



Donald Stuart McDowall Sr.

September 27, 1933 - August 3, 2025

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Don was born and raised in a log cabin in the Canadian Rockies just north of Glacier National Park, in Alberta. His childhood was the difficulties of the Great Depression and then the struggle of World War 2, which for Canada began in 1939.

His mother Lenora had US citizenship so in 1942 they moved to Northern California, where Don and his older brother Harry had some pretty idyllic teenage years fishing the creeks in the shadow of Mt. Shasta, hustling kids at marbles, aggravating apple growers and reveling in the much-milder winters. Just as Don was graduating from Shasta Union High School in Redding (he got his diploma by mail) the family moved north – where the waters of the new Columbia Basin Reclamation Project had reached Moses Lake. He and Harry hustled the pinball machine at Mom's Cafe (owner: their mom) and then Don got drafted into the US Army – but the Korean War ended while he was in basic training.

So it was 1953 and Don was selected to help integrate the formerly all-black 520th Transportation Company in Northern France. He said he never stopped laughing during his 16 months with “the brothers.” He was also the company commander's training assistant, researching and prepping demonstrations and was recommended for Officer Candidate School.

He took Honorable Discharge (remaining a Reserve until 1961), came back to

a booming Moses Lake and caught on with the Snyder carpentry family, over from Seattle to build houses. Don's brother Bob had a buddy named Al Cordell, and Al had a little sister who lived down Stratford Road from Don's parents' dairy.

Marvin Snyder was Don's Best Man when he married Barbara Cordell in 1956. When Larson Airbase was closing in 1960, Don and Barb headed over to the coast to work with Marvin and make enough money to come back and buy a farm.

By 1963 Don had his own framing contractor operation and rode the Seattle building boom in the 60's. At one point he designed, had blueprinted and built his own "mid-century modern" home for Barb and the three "rugrats" they were hauling over the mountains back to Moses Lake every holiday to see their grandparents and cousins.

In 1970 Seattle's boom was over and Don's arm was done banging boards. They sold the house and bought a 280-acre farm south of George. It wasn't Hog Heaven just because Don was raising feeder pigs, hay and grain; he was back in the Basin with his family close and his kids learning the values of farm life.

This was a single-handed operation though, and after three seasons Don knew enough about business to realize that three kids weren't going to college on what the farm was making. So he sold the place for twice what he paid and started a new chapter – in real estate.

When Ken Graves stood by the fence talking to Don about selling his farm, Don talked to Ken about becoming a salesman. He took classes and by 1975 was an associate broker with Graves Realty in Ephrata specializing in farm and commercial properties. In 1979 he became president of the Moses Lake-Othello Board of Realtors.

That career continued into the 1980's with Don becoming a part-time instructor in real estate at Big Bend Community College. While he was at the college he obtained an Associate in Applied Science degree, a lifetime goal of Don's.

Real estate professionals got to know people at the Courthouse, because that's where information on property valuations, boundaries, tax levies and such was kept. County Assessor Rose Freestone convinced Don to join her staff so she could retire, and a few years later in 1986 Don was elected to take over officially as Grant County Assessor.

He was very honored to serve the people of Grant County and with Treasurer Darryl Pheasant (also elected with Don) fostered the transformation of county property and tax information onto computers and eventually something called "the internet."

Don's other major achievement for the county was obtaining reimbursement from the US Government for land taken to create the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. It was a seven-year project highlighted by two days alone in a room with DOJ lawyers trying to catch him filing a "fraudulent claim." They failed, and the Mattawa School District got a surprise seven-figure "donation" from the feds.

After 16 years as "Our Beloved Assessor" Don retired, took up golf and worked on the 1950's Chevy pickups he was restoring with his grandson Trevor. He and his good friend Don Goodwin were regulars at BBCC basketball and volleyball games for many years.

He outlived his brother-in-law Al, Marv Snyder, his brothers Harry and Bob, Mr. Graves, Mr. Goodwin and Rose too. Don gradually succumbed to the Parkinson's Syndrome that had taken his mother. He'd seen how that went and tried to be as kind and helpful as he could to his caregivers – Barb and his daughter Kelley, who made it possible for him to live out his life in his own home. Every night of his 69-year marriage Don had his wife sleeping at his side.

He was also the Elder of the McDowall Clan in North America, so Don has a lot of survivors besides all of his family and friends here.

We'll just list the immediate family which includes: Wife Barbara; Son Donald Stuart Jr. and his son Logan; Daughter Tomi, her husband Tony Smith and

their son Trevor; Daughter Kelley, her husband Tom Pearce, her daughter Elizabeth Schmidt and her daughter Emily, Em's husband Jason Christensen and their daughters Grace and Mikayla; Brother-in-law Tom Cordell and his wife Marcia; Sister-in-law Marilyn McDowall; Sister-in-law Mildred Cordell; and the last of Don's siblings, his sister Marjorie Claiborne.

The family would like to thank Rachel, Holly and Yesie at Assured Hospice for their compassionate care toward the end of Don's journey.

A gathering of friends and family was held Friday, August 8 before Don was interred at Pioneer Memorial Gardens under the broad blue sky of the Columbia Basin that he proudly called home.

Cemetery Details

Pioneer Memorial Gardens

14403 Rd. 2 Ne
Moses Lake, WA

Events

Details are pending.

Tribute Wall

GM

“ When I started in Real Estate, almost 50 years ago, I had the pleasure of working with Don first as a competing Broker at Diversified Properties and then in the same office at Dave Jones Real Estate Services. He taught me a lot and was always fun to be around, he could find humor in everything he was constantly laughing. The Real Estate industry lost a great knowledgeable agent when he went to the Assessors office. The gain was the citizens of Grant County. The County Assessors office was a pleasure to work with for all the years Don was there. Gary Mann

Gary Mann - August 13, 2025 at 04:08 PM

RF

“ What a good man and honorable public servant, a life well lived.

richard fitterer - August 13, 2025 at 01:26 PM

SK

“ Don was a positive, humorous, lovely man. I was at the Courthouse for many years meeting with Commissioners. I always loved it when I came out of their office and could see Don's smiling face across the hall in the Assessors office and we'd visit for a few fun minutes. Such a nice kind man. Condolences to the family. Sharon Kiehn

Sharon Kiehn - August 09, 2025 at 11:51 AM

SG

“ Barbara, prayers for you & family on Don's passing. It's hard to lose them but we know they are out of pain & into peace. Sorry to have missed the service-I'm in Alaska & just a few days ago in Glacier Natl Park. Hope you are well. Take care, Sally Goodwin

sally Goodwin - August 08, 2025 at 11:35 AM



“ To the McDowall clan, I give my heartfelt condolences.
I worked with and for Don during his years at the Grant County
Assessors Office. What a treasure he was for all of us there and for
the whole of Grant County. Don taught me a lot about work and life
and shared the joys he had in his life. I am so happy to have been in
a small part of it. My prayers and blessings to you all. Gail Smith

Gail Scellick - August 08, 2025 at 12:55 AM