

10/28/1951

9/20/2025

Rodney Eugene Swanigan

Rodney Eugene Swanigan, 73, went to be with Jesus on September 20 while at E. T. York (Haven) Hospice in Gainesville. Rod was born on October 28, 1951 in Tracy, California to Raymond "Bud" and Vinita Swanigan.

Rod was active in swimming and water polo at Tracy Joint Union High and graduated in 1969. He really loved the water and was fearless in going out in the Pacific to surf at his beloved Santa Cruz. On the family's regular visits back to Bud's home area in the Missouri Ozarks, Rod also loved swimming in the Missouri rivers. For many years Rod was a newspaper boy for The Tracy Press. Youth for Christ was an important part of his high school time along with Grace Baptist's youth group. He became active with martial arts and that continued to his time in Florida. Later he trained in Tai Chi and taught some classes in that art. He continued his education in Stockton at San Joaquin Delta College and then San Francisco State before deciding to move to Nashville, Tennessee. Opryland had recently opened and he worked there in food services, did studio work, taught music and for a brief time joined The Cousin Brothers on a tour of the northeast. He also worked at Shoney's where he became a manager at several Nashville stores. Shoney's executives sent him to Muscle Shoals, Alabama where he managed the first Shoney's in that area.

In 1978 he discovered the warm waters of the Gulf of America and moved to St. Petersburg, Florida. He worked there in food services, did life insurance sales and eventually began his 37-year career teaching at Bringe School of Music. Rod taught all stringed instruments as well as keyboard but guitar was his specialty. In 1985 he met his future wife, Karen, when she signed up for guitar lessons. His story telling and sense of humor were a big attraction but the most important attraction was that Rod was a believer in Jesus and had been "dragged" to a Bible-believing church all his life, just like Karen was.



Rod attended the Humanities Center in Pinellas Park, Florida for training as a massage therapist, graduated with honors and was hired on to teach part-time. With lifelong back issues, Rod had discovered the benefits of going for Rolfing sessions with Dr. Tom West. He went to some Rolfing seminars and was a firm believer in the benefits of this technique in realigning the body. Along with human clients, Rod helped dogs and horses using his therapeutic massage techniques.

Rod and Karen loved to travel and made many visits to see family in California as well as visiting 47 states, the Bahamas and a trip of a lifetime to Israel in 1999.

In 2017 Rod and Karen retired and moved to the woods of Dixie County with 2 indoor cats and 2 cockatiels. The number of cats eventually changed to 4 indoor cats and 5 (sometimes 6) outdoor cats. The peacefulness of the woods was made even more welcome as they loved seeing the deer, possums, raccoons, armadillos, gopher tortoises and many birds. Rod continued to use his teaching skills at Dixie Music and also as a substitute teacher for Dixie District Schools.

In 2021 Rod's health declined and he bravely went on kidney dialysis first at Fresenius in Trenton and, after training, he did home dialysis for 3 ½ years. He made friends at Fresenius with their wonderful staff. He also made friends with staff at Gainesville's Surgery Center where he went for regular checks on the veins used for needle placement for dialysis. This ended their days of travel but being in God's creation in Dixie County more than made up for it.

A celebration of life will be held at Trailrider's Club in Cross City on March 21, 2026 @1:00 p.m.

Rod is survived by his wife, Karen, who will continue to care for their animal family, especially his special cat buddy, Snapper; brothers, Stan of Tracy, California, Wes (Linda) of Carmichael, California and Mark (Denise) of LaGrange, Kentucky, along with nieces, nephews, cousins and many friends.

He's preceded by his parents, Raymond and Vinita Swanigan, uncles, aunts; sister-in-law, Gail; cousins, Vesta and Debbie.

He was a true original and Jesus is going to have His hands full!