

Mr. Samuel Vanleave Wickcliffe



Samuel Wickcliffe Sr., of Campbellsville, was a beloved leader in the African American community. He was a lifelong advocate and activist for justice and equity for the African American community, as well as for all people, regardless of race. Mr. Wickcliffe was a leader in establishing annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. events in his community, and he left a legacy in keeping with that of Dr. King.

Mr. Wickcliffe was a schoolteacher in the Taylor County School district, a United States Air Force veteran, a board member at Fannie Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, a former assistant football coach at Campbellsville University and Campbellsville High School, and a member of Masonic Lodge in Bardstown. He was inducted into the Campbellsville University Athletics Hall of Fame in 2003 and was

named an American Football Coaches Association NAJA Assistant Coach of the Year in 1998. L

He grew up in Bardstown and attended Bardstown Training High School and received a scholarship to Winston-Salem Teacher's College, which is now Winston-Salem University, in North Carolina. Mr. Wickcliffe graduated from Winston-Salem in 1952. Sam joined the United States Air Force and served four years. He started teaching at Durham High School in 1956.

Mr. Wickcliffe came to Campbellsville University after retiring from the Campbellsville Independent School System, and helped legendary coach Ron Finley restart football in 1987. He was a solid addition to the football coaching staff after teaching and coaching for 31 years in middle and high schools in both Durham and Campbellsville. Mr. Wickcliffe was one of the first African American teachers in Campbellsville Independent School System (Taylor County). He was inducted into the Campbellsville University Athletics Hall of Fame in 2003 and was named an American Football Coaches Association NAJA Assistant Coach of the Year in 1998.

"It was amazing how he could motivate players," said fellow assistant coach Eric Graves. "A lot of our success was because of the way he taught our players. Mr. Wickcliffe was a leader and lead by living the example for those who followed him."

Gilbert Robbins, a player brought in during Finley's first recruiting class and an all-conference defensive end, fondly remembers his years with Mr. Wickcliffe as his position coach. "He set an example that we all learned to respect. He would say: 'Do it right, or do it twice.'" Robbins credits Mr. Wickcliffe with instilling a work ethic in him that he says has stood the test of time.

Haywood Riner, another Campbellsville University assistant from the early days, says Wickcliffe was a gentleman who lived Christ's values every minute of every day. "He was a fine football coach, too," said Riner. "He was a leader in our community and was a leader among the coaches."

Dr. John Chowning, Vice President for Church and External Relations and Executive Assistant to the President at Campbellsville University, said Wickcliffe was "a wonderful man and true servant leader. He touched the lives of many people in his various roles - as a beloved husband and father, devoted church member, coach and teacher, civic leader, board member, and friend and mentor to countless people."

Mr. Wickcliffe passed away in July 2015 at age 87, and a large crowd attending his memorial service – a testimony to the life he lived. Mr. Wickcliffe is survived by his wife, Jean Wickcliffe of Campbellsville; a son, Samuel Leon Wickcliffe (Joetta) of Frankfort; a daughter, Dr. Lori Wickcliffe-Wyatt (Dr.Karl) of Prairie Grove, Ill; two grandchildren, LaToya Fields of Frankfort, and Dr. Karla Wyatt of Chicago, Ill; a brother, Horace W. Wickcliffe of San Diego, Calif.; two sisters, Sadie Lawler of Jeffersonville, Ind. and Hettie Fisher of Bardstown, Ky. and a host of nieces, nephews, relatives and friends.

Western Kentucky University Manuscripts & Folklife Archives: Interview with Samuel V. Wickcliffe Regarding Campbellsville & Taylor County (FA 202), http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_fa_oral_hist/16/.