



## Fred C. Kniffen

September 7, 1935 - June 24, 2020

Fred Calvin Kniffen, Jr., 84, of Tyler entered Heaven's gate June 24, 2020. We take great comfort in knowing he claimed his victory in Jesus and is now strolling over heaven with the love of his life, our Mother.

Fred was born, September 7, 1935 and raised in Clyde, TX on a farm, where he worked hard planting and harvesting crops in the fields, milking cows and picking cotton with the rest of his family. His parents always allowed him time to play sports. He played football, basketball, baseball and tennis. Tennis was his favorite and he became a State Champion in High School. He then attended Hardin Simmons University, the first in his family ancestry to attend college. He was an officer in the ROTC and helped bring the HSU tennis program to National prominence winning Championships all along the way.

On August 24, 1957, he married his high school sweetheart, Carolyn Johnson. They lived in Abilene, TX for 16 years, then moved to Tyler where they spent the next 45 years. They shared a special love. They were a team. They loved, and they were loved.

He was a pioneer in Texas tennis. His career included Tennis Coach at Cooper High School in Abilene and Tennis Pro at Rose Park Tennis Center in Abilene. He then moved to Tyler in 1973 to start the Tennis Tech Program, the first of its kind. The Tennis Tech Program is now an internationally known program that brings students seeking a career and a degree teaching and managing tennis programs, to TJC from all over the world. At the same time, he was the Head Tennis Coach for Tyler Junior College. In 1985, he accepted the Head Tennis Coach position at The University of Texas at Tyler, where he retired in 1997.

During these years, Fred also started week-long, overnight tennis camps, along with his brothers Johnny and Novice, and countless other coaches. They held tennis camps for players all across Texas every summer for 48 years.

He is one of the most celebrated coaches in Texas Tennis history earning the Texas

Professional Tennis Association (TPTA) Coach of the Year award; the Wilson National Coach of the Year twice, the National Junior College Men's Coach of the Year twice; the National Women's Coach of the Year twice; the Penn NAIA National Coach of the Year twice, National Championships at TJC and UT Tyler; and more. He also helped 31 players earn All-American honors and was inducted into the following Hall of Fames:

- 1990 Hardin-Simmons University Hall of Fame
- 1993 Texas Tennis Coaches Association Hall of Fame
- 1993 National Junior College Coaches Association Hall of Fame
- 1996 National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Hall of Fame
- 1999 Texas Tennis Hall of Fame
- 2001 Tyler Junior College Circle of Honor
- 2012 UT Tyler Athletics Hall of Fame
- 2015 Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) Hall of Fame

With all of the fame, Fred was still a wonderful, loving, humble servant of God. A devoted husband and father. He will be remembered for the love he shared with his beloved wife, his love of family, friends, students, tennis players and everyone he met. He was our example of Jesus loving and serving on this earth. Our home was always open for those needing a place to stay (short or long-term), or to share a meal, Wednesday night Devotionals, tennis lessons, or he would just be "available" to take you to get a haircut if he thought you needed one. He was an icon in the tennis community not only in Texas, but throughout the nation. He touched thousands of lives using tennis as his tool. His impact on students and players from decades ago to present-time will never be forgotten.

He is survived by his children and spouses, Janet (Jeff) Scholl, Dallas, TX; Judy (Travis) Clardy, Nacogdoches, TX; J'Lynn (Micky) Navarro; Dale (Wendy) Kniffen; 13 loving grandchildren; 9 great-grandchildren; his brothers, Johnny, Novice, Paul and Billy Kniffen, and his sister Jean Kniffen Seagroves, and countless cousins. He was preceded in death by his wife, Carolyn Janet Kniffen; and his parents, Fred & Iona Kniffen.

The family will receive friends on Saturday, June 27th from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Stewart Family Funeral Home, 7525 Old Jacksonville Hwy, Tyler. A dessert bar will be set up for you to enjoy in honor of Fred's infamous sweet tooth. A funeral service celebrating his life will be held Sunday, June 28, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. at Shiloh Road Church of Christ, 1801 Shiloh Rd, Tyler. There will also be a Live Stream Broadcast for those unable to attend. Go to Shiloh Road Church of Christ Facebook page Sunday prior to the service and a link will be available at that time. Burial will follow at Rose Hill Cemetery.

Special Request: Anyone that earned a Hall of Fame Jacket, please wear it in his honor.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to support the tennis programs at Tyler Junior College or The University of Texas at Tyler in Coach Fred Kniffen's memory. TJC donations may be made at [www.tjc.edu/giving](http://www.tjc.edu/giving) and select "Fred Kniffen Memorial Gift" UT Tyler donations may be made at <https://elevate.uttyler.edu/fred-kniffen> Game.Set.Match. Well done Coach.

