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James Whitlock, pioneer of school computing, dies

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James William Whitlock had trouble turning on his daughter Cathy's newfangled computer, but back in the 1960s ? when punch cards were the equivalent of DVDs ? he was a pioneer in education-related data processing.

Mr. Whitlock, 82, of Nashville died yesterday at Vanderbilt University Medical Center after complications from surgery.

He had traveled around the country and the world helping schools switch their administrative records and processes from stacks of paper to computers, his daughter said yesterday.

He was a retired executive dean at George Peabody University, where he started in 1960, and a professor emeritus at Vanderbilt University.

He wrote two books, Automatic Data Processing in Education and Integrated Data Systems. He was also an educational finance specialist with the U.S. Office of Education in Washington.

In 1974 he was National Data Educator of the Year and received the Governor's Outstanding Tennessean award.

Mr. Whitlock was a World War II officer and navigator with the U.S. Marine Corps. From January 1944 to April 1945, he transported personnel, wounded marines and equipment to Pacific bases at Pearl Harbor, Guam, Saipan and Midway. He and his crew survived heavy mortar attacks in the first landing to evacuate the wounded from Iwo Jima.

"I gave him a journal a couple of Christmases ago," said his daughter, Cathy Whitlock. "I made him write down all of his old stories."

Mr. Whitlock received a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Tennessee and master's and doctorate degrees in education from Peabody.

He was a former president of the Tennessee Educators Credit Union, a former member of the board of directors of Watkins Institute and an active member of Hillsboro Church of Christ.

An avid sports fan, he held season tickets for the Vanderbilt women's and men's basketball teams for more than 40 years and was a National Commodore Club member.

Visitation will be 4-7 p.m. Saturday at Roesch-Patton-Austin-Bracey & Charlton Funeral Home, 1715 Broadway. Funeral services will be held 11 a.m. Monday at Hillsboro Church of Christ, with burial in Harpeth Hills Cemetery.

Survivors include his wife, Dorothy Long Whitlock, and daughter, Cathy Whitlock, both of Nashville; a son, Dr. Lawrence Whitlock of Memphis; and two grandchildren.

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