



James W. (Bill) Ray
28 April 1934-22 April 2021

The children of Maj. Gen. (Ret.) James W. (Bill) Ray are saddened to announce his death, after a short illness, on 22 April 2021 at the age of 86.

Bill Ray was born on 28 April 1934 in Dyersburg, Tenn. After graduating from high school in 1952, he attended Union University in Jackson, Tenn. for a year before entering the United States Military Academy at West Point in the summer of 1953. Bill eventually served as commander of Company D2 at the Academy, before graduating and being commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in 1957. Bill and Bamby married shortly after his graduation and remained a loving couple until Bamby's death in 2012 and traveled, hiked and skied throughout their lives.

Bill had a long and distinguished career as an Army officer, retiring at the rank of Major General with more than 34 years of service in 1987.

Bill served two tours in Vietnam, as an advisor from July 1964 to July 1965, and from June 1969 to June 1970 as commander of the 35th Combat Engineer Battalion, 20th Engineer Brigade, tasked with upgrading roads and constructing bridges, airstrips and other facilities in the Mekong Delta. Bill was always very proud that the 35th did not suffer a single fatality due to enemy action or accident during his command.

Bill was breveted to Brigadier General in 1984 and immediately departed for Saudi Arabia, where he took command of the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Middle East Division, headquartered in Riyadh, and successfully led an effort to close out numerous open projects from a \$14-billion program and draw down the Division. He was officially promoted to Brigadier General in February 1985. From September 1985 to July 1988, he commanded the USACE European Engineering Division, headquartered in Frankfurt, Germany. In July 1988, the Army promoted Bill to Major General and assigned him to serve as the Deputy Chief of Staff, Engineer for the United States Army, Europe.

In September 1990, he and Bamby returned to the United States, where he served as the USACE Chief of Military Programs. While in this position, he was tasked to negotiate a host nation support agreement with the Saudi Arabian government to cover the costs of US forces stationed in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Storm. Bill successfully completed this negotiation; the first payment made by the Saudis was in the form of a check for \$760 million, made out to "His Excellency, Major General Ray." Bill retired from the Army on 30 June 1991.

After retiring from the Army, Bill and Bamby moved to Atlanta, GA, where he worked for Georgia Tech, overseeing the construction of the Olympic Village and the Aquatic Center for the 1996 Olympics. The dormitory design, with apartment-style living, has helped Georgia Tech's recruiting world-class students. While overseeing the Olympic projects, Bill was asked by the Board of Regents to assist in helping Albany College recover from devastating floods. After the Olympics, Bill remained with Georgia Tech facilities and athletic departments until December 1996 when he went to work for Draper and Associates, an Atlanta-based consulting firm, as the Senior Vice President. In that capacity, Bill drew upon his extensive experience in construction to provide invaluable counsel to the Draper consultants working on projects throughout the United States. He was instrumental in securing a multi-year contract with the University of Arkansas which opened a new business for Draper consulting in higher education facility management. At Draper, Bill remained close to Georgia Tech, working on multiple projects for the Georgia Tech Foundation. Bill left Draper in 2017.

Bill was a strong supporter of West Point and the Class of '57. He served as the president of the Class of '57 from April 2017 through February 2021.

Bill is survived by his brother, Lloyd (Sonny) Ray, and by his three children, Mark, William (Gus), and Karen. In lieu of flowers, the Ray family suggests considering a donation in Bill's honor to the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, <http://www.hicashlt.org/in-honor--in-memory.html>.