

## **Raymond Kondo**

June 27, 1954 - April 13, 2020

Ray's grandfather was born in Japan and eventually met his grandmother in El Paso and they opened a small grocery store on the border. When the store was passed to Ray's parents, Ray worked in the store filling sacks of pinto beans, sweeping, and learning the value of hard work. When Ray was a young boy, his dad would pay him a dollar for every shoplifter he caught. We give a lot of credit to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, but I think the law enforcement seed was planted a lot sooner. Ray said that his parents showed him by example that *hard work, integrity, love of God, country, and family are what make a man.*

Many people didn't realize that Ray was an environmental engineer for 12 years before joining the U.S. Marshals in 1989. He was described as a legend by his own colleagues during and after his 22 years in the U.S. Marshal Service. He held many roles (PA, GA, D.C., AZ) culminating as Assistant Chief Deputy here in Tucson. Ray's best-known cases included the arrest of one of the U.S. Marshals' Top 15 fugitives, a serial killer, and other high-profile cases.

His work also took him to faraway places like Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Central America. In fact, he was shot in Puerto Rico by a sniper as they staged to enter a building to capture a fugitive. They returned to the office and a doctor came to stitch up Ray's leg before returning to duty in the afternoon. He was mostly annoyed because he wasn't making much money at the time and those pants, he said, were not cheap.

Ray served as an advisor to several TV shows about the US Marshal Service. He was the on-set advisor for the show "Justified" and even starred with Chuck Norris in an episode of "Walker, Texas Ranger" when he was in Dallas. He was not just an extra, but appears throughout the episode at the range, driving cars with the main characters, and when Chuck Norris kicks the snot out of the bad guy at the end, Ray is there to cuff him and haul him off to jail. It must have been hard for Chuck to not be the toughest guy on the set that day. There was a rumor that Chuck Norris asked Ray for HIS autograph.

While arresting someone early in his career a scuffle ensued as the fugitive decided he didn't want to go to jail after all. I don't have to tell you who won the scuffle, and as Ray was cuffing him, the guy said, "*You are one badass Fed!*" That comment followed him throughout his legendary career and became immortalized on the license plate of his blue 2017 Corvette (1BADFED)

And yet, there are other stories of Ray jumping into a golf cart to patrol a retirement community in short shorts and a t-shirt to blend in with the locals as he searched for fugitives that were thought to be in the trailer park. Pretty versatile.

They say Ethics is how you act when no one is watching. With Ray it didn't matter if anyone was watching or not – the right thing to do was the right thing to do. Ray's two mantras were **“Respect Yourself and Others”** and **“Always Do The Right Thing”**

Comment from a colleague when he first met Ray early in his career at the academy when Ray was an instructor: *“I can still remember being in the classroom on Day 1, sweating in my suit and tie with all the stress and uncertainty, Ray walks in looking like something out of a movie: all fit, confident, and square-jawed, regaling us with tales of derring-do as a manhunter on the Dallas fugitive task force. He embodied everything that most of us joined up to do in the first place. I took one look at Ray and thought to myself: I want to be THAT guy.”*

Everyone was drawn to Ray's magnetic personality, smile, and laugh. He shined an aura that lit everyone up around him. The pistol range is different without Ray - there is some strong energy missing. We're not going to see Ray's smile or hear his voice in person, but he is a part of me, and part of him will be with all of us forever.

Written by Jim Heffelfinger