



Milton "Ray" Gilliland

September 13, 1922 - March 11, 2018

Milton "Ray" Gilliland, 95, passed away peacefully on Sunday, March 11, 2018, in Austin, Texas.

Born September 13, 1922, in West Coffeyville, Kansas, Ray spent the early years of his life on his family's working farms in Kansas and Oklahoma. He later attended Field Kindley High School and Coffeyville Junior College. Upon graduation from junior college, Ray accepted a call to Christian service and entered studies at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, in the fall of 1945. Following his graduation in 1947, and a series of major surgeries that transformed his life and cemented his deep commitment to Christ, Ray enrolled in Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, majoring in the New Testament.

It was during his studies at Southwestern that he met Anne Hitchcock of Apopka, Florida. Ray and Anne married following their graduation on June 13, 1952, and enjoyed 56 years together before her passing in January 2008. They served churches in Kansas and Nebraska for more than 16 years, during which time Ray returned to his studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and earned his Master of Arts in Religious Education in 1962. Their service led to the founding of Pilgrim 20, a singing and campus ministry group of students chosen from colleges and universities in the region, and leadership of a group of students – including their daughter Rebecca and

son David – to participate in the 1968 Baptist Youth World Conference in Berne, Switzerland.

In 1969, Ray was appointed a student minister in the Greater New York metropolitan area, leading to the family's relocation to Park Ridge, New Jersey. He was named Home Missionary for the Southern Baptist Convention for the area in 1975, serving in that capacity until his retirement in 1987. His tenure in New York was instrumental to the founding of Graffiti Church, which began its ministry serving children, youth, and adults in the Lower East Side of New York in the early 1970s through a single, small storefront. Today, Graffiti Church serves others through five sites in the area and two affiliates in other cities, and has assisted in the establishment of more than 40 new churches.

A reader and gardener in his spare time, Ray also was an avid lover of opera, listening to Metropolitan Opera broadcasts as a child and later attending dozens of Met performances over the family's years in New York. His warm tenor voice and Anne's own skills as an organist and pianist live on in the musical talents and academic and career accomplishments of their children and grandchildren. He also loved refinishing furniture, restoring pieces that remain in the family today.

In addition to Anne, Ray was preceded in death by his parents Jasper and Cecil Gilliland and his sister Becky Gilliland, all of Coffeyville. He is survived by his brother Larry and sister-in-law Margie Gilliland of Tulsa, Oklahoma; his daughter Rebecca and son-in-law Craig Smith of Chapel Hill, North Carolina; his son David and daughter-in-law Laquita Gilliland of Austin, Texas; his five grandchildren Evan Gilliland, Daniel Smith, Ethan Gilliland, Michael Smith, and Erin Gilliland; his great-grandchild Amina Brielle Gilliland; his niece Sherry Gilliland; and his nephew Terry Gilliland.

A celebration of Ray's life will be held at Graffiti Church in May. In lieu of

flowers, donations may be made to Graffiti Church, 205 East 7th Street, New York, New York, 10009 in honor of Ray's and Anne's lifetime of ministry.

Tribute Wall



“ Milton "Ray" Gilliland

October 05, 2023 at 10:58 AM



“ Milton "Ray" Gilliland

October 04, 2023 at 06:25 PM



“ Milton "Ray" Gilliland

September 26, 2023 at 10:57 PM



“ Beverly Gavenda lit a candle in memory of Milton "Ray" Gilliland



Beverly Gavenda - March 26, 2018 at 06:50 PM



“ Well done good and faithful servant. Well done.



Harry Simpson - March 24, 2018 at 11:50 AM