



SERVING CAMDEN COUNTY, GEORGIA SINCE 1894

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Ronald Edward Szelist, 74, died unexpectedly in the early hours of 27 July 2021, at Cypress Village Rehab facility in Jacksonville, Florida.

Ron, as all his family and friends knew him, was born to the late Louis J. and Nancy P. Szelist in Arlington, Virginia, in 1947. He attended Florida Institute of Technology, where he was a member of Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity. Following graduation, he began work with Lockheed Martin as an aerospace engineer and retired from the company after 42 years of loyal service.

He married the love of his life, Jane C. Pettijohn, on 14 December 1968. Ron and Jane lived in various Lockheed communities around the country before settling in St. Marys in 1986. The couple enjoyed traveling together around the United States and overseas.

A faithful, committed Christian, Ron was a member of Christ Episcopal Church, serving many rotations and years on its vestry, playing the trumpet in its music ministry, and serving as a prayer counselor. Special in Ron's life was his ongoing relationship with Renewal in Christ Ministries. He served in many capacities with RICM, in addition to praying with people from numerous states and the Netherlands as RICM traveled.

Ron was active in the larger community through his work with Kiwanis. All those who knew him counted on his presence, quiet cheerfulness and his willingness to stay as late as it took to make Kiwanis-sponsored festivals successful. For years, it was Ron behind the wheel of the Toonerville Trolley in July 4th parades. He also played trumpet in the Camden County Community Band for many, many years, and he volunteered for Habitat for Humanity. In all of these endeavors, Ron's faith was like that of St. Francis of Assisi, who once said, "Preach the Gospel at all times and if necessary, use words."

Ron was preceded in death by his parents and by his brother-in-law, James Earl "Jimmy" Pettijohn.

Ron is survived by Jane, his wife of 52 years, his daughters Tina Higginbotham (John), Victoria Caruso-Messina (Nick) and five grandchildren: Larry Caruso, Josey Higginbotham, Louis, Elijah and Ariana Messina. He is also survived by his sister, Marti S. Fontenrose (Richard), and nephews, Gary and Kevin Toothman, Dan Gloger, Jr., Paul Fontenrose and nieces Amy Fulmer and Michelle Suling.

