

## RAY TIDWELL

**R**AY TIDWELL WAS BORN AUGUST 15, 1948, TO VIRGIL AND FRAN TIDWELL. HE IS ONE OF ONLY A

few athletes who have ever signed college scholarships to play in two different sports: basketball at Walker College and baseball at Auburn University.

Ray graduated from Curry High School in 1966 having played football and basketball, and running track for two of Curry's legendary coaches: Travis Hudson and James Hubbert. His high school football team had a record of 24-4-2. He was selected to the All WAL-WIN Conference Team after his senior season.

Tidwell was a two-year starter in basketball at Curry with back-to-back WAL-WIN Conference championships and a Walker County championship. The team, coached by Bruce Abbott, finished 24-7 in his senior year and won both the area and regional tournaments, earning a trip to the state championship tournament in Tuscaloosa. They finished third, losing only to the eventual state champion, Kinston High School, by 8 points.

In the post season, Ray was selected to play in the North-South All-Star basketball game in Tuscaloosa. *Daily Mountain Eagle* Sports Editor, Tony Estes wrote, "Ray Tidwell is the only representative from Walker County. He was All-Area and All-Region and a member of the *Birmingham Post Herald's* All-State team." Tidwell started the game at point guard and led the team in both steals and assists.

After the game, legendary basketball coach Glen Clem asked Tidwell to be an invited walk-on for the upcoming year at Walker College. Ray was placed on scholarship the second semester. Coach Clem is quoted as stating, "Tidwell is one of the most aggressive defensive players to ever play at Walker College." Those teams were State of Alabama Junior College Champions, Dixie Conference Co-Champions, and a runner-up in the Dixie Conference Championship.

Following his time at Walker College, Tidwell turned his attention to his first love; baseball. Ray had started playing baseball in the Walker County Men's League at the age of 13. He played baseball every summer throughout high school and junior college. The summer after graduating from Walker College, he was offered a Minor League contract with the St. Louis Cardinals but had already decided that he wanted to play baseball at Auburn University.

Ray played baseball as an outfielder at Auburn for two years under Paul Nix, another legendary coach who described Tidwell as "a line drive hitter with fine speed as a base runner." He was a regular starter, lettering both years and earning membership in the Auburn Baseball Letterman's Club. He suffered two broken bones while playing in his senior season. Tidwell came back and finished the season but the injuries ended his chance of a professional baseball career.

After returning to Walker County, Ray began a softball career that spanned some 27 years. He started playing with local powerhouse teams Walker County Sheet Metal, Drummond Coal, and Cupps Enterprises in the Jasper Parks and Recreation Leagues. Tidwell excelled in softball and these teams were a force in the league as well as in weekend tournaments around the area.

Tidwell then joined a travel team sponsored by Cupps & Cupps of Empire, AL. made up of players from all sections of north Alabama. The team competed in the Major and Super-Major Softball circuits, playing in tournaments throughout the Southeast. He finished his softball career on a team that won the Alabama State Slow-Pitch Championship Over-40 Division.

Ray Tidwell dedicated his life to working with the students of Walker County serving as head football and head baseball coach at Oakman High School and Curry High School. He spent 25 years as an administrator in Walker County serving at Farmstead, Townley, Oakman Elementary, and Oakman High School.

Ray is married to the former Coneta Lee of Addison. They are the parents of Chris Tidwell of Auburn, Tracy Tidwell of Opelika, and Hillary Tidwell Nowland of Opelika.

