

Donald Albert Purpur

December 02, 1941 - March 09, 2019

Donald Albert Purpur, 77 of Grand Forks, North Dakota passed away on Saturday March 9, 2019, following a period of declining health. He died peacefully at Altru's Transitional Care.



Don was born on December 2, 1941 at 3:20 A.M. at Deaconess Hospital in Grand Forks, son of Albert and Viola (Pomplun) Purpur. His Godparents were Elenore and Howard Feldman. Known as Donny, at two years old his first prayer was "Now I lay me down to sleep". His favorite story was "The Three Bears". As a boy he grew up on Dyke Avenue playing for the Pee Wee Washington Rink Rats and played at the rink on Washington and 1st Ave North. He loved sports and grew up near many relatives including Adolph and Annie Purpur. "Purp", as he became known in school, attended Winship Elementary and graduated from Central High School in 1959. He played hockey wearing #13 played football wearing #48 and was a member of the Sigma Hi-Y. As a very young man, he learned to work hard and take on whatever job was available to support himself and his future family. In December of 1960, he was introduced to Carolyn Draxton, by his friend, her brother-in-law Charlie McWilliams at Norby's where she was working. They were married at St. Mark's Lutheran Church on June 24, 1961. Don & Carolyn made their first household in the Valley Ho Trailer Park. Don's first job when they were married was at Acme Electric. Soon after they moved to their beloved home on South 19th Street. At the time, the home was light blue and was unfinished inside. The street was unpaved, but they loved it all the same. They were able to raise their two children, run a gun repair shop and later a daycare center there for many years. Purp started working for Bridgeman Creamery in June of 1963, retiring as Chief Engineer in January 1998. He then went to work for C.J. Machine as the Installation Engineer for several years. In 1975 he became a Reserve Police Officer in the Grand Forks Police Department, retiring as Chief of the Police Reserve. He also was a Special Deputy Sheriff for many years and during retirement worked as a Deputy in the Grand Forks Sheriff's Office from 2000-2014. He truly loved his 39 years in law enforcement.

He loved to travel for gun shows, shooting competitions but mostly to SCUBA dive. He traveled to Grand Cayman, Jamaica, Isle Royale, the Apostle Islands and many other wonderful places. Don was also an entrepreneur and ran several businesses including Purp's Gun Shop started from his home in 1964 and later moved downtown, The Gunnery in downtown, and The Hydronauts III, specializing in underwater salvage and recovery with close friends Mike and Bev Moulton. Purp was an officer of the Walleye Sports Diver Club, Founder and Past President of the Coon'n Crockett Muzzle Loaders, active in the EGF Rod and Gun Club, and the North Dakota Military Vehicle Collectors Association. He was an awarded Police Marksman, State Muzzle Loaders Champion and Champion as a trapshooter. Never to sit still, recently he was the co-founder of the Grand Forks' Veterans Memorial Park.

Never to keep the same hobby for too long, later in life, Purp loved motorcycles, he owned a 1942 U.S. Army bike whose engine was built within 10 days of his birth, a 1962 police 3-wheeler, among many, many others. He had taken numerous trips to California on one of his bikes. He also showed many other vehicles he restored including a U.S. Army Half-Track and a fully armored 1954 Army tank. Well known around the community, his photo was on the front page of the Grand Forks Herald in 1990, 2007 and 2010. He could hardly go out anywhere without stopping and talking to an old friend, a relative or a new friend.

He was the strong patriarch of his family, a great friend to all, a man who would give his shirt for anyone he met. He was a great father who always took care of his children and did the best he could to teach and guide them, a loving grandfather who always knew their every move, even from afar. Purp was a strong, proud and good man. He is loved and will be missed by so many. In addition to his wife of 57 years, Carolyn Purpur, he is survived by his children Ray and Terrie Purpur of Stanford, CA, Patty and Greg de Vries of Los Gatos, grandchildren, Donte Gash of Avila Beach, CA, Ariana Gash of Grand Forks, Alicia Purpur and Ryan Purpur both of Stanford, CA, and two step grandchildren Ian and Colin de Vries of Los Gatos, sister-in-law Liz McWilliams and brother-in-law Craig Fontaine, 4 nieces, cousins, friends and all who loved and cared for him.

He was proceeded in death by his loving parents Al and Vi Purpur, and an older brother, Duane Purpur, who died when he was a baby, brothers-in-law, Charlie, McWilliams and Mike Dennis, and sister-in-law Faye Dennis.

He is on his motorcycle ride into the sky.

Memorials requested to: Veterans Memorial Park, c/o Grand Forks Parks and Recreation Foundation, P.O. Box 12429, Grand Forks, ND 58208-2429, Phone: 701-746-2750

Funeral Service: 2:00 p.m. Sunday, March 17, 2019 in the Historic Norman Funeral Home Chapel.

Visitation: 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Saturday with a 7: 00 p.m. prayer service in the funeral home chapel. Visitation will continue for one hour prior to the service in the funeral home on Sunday.

Honor Watch: Accorded by Officers of the Grand Forks Police Department and Deputies of the Grand Forks County Sheriffs Department.