



Ronald F Draper

December 15, 1933 - March 12, 2021

Ronald F. Draper was born on December 15, 1933, in Imperial, Nebraska to Everett and Edith “Marita” Draper. He grew up in Eureka, CA graduating from Eureka High School in 1952 with honors.

After high school, he attended Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University) in Pittsburg, PA. He was in Alpha Tau Omega; Omicron Delta Kappa; Pi Tau Sigma; Scabbard and Blade; Pershing Rifles; Intramurals; Student Council; Dorm Council; Society of Automotive Engineers; American Society of Mechanical Engineers; and ROTC. In 1956 he received his Bachelor’s in Mechanical Engineering.

He was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Army Corps of Engineers, serving on active duty at Fort Leonard Wood, MO as a Basic Training Instructor. This is where he met his future wife, Adah Pascua, whose father was also stationed there.

After the Army, Ronald earned a Master’s Degree in Aeronautics and Space Engineering from Caltech in 1961.

Most of his working life was at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, where he worked on many significant space projects including Mariner IV, Mariner V, Voyager, Galileo, Mariner Mark II, and CRAF. His final assignment was as Deputy Program Manager for Cassini. He was awarded the American Astronautical Society of Achievement Award – Voyager Program (1980), and the JPL/NASA Medal of Outstanding Leadership – Voyager Spacecraft (1981). After retiring in 1999, he continued to support JPL as a consultant.

Ronald had a lifetime association with the Boy Scouts where he was able to pursue his love of hiking and the outdoors. He earned the top rank of Eagle Scout when he was 14 years old, was a troop leader for his son, Kevin, and continued in leadership roles including the Executive Board of both Verdugo Hills & Orange County Councils. He also received the prestigious Silver Beaver award for his lifelong service to the organization.

He was so proud that his son Kevin, and all three of his grandsons, earned Eagle Scout honors.

Ronald and Adah married in 1961 in San Francisco, CA. They were happily married for 60 years and had two children, three grandsons, and their beloved dog Biskit of 16 years. They spent many years with the "Gourmet Group" of close friends having dinner parties and going on camping trips.

They enjoyed going to the theatre and loved to travel.

Ronald was 87, surrounded by his family when he passed peacefully on March 12, 2021, in his home in Mission Viejo, CA.

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Ron Draper's Celebration of Life Service will be at South Shores Church, 32712 Crown Valley Parkway, Dana Point, CA 92629 at 1:00 pm on Sunday, April 11, 2021.

Gifts in memory of Ronald may be given to South Shores Church, 32712 Crown Valley Parkway, Dana Point, CA 92629, or to the Boy Scouts of America, Orange County Council <https://donations.scouting.org/#/council/039/appeal/4557>

Livestream link to the service is <https://www.southshores.org/rondrapermemorial>

# Cemetery

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# Events

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**El Toro Memorial Park APR**

25751 Trabuco Road **11**

Lake Forest, CA, 92630

**Celebration of Life**

01:00PM

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South Shores Church

32712 Crown Valley Parkway, Dana Point, CA, US, 92629

# Comments

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“ Michael Allen is following this tribute.

**Michael Allen** - August 04 at 11:37 PM

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“ I worked with Ron on the CRAF pre project and project. I admired his team leadership skills and raw systems engineering capability. He was a critical asset to JPL's success and prominence in the space program.

**PAUL WIENER** - April 17 at 12:45 AM



“ Thank you for sharing!

**Monique** - April 18 at 04:46 PM

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“ I worked for Ron when he was in charge of a series of studies called Mariner Mark II, which eventually narrowed down to a comet rendezvous mission and Saturn orbiter, and ultimately led to the beginning of the Cassini project. During that association with Ron I gained great respect for his engineering knowledge, his enthusiasm and optimism, and the boundless energy that he applied to his work. On two occasions I was also with Ron in more social environments. One was while we were on a business trip to Munich, Germany for discussions regarding a propulsion module. Coincidentally, the trip was during Oktoberfest, and one evening some members from the German and American teams went to the event, which was held adjacent to where there was a large and extremely intimidating-looking rollercoaster. Late in the evening the leader of the German team asked (or challenged) Ron, the leader of the American team, to ride the rollercoaster with him. No one else from either team volunteered to take the ride, but Ron did, and the two leaders rode in the front car of the rollercoaster. I was very proud of Ron for accepting the challenge, and I gained even more respect for his leadership. The other social occasion was when Ron and his wife, Richard Stoller and his wife, and I and a lady friend went for dinner and dancing at a huge German restaurant located near where the LA Staples Center is now. It was nice to meet Ron's wife, be with Ron in that very different setting from work, and see that his enthusiasm for work carried over more generally to an enthusiasm for life.

