that sprang from his fervent faith in Jesus Christ grew to impact lives worldwide. He did not intend to start a publishing empire when he began giving away copies of *The Cross* and *the Switchblade* by David Wilkerson in the 1960s—he simply wanted friends and neighbors to come to know Jesus the way he had after reading Wilkerson’s book and others like it.

“God led me to literally give books away—by the hundreds—as a ministry to help others find the joy and peace I’d found,” he wrote in 2010 as Whitaker Corporation celebrated its fortieth anniversary.

“Eventually, my office and my garage ‘warehouse’ overflowed,” he explained. “I took a step of faith and sold my first business. With God’s help, our distributing endeavor was born, and shortly thereafter, the publishing arm.”

Today Whitaker Corporation releases bestselling nonfiction and fiction books through its publishing division, Whitaker House; sister company Anchor Distributors delivers tens of thousands of books and products from hundreds of companies to retailers

worldwide.

In announcing the news to the combined staffs of Whitaker House and Anchor Distributors this morning, Bob Whitaker Jr. and his brother, John Whitaker, assured employees that the company was in good financial shape and that their father had long ago established a plan for his estate and the eventual transition in leadership.

At John's suggestion earlier this week, Bob Sr. officially turned over his role as Whitaker Corporation president to Bob Jr. While largely a symbolic gesture, both brothers expressed gratitude that the mantle was passed to the next generation with their father's blessings.

"I'm so thankful to John for his confidence in me and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit," Bob said. "I have some big shoes to fill, but I'm confident, with God's help, the mission and purpose Dad had for this company will continue to grow. We're blessed—we're the apple of God's eye! I fully expect to double in size in the next seven years."

Besides his wife, the former Mary Heurich of Pittsburgh's North Side, Whitaker is survived by his sister Marilyn Ruffner of Delaware, six children, including Lois Gregg, Nancy Newbury, Robert E. Whitaker Jr., Paul Whitaker, John Whitaker, and Mark Whitaker, and 26 grandchildren.

Whitaker graduated from Seneca High School, Penn Hills and was an Eagle Scout. He served in U. S. Army, stationed in Germany, immediately following World War II. He received an honorary Doctorate of Divinity from National Bible College and Seminary, Ft. Washington, Maryland and was ordained by the National Church of God, Washington, D. C.

His desire to reach others with the love of Jesus went far beyond the publishing business. He served as a counselor for the 700 Club and Cornerstone Television, and as a teacher and Bible study leader at his home church. A long time member and

chapter president of Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International, Whitaker served a term as the organization's International Director.

According to family members, the ministry that most ignited his passion was his work with prisoners incarcerated in Pittsburgh area facilities. In conjunction with a variety of local and national ministries, he volunteered as a Bible teacher and Theotherapy facilitator at the Allegheny County Jail and state correctional facilities in Pittsburgh and Greensburg.

In 2006 Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell awarded Whitaker "Volunteer of the Year" for his 25 years of faithful service to Pennsylvania's prison population.

Visitation and the funeral service will take place at Monroeville Assembly of God, 4561 Old William Penn Highway, Monroeville, PA 15146. Viewing times: Sunday, May 6, 6 p.m. 8 p.m.; Monday, May 7, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 8pm. The funeral service will be held Tuesday, 10 a.m.

*In lieu of flowers the family requests donations be made to Monroeville Assembly of God, 4561 Old William Penn Highway, Monroeville, PA 15146 and Cornerstone Television, 1 Signal Hill Drive, Wall, PA 15148-1499.*