



## Philip Merrill Ray

February 13, 1947 - August 29, 2023

Born February 13, 1947, Philip passed away August 29, 2023, at his home in the Shady Grove Community. He graduated from Provine High School in Jackson in May 1965. He attended Southeastern Baptist College in Laurel for one semester where he met his wife, Becky Harper. They were married in December of 1965 and would have celebrated 58 years together this December.

In April of 1966, he joined the Air Force. His early career was spent repairing the radar navigation systems for the B-52 Bomber. In 1970, he began college at Oklahoma State University, and in 1972, earned his bachelor's degree in civil engineering. As a commissioned officer he began flying in the B-52 as a Radar Navigator.

After his years in the air, Philip attended the Air Force Institute of Technology where he earned his master's degree in civil engineering. He spent the next four years using that degree, traveling to air force bases around the world, working in fire protection. The air force then decided that he should start flying again, and the next five years were spent in the belly of the B-52.

When his flying days were behind him, he transferred to "The Mighty Eighth" Air Force Headquarters at Barksdale AFB in Shreveport, LA. He attained his final rank of Lieutenant Colonel and served as a special advisor for B-52

flights during Operation Desert Storm. After 27½ years of distinguished service, during which he earned numerous service medals and commendations, he retired in September 1993. Thus began Philip and Becky's civilian career.

Never one to be idle for long, he decided a career helping others as a teacher would be a good fit. He attended Florida State University and obtained a specialist's degree in education. He and Becky then moved to Laurel where he taught math at Northeast Jones High School before transitioning to college as the Civil Engineering Technology instructor at Jones County Junior College. After 16 years in the teaching profession, he retired from working.

While in Laurel, he was ordained as a Deacon at First Baptist Church of Shady Grove. He served the church as the treasurer and as the church cemetery manager.

He was preceded in death by his father Merrill Franklin Ray and mother Dorothy Joyce Nottle Ray. Survived by his wife Becky Ray; sons Philip T. Ray (Melissa), and Michael Ray (Summer); grandchildren Elisha Ray, Karly Webb (Hayden), and Connor Ray; great grandson Hudson Webb; sisters Gloria Blakeney and Carol Wooley, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Funeral services will be conducted by Bro. Sidney Davis and Bro. Chris Sledge at the First Baptist Church of Shady Grove on Saturday, September 2nd. Visitation will begin at 1:00 pm, service at 2:00 pm, followed by internment in the church cemetery. Pall bearers will be Philip T. Ray, Michael Ray, Connor Ray, Mike Dykes, Jonathan Blakeney, and Ron Hilbun.

To sign the online guest book, visit [www.memorychapellaurel.com](http://www.memorychapellaurel.com).

# Cemetery Details

## Shady Grove Cemetery

4514 Hy 15 N  
Laurel, MS 39443

# Previous Events

## Visitation

SEP 2. 1:00 PM (CT)

First Baptist Church of Shady Grove  
4514 Highway 15 North  
Laurel, MS 39443

## Service

SEP 2. 2:00 PM (CT)

First Baptist Church of Shady Grove  
4514 Highway 15 North  
Laurel, MS 39443

# Tribute Wall

GB

“ I just wanted to send my condolences to the families and he was always friendly and respectful and I would see this in the family members. Praying for your comfort.

George Beaty - September 03, 2023 at 02:47 PM

AR

“ So sorry for the loss of your loved one. I was the secretary at Northeast Jones High School. He was always friendly and I enjoyed working with him. Our thoughts and prayers will be with your family in the days ahead. Our deepest sympathy,  
Angela & David Rudolph

Angela Rudolph - September 01, 2023 at 09:32 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Philip Merrill Ray.



August 31, 2023 at 03:32 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Philip Merrill Ray.

August 31, 2023 at 03:32 PM

SD

“ *South Panola Transportation Department purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Philip Merrill Ray.*



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**South Panola Transportation Department** - August 31, 2023 at 02:43 PM

SD

“ *South Panola Transportation Department planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Philip Merrill Ray.*

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**South Panola Transportation Department** - August 31, 2023 at 02:43 PM



“ *We have had lots of memories with Phillip & Becky in the 42 years that we have know them. A lot of those memories were made when Phil and Lonnie were in the Air Force and stationed at KI Sawyer AF base. The last memories we made were at the Ark Encounter and the Creation Museum in Kentucky in 2016. Though that was the last time we saw them we kept in touch by phone. Becky and family we are beyond so sorry for the loss of Phillip. You are all in our prayers. Love Lonnie & Brenda Carpenter*

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**Brenda Carpenter** - August 30, 2023 at 05:33 PM