



Mr. Billy Gene Ray

August 18, 1950 - September 10, 2025

Billy Gene Ray was born on August 18, 1950, in Palestine, Arkansas, to the late George Henry Ray and Theola Kimble Ray. One of six children, he accepted Christ at an early age at Shiloh C.M.E. Church in Palestine.

Raised on the family farm, Mr. Ray learned the value of diligence working alongside his father. He graduated from Palestine High School in 1970, employed by Warren Faupel even while in school. After graduation, he worked several years at Halstead Industries, Inc., before pursuing his passion for entrepreneurship. He enrolled in Little Rock Barber College and graduated in 1979.

Mr. Ray went on to own and operate one of the area's oldest and most respected Black-owned businesses, becoming the longest-serving barber in St. Francis County. A licensed master barber and hair stylist for forty-seven years, he was known for his precision, professionalism, and care for the community he served. His public service included years as an auxiliary sheriff's deputy and recognized contributions as a quorum court member and constable; he received honorary commendation from the St. Francis County Judge for his dedication. He also served as Justice of the Peace for District 3 from 2007 through 2020. Always fair and compassionate, he was seldom seen without a smile. He participated in job fairs and outreach with inmates at the Federal Correctional Institution, offering encouragement and practical

guidance.

Beyond the barbershop, Mr. Ray enjoyed acting—appearing in the 2017 film *The Grace of Jake*—as well as maintaining real estate, cutting his grass, and spending time with family. Charitable by nature, he quietly helped many as the Lord directed his steps. He was a devoted husband, a loving father and grandfather, a loyal friend and brother, and a servant-leader in his community.

He was united in marriage to Gloria Ann Vanzant, and together they shared more than thirty years of love.

Billy Gene Ray “fought a good fight” and peacefully ascended to his eternal rest on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at Baptist Memorial Hospital—Memphis. His legacy continues in his children and grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents; siblings Mary Lee Smith, Stanford Ray, and Frank Ray; and one stepson, Thurman Vanzant.

He leaves to cherish his memory his wife, Gloria Ann Vanzant Ray of Madison, Arkansas; his children: Darlene Slaughter of St. Louis, Missouri; Eddie Clinton, Sr., of Texas; Felica (Felix) Doby of Forrest City, Arkansas; Tamala (Robert, Sr.) Baldwin-Bell of Algonquin, Illinois; Christopher (Shawanda) Jones of Forrest City, Arkansas; Kevin (Jenime) Black of Grand Prairie, Texas; O’Neal (Samantha) Winfrey of Forrest City, Arkansas; April Prater of Forrest City, Arkansas; Felica Johnson of Jonesboro, Arkansas; Roshandra Ray of Forrest City, Arkansas; Natasha Kidd (Nathanael) Pendleton of Forrest City, Arkansas; Henrietta (Chris) Cross of Wynne, Arkansas; Patrick Jones of Forrest City, Arkansas; Armar Vanzant and Torrence McMurren, both of Saginaw, Michigan; a host of grandchildren and great-grandchildren; one brother, Willard “Bill” (Elizabeth) Ray of Palestine, Arkansas; one sister, Dimple Mae Brown of Forrest City, Arkansas; one sister-

in-law, Oretha Ray; one dear friend, Grant Long, Sr.; and a large circle of nieces, nephews, other relatives, and friends.

Faithful, industrious, and kind, Mr. Ray's life spoke for him. Those who knew him will remember his steady hands, generous heart, and unwavering commitment to family and community. May his memory be a blessing.

Cemetery Details

Gill Cemetery

7646 Arkansas 261
Palestine , AR 72372

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP **19**. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (CT)

Miles J. Kimble Mortuary & Cremation
1900 South Washington Street
Forrest City, AR 72335
(870) 633-1914
mjkimble@yahoo.com
<http://www.mjkmortuaryandcremation.com>

Service

SEP **20**. 11:00 AM (CT)

Greater Mount Moriah Missionary Baptist Church
4986 Highway 1 North
Caldwell , AR 72322

The family will line up at Ray's Barber & Style Shop, 311 Hill Ave, Forrest City, AR 72335, on the day of the service. Everyone is expected to be ready to leave by 10:30 AM.

