



Richard Franklin Nelson

March 27, 1940 - January 26, 2021

RICHARD FRANKLIN NELSON

Richard "Dick" Franklin Nelson, 80, of Ocala, passed away on January 26. Dick was born on March 27, 1940, to Henry George Nelson and Grace Stoffel in Charleston, West Virginia.

After troublemaking with the Red Lantern Boys at Whitmer High School in Toledo, Ohio, he went on to study at the University of Toledo...until Uncle Sam came knocking. Sam voluntold Dick to serve for two years, eleven months, and twenty-nine days--not that he counted--in the Army Security Agency. If he told you what he did there, he'd've had to terminate you.

He worked for the U.S. Defense Department as an instructor at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, then was recruited by defense contractor Sanders Associates in Nashua, New Hampshire for nine years. After that, he signed on with the Navy Department in 1975 at Pinecastle Electronic Warfare Range in Florida. In 1987, he accepted an opportunity with Marion County, Florida, as the 9-1-1 Director, where he served until his retirement in 2007.

Dick implemented an Enhanced 9-1-1 system in Marion County, a place one-and-a-half times larger than the state of Rhode Island--1624 square miles. Enhanced 9-1-1 is a service that automatically displays the telephone number and physical location of the 9-1-1 caller on the emergency operator's screen, so more people can be saved from emergencies, even if they're unable to speak. His group also worked to assign a physical address to everyone in Marion County, so everyone could use this life-saving system.

Along with his 9-1-1 duties, he served for seven years as Chairman of the Florida Statewide 9-1-1 Coordinator Group, and for six years on the Board of Officers for the Florida Chapter of The Association of Public Safety Communications Officials International, Inc. (APCO), serving as President from 2000-2001. In 1994, he received his Certified Public Manager designation from the Florida Center for Public Management at Florida State University, and in 2004, he was awarded the honor of APCO lifetime membership.

Dick married Maxine Russell in 1974, and she put up with him ever since, through all the bad jokes and even worse movies. With laughter and love, they raised four children and have six grandchildren. All the kids cherish and miss him, despite the watching and re-watching of *The Hunt for Red October*. So. Many. Times. (That's a joke. Mostly.)

Dick was a member of The Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks for 23 years.

He began volunteering and performing at the Ocala Civic Theatre in 1983. He was Chairman of the Technical Committee for the Play-A-Part Campaign to build the new theatre from 1986-1988. Audiences enjoyed his talent, humor, singing, and dancing on OCT's stage in shows such as *Oklahoma*, *Music Man*, *Anything Goes*, and many more. His joyful hamming-it-up was inherited by his kids, two of whom joined him performing at OCT, and who, even now, annoy their friends and spouses in his honor.

Dick is survived by his wife, Maxine; his children, Martti Collins (Marc), Kenneth Nelson (Marissa), Eric Paro (Courtney) and Lisa Nelson; and his brother Thomas Nelson (Judy).

He saved lives through his groundbreaking work for Marion County, and he brought smiles to everyone who knew him.

Tribute Wall

DD

“ It was truly an honor to work along side Dick as a colleague, while I was the 911 Coordinator for Collier County. We served on the APCO Board together as well as charter members of the Florida NENA Chapter. He was a great advocate for public safety and was instrumental in the re-writing of the E911 Statute and State Plan. Always ready with humor and kindness. A great man who will be greatly missed.

Deb D'Orazio - February 12, 2021 at 12:40 PM

MS

“ Had the honor of serving with Dick on the Florida APCO Board. A true gentleman! Condolences to his family. RIP Dick!!!

Matt Stillwell - February 12, 2021 at 08:00 AM

SN

“ I new Dick from his 9-1-1 work, being his counterpart in neighboring Alachua County. He was a fountain of knowledge and always available to answer questions or brainstorm problems. He was a true leader in our 9-1-1 professional associations and left a mark on all of us. I remember one particular time when I was going through a stressful situation at work and ended up talking to Dick about it. He gave me a pep talk that made a huge difference, and that I remember to this day. We have all missed him since his retirement, and I think about him often. He was a true friend. My sincerest condolences to the family.

Susan Nelson - February 11, 2021 at 03:44 PM

MH

“ Dick was a great boss. He was very passionate about everything 9-1-1 and made tremendous contributions to Marion County as a whole. He was always an advocate for his staff and did everything in his power to ensure we had all of the latest and greatest tools to make 9-1-1 in Marion County a success. I learned most of what I know from Dick Nelson and he will be greatly missed, not only by his former staff but for those who has the pleasure of knowing him within the 9-1-1 community around the state. All of our sympathy to Maxine and his family.

Michelle Hirst - February 11, 2021 at 02:15 PM

LP

“ Dick was a great friend at Whitmer. Always fun to be around. Not surprised that his obit has so much humor in it. Love and prayers for Maxine and his family.

Larry Pool - February 11, 2021 at 11:27 AM

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Larry Pool - February 11, 2021 at 11:26 AM

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Larry Pool - February 11, 2021 at 11:14 AM

JM

“ Will miss Dick and his talents. He has been a friend for many years. We will cherish all those memories from the 'Good Ole Days' at OCT. Our sympathy to Maxine and his wonderful children.
Joyce and Fred Mullen

Joycr Mullen - February 11, 2021 at 02:36 AM

DK

“ Dick Nelson was a favorite of mine at Whitmer High School. As I recall he played trombone. I played coronet. Dick was one who made you smile. May the God of all comfort be with his beloved family.

Dale Knepper - February 09, 2021 at 07:19 PM

DB

“ Dear Maxine and family. I went to school with Dick (1958 class), and he always made us laugh at his jokes! He was such a nice person to know, and I hope he is in charge of entertainment in Heaven, God loves to laugh! You are all in my prayers. love and blessings

Dee Yeager Bovenzi - February 09, 2021 at 05:41 PM