

Guestbook

It is with a heavy heart that we share that Robert D. Ray passed away July 8, 2018. Governor Ray proudly served as Iowa's 38th governor and, later in his career, as the 11th president of Drake University, from April 1998 to May 1999. He received his B.A. in business from Drake in 1952, and his juris doctorate from Drake Law School in 1954.



Governor Ray is survived by his beloved wife, Billie, three daughters and eight grandchildren.

Do you have a story to share about Governor Ray? We'd love to hear it.

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74 entries.



wrote on 2018-07-09 at 16:09

My late husband George and I had an acquaintance with Robert Ray that spanned over many years. I first met him in 1963 when he was elected Iowa Republican State Chairman and I was just named Lyon County Vice- Chairperson. We both guided our constituencies through the 1964 General Election when there were heavy losses statewide in the Goldwater presidential campaign. Only two counties in the state, Lyon and Sioux, saw winning tallies for Goldwater. "Bob" went on to run for Governor and I continued to serve my county supporting Republican candidates for statewide and national office until 1972. By this time my husband became active in city offices and traveled to Des Moines to accept a certificate of award on behalf of the city. As he took the stage to accept the award, George said, under the applause, "Betty says "hello", to which Bob replied, "Tell Betty hello". His recollection of people and events was uncanny. In 2005 when he became the only governor or former governor to receive Iowa's highest honor, the Iowa Award I sent him a note of congratulations. In the past such a gesture would evoke a hand written note from Bob, so you can imagine my surprise when the phone rang one day and he was on the other end thanking me for my note. Again I was impressed with his gracious manner. He asked about my husband George and our family and we chatted for a few moments about events we had participated in. As I look at his biography and the extensive list of public service groups he was a part of, I am impressed as many Iowans must be by the dedication to service Robert D. Ray gave to his family, community and state. May his wife Billie and their family be comforted as they mourn the

passing of a man who in his quiet manner walked as a giant among us. Blessed be his memory.



wrote on 2018-07-09 at 16:00

The Iowa World Language Association was having its annual meeting in Des Moines and Governor Ray was invited to welcome the group. The next morning there was a message on my answering machine asking me to call him. When I did, he thanked me for having asked him to speak! What a gentleman!!



wrote on 2018-07-09 at 15:16

It was an honor to work along side Governor Ray the year he served as Drake's President. We received many calls for him during that year. One that I picked up was from THE WHITE HOUSE - President George W Bush. I nearly dropped the phone. What I also learned from him was about good communication and how special his handwritten notes were to people, and I received one of those which I will treasure. Besides the work of the day, our office loved it when he was hungry for ice cream (his favorite) so we could sneak a few minutes to go get some. Billie Ray was also awesome to work with on anything we needed. Thank you Billie.



wrote on 2018-07-09 at 14:34

It was 1992 and Governor Ray was hosting a party on the top floor of the Ruan building. My job was very simple, walk around and offer a canapé to the guests. As I made my rounds, I came face-to-face with Governor Ray and, as I was "the help," I wasn't going to speak. He looked right at me, smiled warmly and asked, "How are you doing tonight?" I smiled and said, "I'm doing very well, Governor Ray. Thank you very much, and yourself?" He said he was doing fine. Then he looked at me again and said, "I think it's a nice party." I smiled and said, "It most certainly is, Governor Ray. You've done very well." He smiled, I smiled and walked on. I was the help, but that didn't matter to him. I was a PERSON, and he felt it necessary to say hello. I was a child when he was governor, but I have never, ever heard one person, Republican or Democrat, say one word against Governor Ray. When the Vietnamese refugees came to the Iowa, I remember meeting two of them and having dinner with them and playing Yahtzee at my Aunt Shirley's kitchen

table. Later that night, we all sat and ate dinner together. I even remember their names, Kit and Nu. Governor Ray forged friendships in every life that he touched, and he touched millions! .He was truly a man whom ALL politicians and all people in general should strive to emulate! God bless you, Governor Ray!



wrote on 2018-07-09 at 14:17

In the early 1960s, Robert Ray was my mom's lawyer. He helped us through a trying and stressful time. We saw him years later in Winterset. Of course he remembered my mom, but surprisingly he remembered me too. "Well didn't she grow up to be a lovely young lady!" He was a classy guy all the way around!



wrote on 2018-07-09 at 13:37

In 1980 I was a state 4-H Officer and a freshman in college. On Thanksgiving Day the Rays invited the 4-H officers and some senior citizens to Terrace Hill for a Thanksgiving dinner in the formal dining room. The officers, that had cars, were asked to pick up the senior citizens. I don't recall how the senior citizens were chosen, but they were all living by themselves and as I picked them up they weren't living in ideal conditions. We had a wonderful meal with the Rays and our wise elders. After dinner the Rays invited all of us up to the private quarters where we continued our conversations. Governor and Mrs. Ray were so attentive and welcoming to everyone. As a young person that was still developing I know that Governor Ray had an influence on how I behave today. I try to be a gentleman and to approach conversations with civility and respect. We lost a great Iowan. But we will never lose the memories.



Lonnie C. Appleby wrote on 2018-07-09 at 13:31

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wrote on 2018-07-09 at 12:47

I am very sorry about the lost he helped my mother to passed the law on Indian burial



wrote on 2018-07-09 at 11:40

Stories about Bob Ray personally helping people are nearly endless. JoAnn Nelson, my future wife, was on Governor Ray's statehouse staff for 6 years. Once she casually mentioned that she would be moving to a new apartment over the weekend. Governor Ray recruited other staff members with himself to help her move. it's the kind of thing that inspired overwhelming loyalty from his staff.



wrote on 2018-07-09 at 10:59

I was new to Iowa, and stood next to Robert and his wife at a function. He was very cordial, and we small talked for a bit. Later that day, I was introduced to him as the former Governor. I did not know the man I previously conversed with was such a powerhouse. He was one of my first impressions of Iowa, and it was a fitting one, for he was very gracious. I would meet him many times throughout the years, and he was always friendly and humble. I know why he was re-elected so many times. A true gentleman in every sense of the word. God speed, dear sir.



wrote on 2018-07-09 at 10:21

Wouldn't it be great if today's politicians try to emulate a civil politician like Bob Ray. What a good man we just lost



wrote on 2018-07-09 at 10:20

My second job after college graduation was working for The Governors Office for Planning and Programing, Bob Tyson was Director. This was in the days when the governor ran every two years for election. The Governor lived in old Mansion, prior to Terrace Hill. The office was a great group of politically astute operatives and who were devoted to the governor. I worked in Health planning and that got me started on my career and healthcare policy. I owe a debt of gratitude to the Governors Office for Planning and Programing for getting me started In a very satisfying career in health policy. I also met my first husband there who worked in the Governors Highway Safety program. Dana Brown Petrowsky Ward



wrote on 2018-07-09 at 10:15

I remember playing church league softball with Bob when he was State GOP Chairman. I was the manager/shortstop and he was the pitcher--and a very good one, too. Later my kids benefitted from going to school with SE Asian children whose families Bob welcomed to Iowa. In recent years I have had the privilege of teaching for the Ray Society. He was a great gentleman, competitor, and governor. He is greatly missed in our current political environment.



wrote on 2018-07-09 at 10:08

When I was a Freshman to be at Drake I played slow pitch softball for the University Christian Churh team & our pitcher for every game was this "older" guy Bob Ray. He was a strong leader & just loved striking out at least one batter a game. If you know slow pitch softball that is a major accomplishment for any pitcher! He was a great team mate.

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