



Don Lemnus

March 11, 1936 - September 27, 2024

Don Lemnus, age 88, died Friday September 27 at The Village at Belmar in Lakewood, CO surrounded by his loving family. A funeral mass will be celebrated 10:30 AM, Saturday, October 26 at St. Catherine Catholic Church, Valley City. Visitation will be from 5:00-6:00 pm with a prayer vigil at 6:00 PM Friday, October 25 at the church.

Donald Eugene Lemnus was born March 11, 1936, in Sheldon, ND, the son of Arthur and Mildred (Pederson) Lemnus. He grew up in the Sheldon area, later moving and graduating from Enderlin High School in 1954. He continued his education at Valley City Teachers College, graduating in 1958. Don accepted his first teaching and coaching position at Napoleon High School. He married Mary Jane Regner in 1961 after which they moved to Fargo where Don completed his Master's degree from North Dakota State University in 1962 and was then hired at Valley City State as a professor of Physical Education and also coached wrestling, football and baseball.

In addition to his coaching and teaching positions, Don was an active referee for many high school sports and was very proud of his referee accomplishments. In 1984, Don and Jane moved to Dickinson, ND accepting the Chair of Physical Education at Dickinson State in addition to coaching cross country and later served as the Athletic Director. Don retired in 1997 and moved back to Valley City spending summers at the cabin on Lake Ashtabula and winters in Mesa, AZ.

Don was fondly known by many as "Coach". His passion for sports and his athletes was a special gift. His enthusiasm as a coach and dad cheering on his teams and later his children and grandchildren is a trait that will be forever remembered by many. Don had a deep love for his friends and family. Spending winters in Arizona, he was able to enjoy his retirement to the fullest. He was an avid golfer and spent many hours on the golf course with his friends. He enjoyed driving his golf cart through the retirement park in Arizona and waving at anyone who passed. He considered everyone his friend.

While Don persevered through many health issues, he had a will to live that was

remarkable. Bring a dog near grandpa, and that dog would surely be his new best friend. His kind soul was felt by many. Children brought him such joy and we are blessed he was able to spend his last month's enjoying his grandkids and great grandkids.

He is survived by: wife Mary Jane Lemnus, his children, Patty Gleason, Deb Horner, Susie (John) Morgan and Bob (Roberta) Lemnus; 14 grandchildren: Annie (Alec) Szuch, Amanda (Wes) Buntin, Ashley Smith, Ben (Taylor) Horner, Nick (Ashley) Horner, Steven (Abbi) Horner, Mike (Emilee) Morgan, Sarah Morgan, Janelle Morgan, Mark Morgan, Rylan Morgan, Jackson (Lacie) Lemnus, Abby Lemnus and Natalie Lemnus, and 8 great grandchildren: Scarlett Horner, Alexis and Rowan Horner, Parker and Carter Smith, Sophie, Mason and Bailey Morgan.

He was preceded in death by his parents, sisters Ethel (Kenny) Wallner and Delores (Jack) Card, brother Merle Lemnus (Mary) and son-in-law Pat Horner.

Don's funeral mass will be viewable via livestream at <https://vimeo.com/event/4626741>

In addition to a guestbook, the family is putting together an audio keepsake for Don that contains stories and messages from family and friends to celebrate Don's life. Please share a quality, trait, or talent of Don that you admire, a favorite story or memory, or what you think makes Don uniquely special. To leave your special message for Don and his family, please call 1-800-437-3009 and enter invitation number 93036 when prompted.

