

## **DR. NOLAN FOWLER OBT.**

**COOKEVILLE** -- Dr. Nolan Fowler of Cookeville, age 94, Professor Emeritus of History at Tennessee Tech University, died on Monday, Oct. 6, 2008.

No visitation or services are planned.

He was born Nov. 3, 1913, in a rural area of Wayne County, W.Va., to the late William Clarence Fowler and Lillie Fay Friel Fowler, both elementary school teachers. Nolan was the product of Nine-Mile Elementary School in Cabell County, W.Va., one of the famed "one-room schools." Fowler attributed his later success to the eight-year regimen based upon these points: emphasis on the basics, splendid organization, endless patience, and omnipresent repetition -- the first law of education as far as he was concerned. He emphasized that this was by no means a dull mechanical system, but rather a rigorous process pervaded with respect and enthusiasm.

Dr. Fowler's family included his late brother, Daryl, and his late sister, Glenith.

He is survived by a daughter and son-in-law, Elaine and Dr. Michael Palencia; a grandson, Andrew; a granddaughter, Dr. Rachel Palencia Harper and husband Jeff Harper; and a great-grandson, Michael Harper. Mr. Fowler's first wife was the late Rubye Lee, nee Cochran, a Marine veteran, whom he married in 1943 and who died in 2004. He married longtime family friend Janet Marks in 2005, and his extended family includes her sons, John, Robert, and Gary Marks, and their families.

Dr. Fowler graduated from Huntington Central High School (W.Va.) in 1931. It was while he was in high school that he developed an affinity and love for the hammer throw, an event in which he excelled throughout his life, throwing weights of from 16 to 56 pounds. He is the holder of over thirty Masters Olympics American and World records in that event, and he was inducted into the Morehead State University Athletic Hall of Fame in 1993 and the Ohio Valley Conference Athletic Hall of Fame in 2001. In 2006 he was honored at the Morehead Homecoming.

Because the Great Depression of the 1930s brought financial hard times, Dr. Fowler had to work his way through Marshall College (now Marshall University), taking various jobs for as little as ten cents an hour. Among these jobs was working at the American Car and Foundry where, among other things, railroad wheels were molded. He graduated with honors in 1939, enlisted in the Navy, was discharged for medical reasons, and then attended graduate school at the University of Kentucky and earned his Master of Arts in history in 1940 and his Ph.D. in 1955 at this institution.

Dr. Fowler taught American history at Morehead State University in Kentucky from 1943 to 1962, started the track and field program there, and was its coach from 1952 to 1957. Under his direction the program won its first Ohio Valley Conference title, even though Morehead did not have a track at the time. In 1962 he was recruited by Tennessee Tech University as a faculty member in history and also as the Track and Field coach. He

retired from Tennessee Tech in 1979, but he remained active in supporting the Department of History and the Department of Foreign Languages with a variety of donations, the latest of which (2005) was an endowment of \$150,000 for continuing funding of an annual lecture on the U.S. Constitution. Tennessee Tech named this event the Nolan Fowler U.S. Constitutional Development Day. He has also made provisions for major contributions to Morehead State University and Marshall University.

Dr. Fowler continued his competition in Masters Olympics events until he was well into his 80s. He maintained a large garden of vegetables and flowers until he was in his late 80s, and he mowed his own lawn with a push mower until he was 90. The head cataloger at UK consulted the Head Archivist at Harvard University about the standing of Fowler's collection. The latter said it was the best of its kind in the U.S. because it was kept in one place, not scattered. Fowler attributed the development of this passion for the epic adventures of ancient heroes and heroines to his rigorous elementary school education, as well as an English course in high school.

Well into his 90s, Dr. Fowler continued the research of many years toward writing "A Biographical Encyclopedia of Prominent Native Kentuckians, Living and Dead." It is much needed by the press, libraries, teachers, and scholars of the state.

Dr. Fowler's friends knew him as an untiring supporter of education and the fine arts, a "Renaissance man" in his knowledge of almost everything -- from sports to gardens to history. If there was ever a time in a conversation that he could not recall a detail dealing with the topic at hand, no matter what that topic might be, his conversation partner could expect a lengthy hand-written letter in a few days with his painstaking research on the subject.

One of Dr. Fowler's former colleagues commented that "Fowler was probably the most knowledgeable and greatest professor to ever teach at Morehead State University. He was the one who inspired me to become a history professor." Tennessee Tech University's first student Fulbright Scholar, later a history professor herself, named him as the professor who inspired her the most because of his excellent teaching and his encyclopedic knowledge.

