



Donald Leslie Heide

September 6, 1946 - April 5, 2025

Donald Leslie "Donnie" Heide, age 78, passed away peacefully on April 5, 2025, in Helena, Montana, after a courageous and tough battle with cancer.

Born in Yreka, California, Donnie was raised on a working cattle ranch in Scott Valley, where his boundless curiosity and love of learning first took root. From a young age, he was captivated by how things worked- an interest sparked when, at age 10, his father gave him a soldering iron. That gift opened the door to a lifelong passion for electronics, invention, and mechanical exploration. Some of his earliest creations were practical, while others were more playful in nature, reflecting his enduring sense of humor.

Growing up, Don and his sisters were actively involved in 4-H and other activities. During high school, he cultivated a meaningful mentorship with teacher Al Kiep-an influential friendship that would remain steadfast throughout Don's life. Though he couldn't attend the after-school Amateur Radio Club due to the distance from the ranch, amateur radio would become a lifelong pursuit and a cornerstone of his identity.

After graduating from Etna Union High School in 1964, Don earned an Associate of Arts degree in Electronics from Shasta Community College in 1966. In 1967, he proudly enlisted and served in the US Navy as an electronics technician, serving aboard the USS Barb (SSN-596). Though his military service was cut short due to a medical condition, he was honorably discharged in 1969 at the rank of E5.

Don married the love of his life, Patricia Heide, on June 10, 1967. Together they built a loving home and family. Don began what would become a lifelong career with Picker International. Soon after, he and Pat would welcome their first son, Greg in 1971 and relocate to Tigard, Oregon, in 1974. After a short time in Medford where their second son Kevin was born in 1977, Don and family were transferred to Montana where they would remain.

Don was a gifted and generous man whose talents reached far beyond his professional career. He had a true knack for fixing, building, and improving anything mechanical or electronic. Whether it was radios, machining precision parts, or crafting beautiful woodworking projects, Don's hands were always busy and his heart was always open to help others. His garage and workshop were more than just spaces-they were sanctuaries of curiosity and creativity, filled with the scent of sawdust, the sound of humming

machines, and the spark of innovation.

One of his greatest joys was amateur radio, a passion he formally embraced in 1976 when he earned his first call sign, WB7ETT (later W7MRI in 1997). Through radio, Don formed lasting friendships that spanned nearly five decades. After retiring in 2011, he devoted even more time to the amateur radio community- generously sharing his knowledge, mentoring newcomers, and participating in events such as the Governor's Cup Race, Field Day, and countless Saturday morning coffee meetups.

Don is survived by his beloved wife of 57 years, Pat Heide; his sons, Kevin Heide and Greg (Jesse) Heide and Grandson James; his mother, Lorene Heide; and his sisters, Peggy (Willie) Heide and Nancy (Garold) Carver. He was preceded in death by his father, John Henry Heide.

Don's legacy lives on through the countless lives he touched with his kindness, ingenuity, and generosity of spirit. He will be deeply missed, fondly remembered, and forever cherished.

Graveside services will be held on Friday, May 9th at 4:00 PM at the Fort Jones Cemetery. Family and friends are welcome to attend and pay their respects.

Tribute Wall

AD

“ We are deeply sorry for your loss ~ Girdner Funeral Chapel

A Memorial Tree was planted for Donnie - May 02, 2025 at 12:00 AM