

JOHN TRUETT WHITLEY, SR., M.D.

1932-2013

John Truett Whitley, Sr., M.D., beloved husband, father, and grandfather, passed away on May 31, 2013, from complications related to Alzheimer's disease. He was 81.

John was born in Rosanky, Texas, on February 8, 1932, to Benjamin Oise Whitley and Nellie Bernice (King) Whitley. He was a fifth generation Texan on his father's side; his ancestor, Asa Wright, founded the Plum Creek Baptist Church in Texas in 1838. Plum Creek was the site of several Indian raids, and the church was at one time burnt down and rebuilt. John also had Revolutionary War and Northern and Southern Civil War ancestors.

When John was twelve, his family moved to Bridgeport, his mother's hometown, where his family maintains a Texas Centennial ranch established in 1876. He graduated from Bridgeport High School; there he was a standout athlete, valedictorian, and participated in missionary trips to Mexico. John was nominated for West Point but instead chose to attend Texas A&M, like his brothers, Donald Lynn Whitley and Joseph Bill Whitley.

After A&M, he moved to Dallas to attend Southwestern Medical School. He graduated from Southwestern in 1956.

John's early medical career included a rotating internship at John Peter Smith Hospital in Ft. Worth; working as a flight surgeon with the Air Force, including trips to the Arctic Circle to supply Air Force bases in Alaska; and anesthesiology residencies at Walter Reed Army Hospital in D.C. and Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco. While moonlighting in Berkeley, he met his wife of 50 years, Agnes Vessey, a psychiatrist. He was previously married to Laura Murvin Whitley, and they had one child, LaVonne, who lives in Southern California.

In 1966, John and his family moved back to Dallas, where he entered private practice. He retired in 1995 after practicing anesthesiology, primarily at Baylor and Doctors Hospitals, for 30 years.

John's interests included travel, particularly to national parks, the Appalachian trail, and overseas; mountain climbing, biking, and running; walking the beach on South Padre Island, where he had a second home; Texas A&M, Civil War history, the novels of Thomas Hardy, and his grandchildren. He was a member of the Richardson Bicycle Club and rode in their "Hotter than Hell" trips in August to Wichita Falls. He was as active as a grandfather could be, helping his children on a daily basis with babysitting. He was a member of Prestonwood Baptist Church.

In 1972, John bought a large tract of land in Collin County. The property eventually became part of the town of Prosper. The land was sold to a homesite developer in 2001, and the neighborhood is now called Whitley Place. John embodied the work ethic and frugality of the Depression era into which he was born. He focused on work, education, family, and travel. He never sought professional or personal recognition, but had a very successful medical practice and was able to retire early and enjoy a long retirement travelling and with grandchildren. He practiced many individual acts of kindness and helped those in need, from friends and strangers to sherpas he met in Nepal. His Texas A&M Presidents' Endowed Scholarship Fund sponsors a gifted student each year.

John is preceded in death by his parents, his older brother and mentor, Don, and his infant grandson, John Truett Whitley, III. He is survived by his wife, Agnes; his children, Lavonne Whitley, Ann (Bernice) Whitley Wood and her husband, David Wood, John Truett Whitley, Jr., and his wife, Cindy, and Mark Edward Whitley, and his wife, Stacie; his grandchildren, Richard Gray Wood, Genevieve Lea Wood, John Landon Wood, Cal Joseph Whitley, Truett Michael Whitley, Emma Mady Whitley, Lea Nicole Whitley, and Anna Katherine Whitley; and his brother and best friend, Joe, as well as Joe's and Don's families.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to a Texas A&M Foundation Scholarship Fund in his memory, 401 George Bush Drive, College Station, TX 77840. There will be a 3:00 p.m. service followed by a private family burial at Calvary Hill on Wednesday, June 5.

*Calvary Hill Funeral Home
3235 Lombardy Ln, Dallas*

Published in The Bridgeport Index and The Chico Texan, Thursday, June 13, 2013