David Collins

David Collins - April 11 at 09:06 AM



“ Dad & I went on many rollercoasters together at Magic Mountain!! Thank you David so much for sharing those stories!

Monique - April 12 at 03:07 PM

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“ The Case’s and Draper’s also hung together outside of Scouts - at the beach, playing volleyball, car-camping and skiing. When our families took separate cars up to the ski slopes, the four-hour drive up was met with gale force winds and rain. A sizable network of CA roads were officially and systematically being closed. As my family kept getting diverted and having to make tough choices on conditions and safety – we successfully made it to the cabin many hours later. I was hoping that the Drapers were going to make it as well. Who was I kidding, the Drapers pulled in soon after. Later that night, when the storm downed a tree and took out our power – it was the Drapers that had for some reason brought a box of candles – and we ate dinner by candle light. Of course I’ve seen this story before – adversity, determination, preparedness, fun, friendship, love.

On another note - it’s ironic that while our dads both served our country through military service (US Army and US Air Force) – the stories we know and those they tell mostly just include family and friends. I know that your dad’s military service was honorable and if I could go back in time – I would ask him to share some US Army exploits around the campfire...

Lots of other stories, but wanted you to hear a couple to pass on how your dad led by example and helped form and mold lots of young adults to this day. I guarantee you that many, many similar stories could be told by others.

Much Love!  
Steve

**Steve Case** - April 10 at 11:21 PM



“ Steve, thank you so much for sharing some stories and experiences. So great to know Dad's legacy. Love, Mo

**Monique** - April 12 at 03:11 PM

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“ A couple of stories to share just to pass down some fun/exciting times.

As you would expect, many of our Scouting hikes through the Sierra Nevada Mountains posed challenges.

During one summer hike, our Troop had run into four days of consecutive driving rain and cold temperatures. When our trail crossed what was normally a small stream - we came face-to-face with a very fast moving torrent of a river... The leaders took some Scouts up and down stream to look for the best place to cross. Once we determined the spot, your dad crossed first - tied to a rope and belayed by the others. After a rope hand hold bridge was established, we all crossed holding our packs over our heads the best we could... It was never a question of who was going to cross first. Your dad was definitely the leader and always willing to put himself at risk. With two days left in the hike, and the weather not abating, it was determined that there was a danger of hyperthermia. A plan was launched to get us all home safely. Your dad had everyone drop all unnecessary equipment and pack just the bare minimum for a 14 hour sprint hike. We tied our gear up in a tree, so it could be recovered at a later date - and then off we went. Hiking the last two days in one shot, we went into the early morning hours crossing up and over a mountain pass. Every time I looked at your dad, he was calm and poised that everything would be ok. Not once during the entire week did your dad show anything but supreme confidence and his attitude rippled through the entire Troop. He led by example.

During our camping trip to Vasquez Rocks (I still see lots of movie backgrounds on the rocks we would scramble), myself and two other scouts were scrambling some rocks when we saw what looked like an abandoned old car. As we approached the car, we found someone asleep in the backseat. For some reason we thought it would be funny to knock on the door and run... which we did. As we ran, we heard him get out of his car and yell at us. End of story.... Except that the next day, the man had tracked down the only campers in the vicinity - our troop... He told your dad that some young kids had damaged his car, and he wanted to find out who. Your dad placated the man and said he would have the entire troop march down to the site of his vehicle - for a lineup. Prior to the hike, your dad gave everyone a chance to come clean. When we said that there was no way we did any damage, your dad emphatically believed us and backed us. Later that day during the lineup, the man picked out a different scout (our Australian Tim Heath), and your dad was quick to say that Tim had been at camp with him all day (true), and ended the hunt. He also went down with Tommy Eneberg (owner of a Porsche repair shop) to check out the damage. I could tell your dad saw a car that was pretty beat up, but he didn't make a point of it with the man. He then stated that he had questioned the boys and also relayed that he backed that his troop didn't cause any of the damage. Not being sure how that event was going to play out (and a very nervous 13-year old) I am thankful how your dad handled the day. He listened and accepted the man's desire to try and pick out a culprit. He gave everyone a chance to be heard, and without taking sides, he systematically worked to a proper resolution. After we got back to camp, your dad never brought up the event again - it was over. I kept waiting to be pulled aside and told I was saved and not to do that again - bet he never did. Your dad gave a 13-year old respect, trust and backing. Still thankful to this day...



