



## Mr. James "Randy" Houston

September 28, 2016

James Randall "Randy" Houston, 57, died Sept. 28, 2016, at his home near Oxford.

A visitation will be held at Coleman Funeral Home from 5 to 7 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 1. Funeral services will be conducted at 2 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 2, also at Coleman Funeral Home, with burial to follow in Pine Bluff Church of Christ Cemetery.

Retired as a Senior Chief Petty Officer with the U.S. Navy, Mr. Houston is survived by his wife, Margaret Ellen Houston; sons, James Kevin Houston (Misty) and Kenneth Eugene Houston (Marcia); daughter, Kelly Marie Whitten (Brion), all of Oxford; and father, James Aaron Houston, of Olive Branch, MS. Other survivors include a brother, Ronald Houston, of Flagstaff, Arizona; a sister, Belinda Boyd of Stanton, Tennessee; his stepmother, Katie Houston of Olive Branch; four grandsons – James Dylan Houston, Ryan Wayne Houston, Brion Chase Whitten and Randall Brooks Whitten; two granddaughters, Cassidy Jayne Houston and Emma Katherine Houston. He was preceded in death by his mother, Martha Jean Houston.

As a 25-year Navy man, Randy Houston served his country all over the world, from tours on the USS Saratoga to the Pascagoula Shipyard, where he had a role in the construction of his final ship, the USS Iwo Jima. One of the literal highlights of his overseas assignments was witnessing the Aurora Borealis in Keflavik, Iceland.

He was the consummate sportsman, adamant that every shot be exactly right

and any game taken be recovered. After his health began declining he went hunting on one occasion with son-in-law Brion Whitten. Convinced that he had shot a deer cleanly, it was only after the two men searched for hours, and target shots proved Randy's marksmanship was off, that they gave up looking for the deer. Rick Castleberry, a Navy buddy, recalled Randy's braving icy waters to retrieve Rick's deer from a beaver pond.

Also known as a huge practical joker, Randy Houston loved such tricks as tilting cups of water on barely opened doors and positioning himself to see it fall on the next person who came along. Grady Cox said, however, that Randy seemed to have a sixth sense for such traps himself, though. One exception was when coworkers threaded a hose through a hole in his office wall and into his desk drawer, turning it on as soon as he was seated.

"It struck him right in the belly," Cox laughed. "That was the only way we could get him – to go to extremes like that."

The practical joking extended to intimidating his future son-in-law when Brion Whitten came to ask for Kelly's hand in marriage. Houston's answer was, "Boy, I've got one question for you. Do you know how much money I have in the bank?" Whitten, stunned at the question, acknowledged he didn't.

"I don't either, but I know it's enough that I can bury you with it," he said, with just enough twinkle in his eyes that Brion realized he was safe – mostly. A gunsmith and collector, Randy also thought it hilarious to show up for their wedding toting a prized double-barreled shotgun as a conversation piece. His humor also extended to kid-level, writing booger songs for his grandkids, making jokes about goat "pills," and advertising his farm-fresh eggs for sale as "Farm Fresh Butt Nuggets \$2 Dozen."

On the serious side, Ellen Houston remembers that her husband's homecomings from his naval posts were special to the whole family. "He had big hands, and I'd always look for him by his hands," she said. His devotion to duty, however, often made him among the last to appear on deck.

"Daddy would never be manning the rails; he'd always be below, taking care of last-minute details," she said, surrounded by her children and their

spouses. "I told him, 'If your ship ever goes down, it's going to be just you and the captain left on board.'"

Kelly remembered being frustrated when her mother suddenly called her home from a friend's birthday party.

"I went in my bedroom, and there was a heart-shaped balloon, with arms and legs, on the bed," she said. "Daddy was hiding behind the balloon on the other side of the bed. When I saw him, the party didn't even matter."

Kevin Houston said under his father's joking nature was a fierce protector of his family. Once Kevin, as a young boy, scouted some hunting territory in the Sierra Nevada with his father.

"It was getting dark, and I heard a noise and asked what that was, and he said, 'Katydids.' Then I heard a different noise and asked him what that was," Kevin said. "He said, 'Katydids' again, but this time he picked me up by my collar and swung me up in the air." At his dad's feet lay the biggest timber rattler either of them had ever seen.

Randy Houston's devotion to family took other forms, too. While stationed in Jacksonville, he was coaching son Kenny's Little League team when Randy was transferred to Iceland. On the weekend of a particularly crucial game, he cobbled together a schedule of military flights that got him from Keflavik to Jacksonville, where he coached the game, and then flew back to Iceland before his duties resumed.

A clean-shaven man throughout his military career, Randy Houston stopped shaving the day he retired, growing an impressive beard that had him in demand as Santa Claus for a variety of events, including the Oxford Christmas Parade.

"After (University of Mississippi Police Officer) Robert Langley was killed, he went to (Langley's widow) Lisa's house and did a special Santa Claus thing for their kids," Misty Houston said. He fit the role so well, she added, that "Mason, a younger cousin, used to call him 'Ho-Ho.'"

Ellen Houston said that her husband's greatest devotions were to family and

God.

