



Rodney J. Ray

October 3, 1946 - July 30, 2020

Rodney J. Ray was born October 3, 1946 in McAlister, Oklahoma to J.B. Ray and Mary “Elizabeth” (Self) Ray. He passed from this life Thursday, July 30, 2020 in Owasso, Oklahoma at the age of 73 years. Rodney was raised and educated in Kiowa, Oklahoma and graduated with the Kiowa High School Class of 1964. After high school, he briefly attended classes at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma, but decided to enlist in the United States Army. Rodney served his country honorably in Vietnam, earning two purple heart medals and a bronze star medal. After returning from Vietnam, he married his first wife, Paula Sue (Adams) Ray and had two children, Russell and Robin. He graduated with a bachelor’s in Political Science from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma in 1971. Rodney later married Karen Sue (Hannah) Ray. He and Karen have made Owasso their home since 1985. Rodney spent most of his working life as the City Manager in Owasso for almost 30 years. He was a faithful and active member at Freedom Church in Owasso for the past 20 years. Rodney enjoyed a variety of pastimes such as tooling around in his GM convertible, gardening, trap shooting, and entertaining his grandkids and family.

Rodney was passionate about public service and was quick to share the Starfish Story, a story about changing the world one small step at a time, with anyone who had never heard of its lesson. The lesson was this: You might not be able to change the entire world, but you can change a small part of it, for someone. Rodney told the story in a thoughtful and meaningful way.

After graduating from Northeastern State University, Rodney joined Oklahoma Congressman Ed Edmondson's staff, where his career in public service and politics began. He later served as Oklahoma's Community Development Director before being named City Manager of Jenks in 1976. In 1982, Rodney was a candidate for Oklahoma Lieutenant Governor. His campaign slogan: "Ray is the Way for Oklahoma."

But Rodney's greatest professional achievement began in 1986, when he was named City Manager of Owasso. For nearly 30 years, he led Owasso's transformation from a small struggling town to the prosperous and burgeoning city it is today. He used his great understanding of the mechanics of government to secure funding for needed infrastructure and to attract the attention and investments of businesses.

The City of Owasso recently wrote: "Rodney focused his efforts, energy and vision on providing a solid foundation for public safety, basic infrastructure and fiscal stability for Owasso... Many of the philosophies and programs he started are still foundational today in setting Owasso apart from other Oklahoma cities and towns."

Those he leaves behind who hold many cherished memories include:

Wife;

Karen Ray, of Owasso

4 Children;

Russell Ray and wife Deborah, of Edmond

Robin Heath and husband Kevin, of Elbe, Washington

Heather Johnson and husband Brett, of Sand Springs

Chad Poston and wife Michelle, of Talala

12 Grandchildren;

Jacob, Daniel, Austin, Blake, Dylan, Makenzie, Presley, Ella, Matt, Amanda, Chase, and Noah

5 Great Grandchildren

3 Sisters;

Cynthia Schooley, of Tahlequah

Kathy Hewlett, of Tulsa

Mary Davis and husband Randy, of Tahlequah

Brother;

Jim Ray and wife Polly, of Kiowa

He was preceded in death by his parents, J.B. and Elizabeth, and his sister, Judy.

A memorial service will be held 10:00 a.m. Tuesday, August 4, 2020 at Freedom Church in Owasso with Pastor Andrew Rankin officiating. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial donations be made in Rodney's memory to Freedom Church, 9602 N. 177th E. Ave, Owasso, OK 74055 or Follower of One, P.O. Box 101, Owasso, OK 74055. The family also requests that masks be worn at the service. Arrangements and services were entrusted to Mowery Funeral Service.

