

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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Stephens, J. Harold (1913-1998) was born in Moore County, Tennessee the son of Amos Milton and Eliza Byrom Stephens. He served as pastor of churches in Mississippi, Tennessee and Florida including First Baptist Church, South Miami, 1962-1964. Stephens and his wife, Janie Witherington Stephens had three sons.



★ ★ ★
THE REV. Harold Stephens
has accepted the call to be-
come the pastor of the South
Miami First Baptist Church.
The minister of the Inglewood
Baptist Church in Nashville
for 20 years, he will assume
his new duties here Oct. 21.
★ ★ ★

< | > 6 of 16 matches

Church). same dedication "
The **Rev. Harold Stephens** (First Baptist of South
Miami). **WHITE TEN**

S. MIAMI BAPTIST

***Pastor Leaving
For Mississippi***

The **Rev. J. Harold Stephens**, pastor of First Baptist Church of South Miami, has resigned the charge to accept a call from the Temple Baptist Church of Hattiesburg, Miss. His resignation was accepted by the congregation Wednesday night "with reluctance."

Rev. Stephens came to the church almost a year ago from a Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn., where he had served for 19 years. He will terminate his duties at the South Miami church Sept. 27 and will begin his new duties at Temple Church Oct. 4.

He and Mrs. **Stephens** and their son, Phillip, will leave in about 10 days for their new home. Wendell, their oldest son, is in the service and David is entering Mid-State Tennessee College in Murfreesboro, Tenn., this fall.

Preacher hears echoes of life as it used to be

"The simplicity of life in rural America has been largely swallowed up with the complexities of a mechanized and computerized world," says the **Rev. J. Harold Stephens**. "Our own nation is passing so rapidly from a rural life to an urban one that a majority of young people have little or no knowledge of farm life of our own day."

Stephens is in his 70s. His recollections of a boyhood in the rural South are vivid, and while he doesn't want us to turn back the clock — even if we could — he thinks it a shame that so much of the lore of yesterday is being lost.

Stephens is a joke-cracking, retired Baptist preacher. He was pastor of the First Baptist Church of South Miami back in the 1960s and now lives in Tennessee. Last year I was so taken by the down-home humor in his book, *Echoes From the Hills*, that I wrote a column about him and his jokes.

Now he has sent me a sequel, *Echoes of a Passing Era*, in which he evokes memories of a world almost totally different from today's, even though it was little more than 60 years ago.

"Do you remember the one-room country church?" he writes. "And the preacher who came in a T-Model Ford?" **Stephens** recalls the spirited gospel singing and how the congregation helped spur the preacher along by blurting out, "Amen," at his every remark.

"Somebody has said," **Stephens** confides, "that a hearty 'Amen' to a preacher is like saying, 'Sic 'em!' to a dog."

Of the country cooking of his boyhood: "My taste buds stand at attention when I think of the suppers my mother used to prepare . . . baked sweet potatoes, a big pot of vegetable soup, thick cornbread, cooked in the big skillet . . . plenty of cow butter, buttermilk, corn popped over hot coals."

Recreation?

"If the farmers worked hard and had sufficient help from everyone in the family, it might be possible to catch up on the week's work by noon Saturday and have Saturday afternoon off for going fishing."

Stephens spins yarns of coon hunting, a child's first barber shop haircut, his first ride in a car, the first real suit of clothes, Christmas in the country (they made stars for the tree from tinfoil saved from chewing gum wrappers). He recounts home remedies told to him by real old-timers:

"For onion breath — eat walnuts or raw parsley. To purify the blood — molasses and sulfur. For a sore throat — a poultice of catnip syrup. For snake bite — hot chicken liver applied immediately to draw out the poison."

Bob Swift



Stephens recalls hearing of a wart cure even more drastic than the stump water and dead cat formula used by Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn:

"Put a chicken skin on the wart, put a red hot needle through the chicken skin and into the wart, then throw the chicken skin over your left shoulder, spit on the ground and turn around twice."

Dermatologists, please note.

I remember my own mother telling me that, when she was a little girl on a North Carolina farm, her mother slathered cobwebs on a cut to help it heal.

Stephens recounts folk sayings about the weather: "Hogs carrying sticks — a sign of bad weather. When the rhododendron leaves droop and roll inwards — a sure sign of winter."

