



## Bobby Joe Corbin

July 10, 1933 - December 15, 2021

Bob J. Corbin, of Searcy, AR, passed away on December 15, 2021 at his home. He was born Bobby Joe Corbin on July 10, 1933 in Norman, OK, to Elvis and Jewel Corbin.

As a young man, Bob excelled in sports, mainly golf, basketball, and baseball at Norman High School, and played baseball at the University of Oklahoma until he was drafted into the services. He spent two years in the Navy during the Korean Conflict, serving on ships in the Atlantic with cruise duties extending from Newfoundland to Boston, MA, to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In addition to his services on the USS John S. McCain D L-3, he played baseball throughout the Caribbean. He anticipated returning to the University of Oklahoma to resume his education and his baseball career; however, a gentle nudge from life-long friend Bob Waugh guided him to East Central State College in Ada, OK, to play baseball and basketball.

It was there he met his future wife, Ruthann Latimer. He and Ruthann were married on November 26, 1958, in Norman, OK. Bob returned to the University of Oklahoma to complete his education, graduating in 1961 with a Master of Education in health and physical education. At this time, he was working under the tutelage of Dr. Robert T. Clark in a relatively new field of exercise physiology, which resulted in another relationship that would later impact and guide his life.

It was around this time their first child, Connie, was born. Bob and his new family then moved to Holdenville, OK, where he taught and coached at both

the junior high and high school levels.

In 1964, Dr. Clark was wooed back to his alma mater to become the vice president for research at Harding College in Searcy, AR. He intended to conduct physical fitness research through a grant from the National Institute of Health. Dr. Clark remembered well his young undergraduate assistant at the facility in Norman. In the spring of 1964, Dr. Clark offered Bob the job of research assistant and director of the testing lab. He began working for Harding College on July 1, 1964. He was the last person hired by President George Benson. He continued that employment for the next 44 years. About this time their second daughter, Cheryl, was born.

Over the next several years, the Robert T. Clark Performance Physiology Lab — named in honor of Clark following his untimely death in 1966 and located in the “new” science building on the Harding College campus — would produce groundbreaking physical fitness and sports medicine research funded by NASA. Bob and colleagues, namely Dr. Harry Olree and Dr. Carroll Smith, continued this research into the 1970s, producing information essential to the Apollo and Sky Lab programs. In 2019, these gentlemen and others associated with these programs were recognized and commended by NASA. His son, Scott, was born in 1966.

One aspect of all the physical fitness research became clear: Physical activity is essential to a healthy lifestyle. In the mid-1960s, he took up jogging for exercise, a commitment that continued for years. A group of colleagues and friends, including David Elliot, Larry Long, Cliff Sharp, Gary Elliot, Bill White, Ron McMinn, David Burks and occasionally others, got up early in the mornings and ran hundreds of miles together.

Bob rose to the rank of professor in the physical education department, now the kinesiology department, at Harding University. He helped develop the text and curriculum for the PE 101 “Introduction to Wellness” course, which became a requirement for graduation. Included in the course was an activity requirement, and nearly every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, one could find Coach Corbin out on the Harding University track with a group of

students.

Bob was an avid golfer who had a career seven holes-in-one. Interestingly, three of these were right-handed and four left-handed. A wrist injury in his 30s required him to switch from right to left-handed. Golf provided another group of close friends from the days playing with Scott at the Searcy Golf Club, tournaments at the Searcy Country Club and playing two or three times a week at The Course at River Oaks with his buddies.

A member of the College Church of Christ since 1964, Bob served as an elder for several years. He was active in mission work and spent approximately 15 summers leading students to Italy for Harding University's international campaigns. He held Italy and the many Italian friends he came to know close to his heart. After his retirement, he continued to support missions by traveling to the Pan-European Lectureships and the Pan-American Lectureships as often as possible.

"Bison Bob" was a fan of the Sooners, the Wildcats and the Razorbacks. He loved his Bisons most of all.

Bob was preceded in death by his wife of 44 years, Ruthann, who died suddenly on November 2, 2003. He was also preceded in death by his mother and father and his sister, Carolyn Wilburn.

He was blessed to find love once again with Joyce Pruitt. The two were married in Shores Chapel in 2004 in the presence of both families.

Bob and Joyce enjoyed travel and for many years were regulars at the European and Caribbean Lectureships. The most memorable of their travels were the 2009 tour of southern Italy with HUF director Robbie Shackelford and their 2012 trip to Israel.

In 2008, Bob retired from Harding University and the kinesiology department after 44 years of service.

Bob Corbin is survived by Joyce, his wife of 17 years; three children, Connie White (Mark) and Cheryl Finley (Scott), both of Searcy, and Scott (Leigh Ann) of Mount Airy, NC; nine grandchildren, Grant White (Natalie), Cara Sills

(Andy), Garrett White (Jenna), Ty Finley, Trent Finley (Piper), Tara Philbrick (Alex), Mullen Corbin (Savannah), Grayson Corbin, Tucker Corbin; eight great-grandchildren, Roxie White, Jaxson White, Addie White, William White, Palmer Sills, Wyatt Sills, Sloane Sills and Houston Finley; and his brother, Billy Gene Corbin (Wanda) of Austin, TX.

He is also survived by three stepsons, Larry Pruitt (Jena) and Eric Pruitt (Rebekah) of Beebe, Marty Pruitt (Kristy) of Little Rock, and six step grandchildren, Hailey Pruitt, Shanie Pruitt, Natalie Huffstickler (Jordan), Parker Pruitt (Annesly), Jack Pruitt and Ford Pruitt.

A memorial service and celebration of Bob's life will take place at the College Church of Christ on Tuesday, Dec. 21 at 1 p.m. The family will receive guests beginning at noon. The family requests that instead of flowers memorial gifts be sent to the Bob Corbin Exercise and Sports Medicine Scholarship at Harding University in Searcy.

Arrangements entrusted to Powell Funeral Home of Searcy. [www.powellfuneralhome.net](http://www.powellfuneralhome.net)

# Previous Events

## Visitation

DEC 21. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (CT)

College Church Of Christ  
712 E Race Ave  
Searcy, AR 72143-4421  
(501) 268-7156

## Funeral Service

DEC 21. 1:00 PM (CT)

College Church Of Christ  
712 E Race Ave  
Searcy, AR 72143-4421  
(501) 268-7156

## Interment

DEC 21 (CT)

Oaklawn Memorial Gardens  
100 E. Moore Ave.  
Searcy, AR 72143

# Tribute Wall



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Bobby Joe Corbin.*



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December 20, 2021 at 10:47 AM