Charlie Coffey Left
The Way He Came In

The blue station wagon pulled in front of Wood- run Airport at 11:22 a.m. Friday. Two men got out, leaving a lonely figure in the back seat.

The men went inside and made ticket arrange- ments for Pridemart flight No. 3 to Nashville, Ten- nessee.

Thirty minutes later, in a clank of secrecy, Charlie Coffey was gone.

It was almost the same way he came three years ago. He made his decision to come to Virgin- ia Tech, and the football coach in the middle of the night three years ago this month.

But instead of coming, Charlie Coffey was going. It is over for him at Virginia Tech, Finished.

After seeing Coffey off to Nashville (where he was picked up by a member of his family and tak- en to his house in Nolensville), Carl Ellis and Jack Prater, two of Coffey's most valued assistants, flew back to Nashville, Tennessee, a few weeks later.

Coffey said he made his decision after much thought. But he had a recruiting meeting with his staff on Wednesday and Thursday he dis- cussed the hiring of a defensive coach.

Last Thursday, he told Dr. Ernest Morgan, who had told Drusell newspaperman Dave Sparks he was quitting. At midnight, he told his children.

He must have worked most of Thursday night cleaning his office.

"When I came in early Friday morning, his desk was still a mess, his pressure under pressure created by himself. You only had to look as he boarded the airplane at the airport. He was not himself." A year ago, Coffey coached his team to the first winning (6-4) season at Tech in three years. He coached the winning team in the Blue-Grey game. He had apparently recruited well for two years. In other words, Charlie Coffey, a year ago, had everything going his way. Now, suddenly, it is over.

Why? What happened?

Of course, the opening loss to William & Mary was the first thing. Coffey had oversold his personnel, he had to commit himself under pressure. Then there was the larcade at Kentucky which further demoral- ized his team.

The defensive unit, at times the worst in the nation, completely lost confidence in the defensive men. And therefore the players lost confidence in themselves.

McKinney and the Defense
Tech finished 2-0 after what was expected to be Coffey's best season. It was beginning to be more than he could take because throughout his coaching career at Tennessee and at Kentucky, Coffey had not experienced that kind of adversity.

Another thing which hurt Coffey was that his close friend, defensive coordinator George McKin- ney, was transferred to Nashville. He had chosen to go to Coffey by the middle of the season. McKinney, it is understood, knew he would be cut out of coaching after this season long before the season began. And this feeling did not escape the defensive unit. They knew they were turned within the staff.

Coffey fired McKinney at the end of the sea- son, but McKinney wasn't coming back anyway. Then he hired Billy Clay away from South Carolina and named him personnel director for Coffey.

T he defensive players were excited about Clay's return. And, at first, Clay was getting the opposite of what he asked for. He was asked to go out and last long wanted. But after a few weeks, Clay decided to chuck his $25,000-a-year salary ($28,000 base, $5,000 for television) and re- turn to South Carolina.

There were reasons, many reasons. Clay de- tailed them to Coffey in a long conversation in a smaller room in which Coffey had never been before. Coffey thanked Clay for his honesty. Two days later, Charlie Coffey resigned.