Previous Events

LIVE STREAM SERVICE

AUG 4. 10:00 AM (CT)

Rodney Ray Live Stream
<http://www.freedom-church.com/live-stream/>

Service

AUG 4. 10:00 AM (CT)

Freedom Church
9602 North 177th East Avenue
Owasso, OK 74055

Memorial Fund

AUG 4 (CT)

Freedom Church
9602 North 177th East Avenue
Owasso, OK 74055

Memorial Fund

AUG 4 (CT)

Follower of One
P.O. Box 101
Owasso, OK 74055

Tribute Wall

TR

“ *Tanna. Marie. Russell sent a virtual gift in memory of Rodney Ray*



Tanna. Marie. Russell - May 12, 2025 at 06:53 PM

MS

“ *Rodney was a steadfast friend. His ideas and irrepressible spirit were always at work to make the lives of the citizens he served better. The opportunity to know and to work with Rodney is one I will always remember I am so very sorry for your loss and send my deepest condolences.*

M. Susan Savage

M Susan Savage - August 04, 2020 at 04:09 PM

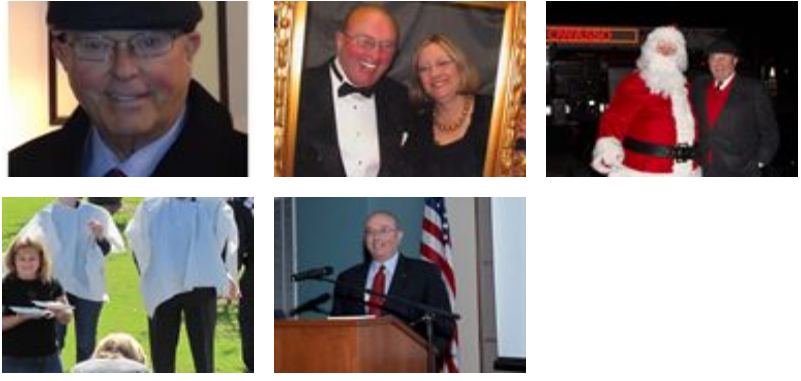
CR

“ *Rodney became a dear friend of our family while we were students at NSU. We shared many's meals and hours of conversation. Rodney served as a pallbearer at my husband's funeral service in 1973. My heart aches for this family. You will be in my prayers. God bless each of you.*

Carol Knight Rose - August 04, 2020 at 02:22 PM



“ 70 files added to the album Life Tributes



Mowery Funeral Service - August 04, 2020 at 09:27 AM



“ Deborah Nichols purchased the Florist Choice Bouquet for the family of Rodney J. Ray.



Deborah Nichols - August 03, 2020 at 03:54 PM



“ Wanda and Tony Schwarz purchased the Crystal Cross Bouquet for the family of Rodney J. Ray.



Wanda and Tony Schwarz - August 03, 2020 at 02:15 PM

BC

“ Prayers lifted up for the Ray family at this time of loss. Recall the opportunities to interact with Rodney when I was a staff member at First Baptist Church. Found him to heart for churches and their desire to be community involved with city plans.

Bill Caudle

Bill Caudle - August 02, 2020 at 02:56 PM

RE

“ I succeeded Rodney as City Manager of Jenks in 1981. Over the course of my early years at Jenks, Rodney would call me having heard from a friend about some undertow political matter in Jenks that had the potential to affect my tenure there. He would offer some advise on the matter in order to smooth things out. He was always right on point. As it happened he and I worked together for our sister cities until our retirements. Rodney did great work for Owasso, and he was an exceptional colleague.

—Randy Ewing

Randy Ewing - August 01, 2020 at 04:06 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Rodney J. Ray.



August 01, 2020 at 02:33 PM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray* was purchased for the family of Rodney J. Ray.



July 31, 2020 at 01:46 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* was purchased for the family of Rodney J. Ray.



July 31, 2020 at 12:04 PM



“ *RIP purchased the Emerald Garden Basket* for the family of Rodney J. Ray.



RIP - July 31, 2020 at 10:48 AM



“ *Austin and Betsy Kenyon purchased the Beautiful in Blue* for the family of Rodney J. Ray.



Austin and Betsy Kenyon - July 31, 2020 at 10:07 AM

JN

“ *John & Julie Nickel purchased the Fairest of All for the family of Rodney J. Ray.*



John & Julie Nickel - July 31, 2020 at 09:53 AM

GV

“ *Greenleaf Nursery VP's purchased the Sweet Tranquility Basket for the family of Rodney J. Ray.*



Greenleaf Nursery VP's - July 31, 2020 at 09:37 AM