“He loved his family; loved his kids and grandkids,” she said. “Randy loved the Lord. He wanted everybody to know Him.”

# Cemetery Details

## Pine Bluff Church of Christ Cemetery

311 CR 431  
Oxford, MS 38655

# Previous Events

## Visitation

OCT 1. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Coleman Funeral Home of Oxford  
601 Commerce Parkway  
Oxford, MS 38655  
(662) 234-3900  
info@colemanfuneralhome.com  
<https://www.colemanfuneralhome.com/>

## Service

OCT 2. 2:00 PM (CT)

Coleman Funeral Home of Oxford  
601 Commerce Parkway  
Oxford, MS 38655  
(662) 234-3900  
info@colemanfuneralhome.com  
<https://www.colemanfuneralhome.com/>

# Tribute Wall



“ *Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Mr. James "Randy" Houston.*



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October 01, 2016 at 01:18 PM



“ *Randy was always ready to laugh and make you smile in return. It was always a pleasure to enjoy his company and I will surely missy my buddy.*



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**Henry Lena** - October 01, 2016 at 11:33 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Mr. James "Randy" Houston.*



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October 01, 2016 at 07:13 AM

Darrell Dowd

“ 1 file added to the album New Album Name



Darrell Dowd - September 30, 2016 at 06:17 PM

Darrell Dowd

“ Darrell Dowd lit a candle in memory of Mr. James "Randy" Houston



Darrell Dowd - September 30, 2016 at 06:15 PM

MG

“ Deepest sympathy to Randy's wife and children. Also to his Dad James, who - along with his Mother Martha, were my sweet friends from High School days. Prayers for comfort during this very sad time to each of you.

Margaret (Cook) Gill  
Bradenton, Florida

Margaret C. Gill - September 30, 2016 at 04:18 PM

AI

“ Ajinomoto Windsor Inc. purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Mr. James "Randy" Houston.



Ajinomoto Windsor Inc. - September 30, 2016 at 03:29 PM



“ Leigh Heard lit a candle in memory of Mr. James "Randy" Houston



Leigh Heard - September 30, 2016 at 10:45 AM



“ Mr prankster. Loved pulling a good joke on people. "Salt in your coffee"

Ray Hardiman - September 30, 2016 at 05:40 AM



“ Randy was such a kind man....always lending a helping hand....thinking of you Ellen and family at this tough time..... Lynne M. Piepkorn USN Retired

Lynne Piepkorn - September 30, 2016 at 03:32 AM



“ With Distinction was purchased for the family of Mr. James "Randy" Houston.



September 29, 2016 at 11:10 PM

GD

“ Randy and the Houston family lived across the street from us in the late 60's and early 70's. He used to carry my books to school. He was always joking around and riding his mini bike. He loved to aggravate me like the time he put a big slimey frog in my mailbox and then told me the postman had left a package in there. He laughed so hard when I was grossed out by that huge frog! We had a lot of fun. We will miss you Randy.

Gina Conn Douglas - September 29, 2016 at 10:21 PM

AL

“ Randy was a hoot, always smiling, singing silly songs and loving his family dearly. I am thankful you are no more in pain and I know someday we will see you again. One thing we all will have is our memories and those cant be taken away. You will be missed by all who knew you and my thoughts and love with all of you. Love ya, Alyce

Alyce - September 29, 2016 at 10:04 PM

R(

“ He once waded neck deep in a beaver pond on a freezing morning to drag out my deer. I had to give him my clothes afterward, which left me in my thermal underwear. He was that kind of friend. My life is better because he was in it.

Rick Castleberry SCPO, USA (Ret) - September 29, 2016 at 09:36 PM

James Mullins

“ James Mullins lit a candle in memory of Mr. James "Randy" Houston



James Mullins - September 29, 2016 at 09:23 PM

RD

“ You will be missed in so many ways by family, friends and loved ones.



Ron and Louise Davis - September 29, 2016 at 08:52 PM

SO

“ We were stationed with Randy and Ellen in China Lake Ca. Some of the best people we got to know. We used to have catfish and hush puppy dinners. Randy would go hunting and come back with deer, then made the best venison chili. He was always such fun to be around. Miss you!!


Sharon Overman - September 29, 2016 at 08:23 PM

SO

“ Sharon Overman lit a candle in memory of Mr. James "Randy" Houston



Sharon Overman - September 29, 2016 at 08:19 PM

  
Randell  
Coleman

“ Randell Coleman lit a candle in memory of Mr. James "Randy" Houston



Randell Coleman - September 29, 2016 at 08:01 PM

QJ

“ *Quinn & Freda Jones lit a candle in memory of Mr. James "Randy" Houston*



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**Quinn & Freda Jones** - September 29, 2016 at 07:17 PM

BP

“ *I remember when Mr.Randy was making Sorgum Molasses. He had me and Kenny out in the field chopping Sorgum in 98 degree heat. But I tell you what that man could make you laugh and he loved to see people smiling and laughing. He treated me as one of his family anytime I was around them. He will truly be missed .*

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**Bo Prince** - September 29, 2016 at 06:57 PM