

Western Kentucky University

TopSCHOLAR®

Ray Family Papers

Manuscripts

2020

The Ray Family Backstory

Department of Library Special Collections
Western Kentucky University, spcol@wku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/ray_fam_papers



Part of the [Nonfiction Commons](#), [Other Rhetoric and Composition Commons](#), and the [Public History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Department of Library Special Collections, "The Ray Family Backstory" (2020). *Ray Family Papers*. Paper 21.

https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/ray_fam_papers/21

This Other is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ray Family Papers by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

THE RAY BACKSTORY

The six Ray siblings' parents were Joe Ed (1864 - 1907) and Vivia Scott Ray (1875 - 1915.) They lived on Kenton Street in Bowling Green KY, and their six children were all born around the turn of the 20th century. Father Joe Ed Ray was a logger who died in a river logging accident in 1907 at age 43. Mother Vivia Scott Ray was a homemaker and seamstress.

When the siblings' father, Joe Ed, died in 1907, he left a pregnant wife and five children. Joseph Malchus Ray was born six weeks after his father's death. Thrust into dire straits, mother Vivia, having no marketable skills except sewing, began working at a Bowling Green dressmaking establishment. Oldest son, William Brown, who was called "Brown" by his siblings, was only 7 at the time, but in the upcoming years he would work at many odd jobs—driving a laundry truck, herding cattle, working as a soda jerk, etc., in order to bring in some money for the family. They all pulled together and managed—until their mother, Vivia, died in 1915 at age 40 of typhoid fever after having drunk tainted water; it was oldest son Brown who had been asked to bring his mother what was thought to be healing water when she was feeling bad. Imagine his anguish when it was determined that she'd contracted typhoid fever because of it. He was 15.

In order to keep the six orphaned children together, Vivia's unmarried twin sister, Iris Scott, stepped in to watch over the Ray brood, ages 7 to 19. The two oldest daughters, Ruby and Virginia, went to work at a Bowling Green sewing factory, and Brown continued to find work doing odd jobs and tending the furnace of a professor at Western KY State Normal School (now Western KY University.)

This professor, Miss Ella Jeffries, would figure prominently in the Ray children's future. She had taught all the Ray siblings, most in elementary school, and saw potential in these hard-working, bright Ray children. Taking the Ray siblings under her wing, one-by-one, she encouraged and helped them attain college educations.

Oldest sibling, Ruby, herself made it her mission in life to see that all her siblings got a good education, even postponing marriage till her late thirties in order to help them out on her meager elementary teacher's salary. It took Ruby till age 30 to get a college degree herself, as, of course, she had to work full time while going to college. All the siblings succeeded in earning at least one degree—the youngest, Joe, earning a doctorate in Government and eventually becoming president of the University of Texas at El Paso in the 1960's.

The story is told in Joseph Malchus Ray's memoirs (digitalcommons.wku.edu) that when their mother died, leaving them orphans, his oldest sister Ruby took 7-year-old Joe on her lap and promised him, "I will always take care of you." And she did. Nearly fifty years later, Ruby attended a ceremony for Joe at the University of Texas at El Paso, where he'd just become president. She leaned over to whisper poignantly to him, "This is a long way from Kenton Street, isn't it!"

Joseph M. Ray's digitized memoirs can be accessed at KY Library & Museum in Bowling Green, KY. These recollections discuss in fascinating detail his professional and personal life (digitalcommons.wku.edu); search here for Joseph Malchus Ray. This collection includes photos of the Ray family and audiorecordings of Joseph M. Ray.

Nearly all of the Ray siblings became teachers. In their twenties and thirties the siblings were scattered in several different states and decided to write round robin letters so that they could keep in touch with each other. The Ray round robin began in 1928 and lasted for over 60 years. These hundreds of round robin letters were meticulously saved over the decades, so that the siblings might "re-read them in old age." Not long after the beginning of the 21st century, the letters were scanned and made available digitally to the remaining family through the determined work of Emily Ray Moore and Sylvia Ray Tatum.

