

**A CELEBRATION
OF THE LIFE
OF
JACOB ASTOR "JAY" SPELL**

(December 22, 1945 - December 30, 2010)



March 13, 2011

**Robert's Grove OFWB Church
725 Robert's Grove Church Road
Dunn, NC 28334**

"I was born Jacob Astor Spell, Jr. on Dec. 22, 1945 in Sampson County, North Carolina.

Fortunately, back then education was compulsory even for blind kids. All states have at least one state-supported school for blind kids, often located in the state capitol. So at age 6, you are forced to attend that school, and if you live too far to commute every day, you live there in dorms. Actually, that is the best thing that could have happened to me--that school and living there. Piano and violin lessons were free, and I studied both all 12 years. I then attended Oberlin Conservatory as a piano performance major. But rock & roll ruled, and halfway through 2nd semester, I returned to North Carolina and rejoined a band I had left to attend conservatory.

One of my dearest schoolmates was Ronnie Milsap. We met in 1956 as I was leaving my violin lesson and he was coming in for his. The teacher had temporarily left the room, so we started talking and immediately discovered we were overwhelmingly consumed with two things--music and radio. We spent way much time the next few years in dorm rooms listening to music, analyzing music and the records of the day, learning about music, records, who wrote and produced what, discussing what we did and did not like about this record and that--preparing ourselves for our careers. We both knew we would do "the biz" from junior high on--him as a front-man, me as a sideman. In fact, we formed a rock & roll band and played fraternities locally.

Some groups and artists I've had the fortune of touring and/or recording with over the years: Jimmy Buffett, Dan Penn, Don Nix, Steve Cropper, Poco, David Clayton-Thomas, Eddie Floyd, Tower Of Power, Roy Head, Jose Feliciano, John Mayall, Jeannie C. Riley, Ronnie Milsap, Richard Torrance and Eureka, Tim Krekel, Canned Heat, Jim Leslie Band, Vern Gosdin, The O'Kanes, Randy Travis, Dan Seals, Buddy Miller, Emmylou Harris, Conway Twitty, Little Texas, Robert Earle Keen, Michelle Shocked, Earle Gaines, Roscoe Shelton, Clifford Curry, Sam Lay, Baillee And The Boys, Judy Collins, Steve Ripley, The Tractors."

(From Jay's My Space page--"Jay Spell/Free Music, Tour Dates, Photos, Videos")



Jacob A. Spell

“He was a good person. He was a real good person,” Curry said.
(Excerpt from the Fayetteville Observer, Sunday, January 9, 2011, Sunday Salute article by Michael Futch relative to Clifford Curry’s comments of having worked with Jay)

“He was an unfailingly kind and generous man...”
(Sir Shambling’s Deep Soul Heaven—KIP ANDERSON website)

“It seems all the good ones are slowly fading away...”
(Arice and Mike Miranda — excerpt from Canned Heat “Official” Facebook)

“I’ve just been told musician extraordinaire Jay Spell passed last night in Los Angeles... I’m lucky to be able to say he was a close friend and musical companero of mine for over 30 years and I shall miss him.”
(Michael Johnstone - excerpt from The Steel Guitar Forum: View topic—Jay Spell RIP)

“We will miss you Jay. This world lost a wonderful and talented man, but that band up there just got one great addition. RIP”
(Kevin Holder — Excerpt from Jay Spell on Myspace Music—Free Streaming MP3s, Pictures & Music Downloads)

“No greater friend and musician. I enjoyed every minute playing with this talented musician. You are going to be greatly missed.”
(Carl Erwin — excerpt from Sail on Jay Spell/Buffer News.com)

“Good ‘ol Jay. We met in Nashville and stayed friends. I’ll miss talking with him (the man could talk!) about old time radio shows, music, and life.”
(Geoff Brittingham — excerpt from Sail on Jay Spell/BufferNews.com)

“Throughout the history of popular music there have been musicians that move from artist-to-artist, impressing everyone in their wake. One of those was Jay Spell who passed away back on December 30 from esophageal cancer. He was 65.”
(VVN Music: Keyboard Journeyman Jay Spell Passes Away, Thursday, January 13, 2011 edition)

I called him last summer just because he was on my mind only to find out that we had just walked similar roads with the battle against cancer. Different kinds, and his road was far more extensive than mine, but still we walked the road. Being an extremely talented musician and keyboard player, to get esophageal cancer must be the scariest thing ever. But he’s a survivor, in more ways than I know how to communicate with words. He’s got the most beautiful soul of any human being I’ve ever had the pleasure to meet. And he loves radio with a passion. I think about how Jay would call and talk to me about his disc jockey friends all over the country. We’ve had long discussions about music and radio. I’ve treasured these talks. I’d like to invite you to meet my friend, by going to his website....He’s one of the coolest people in the world. I need to call him today.”
(Posted by Iris Harrison on August 12, 2009 in Music News, Uncategorized)