



Hal George Gray

July 6, 1926 - February 8, 2019

Hal G. Gray released life on February 8, 2019.

Hal was born July 6, 1926 on his grandmother's farm one mile north and one mile west of Windfall, Tipton County, Indiana. He was the son of James L. and Fern Mitchell Gray. His family moved to Tipton when he was 9 months old. He graduated from Tipton High School with the Class of 1944.

He started working at age 11 when he had a paper route and washed windows for downtown stores on Saturday. During his high school years he worked one summer for the Continental Can Company in Elwood, two summers on a farm and after graduation for the Perfect Circle Piston Ring Company. He often related, in an amusing way, that he wondered how many planes crashed during WW II because of the rings that he turned out on his lathe. He often imagined that just before the plane hit the water the pilot said "Damn the guy that made these rings."

He was inducted into the army in 1944 and had basic training in Camp Fannin near Tyler, Texas. He served with the 36th Infantry Division in central and southern Germany and later transferred to the 771st Tank Battalion. He was discharged in 1946 and worked a few months at the ALCOA factory in Lafayette, Indiana.

He earned his Bachelor's Degree from the Jordan Conservatory of Music in Indianapolis in 1950 and his Master Of Music Degree in 1955 from the Butler University School of Music. He spent a year at Wabash College as Chapel Organist and accompanist for the Wabash Glee Club. He often said "I didn't make much money but oh what a wonderful year that was." After his Wabash experience he was employed for two years in Frankfort, Indiana as a clerk in the Westbound Yard Office for the old Nickel Plate Railroad. He enjoyed the excitement of watching the trains arrive and depart the yard. The trains were all steam at that time.

In 1952 he came to Rensselaer and taught music in the public schools for 35 years and at the same time worked in the City Parks and served as organist for the First Christian Church of Rensselaer for 28 years. He retired from teaching in 1986 and then took the position as Superintendent of the Rensselaer Park Department and did retire in 1991.

He was a member of the First Christian Church of Rensselaer and held many posts during his long association. He was especially pleased when the congregation voted him the honor of being an "Elder Emeritus." He was also a seventy year member of the Masonic Clinton Lodge No. 54 in Frankfort, Indiana.

On August 20, 1955, he married Marcia Parkison in her parent's farm home in Gilliam Township, Jasper County, Indiana. Marcia passed away on October 19, 2015. They celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on August 20, 2015 when the family was here for their summer reunion.

He was preceded in death by his wife, a sister, Eileen Gray Higgins of Tipton Indiana and a brother John T. Gray of Tampa, Florida and a nephew, Robert Higgins of Noblesville. Surviving him is a daughter, Eileen Ann (James) Phegley of Rensselaer and a son, Kenton (Mary Ellen) Gray of Winthrop, Massachusetts. He was blessed with five grandchildren, Patrick, Cory and

Shannon Dowds and Sean and Michael Gray. He is also survived by a nephew, Hal Gray Higgins of Peona, Arizona. He has two great grandchildren, Callie Gray and Madden James and was so pleased to have her middle name in his honor. He often admitted that they were the most beautiful children. ·

He and Marcia often visited their son in Winthrop, Massachusetts (in the Boston area.) Their son lives just a block from the Atlantic Ocean and they loved visiting the beach and watching the waves roll in and the gulls flying all about. They decided that in their next life they would come back as beachcombers so Hal's family now surmises that he has now jointed Marcia on Winthrop Beach.

He had many hobbies. Among them was painting with water colors, photography and had a dark room set up in his home. He loved classic automobiles of the 1930's and 40's and assembled model kits of over 70 of these cars. He also fed the birds, squirrels and rabbits for sixty years enjoying identifying them as they fed in his yard. He was always pleased when a new species would arrive at his feeder.

Hal so loved Rensselaer and enjoyed his life here with his family and friends. According to Hal's wishes there will be no services at this time. A Celebration of Life will be planned for a later date.

Tribute Wall

KS

“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



Koji SUZUKI - February 23, 2021 at 11:55 PM

KS

“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



Koji SUZUKI - February 23, 2021 at 11:54 PM

KS

“Forty years ago, I was an exchange student from Japan at Purdue University. Mr. Gray’s son Kent, who lived in the same dormitory as I, was my best American friend. He kindly invited me to stay with his family in Rensselaer in Indiana during the winter break. Mr. Gray gave me a word-game SCRABBLE as a Christmas present. He was always very kind to me, so was his wife. I had a great time, surrounded by warm-hearted people.

