

# Coffelt remembered as builder of university

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Jambar Editor

The University community continues to benefit from the accomplishments made by Dr. John J. Coffelt, say administrators who remembered the former YSU president Thursday at a memorial service in Kilcawley Center.

Coffelt, who died Sept. 1 following aneurysm surgery in a Houston, Texas hospital, served in the YSU administration for 16 years. He was the vice president for administration until 1973, when he was chosen to succeed the late Dr. Albert L. Pugsley as University president.

Coffelt was responsible for "developing the jewel of a campus that we all enjoy so much," said current President, Dr. Neil D. Humphrey, who succeeded Coffelt in 1984.

Dr. Taylor Alderman, vice president of personnel services, said Coffelt has been accurately described as a builder of the University since many of the physical features of today's campus resulted from Coffelt's work.

Coffelt was instrumental in initiating and planning Stambaugh Stadium, which opened in 1982. Coffelt said in a

February 1976 *Vindicator* article that plans for the stadium were made after community members expressed an interest in having such a facility.

It was Coffelt's concern for other peoples' opinions that impressed Dr. Barbara Brothers, chair of the English department. "I found him always willing to listen," she said.

Coffelt believed that the University had a commitment to students and should not serve merely as a revolving door, Brothers said. When members of the English department proposed a four-point program that was meant to strengthen the department, "John Coffelt made it possible by his commitment," she said.

When Coffelt assumed his responsibilities as president, his job was compounded by low morale among faculty members and a divided Board of Trustees, Alderman said.

In his first State of the University Address in 1973, Coffelt asked faculty members to join him in efforts to achieve the full potential of the University. He continued to work with faculty members throughout his term at YSU.

"Each of you here is a



DR. JAMES J. COFFELT

beneficiary of his collegial spirit," Brothers said.

Students and the community were other groups Coffelt reached out to, the speakers said.

"To him there was nothing more important than the students," said K.J. Satrum, associate director of Kilcawley Center.

One of Coffelt's student-oriented programs was called Breakfast with the President, in which he randomly selected students to discuss their concerns. Satrum said he amazed many people with his knowledge of even minute details of Univer-

sity operations and was "a master at drawing out students."

Coffelt held many other meetings with students, including occasional press conferences and meetings on parking problems. He was concerned with academic affairs and disagreed with college administrators who opposed a 1983 NCAA statute that made academic standards tougher for student athletes.

Speakers at the service dwelled on Coffelt's personal qualities

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as well as his accomplishments.

Humphrey described Coffelt as a highly competitive man in University concerns as well as personal interests. Coffelt was not a poor sport, Humphrey said, but someone who did everything vigorously.

Alderman said the occasion was not a reason to mourn "but to rejoice in that which we were lucky enough to share for a time."

Alderman said Coffelt was paradoxical. He may have seemed aloof at times, he said, but Coffelt was more likely lost in complex thought.

Coffelt also was a person unimpressed with titles or importance, Alderman said. Coffelt often introduced himself simply by saying, "I'm John Coffelt. I work at the University," he said.

Satrum, who had been interviewed for a job at YSU while Pugsley was still President, said she never expected to know Coffelt, let alone ride a motorcycle with him. When she expressed her interest in motorcycles she learned that Coffelt liked motorcycles as well.

She said he showed up at her home one day to take her for a ride. Soon afterward he helped her purchase a used motorcycle and made a test course from pebbles in a church parking lot, Satrum said, adding that Coffelt served as her role model.

Coffelt was born Dec. 26, 1924, in Neosho, Mo., a son of Roscoe and Estelle Turner Coffelt. He was a graduate of the University of Denver and Colorado State College and completed his doctoral degree work at the University of Colorado.

He leaves his wife, the former Anna Marie Nelson; three daughters, Mrs. Susan Ann Lyon of Buffalo, N.Y., Mrs. Margaret Jean Spatar of Youngstown and Mrs. Janet Lee Bannon of Boardman; a son, John of Los Angeles; five brothers; two sisters; and nine grandchildren.