“ I was (and still am) truly blessed to have Ron and the entire Draper family be an integral part of my childhood. However, not just me – but my three children as well – and most likely their children... and very likely - hundreds of others... That is because as a Scout leader, Mr. Draper was dedicated to molding La Crescenta Troop 319 into future men of character. I don't recall any lectures or classroom talks on enjoying nature, being thankful, being prepared, thinking on your feet, being tough when needed, working as team, (insert Scout Oath here), and being above reproach.

Mr. Draper passed down these traits through personal example, and lots of examples at that... and we Scouts absorbed them through continuous observations and real-life necessity. I'm not sure how a young kid raised in the outskirts of Los Angeles CA spent so much time in the outdoors – especially when our dads were very busy NASA engineers working on landing the first ever man-made object on Mars, and designing the Voyager space probe – launched over 43 years ago and still operational today – scientifically benefiting future generations...

Mr. Draper led trips throughout the Sierra Nevada's, summiting amongst many - the highest peak in the lower 48 (Mt Whitney), hiking the Grand Canyon rim-to-rim, camping in Havasupai Reservation, rock climbing Vasquez Rocks, swimming through Pacific Ocean kelp beds off of Catalina Island, week-long canoe trips, sleeping amid the Sequoia's General Grant/Sherman, skiing Waterman/Badger Pass/Mammoth... Each of these trips have a rich story and were never situation normal. Through sustained examples, Mr. Draper showed us how to live life to its fullest and how to treat both the world around us and those in our lives.

Just like Mr. Draper's work on the Voyager space probe – affecting generations to come... his life and legacy will always be that of the generations he continues to indirectly touch with the life he lived.

Adah, Monique, Kevin - I am truly grateful to have had the entire Draper family be a part of my life. Many aspects of what I do now and how I think today are because of your father...!

Looking forward to the day when I see him again and have the opportunity to tell him “thanks from the bottom of my heart” in person!!



“ Ron was a great manager. I feel blessed to have supported his projects as an electronic parts specialist.

Respectfully,  
Shri Agarwal  
Section 5140

**Shri Agarwal** - April 10 at 07:37 PM



“ thank you, Shri!

**Monique** - April 12 at 03:00 PM

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“ Our friendship with Ron and Adah and their whole family began in 1964 in Florida and continues until now. They weren't just friends - but became family. Each area of our lives seemed to include each other. Ron's Christianity was obvious to those who knew him. He "walked" the "talk". The many miles of "walking" spoke to many boy scouts including my own husband and children. We are eternally grateful for having had the blessing of Ron in our lives.

Connie Case

**Constance L. Case** - April 10 at 01:49 PM



“ Thanks, Connie. Many wonderful memories together!

**Monique** - April 12 at 03:02 PM

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“ It is with great sadness that I say goodbye to a friend, a JPL colleague and a former Scoutmaster of Troop 319. I had the pleasure of being one of his Assistant Scoutmasters when Kevin and my three sons were in the troop following their path to Eagle,(Mitch 1978, Eric 1981, Dan 1985.)

Ron was a life-long scouter. As the scoutmaster he was an enthusiastic enabler of the young scouts in developing their leadership skills which would be of value to the troop and to them in the pursuit of their future academic and career goals. The result of his effort produced an outstanding cadre of capable young men that supported the concept of a "boy led troop". A tradition which remains in Troop 319 today.

Ron was always positive and upbeat on our multiple outings with the troop be it on a training hike, weekend camp outs,or canoe training for a 50 mile river excursion. I recall his frequent responses to one or more of the scouts "are we almost there?" question, His response was almost always ..." it's just around the next turn on the trail,,,"

Ron's achievements on be behalf of the Scouts and the scouting movement would not have been possible without the support of Ada and Monique.

Ron was a good even tempered man of high character.  
He will be missed.

Dave Scaff

David Scaff - April 09 at 08:39 PM



“ Thank you Dave for sharing your thoughts!

Monique - April 12 at 03:03 PM



“ From Cloys and Dale Pfremer purchased the Basket of Memories for the family of Ronald F Draper.