He describes — in detail that might shock people who buy their meat sealed in plastic — the hog-killing that was an annual event on every farm. He tells us how hams were cured and lard rendered; how sauerkraut and sorghum molasses were made.

He describes country stores, shearing sheep, plucking geese, wash day, canning vegetables, the country school, the blacksmith shop, the old mill. He evokes the aromas of new-mown hay, honeysuckle, hickory logs burning in the smoke house. He feels again the squish of bare toes in mud and the harshness of lye soap; he hears the baying of a coon hound and the cry of the whippoorwill.

As in his earlier book, **Stephens** peppers his narrative with gentle humor. I'll share more of that in another column, but here's a sample:

"The **Rev.** Quarles had dictated so many letters that when he said the blessing that night at supper he closed with, 'Sincerely yours, Chester Quarles.'"

And here's an anecdote that seems to fit what **Stephens** is trying to tell us:

"The little boy, asked to write a composition on The Changing Times, wrote with some poetic ability: 'Times ain't now like they use to have been; folks don't do now like they use t'did then.'"

Quite so, brother **Stephens**. Thanks for reminding us of some of the use to have beens.

One point to consider: A great

Echoes of a Passing Era — J. Harold Stephens

J. Harold Stephens (Julius Harold Stephens, 1913–1998) authored *Echoes of a Passing Era: Down Memories Lane* in 1971, a 144-page work of personal and regional memory that reflects on rural life, family history, and the fading traditions of his time Google BooksGoogle Books+2.

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17 step-great grandchildren and
21 step-great-great grandchildren.

J. H. Stephens

SHELBYVILLE, Tenn. —
Rev. J. Harold Stephens, 85, died
Tuesday at a Shelbyville hospital.
The funeral will be Friday at 11
a.m. at the First Baptist Church
with the **Rev. Harold** Smith offi-
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The Huntsville Times
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Burial will be in Bomar Ceme-
tery with Howell-Lawrence Fu-
neral Home in charge.

The **Rev. Mr. Stephens** was re-
tired but remained active in the
ministry. He served for 43 years
on the board of trustees of Bap-
tist Hospital in Nashville.

Survivors include his wife,
Janie Witherington **Stephens** of
Shelbyville; three sons, David H.
Stephens of Huntsville, Wendell
V. **Stephens** of Kingston Springs,
Tenn., and Philip D. **Stephens** of
Shelbyville; one sister, Mabel
Brinkley of Tullahoma, Tenn.;
and two grandchildren.

Visitation is today from 6 to 9
p.m. at First Baptist Church, 304
Depot St., Shelbyville.

Memorial donations may be
made to Building Fund of First
Baptist Church.

J. Harold Stephens

SHELBYVILLE, TENN. — Services are scheduled for 11 a.m. Friday at First Baptist Church in Shelbyville, Tenn. for the Rev. J. Harold Stephens, 85, of Shelbyville, Tenn., who died Dec. 29, 1998 at Bedford County Medical Center.

Burial will be in Bomar Cemetery in the Raus Community of Bedford County.

Rev. Stephens was a retired minister, having spent six years at Temple Baptist Church in Hattiesburg. He was a member of First Baptist Church of Shelbyville, Tenn.

Survivors include his wife, Janie Witherington Stephens of Shelbyville, Tenn.; three sons, David H. Stephens of Huntsville, Ala., Wendell V. Stephens of Kingston Springs, Tenn., and Philip D. Stephens of Shelbyville, Tenn.; one sister, Mabel Brinkley of Tullahoma, Tenn. and two grandchildren.

Visitation for the family will be 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. today at First Baptist Church in Shelbyville.

Memorial contributions may be made to the building fund of First Baptist Church, 304 Depot St., Shelbyville, Tenn. 37160.

Howell-Lawrence Funeral Home of Shelbyville, Tenn. is in charge of arrangements.

Julius Harold Stephens

Birth 20 Jun 1913 Moore County, Tennessee, USA

Death 29 Dec 1998 (aged 85) Shelbyville, Bedford County, Tennessee, USA

Burial Bomar Cemetery

Raus, Bedford County, Tennessee, USA

Family Members

Parents

Amos Milton Stephens

1869–1941

Eliza Byrom Stephens

1877–1964

Spouse

Janie Witherington Stephens

1916–2001 (m. 1936)

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/116967058/julius_harold-stephens