

Covington, Ray William | 1938-2013

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Ray William Covington

Dr. Ray William “Red” Covington of Waco died Tuesday, May 14, 2013, at Hillcrest Hospital after a brief illness.

Memorial service is 1 p.m., Monday, May 20, at First Baptist Church of Waco with Dr. Matt Snowden officiating. Visitation is 6 to 9 p.m. Sunday, May 19, at Wilkirson-Hatch-Bailey Funeral Home in Waco.

Ray William Covington was born Feb. 25, 1938, in Alvord to William and Mary Elizabeth Covington. He was bright, funny, loving, wise and incredibly loyal. Red spent a lifetime serving others and making everything and everyone around him better.

Red earned a bachelor of arts degree from Baylor University in 1959 and a medical degree from the Baylor College of Medicine in 1963. He received post-graduate general surgery training at Ben Taub General Hospital in Houston. While in Houston, Red met a hospital volunteer named Sandra Cartlidge. He often called her “the very first cartlidge he ever took out.” They were married June 28, 1963.

Red and Sandra spent two years in Abilene, where Red practiced general surgery at Dyess Air Force Base. He then continued advanced training in orthopedic surgery as part of a three-year residency at the Baylor College of Medicine Affiliated Hospitals.

After Dr. Covington’s orthopedic training, he and his family moved to Waco in 1969. Red joined the Waco Bone and Joint Clinic where he served the Waco community for almost four decades.

In 1972, when Grant Teaff took over the football program at Baylor University, Red was asked to serve as team physician for the fledgling sports medicine program at Baylor. It was a perfect fit, as Dr. Covington not only had a passion for athletics, but also a burning desire to help student athletes reach their personal goals.

Red was extremely popular among the players because he cared so deeply about them and took such exceptional care of them. Under his leadership and that of Dr. James Bowden, Baylor developed one of the top sports medicine programs in college football.

“Red’s leadership on the medical side played an integral role in the building of a winning football program at Baylor University,” Coach Teaff said. “He was an invaluable part of my team and one of my closest friends.”

As an orthopedic surgeon, Red took pride in treating a broad range of musculoskeletal diseases and conditions and helped countless patients. After 39 years, Dr. Covington “retired” only to serve again for the last few years as the on-call doctor for Baylor Health Services.

Dr. Covington was president of the medical staff at Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center in 1982, was a member of the Baylor Development Council and a 1992 Recipient of the W.R. White Service Award from the Baylor Alumni Association. Red served on the Baylor University Board of Regents from 1989 until 1998.

He was a Fellow of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons and an Honorary Member of the National Athletic Trainers Association and Southwest Athletic Trainers Association.

Red and Sandra – who also graduated from Baylor University in 1958 – are longtime members of First Baptist Church of Waco where Red served as chairman of the board of deacons and taught Sunday School to young adults for more than 20 years.

Red Covington was first and foremost a family man. His wife, daughters, son-in-law and granddaughters were the light of his life. He loved Baylor University and held a very deep devotion to his Lady Bears.

Red was a man of deep personal faith who loved to enjoy God’s creation. He enjoyed working on his farm, riding his tractor and taking care of Lake Covington. Whatever Red touched, he made it better.

He is survived by his wife, Sandra; daughters Julie Covington of Waco and Jill Underwood and husband, Paul, of Brownwood; granddaughters Sarah and Meredith Underwood; brother James O. (Spud) Covington and wife, Sammie, of Decatur; niece Mary Jane Covington; and sister-in-law Linda Clark and husband, Floyd.