



## Mr. Donald D. Church

September 30, 1930 - December 13, 2024

Donald Duane Church of Henderson, Texas, passed away quietly at Hospice of East Texas in Tyler. Mr. Church was born September 30, 1930 in Mountain, Wisconsin and moved to Alaska as a child of four years old with his family in 1935 as a member of the Matanuska Colony, a New Deal project. The son of John and Julia Church he graduated from high school in Alaska in 1948. He briefly worked for the Alaska Railroad after high school, as well as being employed as a heavy equipment operator. As an equipment operator he cleared land for homesteaders and cleared the path for Church Road in Wasilla, Alaska named for the multiple homesteads he and his brothers had in that area.

Church and his brothers were drafted into the army during the Korean War. Don served in the Army Corps of Engineers in Alaska from 1958 through 1960. In 1962 he entered service as an Alaska State Trooper. At that time there was no academy, and he was taken under the wing of an experienced trooper to learn the job. Don was briefly stationed in Anchorage before being transferred to Kodiak Island where he had the longest police beat in the world stretching some 1,500 miles from Kodiak to Shemya Island. He was stationed there at the time of the 1964 earthquake, the largest recorded earthquake in North America. As noted in a citation from Alaska Governor William Egan, "Trooper Church had been back in Kodiak only one half hour after completing a 23 days tour of the villages along the Aleutian Chain. He knew the tidal wave would follow the big quake, and rushed to the police station to send the

alarm over the marine radio.” He remained at his post all night sending warnings, helping others, and relieving those in distress. His actions saved countless lives and led to numerous citations, commendations, and was named the State Trooper of the year. He later became a Chief Investigator and retired in 1983 achieving the rank of lieutenant.

Don married his Texas sweetheart Billie Whitehead in Henderson, Texas, and returned to Alaska. The couple met in Anchorage in January 1965 and married in August of the same year. The courtship was so fast that Don did not have time to purchase an engagement ring, so he bought her a gold nugget necklace in lieu of the more traditional ring.

Don never met a child he did not love, nor one who did not love him. He was everyone’s “Uncle Don”. He loved hunting and fishing. Don was always pulling pranks, telling jokes, and full of laughter.

Don was preceded in death by his parents John and Julia Church, brothers John Church, Jr. (Margie), William Church, Edwin (Donna) Church, and his sister Lorraine (Charlie) Lindberg, and brothers-in-law Elmer Feltz and Jim Caputo. He is survived by his sisters Rose Feltz of Blue Springs, Missouri, Alice Caputo of Rices Landing, Pennsylvania, brother-in-law Bobby Whitehead (Lanita), and sister-in-law Ruby Church of Wasilla, Alaska. He is also survived by his wife of 59 years Billie and many beloved nieces and nephews.

Pallbearers are Cory Prior, Chez Prior, David Church, Tim Caputo, John Prior, and Adrian Roberson. Honorary pallbearers are the Alaska State Troopers. Visitation will be held from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm on Monday, Dec. 16, 2024 at Crawford - A. Crim Funeral Home. Chapel service will be at 10:00 a.m., Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2024 at Crawford - A. Crim Funeral Home chapel of Henderson. The family will have a private burial at Lakewood Memorial Park under the direction of Crawford - A. Crim Funeral Home of Henderson. Memorial donations may be made to St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital. Words of comfort may be shared at [www.crawfordacrim.com](http://www.crawfordacrim.com).



# Cemetery Details

## Lakewood Memorial Park

Hwy 64 and 323  
Henderson, TX 75652

# Previous Events

## Visitation

DEC 16. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Crawford A. Crim Funeral Home  
1414 South Main Street  
Henderson, TX 75654

## Service

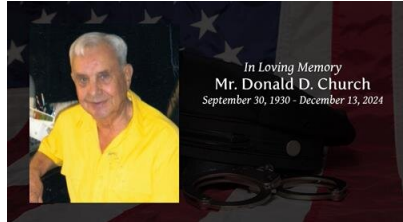
DEC 17. 10:00 AM (CT)

Crawford A. Crim Funeral Home  
1414 South Main Street  
Henderson, TX 75654

# Tribute Wall



“ *Crawford A.Crim Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Mr. Donald D. Church*



**Crawford- A.Crim Funeral Home** - December 16, 2024 at 10:05 AM

RS

*I am So sorry for the loss of your Loved one. Please know my thoughts and prayers are with all Donald's family. Rita Sartin*

**Rita Sartin** - December 17, 2024 at 03:36 PM

DU

*Don was my supervisor when I was in the investigation division of the Alaska State Troopers in Anchorage Alaska. I have never met anyone else who personified my vision of a perfect law enforcement officer,,,,intelligent, strong, kind, respectful, ethical, and an ever present calm intelligence that that made him a model law enforcement officer. I admired him and was fortunate to work under his guidance. He made a significant influence on my life and I will always appreciate knowing and learning from him. He is remembered by me often.*

*David Ulfers  
970-231-7475  
Queen Creek, Arizona*

**David Ulfers** - October 07, 2025 at 12:28 PM

JB

“ Johnny and Colleen Burton lit a candle in memory of Donald Church



Johnny and Colleen Burton - December 19, 2024 at 06:47 PM

MW

“ Billie I am so sorry to hear about Donald. Remember I am only a phone call away. My thoughts and prayers are with you.

Mandy Willeford - December 16, 2024 at 03:53 PM

CL

“ Charlotte Lockridge lit a candle in memory of Donald Church



Charlotte Lockridge - December 16, 2024 at 08:44 AM

SM

“ Shannon McKey lit a candle in memory of Donald Church



Shannon McKey - December 16, 2024 at 07:08 AM

JG

“ Our prayers and love is with you during this difficult time. We have fond memories of our visiting with the boys, picking raspberries, and listening to amazing stories. He will be truly missed, but a beautiful angel will always be with us. Sending our deepest condolences and love. Love you so much, Aunt Billie.  
Julie and Lex, Ryan and Dylan Griffith



Julie Griffith - December 15, 2024 at 01:43 PM

SW

“ Steven & Virginia Walker lit a candle in memory of Donald Church



Steven & Virginia Walker - December 14, 2024 at 07:40 PM

MM

“ What a wonderful life he seemed to lead! He seemed to be the quietest fella, which must have masked the mischief. I am glad to have known him and to learn his history. Blessings of peace to you Billie, as you continue to grieve. You enabled him to live his life to the fullest.

Marilyn Martin - December 14, 2024 at 05:53 PM

BP

“ Prayers for Billie and family during this time. I pray your memories give you some peace

Beth Hale Pope

Beth Pope - December 14, 2024 at 02:20 PM

JP

“ *Billie, we are so so very sorry over the loss of your beloved husband-Don. We always enjoyed so much visiting with you both at our Class Luncheons. Gary and I send up prayers to you and your family.*  
*Janice and Gary Pirkey*



---

**Janice Alken Pirkey** - December 14, 2024 at 11:10 AM