



## Don R. Crays

October 1, 1935 - September 23, 2023

A Mass of Christian Burial for Don will be held on Thursday, September 28, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Tobias, Nebraska with Father Robert Barnhill presiding.

Visitation will take place on Wednesday, September 27, 2023 from 1:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. with family present from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at Farmer & Son Funeral Home - Kotas Chapel in Milligan, Nebraska.

Visitation will cease at 6:00 p.m. for the Praying of the Rosary but will continue following the Rosary at 6:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.

Praying of the Rosary will be held on Wednesday, September 27, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at Farmer & Son Funeral Home - Kotas Chapel in Milligan, Nebraska with Father Robert Barnhill leading the Rosary.

Graveside Services will be conducted following the funeral service at the Atlanta Cemetery in rural Milligan, Nebraska.

In Lieu of Flowers - Memorials are to be directed to the family to be designated at a later date.

Don Roger Crays was born to Donald and Anna (Herynk) Crays on October 1,

1935 on a farm southwest of Tobias, NE. He passed away September 23, 2023 in Grand Island, NE at the age of 87. He was the oldest of five children.

He attended Atlanta Center Country School through 8th grade and graduated from Tobias High School in 1953. Before becoming a full time farmer, he worked for the railroad in Lincoln, appraised land in Custer County, constructed concrete elevators around the Milligan area, and worked at the ammunition depot in Hasting.

Don began farming at the age of 15 with his grandfather Joe Herynk on the farm that eventually became his lifelong home. He was proud to be the owner of three farms that have been in the family for over 100 years that all received the Nebraska Pioneer Farm Family award.

Don was married to Sheila Elznic in Exeter, NE on November 6, 1965. To this union, three daughters were born; Stephanie, Linda and Clara.

His love for cattle started at a young age when he began showing in 4-H, this led to over 40 years as a 4-H leader mentoring many youth including his sisters and daughters. His passion for Polled Hereford cattle began in 1976 with the purchase of four heifers from his brother, Roland. Little did he know this endeavor would be the beginning of many friendships and “family vacations” to cattle shows and events across the nation. Don & Sheila served as Nebraska Junior Polled Hereford Advisors for three years and were awarded the Nebraska Hereford Association Outstanding Breeder and Pioneer Breeder Awards.

He was a member of St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, serving on the parish council, the Tobias Volunteer Fire Department and EMTs, serving as the Fire Chief, the Nebraska Hereford Association, and the American Hereford Association.

Don will long be remembered for his orneriness, his signature cowboy hat and cigar, his passion for cattle and horses but most of all his dedication to his family and friends.

Don was preceded in death by his parents Don & Anne Crays, in-laws Clarence & Evelyn Elznic, grandson Seth McKay, brother-in-law Leo Etter, and sister-in-law Norma Crays.

Don is survived by his wife Shelia of Tobias; daughters, Stephanie (Kirk) Jensen, Courtland, KS, Linda (Grant) McKay Marysville, KS, Clara (Tim) Grace, Humboldt, SD; grandchildren, Cody, Casey (Raleigh), Jessica Jensen, Bailey McKay, Kane, Weston, Xavier, & Blaze Grace; Great-Granddaughter Blair Jensen; Siblings, Roland Crays, Barry (Jean) Crays, Sharon (Jerry) Kroese, and Karen Etter; and many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

# Cemetery Details

## Atlanta Cemetery

Road P and Road 400  
Rural Saline County, NE

# Previous Events

## Visitation

SEP 27. 1:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Farmer & Son Funeral Home-Kotas Chapel  
Main Street  
Milligan, NE 68406  
(402) 759-3617  
<https://farmerandsonfuneralhome.com>

*Visitation will cease at 6:00 p.m. for the Praying of the Rosary but will continue following the Rosary at 6:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.*

## Family Present for Visitation

SEP 27. 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Farmer & Son Funeral Home-Kotas Chapel  
Main Street  
Milligan, NE 68406  
(402) 759-3617  
<https://farmerandsonfuneralhome.com>

## Rosary

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SEP 27. 6:00 PM (CT)

Farmer & Son Funeral Home-Kotas Chapel  
Main Street  
Milligan, NE 68406  
(402) 759-3617  
<https://farmerandsonfuneralhome.com>

## Mass Of Christian Burial

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SEP 28. 10:00 AM (CT)

St. Joseph Catholic Church  
511 Elm St  
Tobias, NE 68453

# Tribute Wall



“ Sincere condolences and our thoughts are with all of you.

