



# Merrill D. "Ronnie" Round

APR 23, 1924 - APR 5, 2022



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SACRED PARK CEMETERY  
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## **Merrill D. "Ronnie" Round**

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**A**fter a blessed life of nearly 98 years, Merrill D. "Ronnie" Round Jr. piloted his final flight to be at home with the Lord on April 5th, 2022.

Ronnie was born in Providence, Rhode Island to Emily J. Spencer and Merrill D. Round, the oldest of four brothers and one sister. His early years were spent either swimming in the nearby Lime Rock quarry or building finely crafted model airplanes.

Although a good student, he knew the minute he graduated from Pawtucket High School he would enlist in the U.S. Air Force. Pearl Harbor erased any doubt and he was off to the wild blue yonder. Ronnie's interest in flying was influenced greatly by a beloved uncle, Frank Spencer, who took the young teen to Hillsgrove Airport for the well-advertised \$1 plane rides.

Ronnie was intent on wearing those Air Force wings and he progressed rapidly, soloing at Clarksdale AFB in a P-23 Fairchild. "It was the greatest thrill of my life." He was instructor-certified for the B-17, B-26, and the granddaddy of them all, the B-29. At Harlingen AFB, a harrowing ride with one of his cocky B-29 trainee pilots would have a startling effect on the rest of his life. He awoke at the base hospital with an angel hovering over him. It was nurse Anne Marie Fryer, a medical lab technician, whom he married in 1944. Ronnie and Anne were blessed with daughter Melodye in 1955. This wonderful marriage lasted 56 years until Anne's death in 2000. His enduring optimism and love of life were matched by her beauty, grace, and loving spirit. Ronnie and Anne built a country home in Harlingen with a connecting stone walkway to the home of their best friends, Kenneth and Ruth Scoggins. The two families essentially became one family sharing their lifetimes together.

Following discharge, with honors, this Yankee wasn't about to return to Rhode Island. Firmly transplanted in the Rio Grande Valley would be more like it. Opening one tire store after another, "Roll on Round Tires" was emblazoned on billboards throughout the Valley and extending to Laredo. His business success was based on honesty and fairness-and a handshake. He was appointed to the Executive Board of the National Tire Dealers Association which led to many tire



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convention trips where he and Anne met their lifelong friends and travel companions, Peggy and Campbell Cox of Nacogdoches. In 1977, Ronnie was honored with the Small Business Person of the Year Award for the Lower RGV. He knew and loved the business--especially making a good deal.

In the early '60s, Ronnie was one of the initial founding colonels of the Confederate Air Force (now the Commemorative Air Force) with the goal of acquiring and preserving World War II aircraft. He remained very actively involved while it was based in the RGV.

Ronnie sold his business to Bridgestone Tire in 1982 and moved to McAllen, but, he couldn't retire. His marketing skills were capitalized at Alamo Bank of Texas and Frost Bank, serving as their marketing officer until 2008. There he became fondly known as "Mr. Terrific" and as the "Official Hugger". He knew everyone and was known by all. He could not go into any public place without seeing and shaking hands with someone he knew. It was amazing to watch. The ultimate networker!

Ronnie's Valley leadership presence was reflected in many civic organizations. He was President of the Harlingen Rotary Club, Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the 20-30 Club. He served as a Board member of the Harlingen Chamber of Commerce, Valley Baptist Medical Center and Foundation, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and the Food Bank of the RGV. His awards and recognitions were numerous. Ronnie was also a frequent motivational speaker at Rotary meetings often injecting humor along with positivity.

Leadership extended to his church. For 25 years, he taught and mentored youth at the First Baptist Church of Harlingen. Ronnie shared his passion for flying with the students in his Sunday School class who achieved "perfect attendance" by taking them for a plane ride. Each summer, his class was treated to a memorable bay fishing trip.

His strong Christian faith led to close ties with Barney Sarver of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and the founding of the Ronnie Round FCA Golf Classic, an annual event lasting from 1997-2001. Ronnie was a very generous man. All he ever wanted in return was "a few kind words." He made a big impact on a lot of people over his 98 years. His love of God never wavered and was exemplified by his life.



