



## Roy Clark Kepferle

December 28, 1926 - October 9, 2022

Roy Clark Kepferle, born December 28, 1926, in Greeley, CO, to Dorothy Gladys (Ayers) Kepferle and Joseph Royal Kepferle, died on October 9, 2022, in Port Tobacco, MD, at the age of 95. The cause of death was end-stage renal failure.

A lover of rocks, nature, and family, Roy was the eldest of five boys. Growing up in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains in the small Plains town of Dover, CO, in Weld County, surrounded by Ayers and Clark cousins including his “twin cousin” Gladys Ayers, Dad survived the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, his father’s practical jokes, and the antics of four younger brothers. When teaching his brother’s gun safety, Roy took his dad’s shotgun, and after telling them never to point it at anyone, pulled the trigger and blasted his parents’ mattress. On another occasion, in the era before Frisbees, they ran out of cowpies to toss and instead found old cracked plates at the back of the cupboard—Gramma’s antiques from her Kellogg family. Dad’s fond memories of growing up included singing, memorizing poems, hiking and fishing in the mountains, and getting his first car, a Model A Ford. Near the end of WWII, he signed up for the Army Reserve at age 17 at Fort Logan, CO, on May 20, 1944, and began studying pre-engineering at Fort Collins College A&E (now Colorado State). That summer, as part of the Army Specialized Training Program, he transferred to Yale University to study Japanese with classmates who called themselves the Ronin, or leaderless samurai. After turning 18, he

entered active service on March 16, 1945, with the US Army's 24th Infantry Division, formerly the Hawaiian Division (with Taro leaf patch). After basic training at Camp Maxey, TX, on the Red River, he was assigned again to study Japanese at the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities. On February 27, 1946, he shipped out from Camp Beale, CA, as part of the US Army Occupation of Japan. During the 16-day voyage, he became sick, temporarily lost his hearing, and was hospitalized at Camp Zama, south of Tokyo. With his fellow translators dispersed, he was transferred to the HQ company as an administrative NCO, based first at Okayama on Honshu and then on Kyushu. He rose to the rank of technical sergeant and after seven months in Japan was honorably discharged at Camp Beale on November 25, 1946, having received the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, and the Army of Occupation Medal.

Returning to civilian life, Roy took a year off to work and follow his love for rocks and the mountains, including hiking Longs Peak, CO. In 1947, he began studying geology as an excuse to get out in nature, receiving his BS in Geology/Earth Sciences at the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1950. As a beneficiary of the GI Bill, he wanted to give back to his country, so he joined the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in 1950. After a brief stint in Washington, DC, he mapped eastern Montana uranium, coal, and shale deposits. While in Miles City, MT, Roy met Rhua Ethel Slavens on a Valentine's Day blind double date. Married in Miles City on October 27, 1951, they moved wherever his USGS assignments took them, with children being born at each stay: Grand Forks, ND (Mary Rose); Rapid City, SD (Michael), where he completed his MS in Geology/Earth Sciences at South Dakota School of Mines in 1953–54; and Denver, CO (Gregory). When the USGS sought a Japanese-speaker to work in Tokyo with Japanese geologists to analyze Japan's data on coal, gas, and uranium explorations from China and the South Pacific, Roy volunteered, despite being lead geologist on a project in the Dakotas. In 1956, with three children, Roy and Rhua traveled to Japan

on the USS General William Mitchell, a converted troop carrier. The family enjoyed life in Tokyo and returned to the States four years later with two more children (Anne Marie and Mary Elizabeth). When assigned to map central Kentucky, Roy moved his family to Elizabethtown, KY, at the end of 1960, where sons Christopher and Matthew were born. Life in Kentucky included long Sunday drives through the country singing cowboy songs, stopping for road cuts, and stalking the wild asparagus as well as geology field trips and fishing with his children, teaching geology at the local community college, and participating in Cursillo and retreats at the Trappist Abbey of Gethsemani. Once, because of his knowledge of the Kentucky backwoods, he joined a search party and saved the life of a toddler who had been lost for over 18 hours.

Having been impressed by his Japanese colleagues respectfully calling him "Doctor" Kepferle, Roy took a study leave from the USGS in 1968, completing his PhD in Geology/Earth Sciences at the University of Cincinnati in 1972. With the family move to Cincinnati, daughter Theresa was born. After a brief stint on an early shale gasification project, he retired from the USGS in December 1981. In 1982, he accepted a professorship in the Department of Geology at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, KY, where he enjoyed taking his geology students on summer field trips to Dillon, Montana. After retiring from ECU in 1994, Roy and Rhua enjoyed researching genealogy and visiting family before Rhua's death in December 2011 after a long illness.

