



Ramon H. "Ray" Mason

January 19, 1918 - January 13, 2011

Morton - Ramon H. "Ray" Mason, a Morton attorney for nearly 60 years and the founder of "Morton's first law office," died peacefully at 7:05 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 13, 2011, at Apostolic Christian Restmor in Morton, shortly before his 93rd birthday.

Special music will be performed by the Central Illinois Banjo Club and the Edward and Janet Kaizer Combo of Bradley University's Department of Music.

He was born Raymond Hawes Mason on Jan. 19, 1918, in Atlanta, Ill., to Walter R. and Litta (Hawes) Mason. As an adolescent, he began to spell his first name "Ramon" (pronounced "RAY-men"), at the suggestion of his older brother Dale and perhaps under the influence of the Mexican silent-film star Ramon Novarro. His first name was legally changed to "Ramon" in 1942.

He married his high school sweetheart, Mary Alice Thompson, on July 3, 1943, at Eminence Christian Church in rural Atlanta, and was a devoted husband for 53 years, in her sickness and in her health. She died Aug. 3, 1996.

He also was preceded in death by an infant son, Robert, in 1951; two brothers; a half brother; a half sister and an infant half sibling.

Survivors include two sons, John Mason of Silver Spring, Md., and Craig Mason of Morton; and a granddaughter, Tomiko Mason of Silver Spring.

A 1935 graduate of Atlanta Community High School and a member of the Atlanta High School Alumni Association, he worked in the 1930s for various central Illinois grocers, including his family's store in Atlanta.

He received his bachelor's degree, in marketing, in 1942 from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where, during the big band era, he played drums for four years with the Johnny Bruce Orchestra. His life-long enthusiasm for drumming began when he was very young. In 2008 he said, "I recall my mother playing the piano and teaching me to keep time as I pounded on my first snare drum, a round five-pound tin of Campfire Marshmallows from my dad's grocery store."

A World War II and Korean War Army veteran, he served from 1942 to 1946 and from 1951 to 1952, graduating from Officer Candidate School and the Command and General Staff School, where he prepared for the anticipated invasion of Japan. He attained the rank of Captain. He served in the Army Reserve from 1946 to 1951. In 2008 he recalled,

“During my time in the budget, fiscal and finance departments of the Army, I had to study regulations and issue opinions on them, and that helped lead me to an interest in the law.” He was a lifetime member and former judge advocate of American Legion Post 318 in Morton. He was a lifetime charter member of the National World War II Memorial Society and a charter member of the National World War II Museum. His account of his Army service appears in the book “Tazewell County Veterans of World War II: Remembrances.” He taught introductory economics at the University of Illinois while attending its College of Law, from which he graduated in 1949. He later attended continuing education courses at Harvard Law School.

Believed to be Morton’s first full-time, resident lawyer, he began the practice of general civil law in November 1949, in Morton, where, aside from Army service, he practiced into his 90th year. On July 1, 2008, he officially took what he called early retirement but remained active in his church and community to his dying day, his death coming just hours after he had attended his weekly Rotary meeting.

He was a single practitioner until 1981. Thomas A. Krieg was his associate from 1981 to 1987 and his partner from 1988 to 2008.

In 2008, at the Governor’s Mansion in Springfield, he was honored for his commitment to his profession and his community with induction into the Senior Illinoisans Hall of Fame, which recognizes distinguished service by Illinoisans age 65 or older.

He was named Grand Marshal of the 2010 Morton Pumpkin Festival parade.

In 1962-63, he and his family were hosts to Morton’s first foreign exchange student, Fritz Mattejat of Germany.

He served as school board and school district attorney for Morton and Pleasant Hill during the years when Morton High School and three of Morton’s four elementary schools were planned and built. He had also served as attorney for the Village of Morton.

He had served as a legal adviser to the Capital Campaign Committee for the Bertha Frank Performing Arts Center in Morton.

