



Gerald Ray Hayes

May 7, 1932 - March 16, 2020

We have all seen the phrase on a bumper sticker, mug, or T-shirt countless times: "Best Dad Ever." On March 16, 2020 Gerald Ray Hayes, who will always be remembered as our 'Best Dad Ever' (apologies to those whose Dad might also have the title), went home to the one that loves him the most. Dad was a "Road to Romans Christian", a magnetic personality with a "lightness of being" and "generosity of spirit" who made us all believe in the possibilities. He was born at home on May 7, 1932, to Ernest Dewey Hayes and mother Essie Jane Leach with a large family of 4 boys and 5 girls. He grew on a farm just west of Washington in a 2-room shotgun house with no indoor plumbing or electricity. It was on that farm he learned a strong work ethic from plowing with a mule to getting the chicken "ready" for supper. At the age of 8 he started as a water jack boy during the broomcorn harvest, later working right alongside his father cutting broomcorn. Dad always said there is nothing like a broomcorn itch. In 1941, the family move into town, where Dad attended Purcell Schools. Dad always loved sports. He lettered in football, basketball and track. He was proud to have played with Olympian Lester Lane and be on the 1950 State Basketball Championship Team. He graduated in 1952 and was voted most handsome senior male. Dad's strong work ethic earned him the projectionist job at the Canadian Theater. He there met and courted his high school sweetheart, Margaret Pearl Tefertiller. On August 9, 1952 they married and settled in Purcell. Dad then started his lifelong career with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. In December there was an abrupt

change. He received a letter from the President, friends and neighbors with regards to his military draft. He commented that he was "so lucky to be chosen" to go to Korea. He completed his basic training at Camp Carson, Colorado. Dad started his world travels with a 17-day cruise to Pusan, Korea and was stationed at Yeongdeungpro above the 38th parallel. In Korea, he served his country proudly as an artillery surveyor and achieving the rank of Master Sergeant. He was honorably discharged and returned to Purcell in 1954. He continued his service in the Army National Guard while also re-starting his career with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. Dad was a strong believer in education. He continued advancing his education and career. He was also proud to be a Registered Professional Land Surveyor. He retired from ODOT as the Assistant Resident Engineer in Purcell.

As a loving husband, father raising 4 boys and 1 girl. Dad was a Coach, Boy Scout leader, Sunday school teacher and wore many more hats. After the untimely passing of Margaret, Dad commented on how he was lucky to find love again, with a bonus, in Regina Ford and her two wonderful kids. Dad embraced his new family and often said that the names may not match but the heart certainly does.

After retirement Dad and Regina traveled the world from the Russian Kremlin, kissing the blarney stone in Ireland to riding elephants in Thailand. They loved every adventure together. Dad also enjoyed taking mission trips to Argentina, Peru and Brazil to share the Gospel. He was a faithful member of the 9th Street Church of Christ and loved his weekly visits to the sick or homebound. His servanthood continued as a member of the Purcell Kiwanis and was a lifelong member of the VFW. Dad was a private man that could solve most of his problems brush-hogging on his John Deere tractor. If life ever got too much, he just turned down his hearing aids, smile and just nod.

Dad's grit, wit, and distinctive charm resonated with everybody. He touched so many lives. Dad always left you shaking your head with a smile. His loving character, straight-forward wisdom, and classic sense of humor will always be cherished.

Gerald leaves behind a family, whom he loved very much, to include his wife of 43 years Regina; his children, Gary Wayne Hayes and wife Cindy of Purcell, Michael Lee Hayes and wife Danice of Blanchard, Cheryl Lynn Strong of Purcell, Darrell Glen Ford of Goldsby, Jerry Don Hayes of Purcell, Kevin Lynn Hayes and wife Shay of Edmond and Marcy Ann Stokes of Bentonville, AR. Twelve grandchildren Christopher, Amber, Cammie, Levi, Chase, Candace, Turner, Sara Beth, Andrew, Caden, Anna and Allison and Ten great grandchildren Aiden, Brycen, Hendrix, Graeme, Annabelle, Layla, Maddox, Kaydence, Emsley. His brother Jack Dempsey Hayes and wife Jean of Oklahoma City.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Ernest Dewey Hayes and mother Essie Jane Leach. His wife Margaret Pearl Hayes. Sisters: Estell, Luciel, Gladys, Earnestean and Carrie. Brothers: Leslie and Jerry Mack

Our family is sincerely grateful to the many friends, neighbors and caregivers who have provided prayers, support and comfort during the time of loss.

A "Celebration of Life" honoring the memory of Gerald Ray Hayes will be held on June 14, 2020. The celebration will begin at 2:00 pm at The Grand Canadian Theater.

In lieu of flowers, the family prefers donations to be made in Gerald Hayes's honor to Westview Boys Home at westviewboyshome.com or Westview Boys Home 120 W. Broadway Hollis, OK 73550

Send online condolences @ www.wilsonlittle.com.