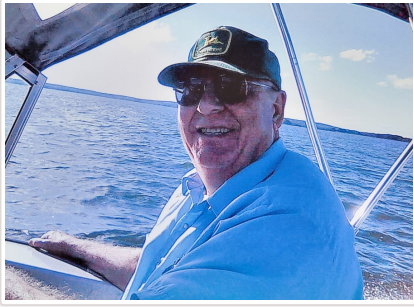


Donald Cook

March 6, 1935 ~ September 22, 2025 (age 90)



Donald Wesley Cook died on September 22, 2025, in Madrid, Iowa. Don was born in Hartford CT and raised by an aunt and uncle in rural western Massachusetts. He attended Williston Academy Prep School and Springfield College before being drafted into the U.S. Army where he spent 18 months in North Africa as a topographic surveyor with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Following his stint in the Army he managed a 4,000-car fleet of long-term lease vehicles and developed a system for selling the off-lease cars. Here he began to realize that his true calling was sales. His experience as a surveyor and ability to sell a life jacket to a fish led him to several years of million-dollar sales with ADS Drainage Tile Systems. He was an ardent John Deere enthusiast, owning a John Deere dealership in upstate New York and most recently representing John Deere through Van Wall Equipment to federal entities in Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska and South Dakota. In retirement Don had a second very successful career as a real estate agent in Minnesota and Florida.

Looking to avoid a date with a young woman commonly regarded as a disaster, Don called Linda, the daughter of his mother's longtime friend, whom he knew to be home from college. It turns out she wasn't a disaster, and they celebrated their 63rd wedding anniversary last summer. Their two daughters, Carrie and Heidi, were born in upstate New York and have been a delight to him.

Don had farming in his blood and he, along with his wife Linda, began raising registered Polled Herefords in the 1960's, taking several championships at county and state fairs. Following that farming gene he and his family moved to northeast Iowa in 1973 where he managed a 500-head cow-calf cattle ranch. He was welcomed to Iowa with that year's April blizzard. He later moved to Shell Rock, Iowa where, with help from his family, he raised hogs, farrow to finish. On that farm he retrofitted a used dairy milking parlor for his daughters' goat herd. Here he experienced another of Iowa's famous weather features, a tornado.

In addition to farming, he had fishing in his blood. From a young age, Don was an enthusiastic fisherman, catching trout and other fish in the brooks and streams of western Massachusetts. Discovering Leech Lake in Minnesota revived that love and he spent many hours keeping the local gas vendors happy as he toiled around the lake in his 18'

Lund boat. He loved taking his children, grandchildren, and his father-in-law, who was superb at catching walleyes, out to the far reaches of the lake.

A member of the Jaycees as a young man, Don learned the importance of employing Robert's Rules of Order in any meeting and has always been emphatic about sticking to those rules. Just ask anyone who has tried to call for discussion before there was a motion and a second! His leadership skills allowed him to rise to the office of Jaycees State Vice-President. Don is also a long-time member of the Lions Club and has held church leadership positions as Deacon and moderator. He is currently a member of St. Paul's United Church of Christ in Madrid, Iowa.

Don was a survivor of the tragic July 6, 1944, Ringling Brothers Barnum and Baily circus fire in Hartford, Connecticut also known as "The Day the Clowns Cried." Don's younger brother, Edward, was one of the 169 people who perished in that blaze. His mother was so severely burned that she spent six months in the hospital. His younger sister, Eleanor, not identified at the time, was remembered for many years as "Little Miss 1565" which was the number on her toe tag. In 1991 an arson investigator reexamined the evidence and determined her identity. Her body was then moved from Hartford to the cemetery in Southampton, Massachusetts where she was buried next to her brother.

Don was predeceased by his sister, Eleanor and his brother, Edward. He leaves his wife, Linda, two daughters, Carrie Cook and Heidi Loomis (Ben), grandsons Wesley Loomis (Jayme) and Adam Loomis, five great grandchildren, Robbie, Owen, Makaila, Nevaeh, and Abel, a niece, Pamela Bohl in South Carolina and nephew, Mark O'Dell in Florida.

The family wishes to thank St. Croix Hospice for their compassionate support at the end of Don's life.

A celebration of life will be held at St. Paul's United Church of Christ, 115 South Cedar St., Madrid, Iowa, on September 27th at 11 AM, with a luncheon to follow in the fellowship hall. A graveside service will be held in Center Cemetery, Southampton on November 1st at 11am

In lieu of flowers the family requests memorial donations be directed to The Madrid Lions Club, Box 15, Madrid, IA, 50156 or St. Paul's United Church of Christ, 115 South Cedar St. Madrid, IA 50156.