



Mr. Claude Gray Jr.

January 25, 1932 - April 28, 2023

Funeral services for country music legend, Claude Gray, Jr., 91 of Skokie, IL, formerly of Henderson, TX, will be Saturday, May 6, 2023 at 11:00 A.M, at Lakeview Baptist Church with Sam Newton and Ted White officiating. Interment will follow at Oak Hill Cemetery in the Oak Hill Community in Rusk County, under the direction of Crawford-A. Crim Funeral Home.

The family will receive friends from 9:00 a.m. until service time on Saturday at Lakeview Baptist Church.

Mr. Gray passed away on April 28, 2023, in Skokie, IL. Born January 25, 1932, he was the son of Claude and Odelle McFadden Gray, who predeceased him. Also predeceasing him were three sisters, Mary Louise Adams, Opal Parker Bieciuk, and Beatrice Miller. Claude is survived by his sister, Velta Morris, (William), of Lancaster, SC; nephew, Sandy Ray Bristow (Charlotte) of Glenn Heights, Tx; niece, Judy Parker Richardson (Hoyt) of Aubrey, Tx; niece, Millicent Gray Tennison (Johnny) of Eustace, Tx; nephews, William Arthur Morris (Merritt) of Lancaster, SC and Claude Andrew Morris (Karen) of Colcord, OK. Also surviving are Brigitte Peick Ross, his former wife and long-time faithful companion, as well as a host of great-nieces and great nephews, friends, and devoted fans of country music.

A month after high school graduation in 1950 from Henderson High School,

Rusk County, Texas, Claude enlisted in the US Navy and was sent to boot camp in San Diego, CA. Following boot camp, Claude was bound for Sasebo, Japan, where he was assigned to his ship, an oil tanker, the USS Cacapon, AO-52. This was his home for almost four years. He was selected to become a Quarter Master. In the Navy, Quarter Masters are helmsmen, navigators, and signalmen. His assignment was to work on the bridge.

After being honorably discharged from the Navy, he began his country music career, which spanned a lifetime. It slowed only in his last years when his health began to decline, making it difficult to perform. He was fondly known as the “Tall Texan”, and today his signature song, Family Bible, can still be heard on the radio.

Claude will be remembered for his other many well-known country hits, among them I’ll Just Have a Cup of Coffee, Then I’ll Go; How Fast Them Trucks Can Go, and, of course, the much-loved Family Bible. For years Claude performed regularly at will on the Grand Ole Opry, and during his long-time contracts with Mercury, Columbia and Decca MCA records. He had five hit records in the Billboard Top Ten charts where each sold over 1 million records. Today his music can still be heard on SiriusXM Radio. On Saturday, August 10, 2019, Claude was inducted into the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame in Carthage, Texas, an honor well-deserved, as he spent a lifetime after his military career, in spreading country music across the United States and in several foreign countries. Also honored that evening were country stars Jeannie C. Riley and Rodney Crowell.

Late in life, Claude decided he wanted to write books – and so he did. He authored two books in his 80s, an autobiography, Glorious Country Trail, and another in which he shared his thoughts on the condition of the current political scene, Washington Weasels. He, like many of us, always had an opinion.

Always a devoted reader of both fiction and non-fiction, he always stayed abreast of the current news and political climate, and would happily engage you in conversation on any topic. He was a self-taught student of the Bible and a professed believer in Jesus Christ. Claude was well-loved and he lived a life of loving others; he loved the simple things in life and as long as he lived he had a special fondness for his old home place in East Texas near Henderson.

Perhaps one of Claude's greatest joys came when he was included in the annual honor flight in August 2022. Leaving Illinois early in the morning, he was flown to Washington, DC along with other military veterans. It was a memorable day, packed with bestowing honors on and appreciation for our retired military men and women who are 78 years or older. Claude was especially grateful to be included in this historic occasion.

Pallbearers will be H.D. Ainsworth, Johnny Angel, Adam Ray Bristow, H. David Richardson, Bailey Wayne Sanders, Sr., and Terrence L. Tyson. Honorary Pallbearers will be Hoyt L. Richardson, Billy T. Zager, and Tom Mullally.

His family wishes to express a special thank-you to his cousin, Billy Zager, with whom he spent many hours reminiscing about old times, and to close and faithful friends, Terry and Lori Tyson, who were especially devoted to Claude.

