



IN MEMORIAM: RAY A. BALESTRI (1960-2025)

January 16, 2025

Bell Nunnally mourns the passing of Ray Allen Balestri, who died on January 4, 2025, of natural causes at the age of 64.

Ray, the energetic leader of Bell Nunnally's Transactional Section, was an integral part and a beloved partner of Bell Nunnally since 2009. He was widely known as a trusted advisor, strategist and advocate for his clients; a mentor to young attorneys and professionals; a passionate advocate and teacher of the law; and a valued colleague and friend.

A graduate of Harvard Law School (J.D., 1985) and the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (B.S., 1982), Ray quickly became a titan in the corporate and M&A world. As one of the top dealmakers in the United States, Ray's transactional highlights during his 40 years of experience ran the gamut from representing startup companies in seed, venture and private equity financings and recapitalizations to advising established companies on complex multi-billion-dollar M&A deals.

Ray dedicated significant time to mentor young attorneys and other professionals. He was passionate about imparting his extensive knowledge and experience to help others realize their potential and attain success. Ray's mentorship has fostered and strengthened many in the hallways of Bell Nunnally, including current Bell Nunnally attorneys Joshua Smith, Kimberly Cruz, Matthew DeWitte and Vikram Kadiri. Ray also inspired countless future business leaders and clients as an adjunct professor at SMU's Cox School of Business for 25 years, teaching the MBA course "Startups to IPOs: Financial Transactions for Entrepreneurs."

Bell Nunnally Managing Partner Christopher Trowbridge, a long-time friend and colleague of Ray, offered this reflection:

Ray was extraordinary in his ability to combine the sharpest legal analysis with savvy business strategy to achieve the client's goals. Ray was truly one-of-a-kind — with sophisticated wit, a mastery of words and prose and impeccable style. He maintained a keen interest in humanity, politics and the world around us.

Ray always had an informed opinion and was not afraid to offer criticism or praise — and it was always presented in a professional but often bold and entertaining manner. Many of the largest transactions in Bell Nunnally's history were led by Ray. His footprints in the corporate and M&A world have heightened the prestige and global significance of deals in Dallas and across Texas. He was man in full and leaves an indelible mark upon all lucky enough to have known him. Ray was a treasured friend and colleague to all of us at the firm, and this is a terrible and sudden loss of a brilliant, funny and charismatic man. We will deeply miss him. Ray will always remain a part of who Bell Nunnally is as a firm.

In lieu of flowers, Ray's family suggests donations to Friends of the Boundary Waters through their [website](#). Gifts may be made in Ray's memory. Ray's full obituary, detailing his deep love for his family, his amazingly broad interests and talents, and his warm and engaging personality, may be found [here](#).

Related Media Coverage

- "[Ray A. Balestri, 1960-2025](#)," *Texas Lawbook*, January 17, 2025.

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