



Donald Tate

September 25, 1922 - April 5, 2017

On April 5th, our family lost friend and father with the passing of Donald H. Tate at the age of 94. He passed peacefully in his bed from a bout of pneumonia. Born in Eastwood Township, Aitkin County on September 25, 1922, Don Tate lived the greater part of his life in the lake country of Northern Minnesota. He was preceded in death by his older brother who died at birth, wife Beverly Mae, brother Vernon, and sister Mildred. Don is survived by his sister Muriel and Cal Hawley of Rochester, children Steven Henry (Judy Waters), Neil Le Roy (Denise Dallas), Cheryl Ann (Scott Biscoe), Thomas Vernon (Marty Jones), and his chocolate Labrador retriever Amber "AmpDog" of Tate Lake as well as many friends and neighbors.

Born in Eastwood Township, Aitkin County on September 25, 1922, Don Tate lived the greater part of his life in the lake country of Northern Minnesota. He attended the small Eastwood primary and graduated from Isle, High School in the early 1940s. Having survived the Great Depression and many epidemics that killed entire families before the age of penicillin, Don was swept up by the winds of world war. He volunteered for the special operations group the Marine Raiders and trained at Camp Pendleton in Southern California. In order to join this elite fighting unit, his father was required to sign a waiver that he was aware that the Raider battalions were suicide outfits. Early in the Pacific War, the United States had limited resources in the South Pacific, and the small band of Raiders were a powerful weapon to harass the Imperial Japanese forces from behind their lines—making them waste huge amounts

of manpower believing large enemy groups were operating in their rearmost positions. Skilled at launching from submarines in flimsy rubber rafts, the Raiders would attack Japanese island radio outposts and supply depots which greatly disrupted the ability of the Japanese to conduct warfare in the South Pacific. Coming back from an island raid, a war-weary Don climbed back aboard ship as a combat photographer snapped a photo. The picture appeared in Life Magazine but was not accredited with Don Tate's name, and it is often used to show the 'thousand-yard stare' of combat Marines.

As the United States became more powerful in the latter part of the war, there was no need for elite forces to fight deep behind, enemy lines as the Marines would attack the islands with overwhelming levels of men and machines—the Raider battalions were incorporated into regular Marine divisions but allowed to keep their distinctive blue Raider shoulder patches of a skull set in the Southern Cross star constellation. Don participated in the major amphibious assaults of Guam and Okinawa and was held in reserve during the invasion of Saipan. He was badly wounded on Okinawa at Shuri Ridge Castle which was a Pacific War battle now featured in the movie Hacksaw Ridge. He said that when they attacked the ridge, every foot of ground was covered in the body parts of Japanese and American fighting men as well as civilian casualties. When Don left the Mille Lacs Lake area for war—like all of his generation—he did not see friends or family for three years as there was no skype or internet. At one point, his father received a telegram that Don was missing in action. It was a month before the family received notice that it was an error. His unit suffered 999% casualty rate which means that the original members were replaced nine times. After seventy years, the Marine Corps recently reactivated the Raiders, and the skull and cross are now on the shoulders of Marine special operations groups. Despite losing many comrades and friends to Japanese fire, Don returned from war with a fascination and admiration for the Japanese people and their unique culture.

After peace settled its tranquil mantle upon the world, Don healed his leg wound at the Oakland Naval hospital and was finally able to return to

Minnesota in 1946. He started work with the Minneapolis streetcar company and soon took employment with the United States Railway Post Office and worked the trains that hauled mail to Omaha, Chicago, and Winnipeg. As he was often tasked with the shipment of bank notes between the Federal Reserve banks, the RPO required that he carry a sidearm. Long before the term “going postal” was coined, he went into the Post Office fully armed. He joked that many times he made “million-dollar” pillows of the big money sacks when he was off shift in the mail cars. During the 1948 presidential election, he made a mistake and did not throw the mail bag onto the station platform of a small Iowa town. The mail bag contained the newspapers carrying the famous headline “Dewey Beats Truman,” and the townspeople were forced to wait an entire day before they received the details on the election. In retrospect, Don saved the town from reading a misleading news story because in reality Truman beat Dewey! However, Don’s supervisor—burdened by the weight of many angry letters from the newspaper-deprived citizens—did not see him as a savior, and he was called on the carpet for his omission. The Arlo Guthrie folk ballad “The City of New Orleans” is a song about that great lost era of American railroading when the long-haul trains were given names, and when the song became popular on the airwaves, it was a favorite for Don because many times in Chicago he transferred mail to the train *The City of New Orleans*.

With the demise of the Railway Post Office in the late 1960s, Don became a rural mail carrier on the Gull Lake route in the Brainerd Lakes area and made many friends with his patrons. He retired from the Post Office in 1979. Over the last few years he quipped that he had been retired as many years as he had worked—an enviable achievement by any standard.

In 1949, Don married his beloved wife Beverly in Milaca, Minnesota and made their home for a few years in Coon Rapids. In 1967, Don moved his family to the cabin on Erskine Lake in southeastern Crow Wing County which they affectionately call “Tate Lake.”

