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Ronald Burdett Obituary

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Ronald Charles Burdett, 78, passed away on November 14, 2025, in St. George, Utah. He was born on September 20, 1947, in Ogden, Utah to Kenneth Charles Burdett and Alton Curtis. He married Joyanne Kay Rasmus on June 20, 1970, in Lafayette, California. They and their two children, Reginald Scott Burdett and Jonalda Kay Burdett, were later sealed for eternity in the Oakland California Temple on June 22, 1983.

Throughout his life, Ron was a very faithful member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He assumed many and various callings in the Church. Most recently he was called to be Branch President with the Red Cliffs Utah ASL 7th Branch in St. George, Utah.

He attended the Utah School for the Deaf (currently named the Kenneth Burdett School for the Deaf, after Ron's father who began his schooling there at age 5 and taught there for over 40 years). After graduation, Ron attended Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. beginning in 1965 and obtained his Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting in 1970.

His work and career history began when he was invited to join a new and exciting effort with a group at Stanford University as a programmer and researcher in developing Computer-Assisted Instruction for deaf students. This effort was developed and supported within the Institute for Mathematical Studies in the Social Sciences at Stanford and applied and refined with deaf students at the California School for the Deaf in Berkeley from 1970 to 1973. After the project was successfully completed at Stanford, Ron moved on to California State University in Northridge to study for his Master of Arts degree in Education, Special Education and Rehabilitation.

In fall of 1973, he started his new career in the Deaf Program at Ohlone College in Fremont, California as the Computer Science Instructor and also worked to establish the Gallaudet University Regional Center at Ohlone College (forerunner for the Hearing Impaired (later renamed with new identity as the Ohlone College Deaf Center). In 1997, he became Dean of the Deaf Studies and Special Services Division. He also helped in establishing WorkAbility III, under his leadership. With this, his responsibilities were expanding to manage the Learning Disabilities and Disables Student Programs and Services Programs at Ohlone.

By 2004, this Division served over 200 deaf students, over 1,000 ASL (American Sign Language) students, and was an internationally recognized program for deaf students, as well as a nationally recognized Interpreter Preparation Program.

During those years at Ohlone College, he was also elected to serve as President of the California Association of Post-Education of the Disabled (over 100 community colleges in California), a one-year term.

In May 2004, Ron retired with many honors from his positions at Ohlone College. Soon after, he and his wife, Joyanne, moved to Irina, Utah (west of St. George). They had just settled into their home when Ron was asked to found the Southern Utah Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services on the State of Utah and became its first director from 2005 to 2007. In the midst of that, he was approached and asked to join Sorenson Communications, Inc. as Vice President of Community Relations. This company provides Video Relay Services (VRS) to benefit the deaf community and grew to provide communication services for the deaf worldwide. Ron traveled all over the USA and to England teaching and demonstrating this new technology to deaf and hearing alike before retiring in 2016.

That same year, 2016, Sorenson honored Ron by creating "The Ron Burdett, '70, Seminar Room' in the new Sorenson Language and Communication Center at Gallaudet University, Washinton, D.C.

Throughout his life, he accomplished so very much, being actively involved in various ways in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, actively involved in both the deaf and the hearing communities, in various organizations of the deaf, and much more. He was known as 'The man with a big heart'.

Ron is survived by his wife, Joyanne Kay Rasmus Burdett; son, Reginald Scott Burdett and his wife, Ann Tuerffs Burdett of Pleasanton, California; daughter Jonalda Kay Burdett; grandchildren: Addyson Kay Davis, Brody Richard Davis and Cassidy Arlene Davis of St. George, Utah; sister JoAnn Burdett Haymond and brother-in-law, Morey Haymond; as well as nieces, nephews and cousins.

Ron loved his early years of family camping, hunting and fishing trips. As a married couple he and Joyanne loved creating wonderful family trips and loved spending quality time with their grandchildren and extended family.

All his family and friends, even acquaintances, recognized him and loved it when he wore his favorite white woven Panama hat to shield his bald head from the sun. In fact, he created his own personal emoji (man in a white hat) and constantly used it in text communications.

The family wishes to recognize Intermountain Health and Intermountain Hospice Home Care services for their wonderful care of Ron and the caring ASL interpreters who served him, as well as the deaf and hearing communities in St. George, Utah.

In his memory you are invited to contribute to your favorite charity.

Private family services will be held

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1 Entry

Kelly A Smith December 12, 2025

I have met him once at the Deaf Expo but he's very warm and kind. But didn't know him that well. But he's very inspirational to the Deaf and hard of deen and Deaf young adults. I believe it was in Atlanta GA. I believe it was in 2008. I don't have the pictures.

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