

Florida Baptist Historical Society Biography Collection

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The link you have chosen connects to the specific individual's resource files that provide the basis for information which the Historical Society has used to develop the respective biographical profile. The sources attached may include copies of articles gleaned from back issues of the *Florida Baptist Witness* and other news publications. Other resources include books, historical journal articles and church histories that are cited as documentation for the biography.

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Skipper, James V., Jr. (1930-1996) was the son of James Vernon, Sr. and Mary Bernice Wells Skipper. He served as pastor of West Shore Baptist Church, Tampa, 1971-1996. Skipper and his wife, Verna Skipper had one daughter.



Tampa TODAY

The Times SECTION B ..

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 1996

Rev. Skipper influenced community

By PAUL WILBORN
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — West Shore Baptist Church was packed Wednesday. People stood along the walls. Cars jammed the parking lots and lined the streets of the working class neighborhood just north of Kennedy Boulevard.

"I think this is the most we've ever had," whispered one parishioner.

The Rev. James Skipper, the church's pastor for 25 years and a quietly innovative social activist, always hoped for congregations that size. Sadly, this crowd had come to tell him goodbye.

The Rev. Skipper died Sunday after falling from a ladder. He was 65.

The Rev. Tim Wilder, who grew up at the Rev. Skipper's church, offered a prayer of thanks "for Brother Skipper's life and for his ministry — the way he touched so many people."

At his funeral, people took turns talking about the Rev. Skipper's quiet influence.

County Commissioner Phyllis Busan-sky remembered him



THE REV. SKIPPER

sky remembered him as "a major innovator." The Rev. Skipper developed an adult day care center at West Shore Baptist that became a model for the county. He was a founding board member of OASIS (Older Adults Services Inc.).

The Rev. Tom Biles, director of the Tampa Bay Baptist Association, talked of the Rev. Skipper's work with many community projects, including a mobile dental clinic for migrant workers.

Wilder, now a minister at First Baptist Church in Kissimmee, pointed around at the small church where he grew up. In that church, the Rev. Skipper built offices by hand, painted walls, fixed the van, remodeled the kitchen and repaired the church computer.

"He worked in every part of this building," Wilder said.

Among the mourners Wednesday were members of the Korean First Baptist Church. The Rev. Sueng Oh and four fami-

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Skipper from 1B

lies were all that existed of the church when the Rev. Skipper met them and invited them to establish a **Korean** ministry at West Shore **Baptist**.

Ten years later, the **Korean** Church had grown as large as the Rev. Skipper's — some 300 members — and is moving into a church of its own.

Through an interpreter, Oh said, "We believe it is our great sorrow to lose our beloved one. Pastor Skipper didn't see any difference in races or in culture. He planted his love and his church in Tampa."

Bessie Monfort, who ran the neighborhood library that the Rev. Skipper started, called him a man who "always wanted to take things to a higher level."

After the service, mourners gathered in a church social hall where the Rev. Skipper and some

helpers recently had redone the kitchen, lowered the ceiling and laid a new floor.

They ate fried chicken, potato salad, pole beans and homemade pies. They hugged his widow, Verna, and his daughter, Denice. They cried and tried to imagine their church without the minister who it seemed had always been there.

Sharon Davis, the church secretary, said the Rev. Skipper was a man who "would see a need, and he would do what he could do."

His church was not rich and not hip. Money was tight.

"Somehow, he always found a way," Davis said. "The money would come."

The Rev. Skipper wrote his last church newsletter just before he died. He included a New Year's message to his members that most agreed was a good description of their minister:

"I ask you for this new year to dream dreams, let your visions be great, (and) let God do great things with you."

Rev James Skipper

Birth 14 Nov 1930 USA

Death 30 Dec 1996 (aged 65) Florida, USA

Burial Hillsboro Memorial Cemetery Brandon, Hillsborough County, Florida, USA

Family Members

Parents

James Vernon Skipper Sr 1910–1989

Mary Bernice Wells Skipper 1913–1999

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/142794691/james-skippe>

