

News Article: DJ100

## MICHAEL JACKSON LEAVES JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

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Jehovah's Witnesses lost their best-known member this spring when Michael Jackson quit the sect. While Watchtower Society spokesmen indicated that his departure was voluntary, sources close to the superstar claimed that he was asked to leave. Neither side would discuss details with newsmen.

Michael's rise to stardom earlier this decade had brought the Jehovah's Witnesses much favorable publicity, with reports of the youth hero donning disguises to hide his identity as he went knocking door-to-door with *Watchtower* and *Awake!* Magazines. But Jackson came into public conflict with his religious mentors in 1984, when his suggestive dancing, dress, and grooming became an embarrassment to a sect that requires rank-and-file members to wear neckties and 1950s haircuts.

He was "reproved" at that time and made a public apology for his musical video *Thriller*, featuring occult imagery. After that, however, Michael continued to offend fellow religionists by attending birthday parties, by sleeping in a hyperbaric oxygen chamber to preserve his youth, and most recently, by showing a fascination with stage magic. A photo of him levitating under a magician's wand appeared in the press shortly before announcement of this final rift.

According to Watchtower rules Jackson must now be shunned by Witness friends and family, including his mother and two of his sisters.

— David A. Reed