

# Buckingham's Song

In 1950, class historian Jamie Buckingham wrote about how "A Great Old Conductor" had in 12 years molded the 73 Vero Beach High School seniors into an orchestra and approved their performance. Upon graduation, they were ready for their new roles in life.

Many took the path into business, a trade or home-making. Buckingham, a principled but sometimes mischievous child, took a path that surprised some of his classmates. The all-American boy turned to the ministry, and became one of the nation's most prolific Christian authors and motivational speakers.

Many of his old friends got together Monday night in Melbourne's Tabernacle Church to pay their last respects to Buckingham, who died Feb. 17 of cancer-related complications.

Some who knew Buckingham in his younger days were shocked to learn of his illness, diagnosed in July 1990 and the subject of a book, "A Summer of Miracles." To many of his classmates, Buckingham was a winner, a scrapper who only fought harder when things looked bad.

"He plays life like basketball — to shoot the goal," the 1950 Arrowhead said of Buckingham. In high school, Buckingham also played football, ran track, was class president and a member of the National Honor Society. It was at VBHS that he met his wife, Jackie.

Buckingham and four VBHS classmates then attended Mercer University in Macon, Ga., where he distinguished himself as president of his class and of the Baptist Student Union. He was a colonel in the Army ROTC.

After a stint in the service, Buckingham attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He founded the charismatic Tabernacle Church in 1967, which today has a congregation of 2,000 in the winter season. He was a monthly speaker at Vero Beach's Central Assembly of God the past 10 years.

Throughout the years, Buckingham wrote more than 40 books. He chronicled the life of CBN founder Pat Robertson and the flight into space of former U.S. Rep. Bill Nelson. In the early 1970s, Buckingham wrote several books for noted faith healer Kathryn Kuhlman. He also was editor of a magazine, Ministries Today.

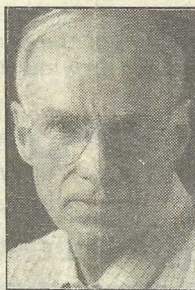
Buckingham was a caring person, always upbeat and helpful. He believed in family, living on 20 acres in Palm Bay with the families of four of his five children. Until recently, Buckingham continued to play handball and basketball seriously.

"I would classify him as God's spokesman for his generation," said Larry Boan, an associate minister at Central Assembly. Boan said Buckingham's compassion and friendliness appealed to people of many churches and ministries.

Perhaps bringing people together for the Great Old Conductor was Buckingham's mission. He wrote this about his high school classmates:

"And as the Old Conductor looked out on the musicians, each branching out into his individual field, He knew that their performance had been approved and accepted, and that they were ready for their new assignments in life."

We're sure that on Buckingham's assignment, the Conductor graded him an 'A'.



Buckingham