

Ralph Willis Gray was born May 1, 1931 to Holden Harold Gray and Clara Bertha (Ketelhut) Gray at Chamberlain, SD. He attended school in Kimball, SD and graduated from Kimball High School in 1950. Ralph was a very proud Kimball Kiote and was known to wear green to the games against the Chamberlain Cubs to show his strong allegiance to Kimball's school colors! He played sports while at Kimball High School, including football, basketball and track and he also played Valve Trombone in the Kimball High School Band. He loved music and made a few memorable trips to Branson, MO later in his life, enjoying the musical entertainment there.

After moving numerous times around the Bijou Hills, Ola and Kimball area throughout Ralph's childhood, the family eventually settled in 1945 on the Henry Nelson homestead, located south of Ola (aka, the Clara and Harold Gray home, and in 1998, the Kelli and Mike Stofferahn home). From 1946-1950, Ralph lived in Kimball with his Aunt Minnie and Uncle Erv Fascher during the school week and he went back to the family farm south of Ola on weekends. Ralph recalled driving a 1938 4-door Plymouth car with a dent in the side during these high school years. Harold, Ralph's dad, is said to have bought the car for Ralph from Andy Pflaum in Lane, SD. After Ralph's high school graduation from Kimball, SD in 1950, he worked again on his family's farm until January, 1953 when he was drafted into the U.S. Army. Ralph served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War era from 1953-1955. He was stationed at Camp Chaffee, AR, then Ft. Polk, LA and lastly at Ft. Campbell, KY with the 560th Field Artillery Battalion as an ammunition supply specialist. Upon his honorable discharge, Ralph moved back to help his dad, Harold, on the family farm in 1955. In 1959, Ralph and Harold bought Earl Howard's home place and farmland together near Ola, SD. This is where Ralph farmed, where he raised his family and where he lived in contentment for over 64 years, up until his death. Ralph was very proud of the fact that he was able to live independently at home for the vast majority of his blessed life.

On March 8, 1959, Ralph was united in marriage to Nolaine Drew. To this union, four children were welcomed: Bret, Kyle, Kelli, and Nicole. Ralph loved his family, his dear friends, and the Lord. He kept a Bible next to his chair and prayed daily for those he loved. Ralph was witty and his mind was still strong, but his body had grown weak after illness in just the last few weeks of his life. He was very grateful for all those that sent cards, called, and visited him.

Ralph was baptized and confirmed in Kimball, SD and he was a member of the St. Olaf Lutheran Church at Ola, SD for over 75 years, serving on many church boards and committees over the years. Ralph was a member of the American Legion and was involved in the Color Guard. He enjoyed bowling for many years on weekly leagues at the Chamberlain Bowling Dome and competed in bowling tournaments, including in Tulsa and Reno in the 1990's. He also enjoyed golfing, fishing, hunting, and watching all kinds of sports. Ralph never met a stranger. One of his greatest joys was to "visit" and to ask "where ya from?". Ralph could easily make a genuine connection and build a quick, yet lasting relationship with those around him.

Ralph was surrounded by his family when he passed away to be with his loving Lord and Savior on September 20, 2023, at Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls, SD at the age of 92 years.

Gratefully sharing his life are his four children, Bret (Sherie) Gray of Casper, WY, Kyle (Cheryl) Gray of Rapid City, SD, Kelli (Dave) Muck of Rockerville, SD and Nikki (Joel) Hardin of Aberdeen, SD. Ralph was very proud of each of his grandchildren; Jerad Gray, Ryan Gray, Holden Gray, Brandon Balch, Ashley Balch, Haylee Hardin, Paige (Caleb) Uher, Porter Muck and Piper Muck. He is also survived by one sister, Ruth Ellen (Gray) Hloucha of Chamberlain, SD.

Preceding him in death were his parents, his son-in-law, Michael Stofferahn, and his brother-in-law, Raymond Hloucha.



In Loving Memory of

Ralph Willis Gray

1931 - 2023



My Farmer Father

My father was a farmer.
His heart was in the soil
It's there he found his solace,
Among the grimy toil.
He planted the seed in springtime,
The corn, the beans, the hay.
He prayed that God would bless it.
A harvest, Lord, I pray.
He tilled and cultivated it,
Provided the most tender care.
Believed that come October,
He'll reap a harvest fair.
Blue skies were his cathedral.
A tractor, his altar of prayer.
God met him in the cornfields,
They had communion there.
My father was a farmer-
That's all he ever was.
The values that the land taught him,
He handed down to us.
I love my farmer father -
I'm thankful that he was mine ...
I pray that God would bless him,
Today and for all time.

In Loving Memory of

Ralph Willis Gray

May 1, 1931 - September 20, 2023

Prayer Service

*Hickey Funeral Chapel, Chamberlain, SD
7:00 p.m., Thursday, September 28, 2023*

Funeral Service

*St. Olaf Lutheran Church, Ola, SD.
10:30 a.m., Friday, September 29, 2023*

Officiating

Rev. Nicholas Schultz

Music

Kristy Nelson—Organist/Pianist

Miriam Schultz—Soloist

Casketbearers

Ralph's Grandsons

Jerad Gray

Ryan Gray

Holden Gray

Brandon Balch

Caleb Uher

Porter Muck

Honorary Pallbearers

Mike Chilson

Donnie Dominiack

Denny Gunderson

Jim Ketelhut

Allen Reis

Bill Stallman

Craig Swanson

Wayne Waysman

Ralph's Granddaughters

Ashley Balch

Haylee Hardin

Paige Uher

Piper Muck

Military Rites By

*American Legion Potter Post No. 3, VFW Post No. 6436
Chamberlain, SD*

Interment

Union Cemetery, Bijou Hills, SD

*Fellowship and lunch for friends and family will be held at the
Ola Hall at Ola, SD following the interment .*