Those wishing to make memorial contributions may do so to Lakeview Baptist Church, 10522 Farm to Market Rd 2011, Longview, TX 75603; or to the charity of one's choice.

Words of comfort may be shared with the family at www.crawfordacrim.com.

Cemetery Details

Oak Hill Cemetery

FM 1716
Henderson, TX 75652

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 6. 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Lakeview Baptist Church
10522 FM 2011
Longview, TX 75603

Service

MAY 6. 11:00 AM (CT)

Lakeview Baptist Church
10522 FM 2011
Longview, TX 75603

Tribute Wall

KC

“ I met Claude when I sang at a truck stop he owned in Colorado City, Tx.

He was a very nice gentleman. We talked after I moved to Tyler about putting together a TV pilot but his health was declining before we really got started. He will certainly be missed by many. He was a great talent & a great gentleman. Miss you Tall Texas but we'll meet again. My condolences to your family.

Karen Collins - May 15, 2023 at 01:26 AM

KC

“ Claude will be missed. My FIL loved him and we went to multiple shows of Claude's, and he even came to a family reunion at my in-laws. Thank you for your voice and your gift of music. You are singing with the Angels now.

Karen Cross - May 07, 2023 at 09:38 PM

JB

“ Velta,

Please know that you and the family are in our thoughts and prayers. May God bring you comfort in the days to come. Claude will be greatly missed in my neck of the woods. Love and prayers....

Johnny & Patti Beall

Johnny and Patti Beall - May 05, 2023 at 08:54 PM

SH

“ Sue HENDERSON lit a candle in memory of Claude Gray



Sue HENDERSON - May 03, 2023 at 11:41 AM

GC

“ Claude, say hi to my Johnny. He loved you like a brother. So many years of friendship between you two. We loved you, I will miss you as will my kids and grandkids. Our sympathy to everyone. GLORIA CROSS



Gloria Cross - May 01, 2023 at 04:09 PM

JH

“ Judy Harris lit a candle in memory of Claude Gray



Judy Harris - May 01, 2023 at 10:28 AM

DH

“ We at MUSIC COUNTRY USA in New Boston, Tx, sure thought alot of Mr. Claude. He came and performed on our stage with our band on 3 different occasions. A class act, for sure! Prayers for his family.

Deborah Holloway - April 30, 2023 at 08:17 PM

GE

“ Gary Earhart lit a candle in memory of Claude Gray



Gary Earhart - April 30, 2023 at 07:54 PM

MK

“ Marilyn Kopecky lit a candle in memory of Claude Gray



Marilyn Kopecky - April 30, 2023 at 10:29 AM

SL

“ Had the honor of backing Mr Gray for a couple of shows in Pawhuska Ok back in the 90s. Enjoyed his stories and playing his music!

Skeeter Long - April 30, 2023 at 10:11 AM

DH

“ Didn't know him, but I loved his songs, condolences to family and friends

Denise Harris - April 29, 2023 at 09:45 PM

JW

“ Thank you for your friendship and kindness towards me and my radio program the way back country jamboree I was honored to be able to call you my friend

Johnny woodlock - April 29, 2023 at 08:10 PM

JW

“ Growing up in Ontario Canada I was a big fan due in part to my father love of country music my biggest honor was to grow up and know Claude as a close friend and supporter of my radio program the way back country jamboree he was a true gentleman and legend RIP Claude til we meet again



Johnny woodlock - April 29, 2023 at 08:08 PM

JL

“ Claude Gray with Michael Knight at Cherokee Opry House in Jacksonville, Texas, mid 80s.



Jeffery Lee - April 29, 2023 at 06:50 PM

KT

“ Claude was a wonderful person for many years he sang at the Oak Hill Homecoming. He always sang the Family Bible. He was kind and sang at my brother's funeral. A great person and a cousin to my grandfather. He will be missed. S. Kay Trammell

Kay Trammell - April 29, 2023 at 06:12 PM

FC

“ Velta and Family, Deepest sympathy on the loss of your brother. You and your family are in my thoughts and prayers.

Freida Cauthen - April 29, 2023 at 05:26 PM

ST

“ My wife went to HEAVEN on NOVEMBER 3 and Tina and I had the pleasure of working with Mr Claude Gray a few years back when My wife Tina founded, Spotlight Referral.com and she got a spot on the movie *The Invincible* starring Mark walburg and Tina and I worked on getting him (CLAUDE) a TV show through the Choctaw Nation in Durant ok, where we live.