After coming back to Japan, I began to teach English at high school. I taught at several different schools. Regrettably, I lost my address book somewhere when I moved. I have occasionally searched for Kent Gray since the Internet became popular. Today I happened to find Kent’s father’s obituary. I’d like to contact Kent. Could anyone tell me Kenton Gray’s address? I’d really appreciate it. Koji Suzuki

My address: Momomidai 3-8-406, Koriyama, FUKUSHIMA 963-8018 JAPAN

Koji SUZUKI - February 23, 2021 at 11:53 PM



Hey Koji, long tim old friend! I live in Boston now.

James Gray - February 25, 2021 at 02:14 PM

SS

“I thought of Hal while sitting in my car at the park listening to music during the Coronavirus outbreak and am sad to find that he recently passed. Listening to a variety of music, as I am doing now, still always makes me think of Hal and elementary school. He had such wonderful presence and patience as he taught restless kids to understand and appreciate music. So many of us were lucky to have him as a teacher a mentor. Condolences to Eileen and Kenton.

Susan (Hoover) Santcoeur - April 22, 2020 at 08:33 PM

CO

“ Hal Gray you will be missed but never forgotten. You made us all strive to seek out higher potential when we couldn't find it in ourselves. Wee singers and candy bars thrown in a circle on the gymnasium floor are some of my fondest memories. Many thanks for all the lives you positively impacted.

Cindy Overmyer - February 27, 2019 at 06:03 PM

LH

“ Linda Hughes lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray

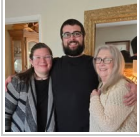


Linda Hughes - February 17, 2019 at 02:46 PM

SD

“ Thank you Mr. Gray for teaching us all how fun music can be. I've been blessed in this community with some wonderful music teachers. I can't imagine my life without singing. I'll continue to carry the music torch and do my best representing the team in good ol' Rensselaer. God Blessed your piano hands, music mind, and love for your profession. And sharing those blessings with us will always be remembered. ❤️🎵❤️

Stephanie Schaltenbrand Davisson - February 14, 2019 at 10:35 PM



“ We have many wonderful memories of both Hal and his lovely wife. We were married at First Christian Church and raised our children there. We shared many lovely Church moments throughout the years. Also, Denny's summer job when he was in High School was with the City Park working for Hal. He enjoyed their conversations and lunch breaks together. Denny says he learned a lot listening to him. He certainly was respected and will be missed by so many.



Pamela Saylor - February 13, 2019 at 04:19 PM

AH

“ Anita Ramey Hladish lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray



Anita Ramey Hladish - February 13, 2019 at 03:38 PM

TD

“ I spent mAny times in the kitchen with Hal and Marcia, talking, drinking tea and feeling loved. Thanks for sharing your parents with all of us Eileen and James....and God, thank you for putting them in my life's path. Much love, " Moosie"

Tanny Dawson - February 13, 2019 at 07:52 AM

TD

“ *Tanny Dawson lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray*



Tanny Dawson - February 13, 2019 at 07:49 AM

EG

“ *What a wonderful teacher! Couldn't wait for music class.*

An summers at the park with Mr. Gray was so wonderful. Always whistling an always saying hello to everyone!!

He will be missed, but is at the beach now with his beloved wife .. what an amazing life!

RIP MR. Gray! ❤️❤️❤️🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵



Elaine Gembala - February 13, 2019 at 01:50 AM

MR

“ *From a young age I remember Hal & Marcia as wonderful, like-family folks. I remember Hal's pipe, his pleasant and friendly manner. What a wonderful impact Hal had on students and his community all those years!*

Max Rodibaugh - February 12, 2019 at 10:44 PM

NS

“ I respected Hal and Marsha so much,, Most beautiful couple that was God Loving Couple..Hal was my music teacher back in the 50s,, Marsha was my 1st grade teacher, They gained a lot of children that loved them both and RESPECTED THEM BOTH ! God has gained two wonderful people with love of God in their hearts...I say this for Both even though it is Hal that passed on to God at this time,, Now they are both together in the arms of God,, Both will be missed in Our Community and Christian Church.. God Bless them and their families...From Norma "Sugar" Schultz

Norma Schultz - February 12, 2019 at 02:16 PM

HB

“ Hal touched the lives of many through music and his sense of humor. He was indeed a rare gem in today's world. Though he will be missed greatly, may you find comfort in the amazing life he lived. Keeping you in our thoughts and prayers. Bob & Heidi

Heidi & Bob - February 12, 2019 at 01:08 PM

CA

“ Chris Arihood lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray



Chris Arihood - February 12, 2019 at 12:19 PM

CA

Mr. Gray - Inspired so many to sing loud and be proud! What a great man !

