



Wright Cannon Finney

April 19, 1953 - January 2, 2026

Wright Cannon Finney, of Tallahassee, Florida, passed away on January 2, 2026. He was born on April 19, 1953, in Baltimore, Maryland, and grew up in Tampa, Florida, where he graduated from H.B. Plant High School.

In 1971, Wright moved to Tallahassee to attend Florida State University. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences in 1975, with minors in chemistry and mathematics, and a Master of Science in Marine Ecology and Systematic Zoology in 1978, with a strong specialization in statistics. It was at Florida State that Wright met his wife, Janice, whom he married in 1977.

Wright devoted his professional life to Florida State University, with a career spanning more than four decades. He was known as a skilled researcher, a generous mentor, and a steady presence within the institution.

Early in his career, Wright worked in the Department of Physics with Professor Robert H. Davis on research involving electron-beam and pulsed-corona technologies for air-pollution control under United States Department of Energy grants. This work focused on reducing sulfur oxides, nitrogen oxides, and particulate matter from industrial emissions and resulted in publications that were widely cited.

In 1992, Wright joined the Department of Chemical and Biomedical

Engineering at the FAMU-FSU College of Engineering as an associate in research. During nearly three decades in that role, he became indispensable to the department's teaching and research missions.

He played a key role in curriculum development and contributed to the development of the Biomedical Engineering undergraduate degree program. For his dedication and contributions, he was presented with the FSU Seminole Award.

Wright mentored generations of graduate and undergraduate students. He was a long-time advisor to the student chapter of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, where he organized fundraising activities, helping students attend regional and national conferences.

Wright was happiest on the water, boating with his wife Janice and participating in water activities with friends. One passion of his was windsurfing. Wright was a founding member of the Shell Point Sailboard Club, which led to his involvement with the Stephen C. Smith Memorial Regatta and the American Cancer Society.

In 1995, Wright was instrumental in the formation of the Stephen C. Smith Memorial Regatta Foundation to ensure continuity of the Regatta and to fundraise for the American Cancer Society. Wright served for many years as the Foundation's president and was widely regarded as the person who quietly made things work, from setting course marks to solving last-minute problems and stepping in whenever help was needed.

In describing Wright, it has been stated that "People like Wright don't just participate in a community – they shape its culture, they lift others up, and they leave behind ripples that keep moving long after they're gone."

Wright is survived by his wife, Janice; his stepmother, Kay Harkness Finney;

his siblings, Joella Finney Sparkman (Joey), P. Gray Finney (Jan), and Kevin Finney (Chris); and many nieces and nephews, and their spouses and children.

He is preceded in death by his father, Dr. Roy Pelham Finney, Jr.; his mother, Elizabeth Lanham Balboni; and his brother, James (Jim) Madison Lanham Finney.

A celebration of Wright's life will be held at Bevis Funeral Home, 200 John Knox Road, Tallahassee, on January 31, 2026, at 11:00 a.m., with a reception to follow at the Shriners, 1805 North Monroe Street, corner of East Tharpe and North Monroe.

In lieu of Flowers, the family requests memorial contributions to the Stephen C. Smith Memorial Regatta Foundation. Payment options can be found at www.smithregatta.com, or you can send a check to Stephen C. Smith Memorial Regatta Foundation, P.O. Box 13423, Tallahassee, FL 32317.

Kelly Barber of Bevis Funeral Home (850-385-2193 or www.bevisfh.com) is assisting the Finney family with their arrangements.

Previous Events

Memorial Celebration

JAN 31. 11:00 AM (ET)

Bevis Funeral Home & Crematory
200 John Knox Road
Tallahassee
Tallahassee, FL 32303

Reception

JAN 31. 1:00 PM (ET)

Marzuq Shrine Center
1805 North Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32303

Tribute Wall



“ I just found out today of Wright's passing. He was very organized and ran a great regatta. He loved sailing and everything that went with it. I sponsored several races and went with the club to the Keys a couple of times. I bought a Porsche from him at one time.....he told me it was Blaupunkt blue! Turbo Carrera. He was a serious type guy, however, I did make him smile a couple of times. He was generous in many ways and had a great sense of humor. He will be missed by all that knew him. Aloha

Rush Rush - May 25 at 10:26 PM



“ I lived in Tallahassee from 1982 thru 1988 while in grad school at FSU. Wright and I were both in the Nuclear Research Building of the Physics Department. Early on, I learned about Shell Point and windsurfing and the Smith Regatta from Wright, and we became very good friends. One year, I was awarded the Party Animal award at the Regatta, but honestly Wright was always the number one party animal. Wright's enthusiasm for friendship, the beach, windsurfing, music, and partying influenced the direction that my life would take. Forty+ years later, I consider Wright to be one of my best friends and one of the best humans I've ever met. I have not seen Wright in years, but I've missed him, and hope his enthusiastic spirit guides your regatta this year. Scott "Shell Point" Van Verst.

Scott Van Verst - March 03 at 04:49 PM

TA

“ 7 files added to the tribute wall



Ted Avellone - February 01 at 01:27 PM

MW

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Mary Katherine Westmark - January 30 at 07:36 PM

MW

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Mary Katherine Westmark - January 30 at 07:34 PM

MW

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Mary Katherine Westmark - January 30 at 07:33 PM

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“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Mary Katherine Westmark - January 30 at 07:32 PM

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“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Mary Katherine Westmark - January 30 at 07:28 PM

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“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Mary Katherine Westmark - January 30 at 07:27 PM

MW

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Mary Katherine Westmark - January 30 at 07:24 PM

MW

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Mary Westmark - January 30 at 07:21 PM

TH

Wright -- will sorely miss you --for over 42 years you personality but above all your dedication to our causes for the Sailboard club and above all the American Cancer Society has been an inspiration for all of us! May you always have fair weather and the best winds in your Valhalla!

The_Gsatyr - January 31 at 02:08 PM

MW

“ *Thank you for being a part of some of our favorite memories. You will be missed. The world will not be the same without the Wrighteous Dude.*

Jay and Mary Katherine Westmark



Mary Westmark - January 30 at 07:20 PM



“ *Fiery Lily and Rose was purchased for the family of Wright Cannon Finney.*



January 30 at 10:14 AM



“ *Rose & Chris Lane planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Wright Cannon Finney.*

Rose & Chris Lane - January 30 at 10:14 AM



“ *Chris A. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Wright Cannon Finney.*

Chris A. - January 28 at 09:16 PM



“ *Dreams From the Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Wright Cannon Finney.*



January 28 at 06:39 PM

DM

“ See you again some sunny day rest in peace beautiful soul.



Dolly Mitchell - January 27 at 01:58 PM

YF

“ Your Enrollment Management family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Wright Cannon Finney.



Your Enrollment Management family - January 26 at 01:53 PM



“ From working closely together at the College of Engineering to eventually working with you at the Stephen C. Smith Memorial Regatta, I feel fortunate to have known you through those years. I'm especially thankful I had the opportunity to give you a hug just a few months ago. I will always admire your loyalty, strong work ethic, and that smirky grin when you were having some fun. Rest in peace, my friend.



Gena Thomas - January 12 at 10:55 AM

JM

“ Wright was big in stature and reputation. He will leave a hole in a lot of hearts that will be hard to fill.

John E McBride - January 11 at 09:58 PM

Rose
Lane

“ *Rose Lane lit a candle in memory of Wright Cannon Finney*



Rose Lane - January 11 at 11:34 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Wright Cannon Finney.*



January 10 at 02:14 PM



“ *Bob and Kerry Jerris planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Wright Cannon Finney.*

Bob and Kerry Jerris - January 10 at 02:14 PM