

Weaver, James Harvey ^[1]

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by Jim L. Sumner, 1996

29 Mar. 1903–11 July 1970

James Harvey Weaver, athletic administrator, was born at [Rutherford College](#) ^[2], of which his father was president. One of five children of the Reverend Charles Clinton and Florence Stacy Weaver, his mother was the sister of [Walter Stacy](#) ^[3], chief justice of the [North Carolina Supreme Court](#) ^[4]. The Reverend Mr. Weaver was later president for a brief period of [Davenport College](#) ^[5] in [Lenoir](#) ^[6] and for a longer time of [Emory and Henry College](#) ^[7] in Emory, Va. James Weaver attended Emory and Henry Academy, where he played football, baseball, and basketball. Matriculating at Emory and Henry College, he played football for two years. In the fall of 1921, when his father returned to a North Carolina pastoral circuit, James Weaver transferred to [Trinity College](#) ^[8]. The next spring he left school over a hazing incident and enrolled in [Centenary College](#) ^[9] in Shreveport, La., where he played football from 1922 to 1924 and was captain his final year. He also played basketball and baseball at Centenary, was a member of the student council, and was vice-president of the student body.

After graduation Weaver sold cars in Shreveport for a short time before taking a position in the fall of 1925 as coach of the Centenary freshman football team. In 1926 and 1927 he coached high school baseball, football, and basketball and taught history and geometry in Nacogdoches, Tex.

Weaver returned to North Carolina in the spring of 1928 to teach and coach football and basketball at [Oak Ridge Academy](#) ^[10], where he remained through the spring of 1933. For several years he also umpired minor league baseball games in the area. In the autumn of 1933 he became head football coach at [Wake Forest College](#) ^[11]. The small Baptist school was having a hard time competing with larger schools in the state, and Weaver was unable to affect an immediate change. His first team was winless and only scored thirteen points for the season. By the 1936 season, however, he produced a winning season, with five victories and four defeats. After that season he became athletic director at Wake Forest and relinquished football coaching duties to Douglas Clyde (Peahead) Walker.

Weaver remained athletic director until 1953, with an interruption during [World War II](#) ^[12]. He joined the U.S. Navy in December 1942 and served until November 1945. During that period he was an athletic director at Georgia Pre-flight and the Ward Island Technical Training Center. He left the service as a lieutenant commander. While Weaver was athletic director, Wake Forest's sports program enjoyed unprecedented success. It joined the large and somewhat unwieldy Southern Conference in 1936. The football team won with regularity under Walker and played in the school's first two bowl games in 1945 and 1948. In 1939 the basketball team became the first team from North Carolina to play in the National Collegiate Athletic Association tournament. In 1951 the Wake Forest baseball team was selected to represent the United States in the Pan American games. Weaver assisted with the golf program and helped recruit [Arnold Palmer](#) ^[13] for the team.

Wake Forest was one of seven schools that left the Southern Conference in 1953 to form the Atlantic Coast Conference. In May 1954, by which time the league had added an eighth school, Weaver was selected to become its first commissioner. His explicit duties included rules enforcement, public relations, and managing the staff. Behind the scenes he was active in arbitrating disputes among the member institutions and promoting the league in the NCAA. During his tenure the conference had its share of recruiting violations, probations, fights, and scandals, most notably the basketball point shaving episodes at [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[14] and [North Carolina State](#) ^[15] in the early 1960s. However, Weaver's leadership helped the league survive these problems and become a leading college athletic conference in the 1950s and 1960s. The conference won national championships in basketball, baseball, and soccer and put together a lucrative basketball television package. It also gained a reputation for academic integrity and boasted stricter eligibility requirements than those mandated by the NCAA.

In addition to his duties as league commissioner Weaver was a member of the NCAA executive committee, where he was an active proponent of strengthened eligibility requirements, and of the National Collegiate Commissioners Association (president, 1970). He died suddenly of a heart attack while attending the commissioners' annual convention in Colorado Springs. Funeral services were held at the Christ United [Methodist Church](#) ^[16] in [Greensboro](#) ^[17], and burial was at Westminster Gardens.

Weaver married Louise Wooten in June 1934. She died later that year. In 1938 he married Kate Dunn of Scotland Neck, and they had a daughter, Florence. A large, amiable man, Weaver was an enthusiastic hunter and fisherman.

Weaver was inducted into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame, the Helms Foundation Hall of Fame, and the [Wake Forest University](#) ^[11] Hall of Fame. In 1971 the Atlantic Coast Conference instituted the Jim Weaver Postgraduate Scholarship, which is awarded to the conference athlete who best distinguishes himself or herself in academic and

leadership qualities.

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