*Dale and Natalie McKay*

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**Dale McKay** - September 29, 2023 at 10:42 AM



“ 40 files added to the album Flower Arrangements



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**Farmer & Son Funeral Home** - September 28, 2023 at 02:29 PM

CU

“ Many the many happy memories be a source of comfort in your loss of Don Roger. Connie Uden and family

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**Connie Uden** - September 28, 2023 at 08:38 AM

SV

“ Condolences to all of the Crays family. I'll always have fond memories of Don Roger and his Dad, and how good and kind they were to me when I was a kid. I had no idea of all the things that he'd done before farming full time, but I'm not surprised, hard working man that he was. I learned a lot from him about cattle, and about practical veterinary skills. He was a great teacher. He was also a high school classmate of my mother, and I've thought about him a lot since hearing of his health issues. We wish you all God's peace, grace, and strength. Rest easy cowboy. Scott Vejraska

Scott and Jo Vejraska - September 27, 2023 at 08:08 PM

MG

So sorry to hear about Don passing. My sincere sympathy to all of you.  
Marlene Gakle

Marlene Gakle - October 01, 2023 at 03:54 PM

GH

“ Sincere thoughts and condolences to all the family. I have memories of all the razzing I got from Don Roger. All kidding and fun times with work and play. The last game of pitch I played with him in 2019 he beat me out on the last hand. Glad he did.. He'll be missed..

Gary Havel

GARY HAVEL - September 27, 2023 at 01:45 PM

RO

“ Ryan and Leann (Raney) Obermeier purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Don R. Crays.



Ryan and Leann (Raney) Obermeier - September 27, 2023 at 11:42 AM



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Don R. Crays.*



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September 26, 2023 at 10:25 PM



“ *Blue Caribbean Bouquet was purchased for the family of Don R. Crays.*



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September 26, 2023 at 01:14 PM



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Don R. Crays.*



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September 26, 2023 at 11:09 AM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Don R. Crays.*

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September 26, 2023 at 11:09 AM



“ *Pretty Please was purchased for the family of Don R. Crays.*



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September 26, 2023 at 09:55 AM



“ *The Grace Family - Jerry & Carmen, Stacy, Lindsay, Kelly & Dean, Travis & Becca, Samantha & Calvin and Children purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Don R. Crays.*



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**The Grace Family - Jerry & Carmen, Stacy, Lindsay, Kelly & Dean, Travis & Becca, Samantha & Calvin and Children -**  
September 26, 2023 at 09:54 AM



“ *Jesse, Robin + the entire Struck Family purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of Don R. Crays.*



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**Jesse, Robin + the entire Struck Family -** September 25, 2023  
at 09:05 PM



“ *Our deepest thoughts to Don's family at this time. His company was always a pleasure to be with and his subtle humor made us laugh. We will miss him.*

*Richard & Kathy Havel*

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**Richard & Kathy Havel -** September 25, 2023 at 09:04 PM

DE

“ Mr. And Mrs. Crays were some of the first parents we really got to know when Bill taught at Meridian. We always felt welcome at the farm and brought our baby Steph out to visit the horse. It was there that Stephanie exclaimed “horsey bite”. Horsey didn’t bite but she learned an important lesson about electric fences. It’s a story that we still tell even though she is now 40. I loved that we shared a 4-H background and felt a closeness to them because of that. Steph and Linda were the kind of athletes every coach hopes to have. Talented, respectful and hardworking. Mr. Mrs Crays raised an amazing family.

*Deb Eidam*

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Deb Eidam - September 25, 2023 at 08:30 PM



“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Don R. Crays.



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September 25, 2023 at 07:44 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Don R. Crays.

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September 25, 2023 at 07:44 PM



“ *Large Basket Garden was purchased for the family of Don R. Crays.*



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September 25, 2023 at 07:29 PM



“ *D.R. was the first real cowboy in our family, I remember him breaking horse's and having more than one learning experience. We shared along with the other cousins many a beverage. He will cerainly be missed by his family and all of us in the extended Herynk family. Perhaps he and the cousins who have preceeded him will have a pevo and a pitch game. Our deepest condolences to all of his family.*

*Allen Soukup and Family*

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allen soukup - September 25, 2023 at 06:33 PM



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Don R. Crays.*



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September 25, 2023 at 03:03 PM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Don R. Crays.*

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September 25, 2023 at 03:03 PM