With many of his children and grandchildren living near Washington, DC, Roy moved to Greenspring Senior Living Community in Springfield, VA, in 2014. There he actively engaged in dialogue groups on race, religion, and the environment, sang with the Choristers, and especially enjoyed the square and ballroom dancing groups, where he met his beloved friend and companion, Penny Showell. Throughout the years, his natural curiosity as well as his love

for family and planet Earth inspired him to travel to Italy, Germany, the Grand Canyon, Denali, Yosemite, and the far edges of the North American continent from Tomales Bay to Iceland.

Roy touched many lives with his generosity, his teaching, his puns, and his classic martinis. He volunteered with civic and church groups wherever he lived: 4-H, the Optimist Club, and PTA (Elizabethtown, KY); the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Avon Woods Nature Center (Cincinnati, OH); and the Fairfax County Volunteer Solutions, the Greenspring Catholic community, the Democrats, and Greenspring Players theater group (Springfield, VA).

When asked what is most important for humans to think about in the universe, Roy combined his scientific curiosity, his love for humanity and nature, his gentle humor, and his personal faith. He replied that we need to think about the vast enormity of space and of time, the infinitesimal tininess and briefness of the human life, and the importance to do the most good we can with the life we are given. And then he added, “And God is in there somewhere.”

In his last days, interspersed with snippets of poems and songs, and musings on geology, the paradigm shift of continental drift, and sedimental feelings, Roy shared bits of his wit and wisdom: “Gravity—it’s the law.” “Depends—the greatest invention since fire.” “Life is a mystery.” “Spinach— to hell with it!”

When asked what he loved most about his life, Roy responded, “What a wonderful family I’ve had. What an enjoyable life I’ve had. What loving people I’ve met. A wonderful world.”

Roy passed softly from this life into the mystery on October 9, 2022, leaving his family and friends grieving his absence but celebrating his life and grateful for the love, joy, and delight they shared with him.

Roy was predeceased by his parents; his four younger brothers: James, Dwight, Robert, and Loyd Kepferle; his spouse, Rhua Ethel (Slavens); two children, Matthew Clark Kepferle and Anne Marie Thorpe; daughter-in-law Deborah (Waltman) Kepferle; and two grandchildren, Jason Grant Thorpe and Joseph Patrick (Pat) Kepferle. Surviving family members include six children and their spouses: Mary Rose Sperlich (Helmut), Michael Roy (Darlene Breck), Gregory Ralph (Jean Marie Blomquist), Mary Elizabeth Kepferle (Thomas Gorguissian), Christopher Damien (Liz Abele), Theresa Marie Wagerson (Kevin), and son-in-law Sherman Thorpe; ten grandchildren: Katherine Christina (Kaci) Garland (Chris), Margaret Gorguissian, Andrew Kepferle, Chase Kepferle, Megan Rose Kepferle, Francis Sperlich, Max Sperlich (Jasmin), Sevi Sperlich, Christian Wagerson, Karl Wagerson ; four great-grandchildren: Patrick Daniel Garland, Emily Kate Garland, Emily-Rose Sperlich, Marla-Fae Sperlich; three step-granddaughters: Cynthia Bouet (Angel), Christie Burnett (Joe), and Melissa Simonson (Paul); twelve step-greatgrandchildren: Alyssa, Alayna, and Nicky Cox; Jacob, Jaxon, and Joie Burnett; Lily Mellott, Andrew, and Logan Bouet; Kylie, Paul, and Zoe Simonson; his beloved companion, Ellen (Penny) Showell, and numerous cousins, nieces, and nephews.

A private celebration of Roy's life will be held in November at Greenspring Senior Living Community in Springfield, VA. Inurnment at Arlington National Cemetery is pending. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to your favorite charity.

# Cemetery Details

**Arlington National Cemetery**

Arlington, VA

# Events

**Details are pending.**

# Tribute Wall



“ *Roy Clark Kepferle*

October 08, 2023 at 10:45 PM



“ *Roy Clark Kepferle*

October 04, 2023 at 03:12 PM



“ *In January of 1981, I returned to school from an extended internship and there was Dr. Kepferle. My life was changed for the better by this man. What a kind and generous person. His knowledge of geologic mapping inspired me to make a career out of it. I'm wonderfully blessed to have known him. My wife and I loved Rhua too.*

Mac Swinford - November 18, 2022 at 11:05 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Roy Clark Kepferle.*



November 07, 2022 at 09:32 PM

AK

“ *Rest in peace Mr. Kepferle.*



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**Ardrika Key** - October 19, 2022 at 01:41 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Roy Clark Kepferle.*



