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## The Ray Family Backstory

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## 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](http://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](http://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)

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## 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

IRIS SCOTT HOWELL ("Auntie")1875 - 1946, twin sister of Vivia Scott Ray, who was  
the mother of the original 6 Ray siblings—Ruby, Virginia, Brown, Ed, Eleanor, and Joe  
Husband—Dave Howell

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## 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. & Martha W. 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  
Howell, Iris Scott (1875 - 1946) Twin sister of the mother of the original six Ray siblings  
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 - 2020 ) 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 - 2020) 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  
Thomas, Sally Ray (1940 - 2009) Daughter of Joe M. & Jettie Ray

### **NICKNAMES, etc., OF CONTRIBUTORS**

Chullus—Joe M. Ray  
Miss Weebie—Ruby Ray MacDonald  
Babs—Barbara Ray Sutter  
Jo—Joanna M. Ray  
Dotsy—Dorothy Ray Damiano  
EMR—Ed M. Ray  
JMR—Joe M. Ray

### **SIMILAR FAMILY NAMES OF CONTRIBUTORS**

Joe (Joe M. Ray—Original Ray sibling)  
Joe (Joe A. Ray—Son of original Ray sibling, William Brown Ray)  
Joe Wilson (Joe Wilson Harman, son of original Ray sibling, Virginia Ray Harman)  
Dorothy/Dotsy (Dorothy Ray Damiano, daughter of original Ray sibling, William Brown Ray)  
Dorothy (Dorothy D. Ray—Wife of David Ray, son of original Ray sibling, Joe M. Ray)  
Bill (Bill Moore—Husband of Emily Ray Moore, daughter of original Ray sibling, Ed M. Ray)  
Bill (Bill Sutter—Husband of Barbara Ray Sutter, daughter of original Ray sibling, Ed M. Ray)  
Bill (William Brown Ray, original Ray sibling--alternatively known as Brown and W. B.)  
Billy (William B. Ray, Jr.—son of original Ray sibling, William Brown Ray)  
Jack (Jack M. MacDonald—Husband of original Ray sibling, Ruby Ray MacDonald)  
Jack (Jack H. Ray—son of original Ray sibling, William Brown Ray)