THE SIX RAY SIBLINGS

Ruby Catherine Ray MacDonald (1896 - 1972) Elementary school teacher and reading supervisor; hobby, oil painting (husband, Jack MacDonald; no children)

Virginia Scott Ray Harman (1897 - 1972) Secretary; briefly, owner of Bowling Green's Tot Shop, a children's clothing store (husband, Ray Harman; sons Sam Ray Harman & Joe Wilson Harman)

William Brown Ray (1899 - 1986) Farm Bureau agent, H.S. Teacher, Principal, Superintendent (wife, Martha; children Alice, Vivian, Dorothy, Billy, Jim Ed, Mary/ wife, Audrey; children Sylvia, Joe, Glenn, Jack)

Amy Eleanor Ray (1902 - 1955) College librarian (never married)

Edward Marshall Ray (1903 - 1973) Teacher & principal ; hobbies, woodworking & archaeology (wife, Joanna; daughters Barbara & Emily)

Joseph Malchus Ray (1907 - 1991) College professor & president (wife, Jettie; adopted children Scott, David, Sally)

RAY ROUND ROBIN FAMILIES (Robin Contributors are capitalized)

RUBY Ray MacDonald (1896 -1972)
Husband—JACK MacDonald (1901 - 1963)
(no children)

VIRGINIA Ray Harman (1897 - 1972)
Husband—RAY W. Harman (1894 - 1962)
Son: SAM Ray Harman (1925 - 1949)
Son: JOE WILSON Harman (1929 - 1981)
Wife: WILMA Harman (1925 - 1999)

William BROWN Ray [also BILL; W.B.] (1899 - 1986)
1st Wife—MARTHA Whitehouse Ray (1905 - 1989)
Daughter: ALICE Ray (1925 - 2013)
Daughter: Vivian Ray (1926 - 1995)
Daughter: DOROTHY Ray (1927 -)
Son: William Brown Ray, Jr. (BILLY, 1929 - 1986); wife: CLAIR
Son: JIM ED Ray (1933 -)
Daughter Mary Ray(1935 - 2012)
2nd Wife—AUDREY Benedict Ray (1920 - 2013)
Daughter: SYLVIA Ray(1948 -)
Husband: BOB (Robert H. Tatum)

Son: JOE Adin Ray(1951 -)
Wife: CELESTE Ploumis

Son: Ray GLENN Ray(1953 -)
Son: JACK Hewson Ray(1956 -)

Edward (ED) Marshall Ray (1903 - 1973)
Wife—JOANNA Mason Ray (1908 - 2002)
Daughter: BARBARA Ray(1932 - 2018)
Husband: BILL Sutter (1927 - 2008)
Daughter: PAM (1956 -)
Daughter: SUSIE (1959 -)
Daughter: LAURA (1962 -)
Son: ERIC: (1965 -)

Daughter: EMILY (1937 -)
Husband: BILL Moore (1931 - 2017)
Daughter: JENNIFER (1969 -)
Son: Josh (1973 -)
(BILL MOORE'S) son: DAVID (1957 -1997)

Amy ELEANOR Ray (1902 - 1955)
unmarried

Joseph (JOE) Malchus Ray (1907 - 1991)
Wife—JETTIE Hollingsworth Ray (1909 - 1995)
Adopted Children:
Son: SCOTT Ray (1939 -)
Son: DAVID Ray (1940 - 2004)
Wife: DOROTHY D. RAY

Daughter: SALLY Ray (1944 - 2009)

ELLA JEFFRIES (1872 - 1953)
Unmarried; maternal aunt of Joanna Mason Ray, wife of Ed M. Ray

LUCILLE SCOTT, daughter of Jim & Hettie Scott & 1st cousin of original Ray siblings
(unmarried)

MAGGIE RAY SMITH (1868 - 1945)
(Paternal aunt of the Ray siblings)
Husband—Jim Smith

