

Mr. Ray Azbell
Registry of Honor
2007

Raymond A. Azbell, born April 12, 1920, is a lifelong resident of Sheffield. He was graduated from SHS, class of '38, then attended the University of North Alabama. Ray received his Bachelor of Electrical Engineering degree from Auburn University in 1943. He is a Registered Professional Engineer and life member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers.

Ray began a long career with Sheffield Utilities in 1938, first as a janitor, then as a warehouseman, plant accountant and lineman helper. Following military service, he returned as chief engineer in 1946, became Power Department manager in 1966, then general manager in 1971. He retired in 1986 after 48 years with Sheffield Utilities. The recipient of Tennessee Valley Public Power Association's Distinguished Service Award for 1985 capped a fruitful career.

A servant in many capacities, Ray was a Naval officer in World War II and again during the Korean Conflict; he was president of North Alabama Power Distributors Association, president of Tennessee Valley Public Power Association, board chairman of Distributors Insurance Company, and board member of American Public Gas Association, American Public Power Association, and Tennessee Valley River Association. He is a member of the Masonic Lodge in Sheffield and past president, Paul Harris Fellow and sixty-year member of the Sheffield Rotary Club; a past board member of TVA Federal Credit Union; and past chairman of the Shoals Hospital Board.

A lifelong member of First Presbyterian Church, Sheffield, Ray has served as a Ruling Elder, Bible teacher, and choir member. He has often supplied a number of churches as a lay minister in the pulpit, in service organizations, or in the workplace. Ray has solidly lived his faith and has been quick to share it with others.

Ray was married to the late Earlene Maddox Azbell and they had two children who attended Sheffield schools. Son Raymond Allen Azbell II is now a medical doctor in Morgantown, NC, board certified in emergency medicine. Daughter Debra Azbell Woods is a graduate of the University of Alabama School of Dentistry and is a periodontist in Birmingham. Twice blest, Ray is now married to the former Wilma (Billie) Jamieson.

With a heart for youth and education, Ray is a long term supporter of the University of North Alabama music department. He holds a prize possession: honorary membership in the UNA jazz and concert bands. The UNA National Alumni Association awarded Ray the Community Service Award in 2003.

One of Ray's fondest desires is for every youth to have support, encouragement, and opportunity to reach his or her potential. In that regard, Ray has funded the C.M. Brewster Scholarship, an endowed scholarship awarded annually to a Sheffield High School senior.