



# Dr. Nathan F. Ford

MAY 23, 1927 - JUL 22, 2024



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## **Dr. Nathan F. Ford**

MAY 23, 1927 - JUL 22, 2024

**D**r. Nathan F. Ford  
05/23/1927-07/22/2024

Family, church, friends, and community were the pillars of Dr. Nathan F. Ford's life. He shared love and laughter with everyone he met. He was born on May 23, 1927, in the mountains of Cocke County to John G. Ford and Anna Davis Ford, the tenth of 12 children (plus two cousins who came to live with them), and he passed away on July 22, 2024.

Instead of attending Class Night at Cocke County High School in 1945, Nathan and Mom Ford, as his mother was known, took the bus to Knoxville, where she gave permission for him to join the Navy. He served for two years, including time on the USS Grapple, which earned him access to the GI Bill.

He graduated from the Southern College of Optometry in 1950, an institution that would later honor him with the Lifetime Achievement Award. As Newport's first full-time optometrist, he loved getting to know his patients. He was a member of the professional organizations ETSOA, the TSOA, and the AOA. He was recognized as Tennessee Optometrist of the Year in the 1980s, and his practice still exists today (as Vision Source).

Continuing his father's legacy of community service, Nathan was elected to the Cocke County Board of Education at age 27. During his tenure, the school board consolidated many of the one- and two-room schools in the county, while greatly improving the educational system. His contributions in support of education were recognized by the county when he received the Cocke County Education Foundation's Celebrate Our Successes award.

In addition to his support of education, Nathan worked to improve the economic status of those living in Cocke County by his service as chair of the first Cocke County Economic Development Commission and as a director of the Chamber of Commerce. He was a long-time member of the



## Obituary

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Lions Club, chair of the Cocke County Election Commission, and a charter member of the Smoky Mountain Country Club where he played hours of golf. In 1976, Nathan was elected to his first of three terms as a representative in the Tennessee House of Representatives, where he proudly spoke for his constituents in Cocke, Jefferson, and Sevier counties. His service was recognized by a resolution of the Legislature that named a portion of Highway 321 in his honor.

For almost 70 years, Nathan was a member of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, where he served as council president and as a member of numerous committees. He and Mary B. Ford were married at Holy Trinity on August 14, 1954, and would have celebrated their 70th anniversary on August 14.

Even though he served others with his whole heart, his love for his family and friends was the true essence of his being. He could talk to anyone and never met a stranger. He and Mary entertained frequently at their home, and even after moving to assisted living, Nathan maintained contact with friends all over the country.

It was his family that made him the happiest. He and Mary were the parents of Beth (Mike Driskill), John (Lisa), and Mark (Jane Rodrigue.) Their grandchildren are Gwyn Herbein (Matt), Gavin Driskill (Christine), and Zachery Ford. All phone calls included conversations about his grandchildren and his great-grandchildren, Olivia Herbein, Emory Driskill, and Delaney Driskill.

Friends will be received at Costner-Maloy and Brown Funeral Home in Newport, Tennessee on Friday, August 9 from 4:00-7:00 pm. The funeral will be held at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 140 Lincoln Avenue, Newport at 10:00 am on Saturday, August 10. Instead of flowers, please make a gift to Holy Trinity or to a charity of your choice.

Funeral Arrangements entrusted to Costner-Maloy & Brown Funeral Home



## Events

**Dr. Nathan F. Ford**

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### Visitation



**Friday**, August 9, 2024

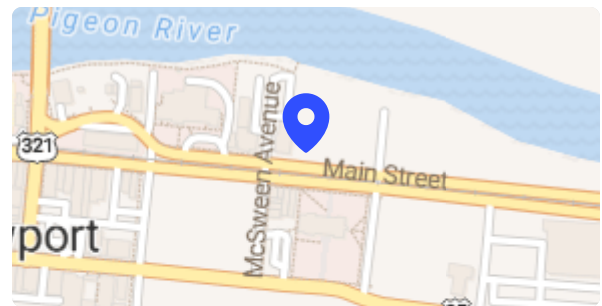


4:00 PM - 7:00 PM ET



**Costner-Maloy & Brown Funeral Home**

338 E Main St, Newport TN 37821



### Funeral



**Saturday**, August 10, 2024



10:00 AM ET



Holy Trinity Lutheran Church



## Tribute Wall

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JD

**Joe And Pat Ward Dotson** posted:

Dr. Ford was our family eye Dr. When I lived in Hot Springs NC in my younger years. Prayers for all the family.

September 16 at 9:16 PM

JW

**Jay Williford** posted:

He got me a job with the state. I worked at TDOT . I really liked Nathan, seems like I knew him all my life ! He was a great man and a wonderful friend.

August 13 at 6:48 AM

EH

**Elaine Harper** posted:

So sorry for your loss. He was a good man. I had intended to pay my respect in person, but am unable to get there tonight. Prayers for the family. Elaine Dockery Harper

August 9 at 4:15 PM

KY

**Karen Yates** lit a candle in honor of Nathan.

He was the nicest person you could ever know. Rest in peace my dear friend.

August 9 at 4:12 PM



**Jeanne Birdwell** posted:

Dr. Nathan Ford has been a tremendous person and asset to Newport and Cocke County. He and wife Mary and children have always meant the best to all of our citizens. During working years he was a valuable asset to all of economic development progress and with a group of citizens were very helpful in our work to develop friendships with new industries in our community. While he served in Nashville, his work was very valuable as he always joined with us in our endeavors to welcome industry to our county and welcomed our visits. I will look forward to seeing him again in Heaven- as we all will. He and Mary and children have always been so special in our community! Thank you all for your service in life and in Cocke County!

