



Donald Kukowski

February 17, 1933 - February 8, 2025

Donald William Kukowski was born on February 17, 1933, in Beach, North Dakota, to parents, Harry and Gladys (Tangen) Kukowski. He was raised on a farm northeast of Beach with his older brother Burt and younger brother Larry. The family moved into Beach, where Don attended grade school and high school. He was an avid basketball player throughout his high school years. After graduating from Beach High School in 1952, Don began driving semi-trucks and competing in rodeos nationwide. In 1951, Don rode in the very first Miles City Bucking Horse Sale Rodeo and made a trip to Madison Square Gardens in NY. During this time, he won “Saddle Bronc Bareback Champion,” “Bull Riding Champion,” and “All Around Cowboy.” These became his coveted belt buckle trophies.

In 1958, he married Colleen (Kittelton) Clark, becoming a caring and supportive father to three children, Shawn (lone) Kukowski of Belgrade, MT, Michelle Torzillo of Evanston, WY, and Tani Short of Phoenix, AZ.

In the late 1960s, Don took over his father’s insurance business in Beach, “Kukowski Insurance Agency”, and later became a real estate broker setting up “Kukowski Land Company,” specializing in farms and ranches. As the business grew, he opened an office in Dickinson, ND. During this time, Don also received his pilot’s license to commute more easily between the offices and give potential buyers a “bird’s-eye-view” of the land they were interested in purchasing. Spearheaded by Don, Kukowski Land Company was the major developer of the Heart River Development Project in south Dickinson, where

homes were built in the 1980s. With his vast knowledge of the tri-state landscape of North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana, Don started DW Kukowski Oil and Gas, specializing in mineral rights and leasing, and in 2000, he established Sanish Properties LLC, both of which he continued to manage until his illness with dementia preventing him from doing so.

Don married Arlene (Eckelberg) Olson in 1983, the love of his life. He referred to her as his “bride” forever after and became an encouraging stepfather to Kim (James) Hodgson of Filey, UK, and Kristi (Alan) Murdock of Boerne, TX. In 1993, Don and Arlene moved to southern California, where they both continued to work and enjoyed traveling to visit their family and friends throughout the USA and England. Eventually fulfilling their bucket list of travels in Europe.

In addition to their five children, they share nine grandchildren, Jeremy (Jennifer) Kukowski, Cole (Jerika) Dolezal, Ali (Cody) Gilbertson, Zachary Short, Lexi Short, Philip Hodgson, Katherine Hodgson, Paige (Surgene) Troost and Tyler (Lillian) Murdock, and twelve great-grandchildren.

Don passed away peacefully on February 8, 2025, at Belmont Memory Care, Poway, California, after a long illness with dementia. Don was preceded in death by his parents and two brothers, Burt of New Mexico and Larry of Montana.

The family requests that any donations made in his memory be given to the local chapter of Alzheimer's Foundation of America. A family service and burial will take place at a later date in Beach. Remembrances and condolences may be shared with the family at: www.Silhafuneralhomes.com. As the people he met on his travels have said, “Don was a true gentleman and a proper cowboy.”

Cemetery Details

St. John the Baptist Catholic Cemetery

16883 35th St SW
Beach, ND 58621
(701) 872-4153

Events

Details are pending.

Tribute Wall



“ *This is a bit delayed, but Tyler and I would like to share our sorrow for your loss. May he rest in peace.*

Sending love and prayers.

VERNETTE (IRONS) & TYLER UNDERWOOD

VERNETTE UNDERWOOD - April 03, 2025 at 03:28 PM