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October 19, 2022 at 09:50 AM

JC

“ *My first class in my graduate career was Dr. K's field class. He was funny, kind and very knowledgeable.*

*At our Field Camp, he ran circles around us young folks and still had energy to go fishing in the evening.*

*I admired him tremendously for his kindness and generosity. I shall miss him greatly!*

*Dr. K, I know the Big Guy has a huge geology project for you when you get there!*

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**Jennifer Click** - October 18, 2022 at 08:23 PM

JM

“ *Roarke Building 1982. I recall waking and somewhat paralyzed by sleeping in one of those highback oak chairs. First of nine classes I had with Roy. It may well have been his first lecture.*

*"I think what you need us beer!" Rot says to me after I got sideways with a mess of nettles off a point bar on the Mississippi River (joint trip with UC and Miami).*

*Dillon Montana. June 1984. I was in the dorm shower at field camp. Though the shower mists comes Roy in fishing gear and a stringer of trout. "Joe, I found where they're biting!"*

*Very very few can attain a level of humanity. Many times I've asked myself, "What Would Roy Do?"*

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**joe meiman** - October 18, 2022 at 04:21 PM

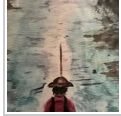
R

“ *I was lucky enough to have been in the group of students that made up Dr. Kepferle's last Field Camp at ECU in 1992. It was a wild ride, but he made the trip fun and enjoyable and great. While staying in Yellowstone, our van ran out of fuel... I don't remember the details, but a little while later some random guy showed up with a gas can... it was Dr. Kepferle's brother. I snapped this pic of them laughing, and it warms my heart and soul thinking about that event and the many, many other memories of him. Thank you Dr. Kepferle.*



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**Jay Ramsey** - October 18, 2022 at 09:48 AM



*Uncle Jim! :-)*

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**Mike Kepferle** - October 20, 2022 at 11:26 AM



*Thanks for the wonderful pictures! Two of my best uncles!*

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**Kathleen Eichman (Kepferle)** - October 20, 2022 at 04:57 PM



“ *Roy was my thesis advisor at EKU, a mentor, and a hero. What a wonderful teacher and man. Best of luck Special K into your next adventure.*

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**John Vanover** - October 17, 2022 at 02:40 PM



“ *Sweet Tranquility Basket was purchased for the family of Roy Clark Kepferle.*



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October 17, 2022 at 01:23 PM



“ *Roy was my thesis advisor, mentor, and friend. His kind and cheerful nature was contagious and his advice thoughtful and clear. He knew how to fish and how to grill it up on the spot; and he could tell hilarious stories while he cooked. He was an amazing geologist, with many endearing nicknames: Captain Fanclastic; Clastic Man, Dr. Roy the WonderBoy...*

*Roy changed the way I thought about Geology and helped shape my life in general and I am thankful for both. Rest peacefully my friend.*

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**Carl Rhodes** - October 17, 2022 at 11:45 AM

AH

“*Dr. Kepferle and I worked together at the Institute for Mining & Minerals Research in Lexington during the summer of 1981, just prior to his first semester teaching at ECU. We carpoled and shared the same research lab, he was researching Conodonts in the Devonian shales. We mapped the Cincinnati Arch, we drilled, cut cores, blasted and mined the black shale; and he would recite poems. An absolute large influence on my life as geology student. My greatest summer ever was field camp 1983 in Dillion and elsewhere. God what a glorious summer. One poem Dr. Kepferle taught me:*

*Many heavy pack we sling  
By the thought & dent of hammering.*

*We run our lines and tie them in  
We measure strata thick & thin.*

*We wear a patch on our backside  
Near a better men you'll find  
As we pick away on the old earth's rind.*

*And Sundays work is never sin  
By the thought & dent, of hammering.*

*God bless you Roy, you were always a legend and my geology hero.*

*Anthony Herald, PG  
Class of 1983*

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Anthony Herald - October 17, 2022 at 09:56 AM

DC

“ *In the mid-1990s I briefly hired Roy as a consultant to help me learn the geology of the Fort Knox quadrangle. I had hoped to understand where and how he called the contacts, what logistics were required to traverse firing range areas, and what it was like to be part of the KGS mapping team back in the '60s and '70s. I got all that and so much more. Every time I travel I-71 through Kentucky I hear his accounting of the Ordovician-Silurian sequence, and feel the encouragement that he gave. Thanks Roy.*

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**Dennis Connair** - October 17, 2022 at 09:11 AM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Roy Clark Kepferle.*



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October 16, 2022 at 09:32 AM