



## Donald Feisthamel

March 1, 1953 - July 25, 2011

Glendive, Montana: Donald Feisthamel, age 58, passed away Sunday, July 17, 2011 at his home in Glendive. A Life Tribute Service will be held at 10:00 A.M. on Monday, July 25, 2011 at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Glendive with Celebrant Sandy Silha and Father Joseph Ponessa officiating. Interment will be held in the Dawson County Cemetery in Glendive.

Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Glendive has been entrusted with the arrangements. Donald was born on March 1, 1953 in Glendive, the son of Anton and Barbara (Schwartzenger) Feisthamel. He was raised and educated in Glendive where he graduated from the Dawson County High School with the class of 1971. After graduation Donald moved to Billings, Montana where he attended college at the Billings Vocational Technical College. Donald married Janice A. Taylor on July 12, 1974 at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Glendive and to this union two children were born. Donald worked for Milne Implement Company from 1974-1975 until beginning a long career with the Burlington Northern Railroad roundhouse as a Machinist. In 1977, Donald and his family moved to Livingston, Montana with the railroad where they resided until 1993 when they moved back to Glendive where they have resided since. Donald was a member of the National Rifle Association and the Makoshika Bowmen. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, archery and target shooting. Donald especially enjoyed working with the youth as a hunters safety instructor. Donald was preceded in death by his parents and one sister-in-law, Shirley. Survivors include his wife, Janice of Glendive; son,

Cole (Tiffany) Feisthamel of Bozeman, Montana; daughter, Katie (Dustin) Kennedy of Germany; one brother, Tony (Carol) Feisthamel of Baker, Montana, one sister, Joyce ("Gar") Ulrich of Casper, Wyoming; and one granddaughter, Aurora Quinn Kennedy. Remembrances and condolences may be shared with the family at: [www.silvernale-silhafuneralhome.com](http://www.silvernale-silhafuneralhome.com) Today is an important day. Today we honor and celebrate the life of Donald Feisthamel. We remember Don and his 58 years with family and friends, a life of loving and giving, working and playing, hunting and fishing. We remember Don's extreme pride in his wife, Jan, his children, Cole and Katie, and his granddaughter, Aurora. We remember his passionate views on politics and policies, his stubborn Feisthamel temper, his ability to out argue anyone. And we remember Don's sense of humor, the gruffness that covered his kind heart, his love of kids, and the time and dedication he gave to teaching kids hunter safety and how to handle and shoot a weapon. We remember Don as a friend. Don was not a complicated man; he was simply a good man. Don was the third of three children, somewhat of an afterthought. His brother, Tony, was thirteen years older and Don's sister, Joyce was ten years older. Joyce recalls that she thought of Don as "her baby doll." Don was not very old by the time his siblings had grown and went out on their own. Joyce does remember that Don was kind of a scrawny kid and she figured that was one reason that Don began to work out with weights at an early age. Tony's memories of Don as a child were of the times their dad took them hunting. Don's passion for hunting began early in life. Tony says that Don didn't seem to have much of an appetite around the house but as soon as they were in the vehicle to go hunting, Don was hungry. Tony learned to pack his pockets with food and treats. After Tony left home, when he would visit, he always would bring his younger brother a toy or something special just for Don. Even with the age difference, there was always a lot of teasing back and forth between the brothers, and hunting was always a common activity. Due to his grandmother's wishes, Don attended Sacred Heart Catholic School all eight years of his grade school. Joyce says that Don had a hard time with school.

