



Ronnie Leigh Wray

July 3, 1951 - October 10, 2025

TRIPOLI - Ronnie Leigh Wray, 74, died Friday, October 10, 2025, at his home in Tripoli surrounded by family. He lived life his own way – with grit, humor and a touch of stubborn charm that those who knew him won't forget.

Ron was born July 3, 1951, in Cedar Falls, Iowa, the son of Guy and Marlys (Webrand)

Wray Jr. He graduated from Cedar Falls High School in 1969, and devoted his career to serving his country, starting with two tours in Vietnam as a UH-1 “Huey” Crew Chief, first with a small aviation unit with the 9th Infantry Division at Tan An and then with the 101st Airborne Division at Camp Eagle until finishing his last 3 months with the 1st Aviation Brigade. He returned home April 8th, 1972, and began his career with the Army Aviation Support Facility (AASF) in June. He supported the AASF as a Helicopter mechanic through September of 2006, when he joined the Iowa Counterdrug Task Force. He served in the Iowa Army National Guard in tandem, most notably as the First Sergeant of Troop D. He retired from service on October 31st, 2010, with a Legion of Merit award among many other honors, shortly after returning home from a tour in Iraq where he served with Company B, 248th Aviation Support Battalion.

On September 28, 1974, he was united in marriage to Linda Jodene “Jody” Murphy in Springdale, Arkansas after a short courtship involving a

McDonald's. Together they built a life of love and laughter welcoming three daughters, a son and many grandchildren.

Ron was a man of honor and integrity, always upholding what he believed to be righteous and true. He had a knack for collecting just about anything that caught his eye, and generously provided for anyone, often with 2-day prime shipping. He loved his Harleys, NASCAR (#3), camping and boating, but nothing brought him more joy than time spent with his children and grandchildren.

A softball player who never lost his competitive spark, he coached his two oldest daughters, leaving behind countless memories of dusty diamonds and post-game laughs and lessons. He spent many years in short shorts distance running and happily shared his knowledge with anyone interested in becoming a stronger runner. A card shark at heart, he enjoyed nearly every card game known to man, except PHASE10, which he swore (literally) was invented just to test his patience.

Ron loved Halloween and Christmas with equal enthusiasm and had a special fondness for the Wizard of Oz, spending years perfecting his rendition of the Wicked Witch of the West with his oldest daughter. His favorite movies included The Ten Commandments, A Christmas Carol, Up, Planet 51, and just about any Western ever made. His singing was equally unique, from the "Oscar Mayer Wiener" song to the "Lollipop Guild."

Known by many, especially his children, for a temper that could stop you in your tracks with just one look, those same eyes could light up a room with love, pride and mischief.

Ron is survived by his wife of 51 years, Jody of Tripoli; four children, Teri (Tim) Rottinghaus of

Waterloo, Katie (Andrew) Boldt of Tripoli, Michael Wray of Tripoli, and Jessi (Scott)

Rechkemmer of Oran; twelve grandchildren, Clayton, Nick, Evelyn, Eli, Dak, Breann (Tyler), Ashlynn, Logan, Liam, Jensen, Tate and Anna Beth; his mother, Marlys Wray of Cedar Falls; and two sisters, Sandy (Dan Scroggin) Walters and Dawn (Sam) DeBord, both of Evansdale. Preceded in death by his father, Guy Wray Jr.

Services will be 10:00 a.m. Friday, October 17, 2025, at the Richardson Funeral Home in Cedar Falls, with graveside service at Cedar Valley Memorial Gardens. Visitation will be from 5 to 7 p.m. Thursday, October 16, 2025, at the funeral home. Full Military Honors will be performed by the Iowa Army National Guard. Online condolences may be directed to: www.richardsonfuneralservice.com. Memorial contributions may be directed to Cedar Valley Hospice or St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.

Ron will be deeply missed, fondly remembered, and never forgotten, especially by those who were lucky enough to be loved (or scolded) by him.

Cemetery Details

Cedar Valley Memorial Gardens

Cedar Falls, IA 50613
(319) 233-6136

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT **16**. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Richardson Funeral Service
615 Main Street
Cedar Falls, IA 50613
(319) 266-3525
richardsonfuneralservice@gmail.com
<http://richardson.funeralplan2.com>

Funeral Service

OCT **17**. 10:00 AM (CT)

Richardson Funeral Service
615 Main Street
Cedar Falls, IA 50613
(319) 266-3525
richardsonfuneralservice@gmail.com
<http://richardson.funeralplan2.com>

Tribute Wall

RB

“ Ron was a man of integrity and someone to look up to as a role model. I didn't know him well until after an injury, I sustained in 2002. He volunteered to stay with me and help me through recovery for a week after surgery. It was then that I realized what a great man and leader he truly was. Later, working with him in counter drug and seeing him lead by example through the years was a pleasure, and made me a better person, soldier, and aviator. My condolences to the Wray family and may Ron rest in peace.

Ryan Butler

Ryan Butler - October 20, 2025 at 11:46 AM

TY

“ Ron was steadfast (to say the least lol) in his sense of right and wrong. The man never wavered or compromised his integrity. As one (of many) of his troops... he WILL be remembered. Gods speed TOP!

My thoughts go to all!

Tony Yahnke

tony yahnke - October 17, 2025 at 06:31 PM

TE

“ Ron was a great American and it was an honor to have served with him.

Tim Eich - October 16, 2025 at 10:12 AM

BF

“ Bryan & Stephanie Sanders and family purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Ronnie Leigh Wray.



Bryan & Stephanie Sanders and family - October 15, 2025 at 01:40 PM

JH

“ Jim & Tammy Hook purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Ronnie Leigh Wray.



Jim & Tammy Hook - October 15, 2025 at 11:56 AM

MF

“ Margie, Steve, Trish, Charlie & Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Ronnie Leigh Wray.

Margie, Steve, Trish, Charlie & Family - October 15, 2025 at 07:32 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Ronnie Leigh Wray.



October 15, 2025 at 07:32 AM

BF

“ Working as an officer in my early aviation career, Ron was one of my mentors. His advice and direction, along with so many Cavalry troops, made the decade flying and leading out of Waterloo a true joy. Best learning experience in leadership comes from those with them and share it with grace. Ron will be missed by many, and remembered forever. Go with the best, “Charge On!” Bob Felderman, Brigadier General, USA, Retired.

Bob Felderman - October 14, 2025 at 08:23 AM

DM

“ Ron was a complex, remarkable man, who loved his family and country harder than anyone I've ever known. In the hangar and on the flight line, he was a complete professional, trusted for his attention to detail and knowledge of both the aircraft and the whole business of Army Aviation. We served together for nearly 40 years. If I ever felt I was the smartest guy in the room, I would first make sure Ron wasn't there. I'll never forget him. I was privileged to do the research and write up his Legion of Merit. award. Two Bronze Stars (With 'V' devices for valor) from Vietnam, years of dedicated leadership, and more other awards than I can list here made it so important to all of us that he be recognized as he deserved. The ceremony happened after he retired and his only concern was wondering if he should get a haircut as that award is always given by a General Officer. I told him, after a career like his, he could finally stand down for one formation. Fair winds and following seas, old friend. Meet me at Fiddler's Green!

Dave Morse - October 13, 2025 at 11:18 AM