

## REMEMBERING RON SIMANTEL (1943-2019)

Our good friend and LRD veteran, Ron Simantel, passed on August 17, 2019, and will be missed. Following are a few remembrances of Ron by his LRD friends:

Al Ong – Ron, you were always the quiet one at NASA Landing and Recovery Division but always so respected. I enjoyed all those days we played softball together and what fun we had. You were so tall that I could never miss any throws to you at 1st base. All of your LRD buddies at NASA will miss you.

Dave Peterson - Goodbye, gentle giant. I will remember you always. Your LRD brother, Dave.

J.T. Chapman - So sorry to hear about Ron. He was TRULY a gentle giant with a great disposition and sense of humor. In LRD and as first base for the Marvels Softball team, nothing got past him - on the ball field OR at work. Proud to have known and worked with him. The Band of Brothers just keeps shrinking, but that is life. J.T.

Dick Snyder - I would also like to say that I'm sorry to hear about Ron. Ron was never a close friend of mine nor did I even work closely with him much. However, he still made a strong impression on me. I remember the first time I met him. I had 2 thoughts: First, I realized he was "one heck of a big guy" and second, I knew I didn't want to "get on his bad side." As I got to know him better, I came to a realization that he didn't seem to have a 'bad side.' He was friendly, treated everyone well and didn't seem to get upset with anyone. He was just a darn nice guy. So, apparently that is why it seems that whenever I reflect back to the good old LRD days, my thoughts always seem to come around to Ron. I totally agree with J. T. that Ron Simantel was truly a "Gentle Giant" of a man. He will and should be missed.

Terry Watson - I never worked with Ron, but I remember playing softball with him. One evening he got a solid hit and the ball was still rising as it went past the field lights. I recall he could throw a ball to home plate from the outfield without a problem.

Susan Carroll - Ron was truly a sweet and gentle soul.

John Stonesifer - I agree he was the gentle giant and always willing to carry out his assignments.

My story... we were very busy and trying hard in our efforts to recruit people about the time Ron was hired. Many were hired with only a phone call. I called after reading his application and was satisfied and told him we would send appropriate paperwork. To this day I believe I must have talked with a fraternity brother for his deep voice was not close to what I heard on the phone. Memories!!

Frank Breshears - I worked and played with Ron while at NASA and counted him as a good friend.

He was a willing worker and a stalwart on our Marvels softball team. He never shied away from any task including those assigned by NASA and those he took on as a friend. I can recall his sense of humor when we worked outside regular hours to help a friend build his house. Ron was amused when I called a sudden and short rain shower "just a band of showers". He wondered if that was "like a band of Indians".

Ron was a gentle soul. His mild mannered good nature was in contrast to his very large intimidating stature. I feel very fortunate to have counted Ron as good friend. He will be missed but my memories of him live on. Goodbye, Ron

Milt Heflin - I think the first time I really noticed that Ron was indeed a BIG guy was during Apollo 8 when he crawled into the CM to do some of the postlanding work! (my first recovery deployment, PRS USS Yorktown)

Enjoyed a lot of slow-pitch softball with Ron...as Al Ong pointed out Ron at 1<sup>st</sup> base provided an excellent target and could darn near reach every wild throw coming his way...I don't know how many times we would see a stray ball snagged by Ron's bare right hand...he may have even snagged a line drive or groundball while ignoring his gloved-hand...our team "manager" loved to put Al behind Ron in the batting order so the pitcher would struggle a bit adjusting to each of them in the batter's box! With Ron reaching first base and when Al would followed with an extra base hit, Al would pretty much be right behind Ron as Ron reached second base...it was hilarious to see both of them caught in the same "run down"...

Occasionally, the "Marvels" played a team that we had not seen before...when Ron got to the batter's box EVERY member of the team in the field would start backing up, infielders and outfielders both!! Overtime they would learn that Ron really wasn't known for his hitting/running skills...

