



## Rod Swanigan

October 28, 1951 - September 20, 2025

Rodney Eugene Swanigan, 73, went to be with Jesus on September 20, 2025 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 Roling sessions with Dr. Tom West. He went to some Roling 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 Trail Rider’s Club in Cross City, Florida on March 21, 2026 at 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!

Arrangements are under the care of Rick Gooding Funeral Home Cross City Chapel, with locations in Cross City (352-498-5400) and Chiefland (352-493-0050). Please sign the online guest book at [rickgoodingfuneralhomes.com](http://rickgoodingfuneralhomes.com)

# Tribute Wall

LH

“ Leon Henkelman purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Rod Swanigan.



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Leon Henkelman - October 14, 2025 at 01:47 AM

HG

“ Rod was a member of our praise and worship band (Praise) in st. Pete in the 80's. He was a great guitar player, singer and spiritual leader for us.

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Howard Grimmenga - October 06, 2025 at 11:31 AM

DA

“ Karen,  
I'm so sorry for brother Rod's passing, and the pain of missing his presence, but I know we are all relieved that his physical suffering has ended. You both are loved by your Christian family, both locally and afar, and we're uplifting you in prayer. Brother Rod lives on in our hearts, and we are here for you always.

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David - September 30, 2025 at 03:38 AM

ED

“ One of my favorite memories with Rod, was a time when both Karen and Rod came for a visit to Wausau WI. Besides riding around Wisconsin on this trip, one day we to take a ride to our cabin for Brats (German sausage, for those who may not know) and Rod was under the impression we were going to make them and eat them at the cabin. After taking the brats out of freezer we continued on driving and making other stops. Needless to say Rod was starving by the time we got back to our house. I did not know what was so funny, till we did get back to our house....that they had been expecting to eat those brats up north. Still puts a smile on my face, even now but you may of had to be there to understand this better.

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**Edith** - September 27, 2025 at 07:01 PM