He was always an “outdoors person.” Don also served as an altar boy, again due to his grandmother’s influence. Don’s high school days were a bit on the wild side. Jan termed Don as being reckless. Don and Jan were in the same class, and when they were in their junior year, their lockers were next to each other. Don and a friend had a bet on which one of them would be the first to get a girl to go out with him. Don asked Jan, and she says she was worth a six pack to Don. With his wild ways, Don always gave Jan credit for “saving” him. After Don attended Billings Vocational Technical College, Don and Jan were married. They brought two children into this world, Cole and Katie, and Don fiercely loved his family. During their 37 years of marriage, it was Jan who taught Don to express this love. Perhaps because of this fierce love, Don was a terrible worrier. He was always thinking up the very worst that could happen, and this would induce long, long lectures, with several points of emphasis and the words, “did you get that?” Don was also hard of hearing, and as he would get excited making his point during a lecture or argument, Don would talk louder and louder. And then he would emphatically yell, “I’m not yelling!” Even being adults, Cole and Katie did not escape the worrying and lectures. That inclination to worry also made Don a disciplinarian. Cole was on one of his first job interviews in Minneapolis. The potential boss guessed that Cole had come from a military family. Cole said, “no, I just had a strict father.” Katie didn’t find Don to be as strict with her. But she is more like Don as she too, learned to argue and make her points. Katie also tends to worry and lecture, and is more likely to react in ways that resemble her father. Christmas’ always brought out the family photo albums, with Don going through them and the family remembering times shared. On Christmas Eve day, when the kids were young, and Don and Jan lived in Livingston, they always drove through east Yellowstone Park over to Cooke City, Montana to have lunch, and when they got back home, it would be time to open gifts. Every vacation and on many week-ends or days off, Don spent time enjoying his passions of fishing and hunting, and being outdoors. Because Don loved these activities, he included

his family in them. Everyone hunted, and everyone fished. Don had a drift boat and would run it on the Yellowstone. Katie remembers going over the rapids. While everyone was relieved to make it through without dumping, Katie would ask to go back and do it again. Favorite fishing spots were at Holter Lake by Helena or on the Tongue River Reservoir. Don was an avid walleye fisherman. Although time-off was dedicated to the outdoor activities, Jan always got her two days during vacations, when the family might go into Helena, or get a history lesson at Virginia City, or just visit the zoo. Don didn't mind giving up these days to Jan if they could learn something. Everyone in the family hunted, thanks to Don, and everyone has a gun. Don also bow hunted and made his own long bows. Jan even has one he modified for her to use to target shoot. There are many shared experiences and memories within the family. Don didn't just include them in what he was doing, he would try to involve himself and support them in what they enjoyed too. Don coached Cole in soccer, although Jan had to remind him not to just yell at Cole but the other kids too. When Tiffany joined the family as Cole's wife, Don and she shared an interest in photography. Katie's husband, Dustin, is into RC airplanes, and Don began learning about them. A tradition for all the extended Feisthamel family was a June reunion at the Tongue River Reservoir for fishing and fun. It was an important family time that Don and his family always attended. Besides being very involved with his family, Don was very proud of them. He was proud that both his children received college educations. And he was proud of their marriages. After Cole and Katie left home, he would badger them to stay in touch, not just with he and Jan, but with each other. There were many calls between family members, and Don, who hated to fly, traveled twice to Europe to see Katie. Don also badgered them about grandchildren. He loved kids and looked forward to many grandchildren. Katie and her husband, Dustin, blessed the family with daughter, Aurora. Boy, was Don the ultimate grandfather! Aurora received a camouflage sleepsack, first thing, and she also has a gun of her very own. Aurora quickly became the light of Don's life. He had much he wanted to share with her and teach her. Aurora could

always cheer Don up. And vice versa. Once, Don was in Subway, and had just finished up talking to Katie and Aurora on the phone. Shortly after ending the call, Don's phone rang. Aurora wouldn't settle down, so Katie called Don to talk to her in a special way. Don could talk like Donald Duck, and so, there was Don doing "duck talk" to Aurora on the phone, in the middle of Subway. Don would do anything for his granddaughter. As for his wife, Jan, how he felt about her could probably be summed up in something he told her. And if Don said it, you could believe that's how it was. His words to Jan were that he "would die for her." Don's friend, Gerald Dobson, made the statement that in Don's life, Don was a good family man first, hunting and shooting was next, and then came Don's work. But Gerald left out one thing, the friendships that Don built during his lifetime, with his family members, with his fellow shooters, and at work. Don's friendships were deep and true and long lasting. Don was fun to be with and quite a jokester. There was a lot of bantering back and forth, bragging rights established, and much laughing at each other and at ones self. All his friends knew about his views on politics, gun control, hunting rights, wolves, and buffalo and all of them loved to push Don's buttons and get him going on these subjects. Don could expend a lot of energy telling you what was what. Some of Don's best friendships began at his job, Gerald, Jim Thompson, Kent Kaelberer. They worked together for the railroad, as well as sharing interests in hunting, shooting, and fishing. All deeply respected Don's skills as a diesel mechanic. Don was meticulous and knowledgeable. Jim tells that Don was instrumental in accomplishing the first engine change, which is now standard practice. As young, new mechanics were brought in over the years, Don was always willing to share his knowledge and teach them what he knew. The day Don went to clean out his locker after retiring, there was a problem with an engine. Don was asked what he thought about it and he told those working on it his solution. They implemented his ideas, and got the problem solved. Other friendships were formed because of a shared love of shooting and hunting. Pat Brophy, Justin Baisch, Jim and Don spent many hours shooting guns and bows. Don also was always available to help his