Repast

SEP **20**. 2:00 PM (CT)

Madison Community Center
302 Dr Martin Luther King Street
Madison , AR 72359

Tribute Wall

AC

“ *Angela Crippen lit a candle in memory of Mr. Billy Gene Ray*



Angela Crippen - November 03, 2025 at 09:10 PM

SP

“ *Shurelle Parchman lit a candle in memory of Mr. Billy Gene Ray*



Shurelle parchman - September 23, 2025 at 11:31 AM

EG

“ *Sincere condolences 🌸 to the entire Ray Family. Billy was a dear friend of mine and my personal barber as well. He had such a joyous personality and was down to earth. He will truly be missed but never forgotten. May the LORD shower his family with his eternal love and everlasting peace and comfort during this hour! 🙏*
❤️🙏❤️✌️

Evangelist Michael K. Gray - September 20, 2025 at 11:25 PM

LW

“ Lee Williams sent a virtual gift in memory of Mr. Billy Gene Ray



Lee Williams - September 20, 2025 at 04:29 PM

ST

“ Ray family and friends, to Heartfelt condolences to you at this most difficult time. Praying that God wrap his arms around you all through this life journey. Continue to keep your faith and trust in God 🙏



Shirley Williams Thorn - September 19, 2025 at 03:31 PM

LH

“ Lovie A Hardrick sent a virtual gift in memory of Mr. Billy Gene Ray



Lovie A Hardrick - September 19, 2025 at 01:31 PM



“ Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Mr. Billy Gene Ray.



September 18, 2025 at 10:29 PM

RF

“ *Richard Boyd and family purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Mr. Billy Gene Ray.*



Richard Boyd and family - September 18, 2025 at 06:05 PM

LL

“ *My condolences to the family. My late husband and I were friend of Billy. We all grew up in Palestine, AR. May the peace and comfort of God be with the family.*

Lillie Lane - September 18, 2025 at 06:55 AM

WP

“ *Man this one here hurts. I've been knowing Mr Billy Ray since I was a snot nose kid. He gave me and my brother our first haircut and my nephew. My condolences to the Ray family!*

-Scooter

William Peacock - September 17, 2025 at 01:07 PM

TV

“ *Sending my condolences to Mr. Billy Ray's family 🙏💙👐*



Tamara Varnado - September 16, 2025 at 11:00 PM

JT

“ *Condolences To The Ray Family*

Jerry Thomas - September 15, 2025 at 09:52 PM

IM

“ *Irene Moore sent a virtual gift in memory of Mr. Billy Gene Ray*



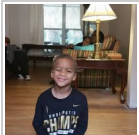
Irene moore - September 15, 2025 at 08:54 PM

LH

“ *Lovie A Hardrick sent a virtual gift in memory of Mr. Billy Gene Ray*



Lovie A Hardrick - September 14, 2025 at 02:42 PM



“ *My heart goes out for the loss of our relative, this devoted husband, this loving father/grandfather and much loved community leader. Our remembrance travels all the way back to our Beasley family connection in Palestine, Arkansas. When all is said and done we know God is able.*

Curtis L. Bradley - Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

Curtis Bradley - September 13, 2025 at 11:50 PM

PC

“ My condolences to you all. I pray God give you strength during this bereavement time. I love you all. God Bless 🙏



Patricia Curtis - September 13, 2025 at 01:59 PM

SC

“ SADDENED TO HEAR OF THE PASSING OF MR. RAY I ONLY HAD THE PLEASURE OF HIS COMPANY A FEW TIMES AND HE WAS ALWAYS A GENTLEMAN FRIENDLY AND WELCOMING ..GLORIA MY FRIEND PEACE FOE YOUR HEART IS MY PRAYER



SONA Carruth - September 12, 2025 at 09:29 PM

HT

I want to give my condolences to the family and friends , I met brother Ray when he were working at Halstead , later he became a barber , he cut my hair when it were black and he continue to cut it when it turned gray , he has cut my hair close to 40 years. I will miss my friend , take your rest Billy J. Ray .

Henry Thompson - September 13, 2025 at 08:13 AM

CM

“ Clarence E Moses lit a candle in memory of Mr. Billy Gene Ray



Clarence E Moses - September 12, 2025 at 03:44 PM

CM

*My condolences to the family.
Praying for strength thru this sad time.*

Clarence E Moses - September 12, 2025 at 03:49 PM

VC

“ *To Gloria and the family of Billy Ray, I send prayers that God will be the comforter in this time and time after everyone has gone. Know that his spirit is always close by so speak to him and feel him when he comes to comfort you.
Love you sister/ cousin for always.
Jenni*

Vanessa Cooper - September 12, 2025 at 02:48 PM



“ *Billy I cherish your memory in the Barber you were for me during my stay in Forrest City, Arkansas.
"Gone But Never Forgotten"
Rest On In Love In Paradise till we meet again*



Claudette Lamar - September 12, 2025 at 02:13 PM

TN

“ *Momma Glo and the entire family, please accept my sincerest condolences. You all are in my thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.*



Tricia L. Neal - September 12, 2025 at 11:03 AM

Robert Mapson

“ You gave us some good times in fc ARK R.
I.L. MR. RAY



Robert Mapson - September 12, 2025 at 09:20 AM

RG

“ Rest with God Billy, you was my barber and
friend for many years prayer 🙏 to the family



Ricky Green - September 12, 2025 at 02:39 AM

AN

“ Ange lit a candle in memory of Mr. Billy Gene
Ray



Ange - September 11, 2025 at 10:20 PM

KL

“ Katherine Lyons sent a virtual gift in memory of
Mr. Billy Gene Ray



Katherine Lyons - September 11, 2025 at 09:59 PM

AW

God be the glory hallelujah.