Chris Arihood - February 12, 2019 at 12:25 PM

ML

“ *Martha Langley lit a candle in memory of Hal
George Gray*



Martha Langley - February 11, 2019 at 06:42 PM

RS

“ I have SO many wonderful memories of Hal and Marcia and continue to look back on them with great fondness even after moving away 50 years ago. The mark that Hal made in my life was indelible. It was "Mr. Gray" who was initially responsible for instilling in me the love of music that I've carried within me throughout my life. When I was in the 3rd grade, Marcia and then Hal, together with my mother, began writing all my scripts as I began performing my ventriloquism act with my dummy, Jerry, and did so for a number of years.

I remember singing in his group, The Wee Singers. What a thrill it was when we were invited to sing for President Eisenhower on the courthouse lawn on "Charlie Halleck Day". For a little kid, it was pretty special shaking the president's hand. Thank you Hal for this memory too!

I would go on to work for Hal in high school as a lifeguard when he managed the pool during the summers. These are but a very few of the countless memories of a great man and of a special time growing up in Rensselaer.

I try to make it back to Rensselaer for my high school reunions. In 2008, at our 40th, when the alumni banquet and reunions were still held at St. Joe, I happened to notice Hal and Marcia during dinner sitting across the room. After dinner, I made my way over to them and asked, "Mr. Gray, do you remember me?" He looked at me for a minute and said, "No, but I sure remember your dummy!" We had a good laugh and spent some time reminiscing.

Hal, thank you for the input you placed into my life. It has served me well and I will continue to carry it with me throughout the rest of my days. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." You're in our prayers Eileen.

Polly Wolly Doodle All the Day Hal!

Robin Sells



Robin Sells - February 11, 2019 at 01:51 PM



“ *Raquel Wicker lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray*



Raquel Wicker - February 11, 2019 at 01:11 PM



Mr Gray, you were my favorite music teacher at Van Elementary. You were such a sweet man, many you RIP. Prayers to your family.

Raquel Wicker - February 11, 2019 at 01:14 PM

JH

Mr. Gray will be missed by many children he taught in school

judy hammond - February 11, 2019 at 06:50 PM

MM

“ *Hal Gray provided some of my best memories as a child. To this day, I sing songs from grade school and teach them to my kids. Well done, Hal Gray, and "Sing a Rainbow" for eternity.*

Mike Moon - February 10, 2019 at 07:23 PM

MC

“ *Such a wonderful man who taught us some of the best songs as kids. I still remember at the end of class how he would let us bring in a vinyl record and he would play one song from it for the class to hear. I think I brought in the Michael Jackson Thriller album in 4th grade. He is the reason for my love of music today. He will certainly be missed in all of our hearts. <3 Thoughts and prayers to his family and to all of the lives he touched in some way.*

Melanie Callahan - February 10, 2019 at 06:06 PM

JO

“ *Janice Odom lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray*



Janice Odom - February 10, 2019 at 04:55 PM

GW

“ *Gayla Warran lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray*



Gayla Warran - February 10, 2019 at 09:59 AM



“ *Mr. Gray brought music into my life and it remains today because of him. A few years ago, I played a Sunday service in Rensselaer. Afterwards he came up to me, thanked me and said he had no idea I could play "like that." I told him it was because of he introduced me to the fun of music at such an early age. He said, "Keep playing always!" Ironically, and sadly, this past week I was playing and thought about how it was time to play again and that it would make him smile. A few days later, he was gone. He captured our hearts and it remained that way. He will be missed.*



Teresa Snyder Rishel - February 10, 2019 at 09:25 AM

JZ

My family has been a part of The First Christian church for many years Mr Gray fill

jane zebendon - February 10, 2019 at 09:51 AM

JZ

Mr Gray filled the sanctuary with wonderful music. He will be missed. Rest In Peace Mr Gray.

jane zebendon - February 10, 2019 at 09:55 AM

MS

“ *His legacy will live on as we sing the songs he taught us to our children and grandchildren. We will all carry a piece of Mr. Gray in our hearts. Prayers for peace and comfort.*

Michele Ever Sanfilippo - February 10, 2019 at 08:26 AM

JR

“ *Your dad was a wonderful teacher. I loved every minute of his classes and Christmas program prep at your house. His presence will certainly be missed in Rensselaer.*

Condolences to you and your families.



