

Ronald Kent Nelson

January 11, 1938 ~ March 3, 2026

Ronald Kent Nelson, “Kent” to friends and family, 88, beloved son, brother, husband, father, and friend, passed away on Tuesday, March 3, 2026, surrounded by the family he loved so much. He left behind a legacy of faith, work, love, and wholesome competitiveness.

Kent was born on January 11, 1938, to Virden James and June Smith Nelson in Ely, Nevada. He was the oldest of eight and dearly loved—and sometimes mercilessly teased—his siblings Lyn, Verdene, Linda, JaNae, Julie, Reed, and Royd. Kent’s family was very close, assembling religiously every Sunday evening at Grandma and Grandpa’s house with extended family for homemade ice cream and games.

After moving to Sandy, Utah when he was one year old, Kent attended school and developed a love for competition—especially baseball and basketball. He would spend hours throwing a tennis ball at the front porch steps or shooting a basketball in the driveway. At the age of fifteen, Kent and his family moved to Idaho after his father purchased an interest in a dairy farm. He grew in confidence and strength working on the farm while attending high school. After his senior year, the farm was sold and the family returned to Sandy, Utah.

Kent enrolled at Brigham Young University prior to serving a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Central States Mission.

Professionally, Kent was both an educator and a general contractor. He received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education from the University of Utah and spent almost the entirety of his teaching career at West Jordan Junior High/Middle School, where he taught physical education and math and coached basketball and swimming. He was a well-loved teacher.

During the summer months, he often worked as a contractor, building homes and taking on a variety of construction projects. Kent was a hard worker, never afraid to take on a difficult task and see it through, ensuring it was done right. His work ethic and accomplishments were examples to his children, who have strived to emulate those characteristics.

On June 7, 1975, Kent married Jolene, and together they built a life focused on providing for their combined children—Tina, Jim, Nicole, Mike, MarjaLee, Jill, and Kim. JoRae, Jennifer, and Ryan would join the family in the following years.

At the age of sixteen, Tina was in a terrible car accident and succumbed to her injuries four years later at the age of twenty-one. It was a profound source of sadness for Kent and the entire family.

Kent loved his ten children, 35 grandchildren, 25 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild. He was an enthusiastic supporter of their many activities throughout the years—including coaching some of his children’s teams. More than one umpire or referee heard from him, sometimes vigorously, when he disagreed with a call

involving one of his kids. Whether coaching or attending, he always strived to be present, and his family knew they were loved because of it.

He loved Jolene, his eternal partner, who stood by him as his travel buddy and closest friend, supporting and serving him during some of life's most difficult moments.

Kent loved competition. What began as a boy shooting marbles grew into many other competitive pursuits. He bowled in leagues for many years, played basketball into his fifties, and loved to golf. He was a prolific card player and loved word games.

When he won games with his family—which was often—his go-to phrase was, "The cream always rises to the top." He also believed that "there can never be too many game nights."

Kent joined a Scrabble club and later formed a cribbage club with his siblings. He cherished the time and friendships he enjoyed with members of those clubs. In Scrabble, he knew all of the valid words with seven letters or fewer in the English dictionary. Known as the "Big Dog," he eventually became the number one player in the state.

At the age of 88, just a week and a half prior to his passing, he competed in a Scrabble tournament in Phoenix, Arizona, where he defeated the top-ranked player in his division.

That same competitive spirit fueled his devotion as a diehard fan of the St. Louis Cardinals and the Utah Jazz. His rabid love for the Cardinals spread through generations—beginning with Kent's father and contagiously passing on to his grandchildren.

GO CARDS!

The gospel of Jesus Christ was central to Kent's life. As a faithful member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he willingly served and blessed the lives of many. He loved the Lord and the restored gospel and held a firm testimony of the Resurrection, which brought him great comfort.

Kent was preceded in death by his parents, Virden and June; his brother Lyn; his sister Verdene; and his daughter Tina Kay.

He is survived by his beloved wife, Jolene, and his children: Jim (Lauri), Nicole (Guy), Mike (Norma), MarjaLee (Jamey), Jill (Tracy), Kim (Mont), JoRae (Garrett), Jennifer (Matt), and Ryan (Hailee), along with his many grandchildren and their spouses.

The family wishes to extend heartfelt gratitude to the staff at Intermountain Medical Center for their dedicated and compassionate care.

Funeral services will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Monday, March 9, 2026, at the LDS Church located at 9331 South 300 East, Sandy, Utah.

Viewings will be held from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Sunday, March 8, 2026, and from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. prior to the funeral service on Monday, both at the same location.

Interment will follow the funeral services at Larkin Sunset Gardens, 1950 East 10600 South, Sandy, Utah.