

## **Harry Doyle Vines**

### **Rollin' Razorbacks coach devoted his life to basketball**

By Claudine Mitchell  
Staff Writer  
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By the time Harry Vines of Sherwood retired in 2000 after 22 years of coaching the Arkansas Rollin' Razorbacks, he and his team had put together a 238-40 record that included four National Wheelchair Basketball Association championships and 13 appearances in the Final Four, including 12 in the last 13 years of his career.

"Harry's legacy is the Rollin' Razorbacks and that he has done so much for wheelchair athletes," said Jared Johnson, current coach of the Rollin' Razorbacks and a former player who Vines had recruited. "He pushed his players to the highest level."

He was also a long-time advocate for the disabled, lobbying in Austin, Texas, in the mid-1970s for wheelchair access to public places.

"My dad believed in his convictions and made a difference to wheelchair athletics. He was a larger-than-life personality," said his son, Phillip Vines of Little Rock.

"I was 16 when he started coaching the Rollin' Razorbacks and it was emotional for me to see how he handled his team," said daughter Holly Vines, also of Little Rock. "It was an amazing thing my father did for them. He was their 'life coach,' motivated them to succeed."

Mr. Vines died on Saturday, Feb. 11, 2006, at his home in Sherwood from heart failure; he had battled cardiac problems since a heart attack and major heart surgery in 2000. He was 67.

The only son of Harry and Venetta Dillard, he was born in Caldwell Corner, Ark., on Sept. 12, 1938. At the age of 3, he was adopted by his stepfather, Fred Vines. He grew up working in the cotton fields of eastern Arkansas until junior high, when he discovered basketball. "When he realized he had potential for the game, he told his mother that he wanted basketball to be his life, so the family moved to Little Rock so he could play the game at Central High School," said his wife, Cheryl Vines.

Mr. Vines graduated in 1957 after leading the Tigers team to a Big 8 championship and earning a high school All American award. He went on to play for coach Abe Lemons, his mentor for life, at Oklahoma City University, playing in the National Invitational Tournament in

1959 and leaving as the school's sixth leading scorer. He graduated from OCU in 1961 and later earned a master's degree in rehabilitation from North Texas State University.

As a student at Oklahoma City University, Mr. Vines met his first wife, but their marriage ended in divorce after one year. He would meet his second wife, Mary Jane Tedford, in 1962. "He was playing basketball and suffered an asthma attack and went to the emergency room at North Little Rock Memorial Hospital," said his daughter. "She was a nurse there and took care of him." They married in 1963 and went on to have two children, Holly and Phillip. They divorced in 1980.

Mr. Vines went to work for Arkansas Rehabilitation Services in 1963 and served with the state Services for the Blind, attorney general's office, governor's office and Workers Compensation Commission for 32 years. "In 1978, he found his true calling when he was asked to coach a fledgling wheelchair basketball team, the Arkansas Rollin' Razorbacks," his wife said. And it was in 1987, while coaching them at a basketball tournament in Chicago, that he met Cheryl Lady. "I was working for the conference commission and we met at a meeting in Chicago and were married on Aug. 22, 1987," she said. "We were soul mates and partners in everything."

He later coached U.S. teams in the World Cup, the Paralympics and many other international competitions. At the time of his death, he was the president of the National Wheelchair Basketball Association. Among his recognitions in life were being named President George H.W. Bush's 967th "Point of Light," twice being named Man of the Year by the Sherwood Chamber of Commerce, and the Governor's Volunteerism Award. He was a Kiwanis Club Paul Harris Fellow, was inducted into the OCU Sports Hall of Fame in 1988 and the National Wheelchair Basketball Hall of Fame in 2001.

At home, he was a member of the Sylvan Hills Methodist Church and enjoyed playing golf with a regular foursome, after which they would go to U.S. Pizza in Levy and solve the world's problems, his wife said. "He told great stories and had a nickname for everyone," she added. "If you were a Rollin' Razorback and he called you 'Goober,' you knew you were in." Current coach Johnson said that Mr. Vines affected many lives during his tenure with the Rollin' Razorbacks, giving players a new start to their lives, even locating jobs for them. "He is our program and always will be," Johnson said. "I can only hope to fill his shoes part of the way."

In addition to his wife and children, he is survived by an aunt, Christine Hampton of Colt; uncles Donald Parkman of Forrest City and Jerry Parkman of Zellwood, Fla.; sisters-in-law Cindy Limbo and husband Kenny of Fair Oaks, Calif., and Shary Smith of Emigsville, Pa.;

brother-in-law Steve Lady of Emigsville; nieces, nephews  
and the past and present members of the Arkansas Rollin' Razorbacks.  
A memorial service was held Friday, Feb. 17, at Sylvan Hills  
United Methodist Church. The family requests that memorials be made to Rollin'  
Razorbacks.