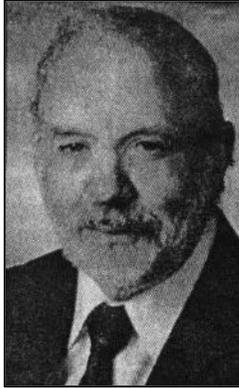


## Services Monday for sportscaster Gene Davidson

**Mary Jo Denton**  
Herald-Citizen Staff

One of the Upper Cumberland's most pleasant and familiar voices went silent yesterday with the death of **Gene Davidson** of Cookeville.



**The longtime WHUB Radio announcer/sportscaster -- whose full name is Oliver Eugene Davidson --** died suddenly, apparently of a heart attack, at his home on Saturday, June 2. He was 64.

Funeral services will be held at the Jefferson Ave. Church of Christ on Monday, June 4, at 11 a.m. with Brother Johnny Fox and Brother Glen McDoniel officiating. Burial will be in Crest Lawn Memorial Gardens.

The family will receive friends today, Sunday, from 2 to 5:30 p.m. and from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the church and on Monday from 9 a.m. until the service, also at the church.

His family includes his wife, Delores Eldridge Davidson; his mother, Mable Davidson; his son and daughter-in-law, Michael and Dana Davidson; three daughters and two sons-in-law, Cindy and Daniel Eich, Amanda and Bryan Street, and Teresa Pugh and special friend, Roger Gambrell, all of Cookeville; five brothers, Myrrl Davidson of Baxter, Wallace Davidson of Jackson, Bobby Davidson of Cookeville, Tommy Davidson of Jackson County, and Billy Davidson of Cookeville; nine grandchildren, Brandon Flatt; Matthew, Tyler and Hollie Pugh; Josh, Brad, and Sarah Eich; and Molly and Rachel Davidson.

He was the son of Mable Flatt Davidson and the late Ralph Davidson of Cookeville, born Nov. 5, 1936. He was a graduate of Tennessee Tech.

Gene Davidson was practically a household name, or more specifically, a household "voice" in this area.

It was a mellow voice as distinct as his easygoing nature. Many Putnam Countians grew up familiar with that voice reading the local news and sports and doing commercials on the radio every day.

He loved sports of all kinds, especially softball, which he began to play himself back in the 1950's when Cookeville merchants closed their stores at noon on Wednesdays, often to meet at the Park View field for a game.

Davidson had come to work in radio when he was in college at TTU and happened to be rooming with a WHUB announcer.

Short of help in 1957, WHUB gave the young man who had grown up in the Nameless community of Jackson County a job as an announcer.

And for the next 40 years, he was among the best known names and voices in radio in this region, particularly for his longest-running role as half of the "Gene and Eldon" sportscasting team.

Together, they called thousands of basketball, football, and baseball games over the years, traveling the nation to cover Tennessee Tech sports.

Davidson and the other half of that team, Eldon Burgess, were inducted into the TTU Sports Hall of Fame in 1996 for their long service in covering the University's sports.

"He was a good personal friend, a good person, the same old Gene every day," said Eldon Burgess yesterday.

"He was a good worker, and easy to work with. We never had a spat of any kind. I never saw him mad."

Friends said Davidson had worked this past Friday at his job as sports director and announcer for the radio station and had played a game of softball, pitching for the Jefferson Ave. Church of Christ team in his church league at Jere Whitson Park on Friday night.

News of his sudden death on Saturday traveled fast, and his many friends began mourning the loss.

"He was a good man, and we will miss him," said Johnny Fox, minister at Sycamore Church of Christ. Davidson attended services at Sycamore as well as at Jefferson Ave. Church of Christ.

Pallbearers at the service will be Mike Medley, Martin Medley, Frank Layne, Hoke White, Stacy Mott, Mike Dyer, Eldon Burgess, and Gene Wilhite.

Whitson Funeral Home is in charge of funeral arrangements.

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## **Recalling Davidson the athlete**

### **Jack Johnson**

Special to the Herald-Citizen

I'm sure Gene Davidson would be happy to know he will be remembered as a great athlete as well as a great sportscaster. I've heard people tell Gene on a number of occasions that they hoped they would be as good as he was at his age. He would tell them he appreciated the comment but would tell them to leave out the age thing.

Gene could smoke a softball and played sports with a passion. Come to think of it, I never had a conversation with Gene that didn't involve sports.

A few years back, during the Kevin O' Neill era of University of Tennessee men's basketball, Tech beat UT in Knoxville and I saw Gene a few days later and had to ask him about the big win.

"It was one of the greatest days of my life and I know it was for a lot of people around here," he said.

Gene was never a UT basher though and I never heard him say anything bad about anyone. I then asked him why he thought so many Tech fans hated UT.

"I guess for some people UT is all they ever hear about and they get sick of that so when Tech wins it's really special to them."

One time I was with Gene on a long trip in a very small van to a softball game. It was a four seat van with limited space to pack some belongings in the back.

I offered to switch with Gene halfway, on the way back or any time he felt claustrophobic. Gene never did complain and refused to switch places. Jokingly I told him I'd feel really bad if we got hit by another car and he said, "I'll just serve as the rear air bag."

Gene thought I was joking one day at a Tennessee Tech basketball game when I asked him and Roger Ealey to sign an ad I ripped out of a TTU program for my local wall of fame. The picture is a takeoff on Siskel and Ebert and it says Roger and Gene give Tech basketball two thumbs up. He finally signed it "Geno" when I told him I was getting autographs from all the sportscasters that had been around since dirt was invented.

Gene had a great sense of humor and a gift for conversation. His broadcasting career was legendary. Someone will fill in for Geno on the radio but he will never be replaced. What a voice and what an athlete! Don't play up on the infield grass because Mean Gene will rip a line-drive off the pearly gates!

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