

At the age of 98½, Donald Kenneth Young of Grafton, North Dakota, completed his life's work and passed peacefully at home on September 17, 2025—his great-grandson's birthday—surrounded by family and the compassionate care of HIA Hospice.

In his final months, Donald put the finishing touches on a legacy of love and craftsmanship: individualized wooden memory boxes for each of his great-grandchildren—jewelry boxes for the girls—all monogrammed and crafted from carefully chosen hardwoods.

Donald was born on March 18, 1927, on his grandparents' homestead near St. Thomas, ND, to Kenneth and Margaret "Maggie" (Bigwood) Young. He entered the world during a spring snowstorm, delivered by Dr. McKay, who braved the elements on horseback to reach the farmhouse. Raised on his father's nearby farm during the Great Depression, Donald learned resilience, resourcefulness, and the value of working with his hands—qualities that defined his life.

He attended the rural, two-room Midland 8 country school through the eighth grade, arriving early in the 7th and 8th grades to light the coal-burning stove. He graduated from St. Thomas High School in 1945. After working alongside his father and brothers on the farm, Donald was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1950. He completed basic training in Fort Riley, Kansas; advanced training on Mount Fuji, Japan; and served on the front lines of the Korean War until 1952—an experience that profoundly shaped his life.

Upon returning home, Donald met the love of his life, Lucille Norma Helland, while roller-skating at the Grafton Armory. They married on May 3, 1953, at Grafton Lutheran Church and shared 63 years together until her passing in 2016. Donald received a diploma from Hanson Mechanical Trade School in Fargo in June 1954 before returning to Grafton, where he worked as a diesel injection mechanic. In 1975, he was awarded an exclusive contract with the Robert Bosch Company and founded Don's Diesel Injection Service, serving the Red River Valley's farming community until his retirement in 1992.

Donald's life was marked by humility and service. He was Scoutmaster of Troop 122 at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, a longtime volunteer with Friends of the Turtle River, and an active member of the Federated Church of Grafton, where he served on the church board until his death.

Channeling his curiosity and creativity, Donald was an expert woodworker and a master of the wood lathe. There wasn't a type of joinery or an exotic wood species he didn't love, and there wasn't a piece of wood he couldn't re-purpose. Mahogany, ebony, padauk, and purpleheart found their way into his heirloom pieces, now gracing the homes of family members and friends throughout the U.S., Norway, and Finland. On the trip of his lifetime with Lucille and family members in 2001, the visit to Bergen, Norway's historic harbor coincided with the Cutty Sark Tall Ship Races hosted by the city. Onboard Norway's largest and oldest three-masted, square-rigged sailing ship, the Statsraad Lehmkuhl, family members toured the vessel while Donald admired the ship deck's joinery. At age 85, he repurposed knotty pine boards from the walls of his basement and used them to panel the walls of his garage. At age 95, he used the remaining pine boards to construct a one-of-a-kind three-drawer filing cabinet to contain his meticulously kept family history records.

A voracious reader, Donald read an average of one book per week even after losing vision in one eye. Relying on frequent phone calls from Grafton's Carnegie Librarians, he was kept informed of incoming book titles of interest. In October 2024, he received an autographed copy of *The River We Remember*, written by his favorite author, William Kent Krueger—the Minnesota-based, Edgar Award-winning novelist. Krueger's inscription inside the front cover—"To my biggest fan in NE North Dakota!"—moved Donald to claim the book as his most prized possession. A storyteller at heart, Donald wrote a detailed and poignant account of his Korean War experience in 2017. His 14th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division—history-making for their replacement of the U.S. Army's last and largest segregated unit to serve in Korea—fought for the control and defense of positions near Heartbreak Ridge and supported ground forces north of the 38th parallel. On the day of his passing, Donald's 43-page memoir chronicling his life on the farm was released by its printer. Among its reflections, he shared one of his few regrets: never telling his parents "how good a job" they had done. His words—alongside the writings of other Youngs and Bigwoods—offer a rare and intimate window into the everyday lives of family members, preserving stories that might otherwise have faded with time.

Donald cherished time with his family, following their lives through visits, photos, social media, and celebrations. Together with Lucille, he established an educational fund to support the higher education of their great-grandchildren.

Donald is survived by his children: Terri (Cliff) Nelson of Pine City, MN, Stephen (Paivi) Young of Moorhead, MN, Gregory (Tammy) Young of Grafton, and Tracy Young of Gilbert, AZ. He is also survived by grandchildren Michael (Dawn) Nelson, Ryan (Amy) Nelson, Kristin (John) Ferreira, Eeva (Adam) Wendorf, Heidi (Dewey) Worker, Ashley (David) Vannatter, and Jordan Young; and great-grandchildren Jacob, April, and Liam Nelson, Riley and Berkley Ferreira, Catherine Greenley, Madeline Greenley, and Owen Wendorf, Oliver Worker, Christian Young, and Collin and Connor Vannatter, and his sister, Margaret Monsebroten. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife Lucille, son Gordon, parents Kenneth and Margaret, and brothers Malcolm Keith, Harvey, and Robert.

In Loving Memory



Donald Kenneth Young
March 18, 1927—September 17, 2025

I will end with these thoughts.
Never stop learning.
Challenge yourself both mentally and
physically each day.
Invest a part of your earnings
into savings.
Do your work well so you
can be proud of it.

Be thankful for each day;
it's a gift from God!
Make good use of it.
If I had a chance,
I would thank each of my
parents for a job well done!

-Donald Young, 2025

**In Loving Memory Of
Donald Kenneth Young**

Date of Birth

March 18, 1927—St. Thomas, North Dakota

Date of Death

September 17, 2025—Grafton, North Dakota

Funeral Services

Friday, September 26, 2025—11:00 A.M.

Federated Church

Grafton, North Dakota

Officiating

Reverend Robin Dill & Reverend Jerry Bass

Music

Cathy Tweten, Pianist

Lucas Mondry, Soloist

Selection

“On Eagle’s Wings”

Congregational Hymns

“My God and I”

“How Great Thou Art”

Casket Bearers

Ryan Nelson

Michael Nelson

Jordan Young

John Ferreira

Adam Wendorf

Ross Monsebroten

Dewey Worker

Honorary Bearers

All of Don’s Granddaughters & Great Grandchildren

Military Rites

Grafton American Legion Post #41

North Dakota National Guard Honor Guard

Interment

Grafton City Cemetery

Grafton, North Dakota