

# Leslie Whitlock

**Author:** Emily Libecap,  
Graduate Student Intern

**Places:** Bowling Green and Frankfort,  
Kentucky

**Birth:** September 21, 1955 **Death:**

**Professions:** Trainer, Horse Owner, Groom,  
Stable Worker, Equine Youth Ministry  
Founder



## Childhood and Family

Leslie Whitlock's career in the horse industry began when he was about five years old. His stepfather, Ollie White, trained Saddlebred horses. He worked at Milky Way farm in Tennessee. White was a talented trainer. He broke the famous Saddlebred stud Wing Commander.<sup>1</sup> The family moved to Bowling Green, Kentucky to work on Richard "Dick" Duncan's farm. Whitlock was the only child out of his twelve siblings to take an interest in horses. His stepfather paid him 50 cents per week to muck out stalls and assist with other chores around the farm.<sup>2</sup>

## Grooming his Career

Whitlock's affinity for horses continued and he honed his skills as a groom. He worked for the Tabor family, grooming their Saddlebreds for shows all over Kentucky and throughout the Midwest. The Tabors paid Whitlock well, but what attracted him the most to this work was the family's kindness. He continued to work for them even after he began college at Kentucky State University. Whitlock also realized that, like his stepfather, he had a gift for breaking horses and gaining their trust. He speaks to them gently and kindly, and brushes them thoroughly. He also acknowledges his faith, and thinks of his talent as "a gift that God has given me: that's all I can say."<sup>3</sup>

## Thoroughbred Racing

In the early 1990s, a friend of Whitlock's wanted to go into the Thoroughbred business. Whitlock co-owned or owned the following winning horses:

- Curtee
- Look Ah Yondah
- Mizz So So

Although Thoroughbreds are quite different than Saddlebreds, Whitlock had a knack for picking horses that he could train for greatness. For example, when he first bought Look Ah Yondah, the horse was weak and injured. Whitlock saw his potential and trained him into a winning racehorse.<sup>4</sup>

## Legacy and Ministry

Whitlock felt called to the ministry in 2000. He began as a youth pastor, and is now the pastor at First Corinthian Baptist Church.<sup>5</sup> He also runs his own ministry, New Day Ministries. Whitlock's ministry combines his passion for horses and youth outreach. In his spare time, before and after his job with United Parcel Service, Whitlock takes young people to his horse farm and teaches them to work with horses. "By putting them to work, it builds character . . . I need to help people, and that love I have for them [turns] their lives around," he explained.<sup>6</sup> He sees some parallels between his past working with horses and his current work with troubled youth. Building trust, treating others with respect, and working hard are lessons that has brought Whitlock far in life and are lessons he teaches to others. When asked about his busy schedule, Whitlock laughed. "It's a long day, but it's a rewarding day."<sup>7</sup>

## Sources

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Phelps, Johnny. 1991. Milky Way Farms. Giles Free Press.

Wasson, Katheran. 2011. "Patience for the Wild at Heart." State Journal, May 23, 2011. [https://www.state-journal.com/news/patience-for-the-wild-at-heart/article\\_0491af51-7288-589c-b665-f981cf7a54a3.html](https://www.state-journal.com/news/patience-for-the-wild-at-heart/article_0491af51-7288-589c-b665-f981cf7a54a3.html).

Whitlock, Leslie W., interview by Yvonne Giles. May 18, 2019, Chronicle of African Americans in the Horse Industry Oral History Project, Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky Libraries.

Whitlock, Leslie W., interview by Cynthia S. Maharrey. July 19, 2019, Chronicle of African Americans in the Horse Industry Oral History Project, Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky Libraries.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Leslie W. Whitlock, Interview by Yvonne Giles.

<sup>2</sup>Whitlock Interview by Giles.

<sup>3</sup>Whitlock Interview by Giles.

<sup>4</sup>Whitlock Interview by Giles.

<sup>5</sup>Leslie W. Whitlock, Interview by Cynthia Maharrey.

<sup>6</sup>Brown, "Get to Know: Rev. Les Whitlock."

<sup>7</sup>Whitlock Interview by Maharrey.