

BEN FENDLEY, JR.

L B. FENDLEY, JR. WAS BORN IN DORA, ALABAMA, ON DECEMBER 20, 1928, TO REV. LONNIE

Benjamin and Audrey Ledbetter Fendley. He was a three sport athlete at Dora High School and an excellent baseball player in the local semi-pro ranks. Ben was the nephew of another member of the Walker County Sports Hall of Fame Class of 2016, Virgil Ledbetter, also a product of Dora High. After graduating from Dora in 1947, he contemplated playing professional baseball.

In the fall of 1947, Ben helped his Dora teammate, Melton Self, move to Clarksville, TN, where he had received a football scholarship to Austin Peay State University and remained to observe Self's first football practice. Immediately after the practice, Ben called home to his mother and asked her to send his clothes to Clarksville. For the next four years, Ben starred in football and baseball for the Governors. When he graduated in 1951, the star halfback held 18 school football records and still holds the Austin Peay record for average yards per carry for a career.

Upon graduation, Ben served with the U.S. Marine Corps in Korea and later in the Marine Reserves. He ultimately was promoted to Captain. Following his active duty, he began his coaching career at Dover High, now Seward County. He coached boys and girls basketball for three years before moving to Clarksville High School, (CHS), prior to the 1957 season.

At Clarksville, Ben served as the assistant football, assistant basketball and head baseball coach. He led the Clarksville Wildcats to their first state baseball tournament and his teams went on to compete in several. In 1959, Fendley was named the head varsity boys basketball coach and built the Wildcats into a state powerhouse. For over three decades, he instilled the value of hard work and other life values into his players. Playing tough defense and running the demanding "Auburn Shuffle," his teams won 621 games. His basketball teams played in numerous state tournaments and finished as state runner-up in 1964.

Ben was married to the former Geraldine (Geri) Reed of Clarksville, and the couple had two sons, Mart and Bill. In 1979, Ben was inducted into the Austin Peay State University Athletic Hall of Fame. Ben passed away in June of 2013. After his death, his former players and associates endowed the Ben Fendley Athletic Scholarship Fund at Austin Peay. This scholarship is awarded annually to student athletes playing football, basketball or baseball at APSU.

Former CHS player and chief financial officer/executive vice president for Time Warner, Inc., Wayne Pace, said of Coach Fendley, "Playing under Coach Fendley was a special part of my growing up in Clarksville. He taught his players values for life such as teamwork, honesty, loyalty, integrity, pride, self-discipline and determination. Practice was brutal; games were the treat." Ben Fendley still serves as a major influence in the lives of his former players. According to his wife, Geri, "His players were so important to him, a lot of them became very good friends of ours. He was a coach that his kids knew that he cared for them. Not because he said, it, but because he showed it."