This is the day the Lord has made. We WILL rejoice and be glad in it. Psalm 118:24

# Events

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**JUN** **Visitation** 06:00PM - 08:00PM

**27**

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Stewart Family Funeral Home

7525 Old Jacksonville Hwy, Tyler, TX, US, 75703

**JUN** **Service** 02:00PM

**28**

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Shiloh Road Church of Christ

1801 Shiloh Rd., Tyler, TX, US, 75703

# Comments

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“ I grew up with Carolyn and Freddie at Clyde and they were such a sweet couple, remaining that way throughout life. I know he felt a great loyalty toward her folks as her dad encouraged him to get started in tennis and to go on to college. The last time I saw them was at Homecoming several years ago when she was quietly smiling and supporting him all the way. Blessings to these two, forever.

**Gloria Forester Morris** - July 03 at 09:20 AM



“ Thank you for sharing. We appreciate your kind words. Janet, Judy, J'Lynn and Dale  
**Janet** - July 03 at 10:07 AM



“ I played for Fred at TJC in 75-77. I owe so much to Him for the opportunity to play at TJC, to participate in the Tennis Tech program, and to teach in both the Apache and Big Country tennis camps. I learned an incredible amount about tennis that has stayed with me all these years.  
Beyond tennis, and more importantly, Fred modeled what it was to care about people. In 2012, 35 years after my time on Fred's team at TJC, I am in New York City and get a call from Fred saying one of his family members wanted to talk to one of my family members in order to help them out with some difficulties they were experiencing. 35 YEARS LATER, HE STILL CARED! He would go to watch my kids and my nephew play at TJC and they knew he was there to support them.  
Thanks to Janet, Judy, J'Lynn, and Dale for graciously sharing your father with us over the years. Your father was a wonderful Christian man.  
Psalms 166:15 says  
“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones”  
Maybe it's precious because now they will see each other face to face.

**Ike Anders** - July 02 at 03:14 PM



“ Played for Fred 1974-1976 at Tyler Junior College. Great Coach and great influence on the team. Owe the great experience to Fred while there. Many great memories!  
Rest in Piece. Ray Anders

**ray anders** - June 30 at 09:25 PM

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“ I played for Coach Kniffen at UT Tyler from the fall of 1987 thru the spring of 1989. He was a great coach and great recruiter. We had tremendous teams both years and I feel very fortunate to have been on the team that brought UT Tyler it's first national championship. Coach did a fantastic job handling the team, it's players and all of their different personalities. I never heard him say a bad word about anyone and he was always upbeat and positive about everything. Those are qualities that make for a winning coach. Coach Kniffen was a great man and it was an honor to have played for him. I'll always be thankful that he saw enough in me to offer me a scholarship to play for such a wonderful school and team.  
Thank you Coach, you will truly be missed.  
Charlie Singer  
Katy, Texas

Charlie Singer - June 28 at 08:25 PM

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“ Fred Kniffen was special in so many ways. One has to be amazed at his long list of accomplishments. Fred left a half century impact on Texas tennis influencing players, students, and fellow coaches. My team played in Fred's tournament at Rose Park in Abilene several times.in the early 70's. He got the top junior highs in the state to come. Fred was instrumental in my learning how to organize and run a successful tournament no matter the size.  
Years ago, as a visitor, I sat in on a pro shop management class taught by Fred at Tyler Junior College. The room was full of eager young people attentively listening to Fred.  
This was another extension of his touching lives. Fred was a Christian man and his Clyde roots taught him the value of hard work and led him to be such an inspiration and example to others. Fred Kniffen was my friend and I will miss him and Carolyn. I love the Kniffen family. My thoughts are with you.  
Bill Shive -----Lubbock, Texas

Bill Shive - June 28 at 12:49 PM



“ Fred instilled a deep faith in Christ and a strong family bond in his Children and extended family. I'm so grateful that I got to meet him when I was visiting Janet and Jeff. He was an amazing role model for so many people. Love to all and especially may the Peace of Christ be with you.

Jeanine - June 28 at 02:51 PM



“ Thank you for sharing the kind words. Janet

Janet - July 03 at 10:09 AM

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“ Fred and Carolyn were our dear friends in the Lord. We were in small groups together for many years and spent many happy hours with them in their home and ours. Their faith was inspirational and infectious. We miss them! Heaven has gained two more saints.

Our love to their children and grandchildren. We know something of how much they loved you. God bless you and may His peace comfort you.

Richard & Greta Leard

Richard & Greta Leard - June 27 at 01:16 PM



“ Thank you for writing. We appreciate your kind words.

Janet - July 03 at 10:10 AM



“ Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Fred C. Kniffen.



June 26 at 02:06 PM



“ Hardin-Simmons Athletics purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Fred C. Kniffen.



Hardin-Simmons Athletics - June 25 at 02:41 PM



“ I have known Fred and his wife Carolyn since August 1999. They sat in front of my wife and I at church for many years. They were a sweet, sweet couple. Fred took me to play golf at Hollytree Country Club. That is the only time I have played there. I will miss Fred immensely but know he is now Home with Carolyn in Heaven. Thank you, Lord, for sharing one of your loved ones with us. God bless the Kniffen family.

Dick and Avon Adams

**Richard Adams** - June 24 at 08:38 PM