A Louisiana native, he studied entomology at Louisiana State University and surrounds himself with mementoes: his 1954 master's thesis on silverfish and insecticide; handwritten recipes for étouffée; black-and-white photos from days flying a Fixed Wing Caribou and helicopters into hot zones in Vietnam. Ray's enjoying life at Independence Village, where he puts some of his life experiences to use. He did a presentation about bugs at the Summer Camp held on the Independence Hill Campus last summer. He also participates in the retirement community’s chili cook-off and takes ballroom dancing classes.

He's a gifted story-teller, too. Ray tells of two tours in Vietnam and of flights over Korea's Demilitarized Zone. "We could see the guns trained on us...as we flew by," he says. And he nonchalantly mentions that in addition to working as a flight instructor and a professor of military science, he also trained soldiers how to fire nuclear weapons on the battlefield. “We never had to use [that technology], but we were prepared to if we had to,” he says.

Ray has always shown initiative and intellect wherever life took him—from Cajun country to combat zones, from fishing waters to Independence Village. “Looking back over my life, I see I've really had a wonderful life," he says.