

Donald “Don” Gray Krause, born Sept 14, 1933 in St. Louis Missouri, passed Feb 27, 2026 at the age of 92 peacefully at his son’s David’s home in Waddell Arizona.

Surviving family members include two sons, David Gray Krause and Robert Michael Krause, a sister Holly Danahy, 5 grandchildren, Jacque Koonce, Steven Krause, Alicia Krause, Mindy Tuttle and Kyle Krause. There are 16 great-grandchildren. Don’s wife Rusty of 60 years and the love of his life passed November 10, 2015.



Don was strong yet humble. His smile was infectious. His eyes would light up every time he would see or talk about his wife Rusty. He surrounded himself with family pictures and when visitors came he would say, these are the loves of my life and those are my career. Don was highly educated who excelled in academics and other activities such as sports. He achieved a national ranking in the card game Bridge. These strengths and dedication carried into his career.

Don grew up with his mother and sisters in Cerillos, New Mexico bringing in adobe skills adding on to their home and provided financial help in the turquoise mines. He graduated high school in Santa Fe where he achieved a full scholarship and received his Bachelor of Science including Personal Management and Business Administration in 1955 from the University of Colorado, Boulder CO. He enlisted with the United States Air Force serving from 1956-1986 and becoming a Full Colonel in only 21 years of service. Don earned his pilot wings in 1957 and is a command pilot with more than 6000 flying hours also achieving his Senior and Command Pilot Wings.

Over the 30 years, Don services included Vietnam, assisted with combat crews, assigned to the Air Refueling squadron, served as a flight simulator instructor. **In**

1977 Don was assigned to the Headquarters Strategic Air Command, became vice commander of the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing then assumed command of the 55th where he was responsible for operations, maintenance and conduct command which included President Reagan's National Emergency Airborne Command. Don worked directly with the Office Joint to the Chiefs of Staff to ensure survival of the 55th's Single Integrated Operational Plan forces, exercises and ensured all desired facets were exercised and critiqued. He was further charged with the worldwide directions to U.S. forces for implementing crucial National Command Authorities' decisions. Don shares President Reagan declined his retirement for 2 years to make critical revisions to the North American defense system.

Don has several military decorations and awards including the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Legion of Merit, Air Medal with nine Oak Leaf Clusters, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Star Device, Vietnam Service Medal—Honor Class, and the Vietnamese Air Service Medal.

Following his retirement from the U.S.A.F., he obtained his realtor license and settled down in 1991 splitting his time in Sun City, Arizona and Deer Lake, Washington.

Family was priority both growing up and his own family, he loved to spend time with family and grandchildren. Don was President of the Lilac Festival in Spokane, and participated with the adoption and home placements for golden retrievers. He enjoyed golf and playing Bridge. Don strived to put others first. Despite his rank and authority, he treated others as important as he.

Don was always a gentleman, ensuring the ladies sat before he would take a chair, and being a distinguished Colonel, he often appeared reserved but when you were with him alone, he would say these little sayings that you couldn't help but giggle. " Goodness gracious, anistatious" which was passed down from his mom, 'Hey.....hay is for horses" or "Heaven's to Murgatroyd....I don't even know who Murgatroyd is". His favorite bible verse was Psalm 23 and he loved Amazing Grace, you would often hear him singing or quoting these around the house.