

Mayetta, KS



Eldon Leonard Ray, 90, of Mayetta, KS passed away Sunday, July 20, 2014 at Oakley Place Senior Living in Topeka. He was born August 27, 1923 in Mayetta, KS the son of Howard Elbert Ray and Lillie Marie (Reynolds) Ray.

Eldon attended South Cedar Grade School and then graduated from Mayetta High School in 1941. At an early age, Eldon learned to catch a baseball from his brother, Art. Once he started playing for Mayetta, he never missed a game. In those days, that included a lot of walking to make it happen... not sure where the activity buses were. He continued to catch ball for years afterwards for the Mayetta home teams. Eldon started playing guitar at the age of 7 and in his early adult life, was broadcast on local radio stations.

He worked at Victory Sand for a short time before entering his life-long employment with Santa Fe Railroad. Eldon held the positions of laborer, machinist, draftsman, car inspector and assistant General Foreman. He retired in 1981 after 40 years of service. In 1943, Eldon took leave and volunteered for the Army Air Corp. He proudly served as a B-17 Bombardier until the war ended in 1945.

He married Lela Leane Christensen on October 21, 1944. She preceded him in death on January 30, 2013. He was also preceded in death by 3 sisters, Thelma Hagen, Lillie Beth Baxter and Lois Brown; and a brother, Arthur Ray.

Survivors include 2 daughters, Wilma Sue Harding (Glenn) of Topeka, KS and Alma Morse (Bob) of Mayetta, KS; a sister, Alma Fitzgerald; 4 grandchildren, Matthew Harding (Shelley), Scott Harding (Tara), Robert M. Morse II (Crystyl) and Jennifer Greene (Casey) and 8 great-grandchildren, Abbigail and Haley Harding, Cyrus and Xander Harding, Angelina, Allyssa and Adrianna Morse and Penelope Greene.

Eldon was a member of the Mayetta Masonic Lodge for over 67 years, where he held various positions including Secretary and Past Master. He was a life-long member of the Mayetta Christian Church, where he served in various capacities on the board, as a trustee and in every other way he could throughout his life. In 1995 he played a huge role in helping to design and build a multi-purpose building that was finished and dedicated in 1996. He then took on a lion's share of helping build the new chapel that was finished and dedicated in 2005. He purchased and tore down the old chapel, after nobody else was found to want it (another huge job taken on almost entirely by him). In the new chapel, Eldon became sound-booth operator for as long as he was able before moving into Vintage Park Assisted Living. He loved to show people the church, whether in person or through pictures sharing countless stories. He always made sure the

congregation was informed before any changes to the building or anything else took place. He was a member and officer for the Kansas Old Time Fiddlers and Pickers. Eldon enjoyed traveling the country to participate in contests, winning countless awards and trophies. He also played with and helped MC the Elmont Opry for 25 years. He loved to make people laugh and just have a good time. He also played for many different grange hall dances where he would call the "Old Time Square Dances". Eldon loved to play his guitar and was proud of the fact that all the fun he and his friend had playing, never included drinking. His wife and kids were always with him... wherever he played.

Eldon loved boating, camping and teaching the kids how to ski. He camped everywhere from the Delaware River near Valley Falls, to Perry Lake, to the Ozarks and even took his fifth wheel to Alaska once. He was the "father" of Bar-B- Q-Bacon – ask his daughters or any of his grandchildren what that means if you haven't enjoyed it. His love for farming and helping others extended through his 90+ years. He was proud of his 340 Farmall and used it to plow countless gardens, put up hay, plow driveways, and even used the front scoop to help move rocks, trim trees, etc. That tractor was only slightly overshadowed by the back-hoe he later purchased and used to help neighbors for multiple projects. He wanted to form an organization called "Neighbors Helping Neighbors", but we all knew Eldon WAS "Neighbors Helping Neighbors." That's what he did!

God blessed Eldon with great strength (despite his 2 by-pass surgeries), an incredible amount of talent (music, carpentry, drafting, mechanical know-how and many others.), but mostly God blessed him with a HUGE HEART!

He will be greatly missed and fondly remembered always.

Funeral services will be 10:30 a.m. Friday, July 25, 2014 at the Mayetta Christian Church.

Burial with Military Honors will follow in the Mayetta Cemetery. Family will greet from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. Thursday evening at the Mercer Funeral Home. Memorials may be given to the Mayetta Christian Church c/o Mercer Funeral Home, P.O. Box 270, Holton, KS 66436. To leave a special message for the family, please visit www.mercerfuneralhomes.com