



## Shelby Ray

November 18, 1947 - February 10, 2022

Our cowboy, G. Shelby Ray, passed away peacefully at home in San Simon, Arizona on February 10, 2022. He was 74. Shelby is survived by his beloved wife, Lynne; his ‘knucklehead’ boys, Sev, Shawn, Sy, Wes, and Casey; his brother, C.B.; and eleven grandchildren. Shelby was preceded in death by his two brothers, James Ray and Luke Ray.

Shelby was born in Council, Idaho to his mother, Noma “Bunky” Louise (Cullen) Ray and his father, Clinghan Barker “C.B.” Ray. He learned the meaning of hard work at a young age from his parents, who worked on cattle ranches across the West. As a young boy he spent time on the Fort Apache Reservation at the Maverick Logging Camp in the White Mountains. His parents later moved to Cochise County where they ran a large cattle ranch just North of San Simon, AZ. Growing up in San Simon the family didn’t have much, like running water and electricity, but such were the simple pleasures of being a cowboy. The early days were like any worthwhile western movie – the Ray clan were salt of the earth ranchers who knew how to work the land. Funny enough, a notorious train robber and member of the Black Jack Ketchum gang in the late 1800s also happened to be his cousin. He is also preceded in Shelby’s death as the result of an unsuccessful train robbery. Proud of his childhood and ancestors, Shelby proudly displayed relics from his past throughout his home to include, antique guns, old weathered photos, dusty leather chaps, worn out spurs and leatherbound books on western

history.

Shelby's signature cowboy hat wasn't the only one he wore. He wore many hats in life, including husband, father, rancher, educator, coach, wrestler, mentor, artist, service member, business partner, and community leader. At 18, Shelby felt compelled to serve his country and enlisted in the United States Army. During boot camp in Fort Benning, GA, he learned "city-folk were sissies." He had never met so many grown men scared of the pitch-black dark before. While many at camp hoped to avoid deployment to Vietnam, Shelby was disappointed when he learned he was unable to deploy after an injury from jump school. After the Army, Shelby returned to his ranching roots in Arizona where he lent a ranch hand, roped calves, rode bulls, and worked as a rodeo clown. If you had the chance to hear him talk about his clown days, you knew the delight of the Shelby-chuckle. He was a serious man on matters of importance; but he never took himself too seriously. Hard to take yourself too seriously when your signature act was blowing up an outhouse with a poodle inside (no poodles were injured)?

Shelby earned and saved enough money to pay for his higher education, receiving his bachelor's degree in Education and Biology from ASU, and a master's degree in Educational Leadership from NAU. He taught many subjects and coached wrestling at Round Valley High School for over 20 years, coaching several State Championship teams and his three sons along the way. Shelby also turned out to be a remarkable educator. Many students have described their experiences with "Mr. Ray" as life changing. He found himself teaching the grandchildren of his former students, jokingly noting, "genetics were a tough thing to get past." He was especially influential for students with difficult backgrounds or lacking support in their home lives. There were few places in the world his family could travel without hearing someone yell, "Mr. Ray!", everywhere he went, he was sure to know someone; and Shelby mattered to them. Rounding out his career as a beloved

educator, Shelby worked as an administrator at Show Low High School, then as the Principal of Wilcox High School. Shelby retired from teaching after Wilcox, but quickly found himself teaching again at San Simon High School as retirement life never fit Shelby.

Shelby was able to return to his ranching roots when he and his beloved wife, Lynne Ray, purchased the ranch he grew up on. Together, they restored Shelby's childhood ranch house, this time with running water and electricity, calling it, The Ray Brangus Ranch. Having gone full circle, the ranch became the pinnacle of Shelby's life. As a fulltime rancher, educator, mentor, husband, and father, his days were fulfilling and meaningful; and he has left a void in our lives that no other person will be able to fill.

A celebration of Shelby's life will be held on Saturday, February 19 in the San Simon High School gymnasium at 11:00 am with lunch to immediately follow. A second celebration will take place on Sunday, February 20 at the Round Valley High School Multi-Purpose Room at 2:00 pm with a reception at Avery's from 3:30 – 7:00 pm.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

FEB **19**. 11:00 AM (MT)

San Simon High School  
2226 West Business I-10  
San Simon, AZ 85632  
<http://520-845-2275>

## Celebration of Life

FEB **20**. 2:00 PM (MT)

Round Valley High School  
550 N. Butler Street  
Eagar, AZ 85925

# Tribute Wall

CW

“ *Mr. Ray was my science teacher in 7th grade and my art teacher in high school.*

*He was my favorite teacher. He really cared about people. It showed everyday in his teaching. He was kind and thoughtful.*

*My father decided to take me out of school when I was a sophomore. No good reason except for his own fears.*

*I was a top student and loved school.*

*When Mr. Ray learned I was withdrawing from high school , he took the time to contact my parents for a meeting. My Mom came, my Dad refused. He wanted to know how he could help. This always stuck with me, to know he cared enough to try. It meant so much to me. And still does. My father would not budge. I have continued to learn and attended some college later.*

*Mr. Ray was just an all around very good person.*

*I also remember he was very distressed when I was in 7th grade about his dear wife. The Dr. mixed up some medical records with another person. So for a time they thought his wife was very ill. To find out she was okay was huge for him and all of us that knew.*

*I would have been class of 81.*

*I was looking up Shelby's art, because I was just wanted to see it.*

*Then I found that he died.*

*My heart sank. My heart goes out to his family, so very sorry for your loss. 💙*

*A very dear person Mr. Shelby Ray*

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**Cindy Wilfong-Griffin** - February 12, 2024 at 02:24 PM



“ *Shelby Ray*

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January 30, 2023 at 12:50 AM

CS

“ I never knew Shelby Ray, except through one of his works as an artist. I purchased a print of "Old School" several years ago. I have it hanging in my office and look at it every day. I wish I would have had the chance to meet him, especially after reading all the wonderful things written about him. A truly extraordinary man. He will live on in my home through his art.