friends out with whatever they needed. Justin tells that Don often came out to his ranch and would help Justin by using his mechanic skills to keep Justin's ranch machinery operating. Pat Brophy, not only hunted and shot targets with Don, but Pat also is a licensed gun dealer, and sold guns to Don. On his gun applications, Don would always put "NMN", no middle name. Pat nicknamed Don, "Coyote" because coyote hunting in the winter was a favorite shared hunt. Both Pat and Don took their guns seriously, and both thought themselves experts. That led to many interesting discussions. For some reason, Don's friends loved to see him get excited. When hunting, the excitement might come over who could spot game or not. It might come when Don hunted with his dad and Tony, and as Don hurried to be the first to get birds, his over and under shotgun would go, click, click, and with dad holding two shells. Or when Don and Tony emptied their guns at a herd of antelope and not one dropped. The excitement might be Don getting back to hunting camp last, and his fellow hunters, his friends, having drank all his beer. It might be deciding when to come in from a hunting or fishing trip. Kent and Don had slipped away to Holter Lake to fish. Jan was very pregnant at the time and not very happy to see them leave. They were having a good time, naturally, and when they thought they should leave, there was some debate about staying or going. They left, and got back to Livingston late in the day. Cole was born that night. Without exception, everyone was aware of and respected Don's love and pride for his family, because Don took that with him wherever he was, at work or with friends. It was mentioned that Don had a hard time with school. But he was a great teacher. He spent years and much time teaching others to about guns and shooting. He instructed kids in the local hunter safety courses. Don loved kids and had the patience and sensitivity to be very successful with his teaching. He taught kids and adults of both family and friends to handle guns safely and hit what they aimed at. Teaching and sharing knowledge was an important part of Don's life. Don always had a hundred projects going, many to do with hunting and shooting,

making longbows, loading shells, or just work around the house. A pet project for many years was a '57 Chevy that Don acquired and worked on. It was one way of using his mechanical ability for his own pleasure. Don was not a complainer; he just took things as they came. When he was diagnosed with cancer, the doctors gave him 2-6 months. After surgery, as he was due to begin treatments, Don talked to a biochemist who was the friend of a friend. Don made the decision to try a homeopathic course of treatment. Katie admires her father for having the courage to do this. Don was a big meat eater, and this treatment required him to become a vegetarian, which Don did. Don lost some weight, and had his bad days, but for ten months the quality of his life was good. His daily routine was lift weights, walk, go to coffee with friends. Don was able to go turkey hunting and fishing with Cole, he went through Yellowstone this past Christmas, he Skyped with his granddaughter weekly, he attended the Feisthamel reunion in June, and two weeks ago he was digging in the yard, and up on the roof working. Don did not regret his choice of treatment. Sadly, on July 17, 2011, Don left our world. Justin Baisch used some very heartfelt words to sum up the man that was Don Feisthamel. "Don was a man's man, and it was very evident to everyone that he was a family man. He was very proud of his family and Aurora was the apple of his eye. He should have had 20 grandchildren. He was a good friend. His word was like iron, if he said it, that was the way it was. Everyone liked him. Don was just a good person. He will be missed."

# Tribute Wall



“ *Donald Feisthamel*

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