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS TO RAY FAMILY LETTERS

Batchelor, Sally Ray (1944-2009) Daughter of Joe M. & Jettie Ray
Christensen, Pam Sutter (1956 -) Daughter of Ed M. & Joanna Ray
Damiano, Dorothy Ray (1927 -) Daughter of William Brown,Sr.& MarthaW.Ray
Harman, Joe Wilson (1929 - 1981) Son of Virginia Ray Harman & Ray W.Harman
Harman, Ray W. (1894 - 1962) Husband of Virginia Ray Harman
Harman, Sam Ray (1925 - 1999) Son of Virginia Ray Harman & Ray W. Harman
Harman , Virginia Ray (1897 - 1972) Daughter of Joe Ed & Vivia Ray; ORIGINAL RAY
ROBIN SIBLING
Harman, Wilma (1925 -1999) Wife of Joe Wilson Harman
Jeffries, Ella (1872 - 1953) Teacher & WKU professor; benefactress of original Ray siblings
(Ruby, Virginia, Brown, Ed, Eleanor, & Joe M. Ray) ORIGINAL RAY
ROBIN CONTRIBUTOR
MacDonald, Jack M. (1901 - 1963) Husband of Ruby Ray MacDonald
MacDonald, Ruby Ray (1896 - 1972) Daughter of Joe Ed & Vivia Ray; ORIGINAL RAY
ROBIN SIBLING
Moore, Bill (1931 - 2017) Husband of Emily Ray Moore
Moore, Emily Ray (1937 -) Daughter of Ed & Joanna Ray
Moore, Jennifer (1969 -) Daughter of Emily & Bill Moore
Moore, David (1957 - 1997) Son of Bill Moore
Morris, Sally Ray (1944 - 2009) Daughter of Joe & Jettie Ray
Person, Sally (1944 - 2009) Daughter of Joe & Jettie Ray
Ray, Alice (1925 - 2013) Daughter of Wm. Brown & Martha Ray
Ray, Audrey Benedict (1920 - 2013) 2nd wife of Wm. Brown Ray
Ray, Barbara (1932 - 2018) Daughter of Ed & Joanna Ray
Ray, Billy (1929 - 1986) Wm. Brown Ray, Jr.; son of Wm. Brown Ray, Sr., & Martha Ray
Ray, Brown (1899 - 1986) Wm. Brown Ray, Sr.; Will B.; W.B.; 1st wife--Martha; 2nd wife--
Audrey; ORIGINAL RAY ROBIN SIBLING
Ray, Celeste P. (1959 -) Wife of Joe Adin Ray
Ray, Clair (1931 - 2011) Wife of Billy Ray
Ray, David (1940 - 2004) Son of Joe & Jettie Ray
Ray, Dorothy D. (1941 -) Wife of David Ray
Ray, Ed M. (1903 - 1973) Son of Joe Ed & Vivia Ray; wife: Joanna M. Ray; ORIGINAL RAY
ROBIN SIBLING
Ray, Eleanor (1902 - 1955) Daughter of Joe Ed & Vivia Ray; ORIGINAL RAY SIBLING
Ray, Emily (1937 -) Daughter of Ed M. & Joanna Ray
Ray, R. Glenn (1953 -) Son of Wm. Brown & Audrey Ray
Ray, Jack H. (1956 -) Son of Wm. Brown & Audrey Ray
Ray, Jettie H. (1909 - 1995) Wife of Joe M. Ray
Ray, Jim Ed (1933 -) Son of Wm. Brown & Martha Ray
Ray, Joanna M. (1908 - 2002) Wife of Ed M. Ray
Ray, Joe A. (1951 -) Son of Wm. Brown & Audrey Ray
Ray, Joe M. (1907 - 1991) Son of Joe Ed & Vivia Ray; ORIGINAL RAY ROBIN SIBLING
Ray, Martha W. (1905 - 1989) Wife of Wm. Brown Ray

Ray, Ruby (1896 - 1972) Daughter of Joe Ed & Vivia Ray; ORIGINAL RAY ROBIN SIBLING
Ray, Sally (1940 - 2009) Daughter of Joe M. & Jettie Ray
Ray, Scott (1939 -) Son of Joe M. & Jettie Ray
Ray, Sylvia (1948 -) Daughter of Wm. Brown & Audrey Ray
Richards, Louise Thomas, 1st cousin of original Ray siblings; daughter of Kate Scott & Wm. F. Thomas & wife of Lovin Richards
Scott, Lucille () Daughter of Jim & Hettie Scott; first cousin of original Ray siblings
Smith, Mattie Ray (1869 - 1945) Paternal aunt of the original Ray siblings
Sutter, Barbara Ray (1932 - 2018) Daughter of Ed M. & Joanna Ray
Sutter, Bill (1927 - 2008) Husband of Barbara Ray Sutter
Sutter, Eric (1965 -) Son of Barbara & Bill Sutter
Sutter, Laura (1962 -) Daughter of Barbara & Bill Sutter
Sutter, Pam (1956 -) Daughter of Barbara & Bill Sutter
Sutter, Susie (1959 -) Daughter of Barbara & Bill Sutter
Tatum, Robert H. (1943 -) Husband of Sylvia Ray Tatum
Tatum, Sylvia Ray (1948 -) Daughter of Wm. Brown & Audrey Ray
Thomas, Elizabeth 1st cousin of original Ray siblings, daughter of Kate Scott & William F. Thomas