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**Craig Sullivan** - April 26, 2022 at 11:24 AM

EK

“ Coach Ray has always had a powerful presence in my life. He had the great ability to be calm, intense, kind, demanding, humble and fun all at the same time. I am grateful to have known him. My prayers are with his family, may God bless you.

*Everett Kelepolo*

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**Everett Kelepolo** - February 19, 2022 at 09:46 AM

LR

“ Lynn,  
My deepest condolences to you and your family. Shelby was a true cowboy and gentleman.

*Larry Ramirez  
(Retired BLM Ranger)*

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**Larry Ramirez** - February 18, 2022 at 09:37 PM

DS

“ I worked with Shelby for 2 years when he was principal at Willcox Middle School. As a boss and as a person he was always encouraging, polite and funny. It was a real pleasure to work with him. Although he will be missed, he will always be remembered because he left a legacy of a life well lived.

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**Diane Shell** - February 18, 2022 at 04:34 PM



“ *Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Shelby Ray.*



February 17, 2022 at 10:53 PM



“ *European Sympathy Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Shelby Ray.*



February 16, 2022 at 06:51 PM



“ *Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Shelby Ray.*



February 16, 2022 at 01:14 PM

SR

“ No one will fill your boots dad. You loved me when I didn't deserve it. My life was forever changed with your presence. I often thought you were part Apache or Coyote. You alone taught me toughness, patience and above all kindness. My world and many others will not be the same without you. No way to sum up your love. Artist, wrestler, coach, teacher, father, cowboy, rodeo clown, mentor...I got to call you dad. My tears won't stop flowing. I know I have to keep going and saddle up. Hero to so many, we love you dad. Nothing will be the same without you.

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**Shawn Ray** - February 15, 2022 at 04:29 PM

RL

We send our deepest condolences to the Shelby Ray Family. We enjoyed many years sharing the wrestling world with Shelby, enjoying our coaching years as our teams competed against each other. Shelby was a stand up guy and lived an exemplary life and set high standards for his athletes and for himself. Shelby was a great example for all those that had the opportunity to have known him. He had an engaging personality, fair-minded, kind and a man that I have always admired. Shelby definitely earned his wings and will be missed greatly. May God bless your good family as you go forward in this life without the presence of this great man. He has left his mighty footprint in your hearts and so many memories that will sustain the family until you meet him again. He will be patiently waiting to embrace each of you again in a better place. Keep Lynn close. She has always been his most devoted companion and made Shelby a very happy partner.

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**Richard and Linda Lopeman** - February 17, 2022 at 10:00 AM

JJ

“ Lynn, all of our deepest heart felt sympathies in your loss.

*Jim and Kathy Cook*

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**James B. Cook II** - February 14, 2022 at 10:15 AM

EG

“*Shelby will, indeed, be well remembered, missed, and in our household there are two very good reasons. He was one of my most encouraging and supportive middle school principals shortly after my start-up at teaching in Willcox. He applied reason & logic to his job, and consequently made mine more doable. He was also an exquisite artist. A most beloved portrait of Doc Holliday and Wyatt Earp (Val Kilmer & Kurt Russell) hangs in our family room overlooking the homestead. It is a marvelous reminder of a great movie, the history, and the reality of humanity and triumph straight out of Arizona---"I'll be your huckleberry."---, and equally so a grand reminder of Shelby. God bless you, lad. Looking forward to riding with you on that big spread with the Lord.*

*Earl & Wanda Goolsby, Yukon, Oklahoma*

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**Earl & Wanda Goolsby** - February 14, 2022 at 08:55 AM

CH

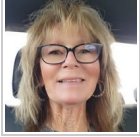
“*To the Ray family - My thoughts and prayers are with you in this difficult time.*

*I had the privilege of being coached by Coach Ray at Round Valley High School (82). He had a huge impact on me and I will always be grateful to him for his kindness and toughness he instilled in his wrestlers.*

*My Deepest Sympathies*  
*Christian Hildebrandt*

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**Christian Hildebrandt** - February 12, 2022 at 11:07 PM



“ *My condolences to Lynn and family. Your all in our thoughts and prayers. Shelby was such an awesome man, he will be missed by many*



*Chad, Carol and Dylan Case*



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**Carol Case** - February 12, 2022 at 08:09 PM

CH

“ *Shelby and I spent some good times together gathering cows and telling stories.*

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**c. m. hudson** - February 11, 2022 at 09:26 PM

CM

“ *Clyde & Glenda Mahan purchased the Simply Lily for the family of Shelby Ray.*



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**Clyde & Glenda Mahan** - February 11, 2022 at 08:29 PM