



Coach William Keith "Bill" Nichols

December 12, 1937 - February 20, 2023

Coach William “Bill” Keith Nichols, 85, of Blountsville died peacefully 20 February 2023 surrounded by family. Bill was born December 12, 1937 in Altoona, AL to Garvis and Opal Nichols. He was a 1956 graduate of Altoona High School where he excelled in football. Initially recruited by Georgia Tech, Bill played college football at Jacksonville State University, where he broke the school’s single season rushing record with 1,051 yards, averaging 9.6 yards per carry during his junior season. In that same season he was named Little All American as one of the top gridiron players in the nation.

During his senior season he met and married the lovely Mary Elizabeth Hubbard and after graduation from JSU they moved to Blountsville to become longtime teachers at J.B. Pennington High School where they helped mentor and mold the community’s future generations. Bill was named head football coach at PHS in his second year, where he forged a lasting legacy, and was named Blount County Coach of the Year multiple times. Bill coached many amazing athletes and tremendous teams, supported by outstanding coaches and staff, with one momentous streak of 23 games with no losses. Until his last day, visitors often greeted Bill by the affectionate title of “Coach.”

Bill possessed an amazing work ethic, buying his first “log” truck, crosscut saw, and mule at age 17. Logging became the strength conditioning system that contributed to Bill’s football success. He continued to cut and haul timber until age 75. In addition, he operated two cattle farms; a love of labor he continued until near 83 years of age.

Hunting quail was his one hobby, or maybe passion, that was not work-related. Buying his first bird dog at age 16, Bill became masterful at training dogs and finding coveys. He shared this passion with friends and family, creating memories still discussed during cold winter days.

Bill loved spending quality time with family, both immediate and extended. His family enjoyed the annual pilgrimage to the Nichols Family Reunion on the outskirts of Snead, where siblings, uncles, aunts and cousins told stories about the “old” days. Bill adored his children, and in his later years, his wonderful grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who always brought a smile to his gentle face. Above all, Bill cherished the love of his life of nearly 55 years, his Mary, or “Mae” as he affectionately called her. His life on earth forever changed when the Lord took her home to heaven in 2015.

Bill is survived by his daughter Anna Nichols, son Keith Nichols (Cheryl), daughter Janey Knutson (Naven), grandchildren Josh King (Jeri), Katie Heindl (Brittain), Mary Lawlor (Luke), Sarah Sandoval (Manolo), Anna Knutson, 1LT Will Nichols, 7 great-grandchildren, his sister Joan Payne, and many nieces and nephews.

Bill will be laid to rest with a graveside service at 11:00 a.m. at the Blountsville City Cemetery on Thursday, February 23, 2023. Brother Billy Vaughn and Donnie Breaseale will be officiating. Pallbearers will be Luke Lawlor, Shannon Payne, Will Nichols, Josh King, Naven Knutson and Brittain Heindl.

In lieu of flowers the family of Coach Nichols asks for donations to be made to the Parkinson Foundation at parkinson.org or the Alzheimer Association at alz.org

Arab Heritage Memorial Chapel, directing

Cemetery Details

Blountsville City Cemetery

415 College Street
Blountsville, AL 35031

Previous Events

Graveside Service

FEB 23. 11:00 AM (CT)

Blountsville City Cemetery
415 College Street
Blountsville, AL 35031

Tribute Wall



“ *Janey, so sorry to hear about your dad's passing. I remember him bringing your mother into the store on many occasions. They were a delightful couple and so sweet. God bless you and your family!* ”

Carolyn Brannon - February 23, 2023 at 01:14 PM

HS

“ *He was a good person* ”

Helen Sanders - February 22, 2023 at 10:47 PM

JT

Coach was a wonderful human being and I can say personally that he helped mold me into the man I am today, I can still hear him in my history class saying Thomas at you paying attention

Jason Thomas - February 23, 2023 at 12:53 PM

AB

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall* ”



Angela Brindley - February 22, 2023 at 08:08 PM

AB

Wish we could hug all tomorrow but we are not going to make. Our prayers are with all. Love, Angie and James Lee.

Angela Brindley - February 22, 2023 at 08:09 PM

KF

“ I'm so sorry to hear about your daddy Mr Nicols was a very sweet man sending hugs and prayers for you all Anna Janey and Keith



Kim Fleming - February 22, 2023 at 07:47 PM

JK

“ Always loved Coach Nichols and his precious wife Mary! She was my 10th grade English Teacher! 2 great people who made my 3 years at Pennington great!



Jeanette Key - February 22, 2023 at 07:17 PM

AB

“ I remember he always had a smile on his face.

Annette Bales - February 22, 2023 at 08:12 AM

CC

“ Rest In Peace, Coach Nichols. He was a fine man.
Anna, Keith and Janey, you are all in my prayers.



Candy Cantrell - February 22, 2023 at 12:29 AM

ES

“ Coach Nichols was a very nice person when I was in school at J B Pennington school. He will be missed by everyone that he knew! Praying for his family at this difficult time!

Elaine Bales Shaw - February 21, 2023 at 11:29 PM

JB

“ He was a great coach but a better man. R.I.P. Coach.

Jim Brown - February 21, 2023 at 09:51 PM

GB

“ Anna, Keith, and Janey....prayers to you all....you were so blessed to have been reared by two of the best!!!!

Ginger Black - February 21, 2023 at 08:45 PM

RC

“ Anna, Keith and Janey, I was so saddened to hear about the passing of your dad. I have so many good memories of him- especially with him teaching me in Drivers Ed. I know that his journey lately has not been easy, but I hope that you will find comfort knowing that he is with your mom and is whole and happy. I will keep you all in my thoughts and prayers. Much love going your way.

Renee Adcock Connolly

Renee Adcock Connolly - February 21, 2023 at 06:15 PM

MB

So sorry, Keith, Janey and Anna. Your Dad was a much love man by so many. Yes, I do think your comfort comes from above and just know their are those of us who will have you all in our prayers. I have just had this thought. He is with his beautiful Mary. Much love and prayer

Martha and James Brindley - February 22, 2023 at 11:00 AM

JK

“ *I loved Coach Nichols! One of my favorites at Pennington!*



Jeanette Key - February 21, 2023 at 04:41 PM

MR

“ *So sorry for your loss!*
Love
Bob and Myris Robinson



Myris Robinson - February 21, 2023 at 04:37 PM