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Ronnie found love again in 2002 with marriage to Norma Ann Foresman. They built a home in John Knox Village in Weslaco where they enjoyed an active social life, met many new friends, and participated in non-stop social activities. Norma Ann passed away in January of 2022.

Ronnie is remembered by his family and friends as such a character. From the perfect delivery of a joke with a straight face to a wild prank, you always were entertained and remained wary of what he might do next. He brought smiles to our faces with his warm hugs and his memorable sayings. When asked "How are you Ronnie?", his boisterous response was always "I'm TerRIFic!". When anyone sneezed, you heard a loud "Santa Maria Luigi!" When he walked up to a counter in any public place he would generate a laugh and a smile with "Is this the bus station?" One of his favorite lines was "I'll always be a Round!"

Ronnie is survived by his daughter Melodye and son-in-law Jack Scoggins of McAllen, brother Wendell of San Diego, and sister Lois Gadway of Inverness, Florida, in addition to numerous nieces and nephews. Ronnie was preceded in death by his best friend Kenneth Scoggins, and his brothers Spencer, Norman, and David. It was a four-star family, Spencer with a Navy career, Norman an Army medical technician, and Wendell with an Army tour in Korea.

Enough cannot be said for the wonderful staff and friends at the John Knox Village Personal Care Center and his loving and devoted caregivers Eva Cavazos, Cristina Sanchez, Maria Mendoza, and Letty Ortega.

Memorials may be sent to the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at

<https://www.southtexasfca.org/>

or P.O. Box 3323 McAllen, TX 78501.

Ronnie-always thoughtful, always kind. We were so blessed to have him "a Round!"

Visitation will be Thursday, April 14th, 10:00am, with a Celebration of Ronnie's life at 11:00am, followed by a luncheon, all held at McCaleb Funeral Home in Weslaco. Ronnie will be placed to rest with Anne Marie at Monte Meta Memorial Park in San Benito at 3pm.



# Tribute Wall

**Merrill D. "Ronnie" Round**

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**Leon And Bonnie Nunn** posted:

Leon Nunn, wife Bonnie

April 20 at 7:09 AM



**Leon And Bonnie Nunn** lit a candle in honor of Merrill.

Am sorry for your loss, he was one of a kind. First met Ronnie when he was with General Tire, before he started Round Tire. I ordered six large heavy equipment tires on a Friday. He said would be ready for Monday. All the companies I worked for, Barr Ewing, Schwartz Farms, and Holt Equipment "CAT" did business with Ronnie. He was a good friend. I remember Ronnie well, met him when I worked for Barr Ewing. Leon Nunn, former " Holt Heavy Haul Driver", retired 2016



April 20 at 7:08 AM



**Leon And Bonnie Nunn** April 20 at 7:09 AM

Leon Nunn, wife Bonnie



**Leon And Bonnie Nunn** posted:

Leon and Bonnie Nunn lit a candle for

April 20 at 7:08 AM



**Anonymous** sent a Sincerest Sorrow - All White to the Round family.

April 13 at 2:22 PM



**Friends & Family** posted:

Sincerest Sorrow - All White was purchased for the family of Merrill D. "Ronnie" Round Jr..

April 13 at 2:22 PM



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**Anonymous** sent a White Sympathy Floor Basket to the Round family.



April 13 at 10:27 AM



**Friends & Family** posted:

White Sympathy Floor Basket was purchased for the family of Merrill D. "Ronnie" Round Jr..

April 13 at 10:27 AM



**Anonymous** sent a Blue & White Sympathy Standing Spray to the Round family.



April 13 at 8:26 AM



**Friends & Family** posted:

Blue & White Sympathy Standing Spray was purchased for the family of Merrill D. "Ronnie" Round Jr..

April 13 at 8:26 AM



**Rachel Cuellar** posted:

I had the distinct pleasure of meeting and interacting at times with Mr. Round, and would often get that famous line, "Is this the bus station"? I will always remember him fondly. RIP sir w/ your beloved Norma. Rachel Cuellar Front Office Staff Dr. Hector G Amaya

April 9 at 6:55 PM



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April 9 at 6:55 PM



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**Myles Beeching** lit a candle in honor of Merrill.



April 7 at 3:02 AM



**Myles Beeching** posted:

Myles Beeching lit a candle for

April 7 at 3:02 AM



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Merrill by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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