TINA and I had the pleasure of working with CLAUDE in Durant with DALE LAY in the music industry, Tina and I both were very proud to call CLAUDE our friend!!!! I'm sorry for your loss

Steve and Tina Taylor - April 29, 2023 at 05:20 PM

MM

“ Claude was still in my show's rotation. It was and will continue to be an honor to spin his records. Mike Martinez WKHS Radio The Southern Star Country Club

MIKE MARTINEZ - April 29, 2023 at 04:58 PM

DY

I worked with Claude off and on over the years many great memories R.I.P. my friend

Donald Rex Young - April 30, 2023 at 07:52 AM

ER

“ In 2003 or so we lived in Spain and I got hired to play steel guitar behind Mr Gray on several shows. At that time my wife and I were moderators for a now-defunct online country music forum, so we were further honored to interview him. He and I knew a lot of people in common, and I knew his songs, so it was a great chapter in our lives.

Emmett Roch

Emmett Roch - April 29, 2023 at 03:01 PM

BC

“ So sorry to hear this. Claude was a good friend and wonderful entertainer. He encouraged many and never looked down on anyone! He did what he loved until the end. We did many shows together and he always made them a great time. He will be missed. RIP my friend.

Barbara CombsAllison - April 29, 2023 at 02:23 PM

NB

My family, the Burton family in Elderville community and me knew Claude. So nice!! RIP.. Condolences to your family & friends!! 🙏❤️

Nancy Burton - April 30, 2023 at 07:05 PM

DS

“ Friend.....😭🎤🎵🎶



Donna Saffell - April 29, 2023 at 01:36 PM

HA

“ Claude Gray will be missed by Radio . It was something he was very familiar with as he worked in Radio first starting out in the Kilgore Texas market , then moving on to a Radio station in Meridian Ms . It was there when destiny kicked in , a chance meeting took place with a guy in Texas who had written a song called family Bible on the table . The guys name was Willie Nelson . Claude Purchased the song from Nelson who needed the money . From there Claudes Vocal capabilities being enormous really made the song a House-whole Standard . Ive thru many years played Claudes music on Radio and grown to love him , my wife my friends in Music all loved him. Claude had many many friends thru life and the best way to describe the reason behind it , I'll explain by using a Phrase a great Radio guy Billy Cole of W H O Radio in Des Moines iowa used every time he would go off the air (The best way to have friends , is to be one your self) Claude lived by that philosophy. Tall Texan you were indeed a good friend to all of us in Country Music and in Radio , You will be missed ... HD Ainsworth Kbef Radio Minden La

HD Ainsworth - April 29, 2023 at 01:05 PM

PB

“ I remember, when I was just a little girl, Claude brought a 45 of his hit country song “I'll Have A Cup of Coffee”, to our house.....I was kinda star-struck at that time and this was my first memory of Claude. I still have the 45. My heart goes out to you, Velta and all the family. May God bring you comfort in the days to come. Rest in peace Claude....you will be greatly missed 🙏💕🙏

Johnny and Patti Beall

Patti Beall - April 29, 2023 at 12:59 PM

LE

“ Mr Gray was a one of a kind...I had the astute pleasure of performing with him on many occasions...very fine man and friend...rest easy my friend....til we meet again

Lynn Emmons - April 29, 2023 at 12:40 PM

CH

“ Rest in peace Claude. You will be deeply missed by all who had the honor of knowing you. Thanks for taking me fishing!

Carl Harmonson - April 29, 2023 at 12:26 PM

HP

“ Wow, what a Great Man and Friend. Claude, and I did several shows over the last 20 years. He always would call me, always send out Christmas cards. I always enjoyed being with This Great Country Singer. We will truly Miss The Tall Texan. Forever Friends.

Harvey Perdue - April 29, 2023 at 12:08 PM

BD

“ Claude and my husband Jack Reno(2008) we're very best buddies. Jack recoded "I'll just have a cup of coffee" great song. My daughter went to Nashville with Claude and Jack for one of their recording sessions. She didn't have enough kind and great things to say about Claude. RIP dear friend and God Bless, tell Jack Hi❤️❤️❤️
❤️🙏🙏

Beverly Reno (wife of Jack Reno deceased) - April 29, 2023 at 12:03 PM