



Raymond Emmet Curtis

October 23, 1932 - February 11, 2022

Raymond Emmet Curtis, a longtime resident of New Orleans who was born on October 23, 1932, in Seguin, Texas, died on February 11, 2022, in Newnan, Georgia, where he had been living since September 2021. He was 89 years old.

Ray Curtis is survived by daughter Anne Kelley Keary (husband Mark J. Keary) and grandsons Alexander Keary and Benjamin Miles Keary; daughter Lisa Rae Curtis (wife Karen A. Leh) and grandsons Aidan Kyle Curtis-Leh and Luca Gabriel Curtis-Leh; brother Clifton Curtis, one of Curtis's six siblings; and many nieces and nephews. Ray was preceded in death by his wife Patricia Hubbard Curtis, whom he married in 1953, and his son Kyle Edward Curtis in 1972.

Ray was the oldest son in a family of seven children living in New Braunfels, a town settled by German immigrants to the Texas Hill Country. While his father Walter Edward Curtis was in the military and stationed overseas, Ray started working to help his mother Edna Magdalena Jandt Curtis support the family. At age six, he raised and sold chicks to the neighbors. By age ten, he was working on a milk wagon, getting up long before school started and running bottles to front porches as the milkman slowly drove a horse and wagon down the street.

Ray was a pin setter in a bowling alley when he was still small enough to crawl up onto a seat behind a wall and next to the pins, waiting for the bowling ball to knock them down and then resetting them. He worked at a shooting range, laying in a gully behind the target while someone shot at it, the bullets sometimes going over his head. When the shooting stopped, he jumped up and took the paper target to the shooter so he or she could see what they hit. Then he'd run back, put up a new target, and lie down in the gully again. He also delivered groceries.

Despite all the jobs he had as a child, he still found time to spend with his maternal grandfather Gustav August Jandt, a farmer who spoke German at home and adored his grandson. Ray followed him around the farm and would also fish in Gustav's pond.

Eventually the little boy realized there weren't any fish in the pond, just turtles.

When he was a teenager, he worked as a lifeguard at a spot on the Guadalupe River where tourists who were floating down the river on inner tubes often got dumped by the rapids. "I would pull people out of that river all day long," he told his daughter Lisa. "You'd be shocked at how many people who went tubing didn't know how to swim." More jobs followed before he graduated from high school. In high school, he played basketball and football, and was a competitive diver.

Ray served in both the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Army before attending Texas A&M University and graduating with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. While in the Army, he lived with his wife and oldest child, Lisa, in Guatemala, Panama, Colombia, and Ecuador. He was part of a team building antenna stations in Central and South America in anticipation of tracking the first U.S. satellites to be launched in the space race with the former Soviet Union.

Ray's work took him to remote places in the mountains and jungles. After a while, he started bringing some of the wildlife home. He liked to tell people that he had a menagerie—an ocelot, a mountain goat, a three-foot long iguana, a myna bird that cursed in Spanish like the sailor who gave it to him, and Lisa. Ray's kids particularly liked his story about the time he and another soldier crash landed their Cessna on a beach.

Throughout his life, Ray kept up his physical activity, taking up jogging and golf, and regularly playing squash with friends.

After becoming an engineer, most of Ray's career was spent working for J. Ray McDermott and McDermott International building offshore oil platforms in the Gulf of Mexico and around the world. After more than 25 years, he retired from McDermott as a senior executive, having lived and worked in New Orleans, Australia, Singapore, Mexico, Egypt, and the United Kingdom.

In addition to living in other countries, Ray also traveled to dozens more and had quite a few adventures, particularly in places experiencing civil unrest. Ray and Pat took it all in stride, forming many friendships among the citizens in their host countries and in the expat communities. They entertained a great deal as part of Ray's job and because of the couple's interest in other people.

Ray became a surrogate father to some of his children's friends. He and Pat were always welcoming and generous when Lisa would come visit in Mexico City or London with three

or four friends in tow. Once, when she arrived in Melbourne from the states with a trunk full of books, he paid the excess baggage charge without complaint, but he did say, "You know, we have books in Australia. They're even in English."

Ray took up weightlifting in retirement, setting records in his age group and winning many medals and trophies over about 15 years. Once, a friend's little girl saw all the trophies of muscled men lifting weights and asked if she could play with his dollies. Then his family started calling them dollies too. She also asked what his name was. When he said Ray Curtis, she heard Ray Gorgeous, a name that stuck among his many friends. Whenever Jonny Jordan saw Ray walking around Audubon Park, he would call out as loud as he could so that everyone around them could hear, "Hey, Ray Gorgeous, how're you doing?"

Ray also raised koi in pond he dug in the front yard of his house on Audubon Park. Over the years, many people stopped to watch the koi from the sidewalk on the other side of the wrought-iron fence. A lot of them became regular visitors to the pond, including one little boy from the UK who sent Ray a letter that began, "Dear Pond Keeper." The boy explained that his family was returning to England and asked if he could leave his goldfish in the pond. Of course, said the Pond Keeper, and the boy, his family, and Ray had a goodbye ceremony as the fish were put in the pond.

Even in retirement, Ray and Pat kept up their travels and entertaining. The New Orleans house was busy with family gatherings and lots of parties. Ray's grandsons Alex and Ben spent part of their summers there. Pat and Ray regularly attended the Santa Fe Opera Festival in the summer with Pat's brother Martin Gould Hubbard II and his wife Margie Hubbard; and they went skiing in Colorado in the winter. Ray and Mart especially liked visiting golf courses in Scotland. After Pat's death, Ray kept up his travels.

The last overseas trip Ray took was to Mongolia in 2017, where he competed in an international weightlifting competition at the age of 85.

Ray was, by any measure, a very successful man whose life was one long, incredible journey. He met many government officials around the world, including heads of state, and once he even shook hands with the Prince of Wales. It was certainly not a life that a six-year-old boy raising chickens in New Braunfels could have imagined.

Ray's remains will be interred at Lake Lawn Metairie Cemetery in New Orleans with those of his wife and son. The family will hold a memorial service at Lake Lawn Metairie Funeral Home in a month. Details to follow.

Condolences may be expressed online at www.mckoon.com

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Cemetery

McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory

38 Jackson Street

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Events

MAR Memorial Service

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Lake Lawn Metairie Funeral Home
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