From Cloys and Dale Pfremer - April 06 at 06:09 PM



“ Ron hired me into his system engineering group at JPL in 1971, and for most of 30 years I had the privilege of working in a variety of positions and projects under his leadership and guidance. He was a mentor and a friend. We shared good times with our wives' Gourmet Group and traveled with our wives around Europe. On one trip to Scotland, Ron and I studied maps while Adah and Jeanne ate shortbread in the backseat.. Ron's Christian faith and character, activities with him at church, and interaction with his family was enriching for me and my family.

**Richard Stoller** - March 31 at 04:27 PM



“ Thank you so much for sharing, Mom & dad loved traveling with you two!

**Monique** - April 04 at 07:20 PM

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“ I knew Ron as my two son's boy scout leader. Ron's leadership and encouragement played a big part in both of them obtaining the rank of Eagle Scout. I was Ron's Committee Chairman. Ron's troop didn't go on camp-outs or hikes; we went on adventures. Ron had us on the top of 4 of the highest peaks in the Sierra Nevada mountains. We were rerouted on one of our many 7-day 70-mile trips into the Sierras by a forest fire. We survived 4 days in the Sierras in a torrential, continuous rain from a hurricane. Finally deciding, on the fourth day, to make a "run" to safety by hiking all day and all night and most of the next morning to get to the little mountain town of Mineral King.

Ron had us paddling home-made canoes down the Colorado River from Hoover Dam to the Mexican border. Sleeping next to freshly harvested melon fields infested with beetles, flying around at night, the size of your thumb.

You can catalog people a lot of different ways. One way is "Takers and Givers". Ron was a "Giver". Some of the best times of my life was when I was with Ron.

**Richard Case** - March 21 at 02:00 PM



“ I know he enjoyed having those many "adventures" together with you!! Thank you so much for sharing!

**Monique** - March 21 at 06:41 PM

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“ At the time of Cassini Launch Ron was the person who inspired our efforts to stress the science in the face of the irrational controversies fomented by a group of loud mouthed opportunists who were more interested in promoting their own books rather than contributing to a rational public discussion. Ron stressed to all of us that when speaking to the public (and particularly the press) we should always emphasize the science and not ourselves.

On the eve of Cassini launch I was one of the science team members who were lending assistance at the Cape in answering direct calls from the press.

One of the calls that was directed to me was from a group of lawyers who claimed to represent the Oleg Cassini fashion corporation, They told me that they were going to sue JPL and NASA for copyright infringement having to do with the use of their name.

I carefully explained to them that our mission was named after an Italo-French astronomer who directed the observatory of Paris about 300 years ago and discovered many features of the Saturnian system.

I was startled that they persisted with their legal claim and demanded my name. I provided them with my name and my JPL badge number and suggested that I would be glad to see them in court.

Curiously, I have not heard from them since.

Thanks Ron for encouraging us to put the science first before our selves.

Bob Nelson,

Robert M. Nelson,

NASA selected member of the Cassini Infrared Scanning Spectrometer (VIMS) team  
Senior Scientist, Planetary Science Institute

**Robert M. Nelson** - March 19 at 02:57 PM



“ I remember dad sharing about the "challenges". Thanks for sharing that!

**Monique** - March 19 at 05:44 PM

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“ Judy and I send our sympathy and best wishes to Ron's family. Ron was my second supervisor at JPL and his example helped me throughout my JPL career. Judy and I also enjoyed dinners with Ron and Adah in the La Crescenta-La Canada JPL system engineering dining group. Ron was also diligent and thorough in organizing Sierra climbing trips during the 1970s, and I thoroughly enjoyed all of the colleagues he brought along on these trips. We haven't seen your family much during the intervening years, but we treasure our memories of Ron and Adah. Ron was an outstanding engineer and teacher and an exemplary human being. Our thoughts are with you. Judy and Kent Frewing

**Kent Frewing** - March 19 at 01:30 PM



“ Thank you - I shared your message with mom - she speaks fondly of the La Crescenta group

**Monique** - March 19 at 05:04 PM

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“ My heart is breaking I'm so very grateful to have so many memories of fun times together, and that he was surrounded by family at home in the end. The sweetest gift God gave me a few weeks before he passed was when he prayed a beautiful prayer of blessing over me. Love you so very much Daddy! I miss you and know that we'll see you again in heaven!

**Monique Bottger** - March 18 at 05:47 PM

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“ 10 files added to the album Family Pixs



**Monique Bottger** - March 18 at 02:12 AM