Deer hunting season was a festive time at the Tate household, and Don was a savvy hunter and knew well the wily tricks of the whitetail and how to get them in the rifle sights—and more importantly into the frying pan. Despite the horrific war wound in his left leg, Don could trudge the tamarack swamps all day, and get up and do it again the following day. The deer hunting gang would often include the Hawleys from Rochester, Ken Fredin from Isle, and the Kilmers from Aitkin. During one November, brother Vern Tate from Pensacola—long acclimated to the gentle tropical weather of Florida—became nostalgic to revisit his Minnesota roots and join the deer hunt. It was the worst deer hunting weather in anyone’s living memory with twenty-below zero temps and waist-deep snow. It took hours to dig through the snow to the deer shack, and then all the cars froze and refused to start. Vern Tate lost all nostalgia for Minnesota deer hunting and never returned for a Mille Lacs Lake hunt—wisely retreating to the warm embrace of Florida sun.

Don was a passionate firearms collector and could identify nearly every type of weapon and cartridge at a glance—even long obsolete cartridges that were last manufactured in the 19th century. Besides firearms, he was an avid vegetable gardener, and most summers would find him tying up tomatoes or hilling potatoes. It was always a joy to visit him in the garden and see how his plants were growing. Don would often spend more time building “Toad Halls” in strategic locations rather than gardening. During the long hot summers, he would house a veritable legion of toads as his minions to battle the many garden foes. When walking through the vegetable patch, you would be warned where to put your feet so as not to disturb his toad buddies in their daytime siestas. When his war wound finally took the steam out of his legs, Don became adept at accomplishing many yard tasks with the help of his surefooted Kawasaki Mule side-by-side, and became a red streak of flashy paint racing around the yard with the AmpDog riding beside him with an imperious look of disdain on her doggy face for all things pedestrian.

As a prolific reader, Don could recite a wide variety of poems from Kipling, Shelley, and Service. His favorites were “Casey at the Bat,” “Ozymandias,”

and "The Cremation of Sam McGee," and the versus were often heard echoing around the Tate household. He was also extremely well-read in the histories of the world and loved archeology and paleontology.

It was a true joy to enter the Tate Household and encounter Don's spunky smile and happy face, and he was always willing to share a joke or offer up a tease. If you were the target of the tease, many times he would slyly snare you in a joke and get you before you knew you were got. Another teasing tactic would lead you down a pleasant rosy garden path of an interesting anecdote and suddenly the "gotcha" trap would spring and you would find yourself the brunt and core of the joke.

During the happy salad days of summer, the kids could always count on Daddy Tate looking down from the front of the house to make sure all was safe, and that the correct number of heads were bobbing on the surface of the lake. A million times he was cajoled into watching clumsy dives off the dock or other swimming antics and never failed to make some kind of supporting comment. Taking time to relax before preparing dinner, Bev Tate could be seen reading the newspaper at his side, and both enjoying a Miller High Life beer. Like our Daddy Tate, Mommy Tate always kept an eye out for any danger threatening her children. For the rest of our lives, we know that they will always be watching over us from the hill in the warm sunset.

Cemetery Details

Lakeside Cemetery

310th Ave
Isle, MN 56342

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 8. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CT)

Light of the Cross Lutheran Church
27170 Monroe St
Garrison, MN 56450

Service

APR 8. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Light of the Cross Lutheran Church
27170 Monroe St
Garrison, MN 56450

Tribute Wall

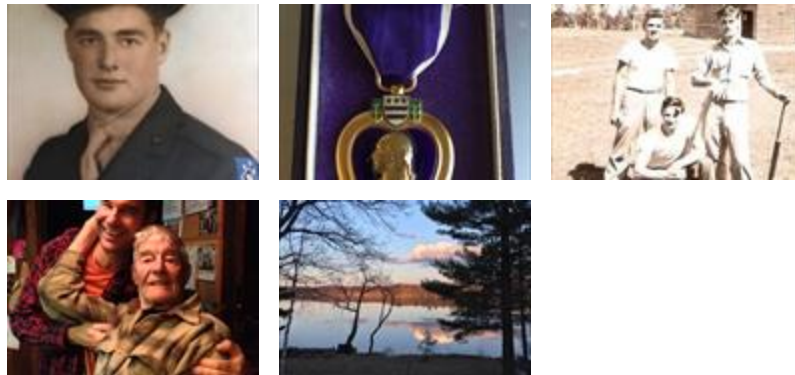


“ *Donald Tate*

January 21, 2023 at 11:59 AM



“ *16 files added to the album Don Tate living the life*



Marti Jones - April 07, 2017 at 10:31 PM



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Donald Tate.*



April 07, 2017 at 02:24 PM

TF

“ *The Hawley and Kearns families purchased the Basket of Joy for the family of Donald Tate.*



The Hawley and Kearns families - April 06, 2017 at 04:30 PM

JH

“ *From the first day I met Don some 40 years ago, I thought he was one of the most interesting, kind, intelligent, respectful men I had ever known and that opinion has only deepened over the years!! Rest in peace Don!! We love you and will miss you but your memory will remain in our hearts always!*

June Hawley, Winona, MN

June Hawley - April 06, 2017 at 11:10 AM

PE

“ *So many good memories of Don Tate and his family over the years. My thoughts and prayers are with you all. So sorry for your loss.*

Patti Erlandson - April 06, 2017 at 06:29 AM

RL

“ *Steve - so sorry for your loss - good picture - just like I remember him. Bud and Rose*

Rose Lafrenierre - April 05, 2017 at 07:18 PM