JoAnn Hooker Reese - February 10, 2019 at 07:44 AM



“ *Great man!! Great memories of music class at Van Rensselaer!!*



Jon Wilkin - February 10, 2019 at 04:03 AM

Nancy
Pettet-
Dunlap

“ *Hal would hand write letters to Cole all of the time...They had very special bond.... Cole will treasure those forever. Hal had a lot of stories to tell him....So cherished...He was a very special man in all of our lives. Our thoughts and prayers are with you...
Charlie & Nancy Dunlap Jr
Cole and Avery*

Nancy Pettet- Dunlap - February 10, 2019 at 02:12 AM

Alison
Hickman

“ Hal Gray shared more than just his love of music in his class. He made everyone feel special. Everyone loved him in return. He was an amazing man and an awesome teacher. His music will live on in the hearts of his many students. ❤️



Alison Hickman - February 09, 2019 at 10:45 PM

TL

“ Tina Mitchell Lemmons lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray



Tina Mitchell Lemmons - February 09, 2019 at 10:31 PM

DS

“ A wonderful man !! Love to go to music class . Will be missed by many.. RIP Mr. Gray!! ❤️

Donna sullivan - February 09, 2019 at 10:18 PM

DW

“ Don And Gloria Waymooth lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray



Don and Gloria Waymooth - February 09, 2019 at 09:45 PM

RR

“ *Lazy Bones sleeping in the shade, "How you going get your cornmeal made?" I hope you rest easy, Mr. Gray!*

Randee Strader Rustin - February 09, 2019 at 07:54 PM

Kristen
Amsler

“ *His music and memory will remain with me and my children for years to come. ❤️*



Kristen Amsler - February 09, 2019 at 07:21 PM

PB

“ *I loved music class. Hal always did a wonderful job playing the piano and organ at church.*



Paula (Minter) Bull - February 09, 2019 at 07:20 PM

AK

From Wee Singers in 2cd grade through my entire musical experience in Rensselaer, Mr. Gray was always present in some capacity. All of those who were touched by him were truly blessed. Ann Blacker Kirschner

Ann Kirschner - February 09, 2019 at 09:51 PM

DH

“ *Debbie Herod lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray*



Debbie Herod - February 09, 2019 at 07:06 PM

MT

“ *Missy Tiede lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray*



Missy Tiede - February 09, 2019 at 06:46 PM

CS

“ *Cindy Sheffer lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray*



Cindy Sheffer - February 09, 2019 at 06:19 PM

BW

“ *We couldn't wait for music at Van Rensselaer. He was an inspiration to many people. He will be missed by us all.*



Bob Weems - February 09, 2019 at 06:11 PM

RL

“ *Ron And Marlene Lashbrook lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray*



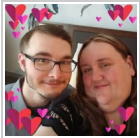
Ron and Marlene Lashbrook - February 09, 2019 at 05:34 PM

CM

“ *Chuck And Jackie Malchow lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray*



Chuck and Jackie Malchow - February 09, 2019 at 05:02 PM



“ *Amber Rising lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray*



Amber Rising - February 09, 2019 at 04:52 PM

RP

“ *You have my deepest sympathy!! Students were always so anxious to go to his music class, and he seemed able to make each one feel special. He enriched all of our lives in many ways. Chris so enjoyed time in their home with Kenton. Prayers for all of you.*

Ruth Paulsen - February 09, 2019 at 04:12 PM

JB

“ *Judy Burvan lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray*



Judy Burvan - February 09, 2019 at 04:01 PM

JB

It's a sad day for Rensselaer. Rest In Peace Mr. Gray! 😞

Judy Burvan - February 09, 2019 at 04:09 PM

BJ

“ *Beth Jackson lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray*



beth jackson - February 09, 2019 at 03:51 PM

JM

“ *Mr. & Mrs. Gray were both teachers of mine. They were the kindest and most caring couple I knew. My friend Sally and I had tea at their house and such a nice visit after our 50th year graduation had passed. His smile and friendliness will be missed. It was always a joy to see him at the grocery when he called me by my name. It is a comfort and a blessing to know they are together again.*



Judi Manns - February 09, 2019 at 03:40 PM

JM

“ Jerry Miller lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray



Jerry miller - February 09, 2019 at 03:22 PM

CK

“ Hal lived an exemplary life. He served his Country, served his Community, and served his Fellowman. He made each one of his students a better person. Such a wonderful legacy. Love to you Eileen and James

Carole Kolodziej - February 09, 2019 at 03:13 PM

SS

“ So many wonderful memories...Thank you Mr Gray.. You will be missed by so very many lives that you touched! Including mine..

Shiela Scott - February 09, 2019 at 02:24 PM

LM

“ Wonderful man and the best teacher. I can still picture him pounding out notes on the school piano and working hard to encourage us all to love music. Prayers for his family and all who love him.



Linda McGilliard - February 09, 2019 at 02:01 PM

KA

“ *Ken And Carla Anderson lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray*



Ken and Carla Anderson - February 09, 2019 at 01:25 PM

KA

Mr. Gray was the nicest person . He was my music teacher and I have fond memories of Wee Singers.

Ken and Carla Anderson - February 09, 2019 at 01:28 PM



“ *Marilyn Lowry lit a candle in memory of Hal George Gray*



Marilyn Lowry - February 09, 2019 at 12:49 PM