Our gentle, quiet giant was part of the LRD experience...thanks for the memories...

Leroy Penn - Ron called me one morning needing a ride to work. Weather was bad, and I was driving a 59 Triumph TR3 with the top up. Told Ron it might be a bit tight, but he assured me it was OK. Envision if you will a 6 ft 6 in 250 pound guy getting into a small convertible which sat 6 inches off the ground. Think PRETZEL. It was sight to behold but one of our favorite memories. Meanwhile over with the MARVELS, Ron's hands dwarfed the legal 34 inch softball bats. So to offset this difficulty, someone in our LRD family chose to take two bats, join them together to get a bat 36, 38, or 40 inches long. I don't remember who did this, but my candidates would be Collins, Epps, Richmond, or Bell. Looked perfectly natural in his hands, until the umpires thought his bat looked like a power pole. Ron has always been one of my favorite people.

Bob Walker - One of my memories (faded though it may be as to precise details) of Ron was when I had written up a trip report from (I think) Apollo 12. Rip Kerby was

reviewing it, and I had written that the boilerplate was hoisted on board “sans collar”. Rip asked me: “What the heck is “sans collar?” I guess I must have replied “without the collar” and Rip probably said “just say so”. About then Ron said something like: “It is hard to introduce any literary sophistication around here.” It was good to have a little backup and I did appreciate his comment.

He also had a “Club” that he attached to the steering wheel of his car, and I thought at the time it might be a little overkill, but a few years ago our van was stolen and recovered. I thought of Ron as I went out and got a “Club” in case the thieves came back with key before I could get it rekeyed.

Good memories from a time we didn’t realize how historic it was as we lived it.

Mel Richmond - Just another memory of Ron. During the shellback ceremony on Apollo 11, Ron, WB Wood and I were in line crawling along the deck with our head protecting the butt of the person in front of each of us. Worked ok for WB and me, but Ron's butt stuck up too high to be protected. After too many hits with a strap of some kind (I never looked up to find out what it was), Ron had had enough and stood up and told his tormentors that it better not continue (he was very clear about what would happen if it did).

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Ron’s Recovery Assignments (compiled by Dick Snyder): **Gemini 10** – PRS (LPH Guadalcanal); **Gemini 11** – ARRS Kindley AFB, Bermuda, ROCR – Recovery Status – Team 1; **Gemini 12** – ARRS Kindley AFB, Bermuda; **Apollo 1/AS-204** – ARRS Kindley AFB, Bermuda [Did not fly; did not deploy]; **Apollo 4/AS-501** – ARRS Hickam AFB, Oahu – Aircraft 6; **Apollo 6/AS-502** – ARRS Kindley AFB, Bermuda - Team Lead; **Apollo 7/AS-205**—ROCR –Recovery Logistics - Team 1; **Apollo 8/AS-503** – PRS (CVS Yorktown) –Swim/Helo Ops & CM Safing/Post Retrieval Ops; **Apollo 9/AS-504** – RCC Kunia, Oahu (CTF-130); **Apollo 10/AS-505** – ARRS Anderson AFB, Guam // ARRS Pago Pago, American Samoa (End-OF Mission); **Apollo 11/AS-506** – ARRS Lajes AFB, Azores & ARRS Ascension; **Apollo 12/AS-507** – PRS (CVS Hornet) – CM Retrieval/Swim Ops/Helo Ops/Post Retrieval Ops; **Apollo 13/AS-508** – ROCR – Recovery Logistics –Team 1; **Apollo 14/AS-509** – ARRS Ascension; **Apollo 15/AS-510** – PRS (LPH Okinawa) – Helo/ Deck Ops/Post Retrieval Ops



LRD Marvels slow-pitch team at MSC-Gilruth Rec Center softball field in early 70's (Ron in center of back row)



The Marvelous Marvels Slow Pitch Softball, Circa 1970-something (Ron left on back row)