He had served on the Tazewell County Selective Service Board, as president of the Morton Parent Teacher Association, president and board member of Morton Community Chest, and as co-chair of Morton’s Inter-Church Crusade Executive Committee in 1968. He had served as a corporate secretary of Morton Progress Inc. and was instrumental in the founding of the Morton Youth Council on Civic Affairs, the Hopedale Investment Co., and the Hopedale Development Co.

He served for 37 years as a director of Community Bank of Hopedale and in 1995 was named Better Banks of Illinois Director of the Year.

A co-founder of We Care Inc., a social service organization providing food and transportation to those in need, he was a former member of its board and its foundation’s board. He also was a current or former director of Eminence Grain and Coal Co., Action Concepts, Heartland Home of Seniors, the Morton Temple Association and Project

Daybreak Inc., a pioneering effort in adult day care.

He was a past member of the board of Morton Chamber of Commerce and the co-recipient of the chamber's 1994 Distinguished Service Award. In 2005 he received a Longevity Award from the chamber, and Mason and Krieg Law Offices received a chamber Golden Pumpkin Award in 2007.

A lifetime member, former president and 50-year honoree of the Tazewell County Bar Association, he also was a lifetime member of the American and Illinois State bar associations and a past member of the Illinois State Bar Association's Committee on Judicial Advisory Polls. The ISBA named him a Senior Counsellor in 1999.

He was a lifetime member of Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity and served as vice justice of its Magruder chapter while in law school.

He was a 61-year member of Community United Church of Christ, Morton's oldest continuous congregation, where, in addition to providing free legal services to the church, he had served as council member and president; co-chair of the Visitation Evangelism Group and of the Serve and Grow Campaign; Sunday school teacher; a co-founder of the Continuing Gifts Ministry; and a member of boards, study groups, the Long Range Planning Committee, the Church and Community Project Committee, the Community Center SOAR Group, adult Sunday school, Men's Fellowship, Sunday Nighters, Friends over Sixty and American Cancer Society Relay for Life teams.

He was a lifetime member of the University of Illinois Alumni Association, the Morton Historical Society, Kennel Lake Sportsmen's Club and Morton Lodge 352 AF & AM. He was a member of the John E. Cribbet Society of the University of Illinois College of Law and the Presidents Council of the University of Illinois Foundation. He and other members of the Ray and Ida (Crihfield) Thompson family received the University of Illinois College of ACES Alumni Association Family Spirit Award for 2004.

He was a current or former member of the Peoria Symphony Guild, the Art Institute of Chicago, Consumer Reports Foundation, the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, the Illinois Sheriffs' Association, UNICEF, USO, the Tazewell County Farm Bureau, WTVP 47 (PBS) and the Atlanta, Ill., Betterment Fund.

He was a charter partner of the Bull and Bear Investment Club and a charter member of Peoria's Lakeview Museum of the Arts and Sciences and of the Morton chapter of the American Field Service (AFS).

A Paul Harris Fellow of Rotary International and a faithful contributor to the Rotary Foundation, he was a Centurion Member of Morton Rotary and a recipient of its Vocational Service Leader of the Month Award.

He was a member of and former drummer for the Central Illinois Banjo Club, last playing his drums shortly before turning 90. A few weeks before his death, while being serenaded by the Banjo Club at supper time at Apostolic Christian Restmor nursing home, he picked up his silverware and began to drum along.

He was a former member of the Creve Coeur Club of Peoria; Pekin Country Club; and the Lions, Jaycees, Music Boosters and Toastmasters, all in Morton.

He was a benefactor of the Peoria Symphony Orchestra, the Peoria Area Civic Chorale, WGLT FM, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, the Central Illinois Memorial Kidney Fund, the Morton Community Foundation, the Morton Fine Arts Association, the Bertha Frank Performing Arts Center, the Morton Public Library, the Atlanta, Ill., Library and Museum and Atlanta's Eminence Christian Church.