August 9 at 1:58 PM



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**Jeanne Birdwell** posted:

Dr. Nathan Ford was always a very special person to know. He was a member of a group in town who were my bosses for many years concerning Economic Development for Newport, Cocke County and always so busy doing the best he could for everybody. During his State Representative years he welcomed all with open arms to aid in many adventures. He will always be remembered along with his wife, Mary, as very caring friends to Cocke County Citizens. We will look forward to meeting with him again in Heaven! Thank you, Family, for being so supportive always! Sincerely, Jeanne Wilson Birdwell - Newport, TN

August 9 at 1:45 PM



**Tommy McGaha** posted:

Doctor Ford was my eye doctor as a young boy. He was always so nice and professional. Prayers for peace and comfort at this difficult time for all his family and friends.

August 9 at 7:42 AM



**Billie, Mike, Mark, And Leslie Tumblin** planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Nathan.



August 8 at 6:47 PM



**Billie, Mike, Mark, And Leslie Tumblin** sent a Lily and Rose Tribute Spray to the Ford family.



August 8 at 6:47 PM



**Billy And Lauralee** sent a Rainbow Of Remembrance Spray to the Ford family.



August 6 at 5:33 PM



## Tribute Wall

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CF

**Codie And Sarah Hair And Family** planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Nathan.

August 6 at 1:50 PM



**Anonymous** sent a Medium Dish Garden to the Ford family.

August 6 at 1:50 PM



TR

**Tom And Linda Rosberg** posted:

I don't know of a more decent human being than Nathan Ford. For all of the twenty six years we have known him there was never a day when a smile and a good word was not in him. As Christians we know that a great reward is ours when we meet again in Heaven. That is our goal. That is our reward and it should be quite a meet up when the time comes. God rest your soul Nathan. You were loved by so many and will always be.

July 30 at 3:51 PM

SP

**Sharon Gann-Peters** posted:

I will forever cherish the memories of growing up on the Ford family farm in Del Rio. Nathan was such a great influence in my life and I will forever be grateful for the kindness he always showed my parents.

July 29 at 4:20 PM

DG

**Debbie Gann** lit a candle in honor of Nathan.

Love Nathan Ford, we were raised up in Del Rio Tenn on Charlie Ford's Farm his brother and we also did Yard work for Nathan and Mary Ford, they are Truly the Best 🥰❤️🌹 I Have Always called them uncle and aunt, Nathan I love you and I'm truly going to miss you, Fly High 🕊️🕊️❤️

July 27 at 5:35 PM







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BC

**Brenda Kay Cook** lit a candle in honor of Nathan.

Brenda Kay Cook lit a candle in memory of Nathan Ford

July 26 at 2:43 PM



JT

**Jewelene And Jim Travis** posted:

I loved Nathan he was such a friendly man. He was so good at calling about my sister when she was going through her battle with cancer. She was a classmate and they were friends as he was to many people. His family will miss him so much. RIP Nathan you were loved by many.

July 25 at 5:46 PM

SH

**Sandy Hurley** posted:

What a wonderful man. I was so blessed to know him. Many prayers for all that loved him

July 25 at 8:03 AM

SH

**Sandy Hurley** lit a candle in honor of Nathan.

Sandy Hurley lit a candle in memory of Nathan Ford

July 25 at 8:02 AM



RL

**Russell Lamb** posted:

To the Ford Family: My parents grew up with Nathan Ford and my grandparents both loved the man. How could you not? Yes that ready laugh and a sparkling smile, but there was a goodness about him that went deeper than just his humor. Along with your mother, he was a force for good - in Cocke County and the life of its children, the State and my own life. I was most impressed that he never forgot his roots in Del Rio. I can never forget his (and your mother's) kindness to me many decades ago. Let us all say, WELL DONE! Russell Lamb ("Rusty")

July 25 at 6:23 AM

CR

**Cookie Ramsey** posted:

Nathan was a great man never met a stranger The county lost a amazing man Rip

July 24 at 10:44 AM



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JW

**Jessie Woods** shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

I will miss you Nathan ❤️ we will see each other again someday 🙏 prayers for his wife Mary and their 3 children and extend family and friends ❤️

July 24 at 10:17 AM



SH

**Sandy Hurley** July 25 at 8:05 AM

Loved this man. Such a pleasure to be around and talk to

RM

**Rob And Lisa Myers** posted:

We send our sympathies to the family! We will be praying for all of his many family members and friends!

July 24 at 9:10 AM

RS

**Ray Snader** posted:

It was his laugh. Nathan always seemed to be happy, a reflection of his positive attitude. My condolences to his entire family.

July 24 at 8:45 AM

BH

**Barbara Holt** posted:

He was always very nice and kind to us. Spanky and Barbara Holt

July 23 at 6:17 PM

KS

**Kurt Steele** posted:

I have several. It was dinner with the four "elder statesman" of our practice (Nathan, Bill Henry, Jeff Foster, and myself), and getting to hear all the stories and history of the practice that I continue today (with Emily Eisenhower, Jacob Norris, and Graham Taylor). It was sometimes just lunch with the two of us since Bill and Jeff passed. He was always interested in our practice and my career. Of course a few laughs were shared! I think my favorite memories are on the golf course. Dr. Ford could putt. And in a scramble putting is key. Nathan and I had lots of fun playing together and often were on the winning team! Nathan words cannot express my gratitude for your mentorship and more importantly your friendship. You were a great doctor and even better person and friend.

July 23 at 12:56 PM



Jessie Woods shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

July 24 at 10:17 AM



Sandy Hurley July 25 at 8:05 AM

Loved this man. Such a pleasure to be around and talk to



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Nathan by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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