



## Donald 'Big D' Gullekson

May 15, 1951 - March 23, 2018

Donald K. Gullekson, "Big D", 66, passed away March 23, 2018, after a brief but courageous battle with brain cancer at the Munson Hospice House with his family by his side.

On May 15, 1951, Don entered this world into the loving arms of his late mother Jean (Butzin) and father Kay Gullekson, in Dearborn, MI.

Don will always be known for excelling in athletics, as he was a natural athlete and coach who shared his gift with others. He played basketball, baseball, hockey, and graduated from Plymouth High School, then attended Huron College in South Dakota on a scholarship for both baseball and basketball. Here is where he met his wife of 43 years, Linda (Jost) and moved back to Michigan. For many years as an extension to his love for sports, he had a passion to play competitive travel softball in many leagues and state tournaments as well as recreational basketball. Two of the most prominent teams that he was a part of were Vegas Ranch (National Champions) from Lake City and Third Coast from Manistee.

"On the court and field, Don was competitive, but off the court and field, he made you feel like the most important person in the room." Sports to Don were number two by a long stretch in comparison for the love he had for his family. He always put his family first above anything else. He retained the best husband award until the end with Linda, always driving distances to find chicken noodle soup when she wasn't well, taking her wherever she may need to go, and truly being by her side in sickness and in health. He wanted to be with his grandchildren (Griffin, Natalie, and Madison) every moment that he could taking them to water parks, the movies, playgrounds, Incredible Mo's, and great grandpa Kay's house. He was a loving and fun grandfather who will be missed sorely by his grandchildren.

Big D instilled many gifts to his family and a large part was him sharing his love of sports with his children. He was the Varsity Basketball Coach for the Mesick Bulldogs from 1992-1997 and a co-coach with his son for JV boys from 2004-2014 at Morley Stanwood. The last two years he took on the responsibilities of being a solo head coach. He was actively involved in any athletic excitement he could find, but never once missed a chance to watch his children play their sports to support them regardless of the distance or driving

conditions. He was literally their biggest supporter and fan.

Don was a successful salesman for Kraft Foods for over 29 years as he had a knack for being able to build incredible long lasting relationships. He was a member of the Faith Lutheran Church in Mesick, enjoyed golfing, fishing, BINGO, snowmobiling and working on his lawn. Big D was also an avid deer hunter in the Mesick hills near their beloved homestead of more than 20 years overlooking the Manistee River, never missing a season.

Big D is best described by all who knew him as; loving, generous, passionate, dedicated, genuine, big hearted, courageous, selfless, inspirational, humble, hard worker, stubborn and FUN!

Big D is survived and missed dearly by his wife Linda, his children; Jeff, Kim (Jason) Jancek and Lindsey, grandchildren; Griffin and Natalie Gullekson and Logan and Madison Jancek, father Kay, brother Doug (Amy) Gullekson, brother-in-law Jon Lash and aunts; Judy (Paul) Marshall and Mandy Gauld and many cousins, nieces, nephews and extended family.

He is preceded in death by his mother Jean (Butzin) Gullekson, his sister Diane Lash, and Uncle Pat Gauld.

A visitation will take place Friday March 30, 2018 from 4-7pm with open sharing at 6pm at the Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home; 305 Sixth Street, Traverse City, MI 49684. A funeral service will take place Saturday March 31, 2018 at 11:00am with visitation one hour prior also at the funeral home. A private burial will take place at a later date.

Please visit [www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com](http://www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com) to share your memories and condolences with Big D's family. In lieu of flowers, the family asks all donations be made to the Don Gullekson Memorial GoFundMe page which will go towards a scholarship or athletic sponsorship in his honor.

The family is being cared for and served by the Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home.

# Events

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**MAR 30 Visitation 04:00PM - 07:00PM**  
Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home  
305 Sixth St, Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

**MAR 30 Sharing Time 06:00PM**  
Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home  
305 Sixth St, Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

**MAR 31 Visitation 10:00AM - 11:00AM**  
Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home  
305 Sixth St, Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

**MAR 31 Funeral Service 11:00AM**  
Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home  
305 Sixth St, Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

# Comments

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“ Linda and Family, So sorry for your loss. I have so many good memories of Don, we always enjoyed visiting at our family reunion. Sorry we could not make the funeral but he is in our thoughts any prayers. Let Uncle Kay and the family know I am thinking of them. Prayers go out to all of you. Tom and Linda (Ritter) Sieber

**Linda Sieber** - March 31, 2018 at 09:01 AM

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“ I have spent some time with Big D rabbit hunting (or chasing dogs) when I was younger and later on while he was coaching basketball. Big D's first year coaching in Mesick was my senior year and I wish he had been coaching me throughout my high school career. I remember team dinners at his house and movies afterwards. Big D was a great coach and a great guy. I know he had bought shoes and warm-ups for some of the guys in our basketball program out of his own pocket. My senior year I led our team in technical fouls, usually for clearing out defenders after a rebound (I only was called for two). After each technical foul, Big D grabbed my jersey and pulled me close, whispering to me that he loved it when I did that, but never to tell anyone that he said that.  
My condolences to the family. He will be missed.  
Casey Kastl

**Casey Kastl** - March 28, 2018 at 10:03 PM

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“ When I would see Bid D anywhere, always that Big Hand shake and hug. Played a lot of b-ball with and against him. Very competitive and a huge heart. Gotta tell, I was always glad to be on his team than against. He is a true winner, sportsman and man. My pleasure to have met and known him as a real friend. R.I.P. Don. Sincerely to all.  
Larry Emery.

**Larry Emery** - March 28, 2018 at 11:34 AM

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“ So sorry to hear of Donnie's passing. Neighbors from 5 Mile Rd. in Plymouth Mi. Love and Prayers to his family and friends. To young, way to young!

The Burkhardt's



**joyce abraham** - March 26, 2018 at 08:55 AM

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“ We are so sorry to hear of Don's passing. Our hearts go out to all of the family and prayers are being sent to give you comfort at this time. "Big D" played a big roll in our lives while our boys were growing up. Now he can go on playing basketball in the great eternal with no knee pain or broken noses to be fixed. Love and prayers from the Boyers.

**Chuck and Carol Boyer** - March 25, 2018 at 12:40 PM