Dr. Fowler's friends and family will miss his enormous range of knowledge and his quick wit.

Hooper-Huddleston & Horner Funeral Home and Cremation Services is in charge of arrangements.

You may send condolence to [www.hhhfunerals.com](http://www.hhhfunerals.com) (931)526-6111.

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<http://www.ajlambert.com>

## **TRIBUTES:**

Barbara Young: Dr. Fowler was one of my favorite professors. He inspired me to not only read and study History, but also to enjoy it! Attending his lectures was fun, enlightening and entertaining. I wish all students could have a Dr. Fowler in their lives.

Amos D. Salisbury: Student & Track aide - Elaine, Please accept my condolences and thank you for sharing Dr. Fowler with me.

Carl and Roselyn Deaton: Former student and athlete - The Dr. Fowler Family, Dr. Fowler was able to take a bunch of guys who had no background in track and field and turn us into OVC champs. He was a coach who was ahead of his time and thanks to his value of hard work, he was hugely successful. He was the most knowledgeable teacher (and person) that I ever had the pleasure of learning under. (Sometimes not so pleasurable) Rosie was afraid to take his courses! His ability to design rigorous workouts for his cross-country and track teams made the meets seem like fun. He had the respect of all of his athletes and respected us by keeping in touch throughout our lives. There will never be another like him. God Bless.

Peggy (Dixon) West: Elaine, We were so sorry to hear about your father. We didn't know your mother had passed away either. She was my favorite teacher when I was at Central. Our prayers are with you and your family. Peggy and Ronnie West.

Donna Knight Bowman: Elaine, Sorry for your loss. I am Hazel Baumgardner Knight Corum's daughter. During one of the first reunions Nolan stayed at my house, at that time I lived on the property his parents owned when he was a young man. At that time I did not know Nolan, but my mother talked me into letting him stay. My family and I enjoyed him very much. My son was very young then and he and Nolan were all over the hills on Nine Mile Road and in the creek. He was a wonderful person.

Dr. Alice Fannin: former student at MSU - In my classroom experiences at four universities, he was one of my finest teachers and he was equally fine as a person. In my student days, I did not know what an influence he would have on my teaching. And in the last few years as we exchanged letters, I came to admire him as even more remarkable in both capacities.

Kenneth I. Daugherty: Student & Athlete MSC - Coach Fowler was my inspiration to attempt Track and Cross-Country. Working with his guidance and very tough (for the time) workout schedules I was able to accomplish more than I ever dreamed with the small amount of talent I had. From him I learned the value of hard work and never giving up. In his classes he was tough but if you worked hard you could succeed. On our Track and Cross-Country trips throughout the Midwest, Mid-Atlantic and South he gave us history & geography lessons on each trip. We were fortunate to have him as a Coach and Teacher. He prepared us for competition on the field and in life.

Debra Allen: Former student, Tennessee Technological University. I will ALWAYS remember Dr. Fowler. He retired the same year I graduated from Tech (purely a coincidence, I'm sure!), but we stayed in touch and we visited when he came to the University of Illinois to visit his family in Champaign-Urbana where I was a doctoral student. I think of him often when I'm teaching Concordia University students about the Constitutionality of the Louisiana Purchase or when I push them to "take it to the well once more" and try to examine something more thoroughly. Please know the peace of Christ.

Paul Whiteley: Student and Athlete - One of the best things I experienced in my life was running track and cross country for Coach Nolan Fowler at Morehead State College (1955-57). Our teams were so fortunate to have a coach of Nolan Fowler's caliber. He knew what he was doing and his variety-spiced workouts were designed to get the most out of his athletes. Coaching distance runners is an art and a science. Coach Fowler excelled in combining the two. He was also a great History professor who cared how his students performed in the classroom. On cross country trips, we sometimes stopped at historical places. In 1955, on the way to a meet in Philadelphia, we stopped at the Civil War battlefield at Gettysburg. The next fall, on the way back from running in the NAIA Championship in Omaha, we toured Abraham Lincoln's home in Springfield, Illinois. When Coach Fowler resigned his coaching duties at Morehead in 1957, he helped me transfer to a school in Kansas to continue my collegiate running career. At my new school, Emporia State, I won five individual national championships--two in cross country and three in track and field. If it were not for Nolan Fowler and my Morehead experience, I would not have those achievements next to my name. I will always be thankful for everything Coach Fowler did for our teams at Morehead and for me personally. He may never be inducted into the Track and Field Coaches Hall of Fame, but down deep in my heart, I know Nolan Fowler was a Hall of Fame coach. I send my condolences to Elaine and her family.