



Thursday, February 12, 2009

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Ronne Sands, 80, of Enterprise, died Feb. 6, 2009, in an accident on Tollgate highway east of Enterprise while he was driving two Wallowa County residents to medical appointments in Walla Walla, Wash.

Ronne was born in Ames, Iowa, to Glenn and Leafy Sands Sept. 3, 1928. The family moved frequently during the hardships of the depression, and ended up in Union and Cove where Ronne and his younger brother, Don, spent their school years.

After graduating from Cove High School, the brothers joined the U.S. Air Force, where Ronne worked in the new missile design programs based in Denver, Colo.

He met and married Laura Lee Glass Dec. 28, 1952. The day he was discharged from the Air Force they moved back to the Grand Ronde Valley of Oregon in 1954.

He and his brother Don joined a fertilizer company in La Grande and, with the company prospering, Ronne split off and began Sands Chemical in 1967.

He was finally able to return to his first love, farming, when the business was sold to his daughter Cynthia and her then-husband Larry Stockdill, in 1984.

An intense, energetic and opinionated man, Ronne was a strong voice in the community, and, according to his family, even if you didn't agree with him, you always knew where he stood. He was also very involved as a volunteer in community activities.

He was a member of the Oregon Farm Bureau and Oregon Wheat League, a life-time member of the National Rifle Association, and active in local Republican politics.

In later years his dedication turned more toward children, and he was involved as a volunteer in the CASA (court-appointed special advocate) program, Wallowa County Volunteer Companion program, Wallowa County Commission on Children and Families and Safe Harbors.

After the death of his wife, Laura, in the fall of 1998, he couldn't sit still and soon began his 10-year career driving folks to doctors' appointments and hospitals for Community Connection. Since he loved to drive and loved to help people, his family described this as the perfect job for him and said he wore out two cars with all the miles he traveled.

True to form, he checked on his passengers and was attempting to go for help when he died after losing control of his car on black ice on his last trip over Tollgate.

Ronne will be missed by many, especially by his family.

He is survived by daughter Peggy Makin of Wallowa, daughter and son-in-law Cynthia and Jon Lazzaretti of Capitan, N.M., and brother Don and his family of La Grande. He is also survived by four grandchildren, Jason, Heather, Jesurum and Enrika, and - the delights of his later years - five great-grandchildren.

A Celebration of Life, with a potluck, will be held at the Community Connection center in Enterprise at 11 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 14.

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