Author B Witherspoon - September 12, 2025 at 02:04 AM

JW

“ *Praying for the family*



Jackie White - September 11, 2025 at 09:16 PM

DS

“ *IN MEMORY OF HIS DAD. EDDIE CLINTON SR. SENDS HIS CONDOLENCES. PRAYING FOR THE FAMILY.*



DIANNE SHINE - September 11, 2025 at 08:16 PM

DJ

My deepest and sincere condolences to the Ray family

Darlene Johnson - September 11, 2025 at 08:59 PM

TS

“ *My Sincere Condolences to His Family* 🙏



Tammy Hudson Staggs - September 11, 2025 at 08:15 PM

AE

“ Condolences extended and Billy cut my hair for years when I was a teenager. Additionally, our families attended the same church for a while. Definitely praying with you. Alex Easter

Alexis Easter - September 11, 2025 at 08:06 PM

DF

“ Debra Hargraves Ford lit a candle in memory of Mr. Billy Gene Ray



Debra Hargraves Ford - September 11, 2025 at 08:02 PM

CW

“ Carolyn Williams lit a candle in memory of Mr. Billy Gene Ray



Carolyn Williams - September 11, 2025 at 07:41 PM

CW

RIP YOU WILL BE TRULY MISSED!

Carolyn Williams - September 11, 2025 at 07:43 PM

DA

“ Della Allen lit a candle in memory of Mr. Billy Gene Ray



Della Allen - September 11, 2025 at 07:02 PM

NW

“ My condolences to the family. Many memories in that shop. Rest on Mr. Ray.

Niyosha Williams - September 11, 2025 at 07:00 PM



“ Pops we just was on the phone talking about how important family is thanks you so much for accepting me in and showing me some love.

We was by your side the whole step of the way. We love you

Shawanda Sparkman - September 11, 2025 at 06:44 PM

SR

“ Shekita Carter Rogers lit a candle in memory of Mr. Billy Gene Ray



Shekita Carter Rogers - September 11, 2025 at 06:07 PM

CC

“ Sending my deepest condolences to the Ray family on your loss. Billy Ray was a great barber, friend, and down to earth man. You could get all the info at "Ray's Barber Shop". His children was his pride, and joy. May God give the family strength, and guidance during this homegoing celebration. Until we meet again "Ray".. Your boy "Chat"



Christopher Chatters, and family

Christopher Chatters - September 11, 2025 at 05:56 PM

MG

“ *Marva Garrett lit a candle in memory of Mr. Billy Gene Ray*



Marva Garrett - September 11, 2025 at 05:47 PM

PG

“ *Patricia Winfrey Gregory lit a candle in memory of Mr. Billy Gene Ray*



Patricia Winfrey Gregory - September 11, 2025 at 05:46 PM

BJ

“ *Bobbie Jones lit a candle in memory of Mr. Billy Gene Ray*



Bobbie Jones - September 11, 2025 at 05:36 PM

DW

“ *Deborah Washington lit a candle in memory of Mr. Billy Gene Ray*



Deborah Washington - September 11, 2025 at 05:29 PM

PW

“ *Peggy Robinson Wright lit a candle in memory of Mr. Billy Gene Ray*



Peggy Robinson Wright - September 11, 2025 at 05:27 PM

PA

“ *We pray for the entire Ray family, Ms Gloria we are asking God to grant strength during this difficult time.*
Lincoln & Paulette Taylor



Paulette - September 11, 2025 at 05:18 PM

BS

Many Prayers for the entire family of Billy Gene Ray. The #1 Barber Shop filled with laughter the moment that you entered. We asked God to give strength to the family during this difficult time .

Barbara Ann Smith - September 11, 2025 at 07:20 PM

MT

He was a wonderful man and barber always listen and sharing his thoughts you will truly be missed Ray. Mary Tate

mary tate - September 12, 2025 at 11:49 AM

CL

Condolences to the Ray family. Our family the Smith's grew up in the neighborhood together. I have been in Texas for years now, but when ever visiting home I would always stop in to say hi.

Charles Etta Smith Lumpkin - September 12, 2025 at 10:10 PM