



Ronald Gene Sands

November 22, 1943 - April 20, 2026

Ronald Gene Sands, 82, of Fernandina Beach, Florida passed away April 20, 2026 at his home. Viewing will be 9:00 am to 10:00 am, May 2, 2026 at Horner Lieske McBride & Kuhl Funeral and Cremation Services. Graveside Service with Military Rites provided by the Kearney American Legion Post #52, Kearney V.F.W. Post #759, and the Navy Funeral Honors Team will be 10:00 am, May 2, 2026 at the Kearney Cemetery. A Celebration of Life Service will be held 11:00 am, May 30, 2026, at Blackrock Baptist Church, 96362 Blackrock Rd., Yulee, FL 32097. In lieu of flowers, please consider a memorial to Blackrock Baptist Church or the Wounded Warriors Project.

Ronald Gene Sands, known to family and friends as Ron, passed away peacefully in his home in Fernandina Beach, Florida on April 20, 2026, after battling metastatic pancreatic cancer. He was eighty-two years old, and with his beloved wife Darla by his side, he went home to be with the Lord with a smile on his face.

Ron was born on November 22, 1943 in Kearney, Nebraska, to Alfred S. and Emma M. Sands. After graduating from high school, he enlisted in the United States Navy at the age of seventeen. He served on active duty from 1961 to 1964 as an Aviation Electrician Mate, with stations in San Diego, Jacksonville, and Sigonella, Sicily. After completing his graduate education, he returned to the Navy as a Clinical Psychologist and Trainer at the National Naval Medical

Center in Bethesda and the Naval Regional Medical Center in Jacksonville. He attained the rank of Lieutenant Commander, was awarded the National Defense Service Medal, and was honorably discharged after ten years, one month, and eleven days of service.

Ron's decision to leave the Navy was difficult, but he so enjoyed the work he had begun in Jacksonville and enjoyed the area that he started a private practice in Orange Park, Florida and served the population in the surrounding areas for 21 years.

Ron earned his Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Sociology from the University of Nebraska at Kearney, a Master of Arts in Clinical-Correctional Psychology from Middle Tennessee State University, and a Master of Science in Allied Health Services from the University of North Florida. He devoted his career to the care of people in crisis, serving juvenile offenders, those struggling with addiction, families in need of counseling, and law enforcement officers carrying the weight of their calling. He retired in September 2011 as Administrator of the Employee Assistance Program and Critical Incident Stress Management for the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, and he remained a steadfast supporter of law enforcement until his passing.

Once asked what he would want a department in an educational building named after him, Ron answered without hesitation, "service, because service involves love." That single sentence captured the shape of his life. Not only did Ron give service to his country, but he also gave service to individuals throughout his career and personal life.

Ron was a believer who supported the work of the gospel going forth. He loved traveling to national parks with Darla, his wife of thirty-one years, their last trip together was to Mount Rushmore and the Badlands. He was also a dedicated student of the Martial Arts, earning several black belts in different

techniques, including his last one in Krav Maga during his employment at JSO.

One of the special traits about Ron that made Darla fall in love with him was that Ron enjoyed people of all walks of life, treating each person as an equal. He could start up a conversation with perfect strangers and carry on as if they had been friends for a long time.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Alfred and Emma Sands, and his son, Ralph Sands, and three older brothers: Ralph, Bill, and Wayne. He is survived by his wife, Darla; his sons, Shane Sands (Holly) and Lance Sands (Laura); his stepdaughter, Natalie Hannum (Dan); and his two grandchildren, Emma Sands and Andrew Sands, and step-granddaughter, Haley Carstens.

Ron will be laid to rest beside his parents in Kearney, Nebraska.

Upcoming Events

Celebration of Life Service

MAY 30. 11:00 AM (ET)

Blackrock Baptist Church
96362 Blackrock Rd.
Yulee, FL 30297

Previous Events

Viewing

MAY 2. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CT)

Horner Lieske McBride & Kuhl
2421 Avenue A
Kearney, NE 68847
(308) 237-2259
<https://www.hlmkfuneral.com>

Funeral

MAY 2. 10:00 AM (CT)

Kearney Cemetery
4400 Avenue I
Kearney, NE 68847

Tribute Wall

LS

“ *Laura S. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Ronald Gene Sands.*

Laura S. - May 01 at 06:25 PM

JH

“ *Jim and Ann Haller purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Ronald Gene Sands.*



Jim and Ann Haller - April 30 at 05:58 AM

CM

“ *With our deepest sympathy. Our thoughts and prayers are with you. Thinking of you Dick and Cindy Maass*

Cynthia M Maass - April 28 at 01:04 PM

CM

“ *Cynthia M. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Ronald Gene Sands.*

Cynthia M. - April 28 at 12:41 PM

MC

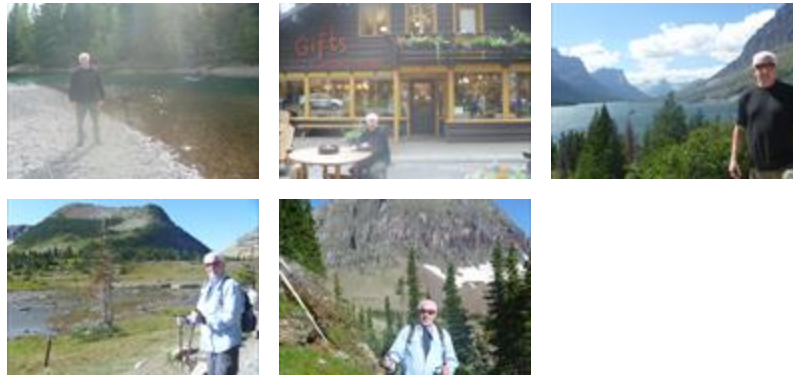
“ *Much Love, Wayne & Debbie Chattaway purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Ronald Gene Sands.*



Much Love, Wayne & Debbie Chattaway - April 27 at 09:42 AM

DS

“ *8 files added to the album Glacier National Park 2024*



Darla Sands - April 25 at 09:52 AM

NH

Thanks for sharing so many beautiful memories! We love you, Ron! We miss your jokes and willingness to laugh and enjoy life to the fullest! I expect we will hear the angels laughing louder from now on :) Natalie and Dan

Natalie Hannum - April 25 at 01:13 PM



“ *Magnificent Life Spray was purchased for the family of Ronald Gene Sands.*



April 23 at 01:19 PM