

Gene A. Mielke
October 22, 1939 - April 16, 2025



Gene A. Mielke, 85, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, April 16, 2025 at the Veterans Hospital in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where he had been receiving hospice care. A Visitation will be held on Saturday, May 17, 2025 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Eidsness Funeral Home in Brookings, South Dakota. Honoring Gene's wishes, his remains were buried in the Mielke family plot at the Elkton Cemetery at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 17, 2025.

Gene was born on October 22, 1939, at Brookings, to Edwin and Kathryn Mielke of rural Elkton, South Dakota. Gene attended country school and later St. Mary's Grade School. He graduated in 1958 from Elkton High School and enlisted in the

United States Navy that summer.

Gene served eight years in the Pacific, where he spent four years aboard the anti-submarine warfare destroyer USS Rogers and three on the carriers USS Coral Sea and USS Yorktown. He served his final year at U.S. Naval Support Activity in Da Nang, South Vietnam as a Ship's Serviceman 2nd Class, where he helped ensure the Swift Boat detachment on the Da Nang River was well supplied. Gene received an Honorable Discharge in September 1966. He then joined the U.S. Merchant Marine under the Military Sea Transportation Service, serving another eight years as an Able Bodied Seaman aboard various ships transporting war supplies to U.S. forces in South Vietnam. Gene's military service was a great source of pride, and he often reminisced about the many places he travelled, the people he met, and the ships he sailed upon.

In the mid-1970's, Gene returned to Elkton and purchased the local pool hall, running it for several years before moving to Wyoming. He joined a railroad track maintenance crew out of Upton with Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad, retiring after 20 years. In retirement, Gene spent much of his time tending 40 acres of forested land in the foothills of the western Black Hills, where he built a cabin and outbuildings. Gene truly loved his "woods," walking every acre of his property and making friends with the residents who shared the "woods."

In June 2023, Gene moved into Independent Living at United Living Center in Brookings. Despite dementia, he did well - coming and going as he pleased and enjoying the friendships of the other residents. Gene transitioned to assisted living in December 2024, but sadly his health declined in early 2025. He was placed in the Senior Program at Avera Medical Group in Sioux Falls and later entered hospice care at the Sioux Falls Veterans Hospital in early April. He passed on to Heaven's Gate within two weeks.

Gene is survived by his brother, Daniel (Marlys) Mielke of Brookings; sisters-in-law, Marilyn Mielke of Mankato, Minnesota, Barbara Mielke of Brookings, and Patsy Mielke of Hopedale, Ohio; as well as many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers, Edwin, William, Allen, and Charles; and sisters, Gatian, Kathleen, and Virginia.

Condolences may be sent to the family through www.eidsnessfuneralhome.com