Events

JAN 21 **Visitation** 04:00PM - 07:00PM

Knapp - Johnson Funeral Home and Cremation Center
140 S. Detroit Ave., Morton, IL, US, 61550

JAN 22 **Service** 11:00AM

Atlanta Cemetery
1975th Avenue, Atlanta, IL, US

JAN 29 **Service** 11:30AM

Community United Church Of Christ
300 N. Main St., Morton, IL, US

Comments



“ Grampa Mason had the biggest heart of anyone I have ever known. I used to think that he was Santa Claus because of his generosity, the twinkle in his eye, and his penchant for leaving oranges in my stocking on Christmas morning. I will always remember visiting the farm with him, watching him play the drums in the basement, eating oatmeal and spudnuts together for breakfast before Dad and Craig woke up, sneaking the butter mints from the jar on the kitchen table, the huge class ring he wore, the way he would tell stories with me on his lap, starting with "Well, Tomi...", trips to the Cracker Barrel, and big hugs at the Peoria Airport. Grandpa I will miss you so much, but I am so glad that you were able to live such a long fulfilling life and to touch so many lives, including my own. Thank you for loving me Grampa, I will always love you. My thoughts are with my Dad, Uncle Craig, and all of the family spread out through Illinois and across the states. Grampa Mason will not soon be forgotten, and never far from my heart.

Tomiko Mason - January 28, 2011 at 11:36 PM



“ Dear John and Craig,
Your father helped define Morton, Illinois. His contributions to this community helped make Morton an outstanding place to grow and learn. I always looked up to him as a kid because he was a leader in the city but more importantly, he was always kind and approachable. We need more people like Ray Mason.

My thoughts are with you as you celebrate and grieve his passing.
Sue

Sue Reuling Furness - January 27, 2011 at 10:38 AM



“ John and Craig,
I have many fond memories of the "old days" of the potluck gang and all us kids running around. My recollection of your father is of a formal yet kind man who always seemed interested in how my life was going. I always appreciated him for that.

eldon
I would enjoy hearing from you John.

Eldon Partridge - January 22, 2011 at 07:00 PM



“ Craig, may our prayers be with you and your family. I have many fond memories of your father. He touched so many lives.

Jim Yarbrough - January 22, 2011 at 10:41 AM



“ John, Craig, & Family, You have our sympathy and prayers. Your father will be greatly missed in the Morton community. We always enjoyed visiting with him.

Norm & Barb Ricketts - January 21, 2011 at 04:50 PM



“ Craig and John, May the memories of your father last a life time. Both of your parents were always there for our family during our years there in Morton. May Gold Bless both of you.

Karla (Christiansen) Jones - January 21, 2011 at 11:35 AM



“ Ray, you were not only a friend and a confidant, but a man of your word who loved the Lord as we do. May you and Mary simply be awaiting the arrival of friends and family as you rest in the arms of Jesus. Our hearts and prayers are with you and yours.

Sincerely, Leon and Sue Clearwater

Leon & Sue Clearwater - January 20, 2011 at 10:18 PM



“ Hi Craig, I just want to express my sympathy in the passing of your Dad. I know you did your best to take care of him. I know it isn't always easy to take people to Doctor appointments. God bless you for your efforts. May God bless and comfort you. Sincerely, Karen Kaiser

Karen Kaiser - January 20, 2011 at 11:30 AM



“ What a wonderful tribute! Our thoughts and prayers are with John, Craig, and the rest of the family.

Carolyn and Sam Chapman
Reno, NV



“ My condolences to John Mason, son of Ramon Mason.

Wayne Cloyd - January 20, 2011 at 10:04 AM



“ Our sympathies to you, John and Craig. We salute your father for his long life and faithful stewardship of time and talent. We wish both of you well as you move on in your own lives.

Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Ronald & Darlene Christiansen - January 20, 2011 at 09:33 AM



“ Wishing the family of Ray our deepest sympathy.
Mr & Mrs. Jerry Klopfenstein

Jerry Klopfenstein - January 20, 2011 at 08:36 AM



“ Dear John, Craig, and Family,
You have my sympathy in the passing of your Dad and grandfather. I enjoyed visiting with your Dad. God bless you and your family. Karen Kaiser

Ms. Karen Kaiser - January 19, 2011 at 06:41 PM



“ John (& Craig)...
While we are saddened to hear of the passing of your Dad, we can only marvel at what a full and worthwhile life he lived for all of those years in Morton. I have many fond childhood memories that include Ray and Mary Mason, both in time spent at your house and the many activities we shared at the Community Church. Hang on to the wonderful memories and take comfort in the fact that you are a fitting legacy to the memory of a man marked by life long contributions to our hometown community. God bless each of you!

Vance Rugaard - January 19, 2011 at 05:18 PM



“ To the sons of Ramon Mason,

Please accept my condolences upon your father's passing away. I first met your dad in 1980 when interviewing for a position as an associate attorney in central Illinois. Based on that first meeting with your father, I concluded he was one of the nicest people I had ever met - very polite, courteous, mannerly, and so on. I ended up accepting a position in another town, but saw Mr. Mason a few times over the years, at seminars and lawyer meetings. He always remembered me and took a few minutes to visit with me. I am certain if we had more attorneys like your father, our society would be the better for it.

Sincerely,

Hunt Henderson

Hunt Henderson - January 19, 2011 at 02:57 PM



“ Craig and Family,
Ray will be sorely missed by us all. He was a wonderful man with many talents. God bless you during this time of loss.

Laurie Swanke - January 19, 2011 at 12:00 PM



“ Ray will be greatly missed among the staff and residents at Restmor. May you find comfort in your memories.

Kelley Stone - January 19, 2011 at 11:10 AM



“ To Ray's sons John and Craig:

I served with your dad on the Board of Directors of The Community Bank of Hopedale. He was a gentleman, and it was an honor to know him. I will treasure his memory. My thoughts are with you.

Rod White - January 19, 2011 at 09:09 AM



“ Craig and John,
Your dad will be missed in the Morton Community. He has given so much of himself to all of us. We just Christmas caroled to him a few weeks ago, and when he played the utensils as his drum, I was brought to tears. He found a way to make MUSIC....even when he moved beyond actually playing the drums. I walked away from that experience feeling blessed to have shared in it. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Dee Jonas - January 19, 2011 at 12:08 AM



“ Mr. Mason we loved you. Craig thanks for helping your Dad. I played at the ice cream social at your church last year and enjoyed Ray's company that day. It was my last time to see him. I have played with your Dad 25 years and enjoyed his playing and I play a different wash board when he is there because he was a great drummer. I will miss him and I am a better person because I knew him. Thanks Ray !!!!

Jim Harper - January 18, 2011 at 10:53 PM



“ Craig - it seems the years have passed too quickly. Surely it was yesterday that we were all performing in parades in marching band. Thank goodness we have our memories. I remember your dad as always being such a sweet person. Everyone loved him. My parents spoke so highly of him and your mother. You and your family have my deepest sympathies. ~ Carrie

Carrie Young-Schmidt - January 18, 2011 at 02:40 PM



“ I will really miss seeing Ray around the halls of Restmor. He was such a sweet man. One of my favorite things to do with Ray was to help him pick out his clothes for the next day, especially if he had an important event to get dressed up for. My thoughts are with your family at this hard time.

Maria Erdmier - January 18, 2011 at 12:46 PM



“ Craig, Your parents were a big part of our family life. I enjoyed talking to your dad when you would bring him to church the past year or so and I happened to be there. My sympathy to you. Judy Kaulfuss

Judy Kaulfuss - January 17, 2011 at 07:52 PM



“ We all at Restmor will miss Ray. May you find comfort in your memories.

Kelley Stone - January 17, 2011 at 09:16 AM



“ Ray and Mary were very special people.
They touched so many lives in very special ways, especially their church family. We all loved them. God Bless!

June Rugaard - January 15, 2011 at 04:37 PM



“ Craig,
My prayers and sympathy are with you. I have always enjoyed talking to your father throughout the years when I would see him around town. I will miss him greatly.

Mike

Michael Kaiser - January 14, 2011 at 04:27 PM