

“In Loving Memory”
A Memorial Service Remembering & Celebrating

Lord, support us all the day long,
Until the shadows lengthen
And the evening comes,
And the busy world is hushed,
And the fever of life is over,
And our work is done.
Then in thy mercy
Grant us a safe lodging,
A holy rest and peace at last. Amen
(From the Book of Common Prayer)

Addresses for Contributions in Ruth's name:

1. Bud & Donna Somers Hospice House
1110 Hammock Road
Sebring, FL 33872

Memo line: In Memory of Ruth E. Handley

2. South Florida State College Foundation
600 W. College Drive
Avon Park, FL 33825

Memo line: Ruth E. Handley Memorial Scholarship

3. Florida Cattlemen's Association Foundation
P. O. Box 421929
Kissimmee, FL 34742

Memo line: University of Florida - Jim Handley Endowed Professor
Animal Science Department

Stephenson-Nelson Funeral Home
www.stephensonnelsonfh.com



Ruth Evans Handley

April 10, 1928 – June 24, 2026

*“All things work together for good to them who love God,
to them who are the called according to his purpose.”*

Romans 8:28

First Sebring Church - Sebring, Florida
Monday, July 6, 2026 – 11:00 a.m.

Ruth Bannister Evans Handley peacefully died in her home at the age of 98 on June 24, 2026, surrounded by loving family and caregivers. Her life exemplified the Greatest Generation’s selfless devotion to the service of others and a deep faith-based commitment to humility, fairness and the equal treatment of all. She was the devoted lifetime spouse of Dr. Frank G. Handley, DVM (deceased) – as able to wash dogs and handle angry cats as she was to productively guide high-level board meetings. She will be deeply missed by friends from many walks of life and remembered as someone who truly listened to others, remembered everyone’s name, and was often the last person to leave any party.

Ruth overcame traditional limitations in her public and private life where, despite having been told she could never bear children, she was the loving mother of five: Frank Gray Jr. (Rose Mary Romano), William Ronald (Patricia), Mary Anne, James Edward (Karen), and Susanna Handley Bishop (Nick), the Grandmother of ten (Jennifer, Chris, Ronnie, Eric, Roland, Drew, Grant, Caroline, Grace and Mollie), and the Great Grandmother of eighteen. Ruth was also the steadfast center of a large extended family. She and Doc. Handley provided a “home-away-from-home” for numerous young people, including foreign exchange students, where they found acceptance, kindness, and mostly gentle guidance.

Mrs. Handley believed that education “was her calling” and she taught for decades at all levels, often wielding a notorious red pencil that encouraged her students to do their best thinking. She was a proud, award-winning alumnus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she led the YWCA, and she earned her Masters’ Degree at Auburn University. During her long career, Mrs. Handley served as one of the first elected female School Superintendents in Florida, an Assistant Principal at Sebring High School, and a Department Head at the South Florida State College – of which she was a founding faculty member. As a thirty-year member of the Readers Club of Sebring, she pursued her love of literature and thoughtful discussion in her private life, for her “nothing is more important than reading”.

During her lifetime of service to children and families, she, Mrs. Doris Gentry Hawthorne, and Judge Clifton M. Kelly founded the Children’s Advocacy Center of Highlands County; she worked with Sebring pastors to establish the Fairyland Daycare Center for migrant workers’ children; and she helped build the Sebring Public Library serving on its Board for many years. With a small group of local citizens, She helped found the United Way of Central Florida – Highlands County Division, and with others she helped establish the Ridge Area ARC. The family deeply appreciates the tender, professional care provided by Raimunda (Piggy), Cathy, Maria, Alma, Angie and Dolores (Dee); the support of the Good Shepherd Hospice team of Amanda, Amy and Kim; Tim’s patient physical therapy; and the devoted gentle companionship provided by friend Kathy.

Ruth E. Handley Celebration of Life

Order of Worship

Gathering, Word of Grace Greeting	Rev. David Juliano, Senior Pastor First Sebring Church
Psalm 121 & The Lord’s Prayer	Jennifer Handley Waltman Granddaughter
“I’ll Fly Away”	Harry Havery, T.J. Kinyon & Jordan Terrell
Dear Granny...	Roland Gray Bishop Grandson
Honoring Ruth	Rev. Chester Clarke, Ret. Indochina Partners, Willison, FL
“In the Garden”	Harry Havery, T.J. Kinyon & Jordan Terrell
Remembering Mom	F. Gray Handley, Jr. Son
Prayer of St. Francis	Caroline Handley Feagle Granddaughter
“Just a Closer Walk with Thee”	Harry Havery, T.J. Kinyon & Jordan Terrell
Reflections & Appreciation	Mary Anne Handley Daughter
Benediction	Rev. Chester Clarke
“Amazing Grace” Recessional	Karina Kusz Niece