

Roy Lawrence Rogers

Roy L. Rogers passed away on September 26, 2026, just days after his 90th birthday. He leaves behind a large and loving family and a lasting mark on the communities of Broward County. Roy was born on September 18, 1936, in Philadelphia. His father was a World War I veteran who carried the wounds of that war long after it ended, and he died when Roy was five years old. The family fell on hard times, and in the years that followed, Roy and his sister, Barbara, lovingly known as “Babs,” lived with relatives in Connecticut, Washington, D.C., Maryland, and New Jersey, often starting at a new school each year. Their mother, Virginia Brown, held the family together with the help of extended family and caring neighbors. Roy found constancy in books, reading his way through the libraries of the families who took them in and developing a lifelong love of history. He came of age in a warm and supportive community in the Bethesda, Maryland area, where he loved being outdoors and riding horses, and where the kindness of neighbors gave him educational opportunities he might not otherwise have had. He was especially grateful to the Tipton family, and throughout his life he credited them with much of his success.

At 17, with money tight at home, Roy dropped out of high school and enlisted in the United States Navy, choosing it to serve his country and to follow in the footsteps of the father he barely knew. When he learned that a small number of enlisted sailors could apply to the Naval Academy, he earned his GED in his spare time to qualify, and two years after enlisting, to the astonishment of his superiors, he was accepted. At the Academy he excelled in academics and athletics, graduating with distinction and becoming the Academy’s undefeated boxing champion. He made friendships there that lasted the rest of his life, and at a dance he met Susan Whelan, the love of his life. Susan’s family welcomed Roy with open arms, and their warmth filled a place in his heart that had been empty since boyhood. Roy graduated from the Naval Academy in 1960. Offered his choice of “any ship, any ocean,” he chose the Pacific, serving on a flagship destroyer that escorted aircraft carriers, and later served as an officer aboard a nuclear submarine. The gravity of that duty weighed on him and led him to rediscover his Catholic faith, which remained at the center of his life. He left the Navy as a Lieutenant in 1966.

Roy then moved to South Florida to be near his mother, who was living there, and to help her in her later years. His first job was helping develop Sabal Palm in the Fort Lauderdale area. He went on to work as a golf course architect with Robert Trent Jones out of Coral Ridge in Fort Lauderdale, designing courses across the United States and around the world, and along the way he became a landscape architect the hard way, without formal training.

During those years he was known to fly home from Spain for the weekend just to go diving with his friends on a boat he named the Lollipop. In 1972 he struck out on his own, guided by his belief that a golf course could become the heartbeat of a community by preserving open space, providing shade, cleaning the air, and giving residents a touch of the countryside. He designed courses in Delray Beach, at Wynmoor Village in Coconut Creek, and elsewhere, and earned the affectionate nickname “Mr. Green Jeans.” Roy was later recruited by Minto to plan and develop Township in Coconut Creek, Florida. He then spent many years as Senior Vice

President of Arvida. When Arvida set out to build a sustainable community at the edge of the Everglades, it chose Roy to lead the planning of what became the City of Weston, a community of roughly 10,000 acres. While the land was still undeveloped, he researched and selected the sites where its schools and parks would be built, and his vision of a community in harmony with nature helped make Weston a national model for planned communities.

Throughout his career, Roy believed Broward County's growth should be balanced against care for the land. His goal was never just to build developments but to create true communities, built in an environmentally sensitive way. His convictions sometimes put him at odds with his superiors. On one memorable occasion he stood firm to save a tree more than a hundred years old, and the tree was spared. Roy was known as a problem solver and the person to call when something needed to get through red tape. He made a real and positive difference in how Broward County grew.

Roy and Susan raised their four children in Deerfield Beach and later in Lighthouse Point, in a home across from DeGroff Park. Roy spent countless hours in that park talking with neighbors and enjoying the outdoors, and a bench there now bears Susan's name. Roy was active in civic life, and for 26 years he taught CCD at St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Lighthouse Point, touching generations of young people. The Rogers home was the heart of the family. For more than two decades, the Rogers family's Wednesday night dinners brought everyone who could make it to the house in Lighthouse Point to share a meal and each other's company.

Roy had many passions. He loved the ocean and the natural world. He dove Florida's waters for decades and passed his love and respect for the sea and its creatures on to his children and grandchildren. He had a special fondness for butterflies and worked with local schools to plant butterfly gardens alongside the students, teaching them to appreciate and protect the natural beauty around them. He was also famous for his homemade bread, which started out as a work in progress and, over the years, became something he perfected. He loved to read, and he had an incredible imagination. With the children, he was known to take hold of the dining room table as if it were an airplane and invite everyone aboard, and together they would imagine flying around the world, seeing faraway cities and places, and dropping in to visit friends and family.

A pioneer of environmental awareness in South Florida, Roy served on many boards throughout his life. In his later years, he became one of the visionaries behind Shipwreck Park and Wahoo Bay, and he raised funds for them tirelessly. He believed in restoring marine habitat and in giving children a place to learn why the ocean matters. That work is honored at the Roy L. Rogers Family Park & Wahoo Bay Conservation Site in Pompano Beach, across the inlet from the Hillsboro Lighthouse. Carrying his vision forward, Shipwreck Park is now working to acquire and sink a third artificial reef wreck off the Pompano coast. One writer who profiled Roy called him "a modern-day St. Francis of Assisi." Roy was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Susan "Mandy" Rogers, who passed away unexpectedly in December 2019, just one month shy of their 60th wedding anniversary, and by his sister, Barbara "Babs" Shearer. He is survived by his four children, Roy Jr. (Wife Cheryl), Brett (Wife Rimma), Karen (Husband James), and Jon Scott (Wife Susan); 15 grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren. Roy was deeply loved and will be dearly missed.

