



## Donald J. Gauger

October 10, 1932 - March 17, 2026

Donald J. Gauger, age 93, of Minocqua, was called Home by his Savior and peacefully departed this earthly life to be reunited with his wife, Shirley and son, Brian on March 17, 2026.

Don was born in Milwaukee to Herbert and Eunice Gauger, the second youngest child, rounding out the family to 8.

Don graduated Rufus King High School in Milwaukee in 1950 and went to work at Lakeside Laboratories on Milwaukee's East Side as a Research Assistant. It was here he met Shirley White, who became his immediate supervisor. They would marry on April 25, 1952 and spend 72 glorious years together. Four children completed their family, Roxanne, Wade, Brian, and Carl. They moved to Grafton, WI in 1958. Don believed in community service and became a volunteer fireman and medic. He was also involved in the Jaycees and Lions Clubs. He dabbled in local politics, being elected to the Grafton Village Board. In 1971 he ran for and was elected President of the Village of Grafton. He continued to be an active member of the Grafton Fire Department and Rescue Squad. Seeing a lack of medical care in the outlying areas of Milwaukee, Don, Shirley and a number of other concerned residents formed a foundation spearheading a campaign to raise funds to build a medical clinic in the Village of Grafton. The effort was successful and The Grafton Medical Clinic was established in 1971 with one doctor. Prior to Don

and the family leaving Grafton, the clinic had expanded to 6 doctors and also provided lab and imaging services.

In 1975, the family moved north, settling in Minocqua, WI, where Don earned his Real Estate license and worked at Hunter Realty. In 1984, with their children grown and the real estate market slowing, Don and Shirley decided to venture out and moved to Tomball, TX, where they worked and lived for 4 years, before returning home to the Northwoods in 1988. The political bug bit again and Don pursued local politics, being elected Minocqua Town Chairman in 1989 and serving for 6 years before retiring in 1996 to spend more time with his wife, children, and grandchildren. He enjoyed his retirement, filling his days with quality time with Shirley, his children and grandchildren, hunting, fishing, wood carving birds, and training Black Labs. He continued with his community service as well. He was a town supervisor from 1996-2001, when he came out of retirement to run for Minocqua Chairman again. Don won the seat a second time in 2001 and served in that capacity until his second retirement in 2005.

He devoted his time after his second retirement to his family, catching up on time missed. He stayed active in community issues, attending Minocqua Town Board meetings regularly as a concerned citizen and voicing opinions and offering suggestions on a number of matters. He was an active member of Rock of Ages Lutheran Church. He was very involved in his church, serving for a number of years on the Church Council, as an elder, and when the minister was absent, he would fill in and conduct the church services. When Shirley's health began to decline, Don was right there by her side as her caregiver, fulfilling and honoring the vows they took so many years before of "In sickness and in health." Shirley passed away November 11, 2023. He cared for his son Brian until Brian's passing November 30, 2024.

Survived by his children, Roxanne (Steve) Gresch, Wade, and Carl (Meg)

Gauger. Further survived by 5 grandchildren, Grant Hunter, Ben (Emily Milton) Gauger, Shane Gauger, Brittany Gauger, and Michelle Gauger and 8 great-grandchildren, Lilly, Lacey, Mason, River, Colton, Nico, Vivian and Taylor. Also survived by many nieces and nephews, his Rock of Ages Church family a multitude of other friends.

Preceded in death by his parents and 5 siblings, his precious wife, Shirley, and his son, Brian.

The family wishes to extend heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the extraordinary staff at Seasons of Life Hospice for putting so much life into his days and the exceptional care and compassionate support they gave not only to Don, but our entire family, during the last 13 months. We also want to extend our thanks to the staff of Bolger Funeral and Cremation for their assistance and support.

Visitation will be held Saturday April 25, 2026 at 9:00 AM at Rock of Ages Lutheran Church in Minocqua followed by a Memorial Service at 11:00 AM with a luncheon to follow.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Rock of Ages Lutheran Church 10441 Hwy 70 W Minocqua, WI. 54548, or donations of birdseed may be made to Seasons of Life Hospice House.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

APR **25**. 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Rock of Ages Lutheran Church  
Minocqua, WI

## Memorial Service

APR **25**. 11:00 AM (CT)

Rock of Ages Lutheran Church  
Minocqua, WI

# Tribute Wall

SC

“ We are so deeply sorry for your loss. Don was truly a remarkable man, and we feel incredibly blessed to have known him. From the very first time we met, both he and Shirley welcomed us with such genuine warmth and kindness. That kind of acceptance is something you never forget—it speaks volumes about the kind of people they were. Don lived with purpose, gave generously of himself, and left a lasting impact on so many lives. Please know that our hearts are with you during this time. With heartfelt sympathy and love. Steve & Carolyn LaVake

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Steve and Carolyn - April 15 at 01:21 PM

DJ

“ I was so blessed to be able to call Don a friend. He truly was a giver to all he met. He had an amazing sense of humor, and an infectious laugh. Farewell Don.

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David Imlah Jr - April 01 at 02:05 AM

KR

“ My sincere condolences to the Gauger family for the loss of a good man and a good friend to many like me. I am so thankful I had one last visit with Don about a week before his passing. I was pleased to see his ready smile and witness his quick wit even though he'd had some tough days recently. Don knew he'd had a good life and he definitely was at peace. He loved his family a great deal and his Lord and I am so thankful I had him as a friend. A dear friend. When I was saying goodbye our last visit I saw about 6 boxes of cookies on his dresser others had bought and I asked him if I should bring cookies or chocolate next time I visit. Without hesitation he said “Chocolates!” Classic Don! Miss you my old friend.

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Kirby Redman - March 29 at 01:47 PM

TR

“ *A good all around guy and good sense of humor. Our condolence to the family.*

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**Tom and Robin** - March 25 at 09:10 AM

PM

“ *Our deepest and most heartfelt sympathy goes out to Carl, Meg and all the family!*

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**Peggy Martinson** - March 24 at 06:10 PM