



Nellis, Raymond Charles

1934-2024

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Raymond Charles Nellis, 90, of Alvord passed Thursday, Dec. 5, 2024, in Fort Worth. He liked to say that he was “90 and a half, like a 7-year-old!”, and he was exactly 90 and a half at his passing.

Ray was born and raised in Dayton, Ohio. When Ray was 10 years old, his love of flying was sparked by a visit with Orville Wright. His paternal grandfather, Carl Nellis, who worked for Charles Kettering at Inland Manufacturing Company, occasionally visited with Orville Wright, so he took Ray out of school one day to visit him in the red brick building Orville called his “lab”. A P-38 flew in while young Ray was there, and he was allowed to sit in the cockpit. It was an exciting and formative day for a young boy!

Ray attended Ohio State University for 2 years of engineering on a tennis scholarship until he qualified for the USAF flying school as an officer. He had

an Air Force career piloting fighter jets and bombers. His favorite airplane was the B-58 Hustler. He first flew MACH-2 (twice the speed of sound) in the B-58 and flew for the Air Force in airshows around the country. He transferred to Thailand during the Southeast Asia conflict as commander of a squadron of forward air controllers in the OV-10. Raymond and Nanci Lee Weideman married on March 12, 1965. He loved being a Texan, and they purchased land near Alvord, Texas upon his military retirement in 1975. He named it “the Rusty Nail Ranch” after his call sign in Thailand. As a new TCU Ranch Management graduate, he became a cattleman and worked to improve the native grasses and coastal bermuda on his land – and won Wise County Grand Champion bale of hay in his first year there!

Ray continued his career in aviation as a flight instructor at Meacham Field in Fort Worth, training American Airlines pilots in their flight simulator, and then flew the band Aerosmith and the country legend Charlie Pride during their music tours.

Later he joined Texas Instruments as a corporate pilot, where he retired once again after 13 years.

His love of Jesus was fostered by his nearly 40 years of membership at the First United Methodist Church of Decatur, and many years at the First United Methodist Church of Alvord until his death. Music was a key part of worship for Ray. He was proud that Nanci was the organist at Decatur FUMC for decades and purchased the pipes for the new organ there. He also cherished his Tuesday morning bible study at the First Baptist Church Decatur and his fellowship with the members of that group.

Also important to Ray was the Wise County Veterans group, where he was a founding member and helped organize the building of the Veterans’ Park in Decatur.

If you feel so moved, donations to his beloved First United Methodist Church of Alvord or to the St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital (that tugged at his heart strings) will honor Ray’s memory.

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of God stands forever, (Isaiah 40:8)

He is survived by his wife of almost 60 years, Nanci Lee Nellis; his daughters, Stacey Earley, Liza Banks, Erin Nellis and Barbara Nellis Townsend; his grandchildren, James Earley, Chloe Banks and George Earley; his great-grandchildren, Gene Marie Earley and Isaac George Earley.

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