



Randel Leonard Zeller

July 28, 1953 - December 1, 2025

Captain Randel Leonard Zeller, United States Navy, retired, age 72, passed away on Monday, December 1, 2025, in Fairfax, VA.

Randel was born at the US Army Hospital in Fort Belvoir, VA, on July 28, 1953, to Leonard and Kathryn Zeller. Soon thereafter, Army orders moved the family to Germany where scouting became a key part of Randy's life. He excelled in academics and athletics, graduating with highest honors from Crossland High School, Temple Hills, MD, in 1972.

Randy followed in his father's footsteps of military service, beginning studies at the US Naval Academy in 1972. Upon graduating with honors in 1975, he was commissioned as an Ensign in the US Navy. Randy loved being at sea on the "boats" and embracing new, stealthy, and often "first of its kind" challenges. His accomplished naval career spanned over 28 years. It included a plank owner's second tour on the USS Groton (SSN 694) as Executive Officer, submarine command of the USS Gato (SSN 615), a senior policy role at the Navy's Office of Legislative Affairs, and senior command of the Trident Refit Facility, Kings Bay, GA. Following retirement from the Navy, Randel began public service as a civilian senior advisor to a Senate member. This responsibility led to subsequent leadership roles in the Senior Executive Service until his retirement in 2018. His distinguished contributions shaped national interagency coordination and partnerships among government,

military, private, and public partners. Public sources attest to some of his accomplishments.

On June 14, 1975, Randel married Deborah Lee Chipman, formerly of Dayton, OH, at the US Naval Academy Chapel. They recently celebrated their jubilee wedding anniversary at the same church where Randy was baptized. His greatest joys were his daughter, AZ, and son, Nate. Randy relished supporting them in all their endeavors, especially in the great outdoors.

Randy's life was one of quiet patriotism—built on love, humility, and a commitment to doing what was right. He will be deeply missed by all who knew him and those whose lives he touched along the way.

Randel Zeller is survived by his: wife, Debbie, and mother-in-law, Beverly Jean (née Gates) Chipman; daughter, Alexandra Lynn (née Zeller) Candler, and son-in-law John Declan Candler; son, Nathaniel Richard Leonard Zeller; brother, Ronald Louis Zeller and wife Rebecca Pearl (née Hayes) Zeller; sister, Robin Kay (née Zeller) Shade, and husband Steven Shade; sister-in-law, Valerie Ann (née Chipman) Powers. Randy is also survived by many treasured nieces, nephews, and God children.

Family members preceding Randy in death include his: parents LTC Leonard Joseph Zeller, US Army (ret) (1929-2007) and Kathryn Delores (née Sams) Zeller (1931-2014); sister, Katrina Lynn Zeller (1958-1979); baby Zachary Zeller (1993); and father-in-law, LTC Richard Alan Chipman, US Air Force (ret) (1932-2021).

Family and friends are invited to visitation at Pierce Funeral Home (PFH) from 6:00 to 8:00 PM Eastern on Friday, January 16, 2026, at 9609 Center Street, Manassas, VA 20110. The PFH website is <https://www.piercefh.com>.

Family and friends will gather at St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church to celebrate Randel Zeller's Funeral Mass, which begins at 11:00 AM Eastern on Saturday, January 17, 2026, at 6720 Union Mill Road, Clifton, VA 20124. The church website is <https://st-andrew.org/contact-us>.

Burial with full military funeral honors will be held at Arlington National Cemetery at a future date and time.

Contributions in Captain Zeller's memory may be made to an organization listed below:

- St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church 'Music Program' at <https://giving.parishsoft.com/App/Giving/FD-310>
- Centreville Volunteer Fire Department, Station #17 at <https://www.cvfd.org/donate/>
- USS Groton Sail Foundation at <https://grotonsail.com/donate/>
- Submarine Force Library and Museum Association at <https://ussnautilus.org/donate-now/>

Per family wishes, please do not send flowers/plants to the funeral home or church.

Upcoming Events

Burial w/ Military Honors

MAY 19. 9:00 AM (ET)

Arlington National Cemetery
1 Memorial Ave
Arlington, VA 22211
(877) 907-8585

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 16. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Pierce Funeral Home
9609 Center St.
Manassas, VA 20110
(703) 257-6028
pfh@piercefh.com
<https://www.piercefh.com>

Funeral Mass

JAN 17. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church
6720 Union Mill Rd.
Clifton, VA 20124

Tribute Wall

DB

“ *My condolences to your family. I served with Randy on his first submarine. He was a great mentor and teacher.*

Donald J Boland - March 31 at 03:46 PM

DK

“ *Deb Kelley sent a virtual gift in memory of Randel Leonard Zeller*



Deb Kelley - January 16 at 03:41 PM

DK

Randy and I met in 2014 when I joined the Senior Ranks of NORAD & USNORTHCOM. We quickly became friends, both at work and off work. He was a very caring, compassionate, and committed individual. He cared for his employees. He loved his family very much. I truly am going to miss him. Whenever I think of Randy, a smile comes to my face. Today we honor a life that was lived to the full. We honor a spirit, now free. You'll long be remembered, whenever we say: "Fair winds and following seas" my friend. God Bless You and Keep you safely in his arms in Heaven.

Deb Kelley - January 16 at 04:11 PM

J(

“ *The preceding comments are perfectly stated... Randy was an extraordinary person who touched many lives from the time he was a child. The love of his family, and his love of his Lord and God, sustained and lifted him up. We can hear the celebration in heaven all the way here on earth. pray the family finds comfort and hope.*

Jodie Birch (cousin) - January 14 at 11:34 AM

SZ

“ Uncle Randy was cut from the finest cloth—a man favored by God Almighty. He inspired those who knew him to rise higher. His love and reverence for God, his kindness toward others, his wisdom, curiosity, and steady leadership set him apart. He will be deeply missed here on earth, joyfully celebrated in heaven, and forever cherished in our hearts.

Subrina Zeller - January 13 at 10:56 AM

RT

“ My deepest sympathies to the Zeller family for the loss of their patriarch and fellow CAPT. Remember him well from our Crossland '71 class. I always respected his sharp intellect, humor, and career successes. Enjoyed seeing him a couple of times at class reunions. His contributions will be missed by our classmates, the Navy, and the nation. May God help your family through this difficult time.
Blessings,
Rick Titi, CAPT, USN (Ret.)
Chesapeake VA

Rick Titi - January 11 at 11:50 AM

GS

“ Randy was a gentle, kind , and loving person. His intellectual talents were beyond measure. He freely gave of his time and talents to youth through the Boy Scouts organization. I wish our paths had crossed more often before his passing. May he now Rest In Peace.

Glenda Sigg - December 22, 2025 at 11:24 AM