Arrangements have been entrusted to the care of the Oliver-Nathan Funeral Chapel, Valley City. An online guestbook is available at www.olivernathanchapel.com

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT **25.** 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM (CT)

St. Catherine Catholic Church
540 3rd Ave. NE
Valley City, ND

Prayer Vigil

OCT **25.** 6:00 PM (CT)

St. Catherine Catholic Church
540 3rd Ave. NE
Valley City, ND

Funeral Mass

OCT **26.** 10:30 AM (CT)

St. Catherine Catholic Church
540 3rd Ave. NE
Valley City, ND

Tribute Wall

BC

“ I just learned of the the passing of Coach Lemnus. To me he was more than a coach, during my years and after at VCSU , he was always concerned about how I was doing. He was that way with everyone. On the football field he brought out the best in you because you didn't want to let him down.i have played for and coached with great coaches over the years but none better than Coach Lemnus. As great a coach as he was he was a better person, although we lost contact when I moved to Georgia, I knew I could always call him. My condolences to his family and his legion of friends and athletes who were lucky enough to be coached by this man— Bill Cahill



Bill Cahill - December 04, 2024 at 07:57 PM

PN

“ Our sympathy goes out to Jane and the family. I met Don and Jane in 1971 when I was hired by VCSU to become the head football coach. Don was my defensive coordinator and mentor to all things Valley City. Don was totally in charge of running our defense during our games, he had a series of hand signals that he communicated what defense were using, one time during a game I sidled up to Don and told him "it's a good thing you know what we are doing defensively because I sure don't". That's just one of the good memories i have of Don as a coach. Nancy and I were fortunate to connect with Don and Jane at VCSU's homecoming a couple of years ago when Mike Tenuto was inducted into VCSU's Hall of Fame, many fun memories were shared with Don and Jane about our days together in Valley City. When you are young you think this day will never come.....Don will be truly missed. Peter Nyhus and Nancy Novak

Peter Nyhus - October 28, 2024 at 12:01 PM

BB

“ I first met Coach Don Lemus as a freshman at Valley State at three a day football practice. Head coach Jim Dew selected me as a free safety in the defense backs. I soon learned who was in charge of the defense and that was coach Lemnus. He didn't talk much but when he did with that commanding voice, you listened. Defense practices were tough, but it made the games easier. You didn't want to let Coach Lem down. He was full of praise when you did well and coached you when you needed it. His defenses were nationally ranked before I got there, during, and after I graduated. Coach Lemus was a class act, a great coach, terrific mentor, a true Viking! He will truly be missed! Bruce Babcock '78

Bruce Babcock - October 27, 2024 at 09:58 AM

CM

“ *My Sympathy to Mary Jane and the Lemnus Family. God Bless You All. Don was an amazing Coach, Friend, and all around Great Man. I know my husband Bob Swampy Maresh Loved and Respected Him . Great Teacher and Leader. Carrie Maresh*



Carrie Maresh - October 24, 2024 at 09:40 PM

TK

“ *A "shout out" to coach Don Lemnus. My twin brother, Merv and I as well as our next older brother, Dennis all were on the football and baseball teams he coached during his first opening years of his coaching years at Napoleon High School, Napoleon, North Dakota after graduating from Valley City Teachers College. A super great coach, a positive effective man who helped develop good athletes and even more important, young adults into mature growing individuals. His legacy lives on in all of us who were fortunate to call him coach and a friend for life. God is gracious and alive in those of us who serve Him. Thank You Don. Shalom, Tom Kramer - quarterback, baseball pitcher and member of the class of '59, the class he advised.*

Tom Kramer - October 22, 2024 at 05:51 PM

AD

“ *Don Lemnus a great friend for many years. His caring and friendly ways were his ways . Our friendship goes back to our college days at VCSC. A great family man with many talents. Thanks to the Lemnus Family for sharing Don with so many over many years. Rest In Peace my good friend Don. RIP*

Al Dosch - October 22, 2024 at 12:20 AM

CE

“ *Colorado Department of Education purchased the Florist Choice Bouquet for the family of Don Lemnus.*



Colorado Department of Education - October 21, 2024 at 03:17 PM



“ *Fairest of All* was purchased for the family of Don Lemnus.



October 21, 2024 at 07:49 AM

T1

“ *The Napoleon High School class of 1961 planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Don Lemnus.*

The Napoleon High School class of 1961 - October 21, 2024 at 07:49 AM

RB

“ *Our condolences to all of Dons family. Coach Lemnus was my xc coach at Dickinson State from 88-92. He was a great guy always concerned how we were doing and how our family was doing. He taught me many life lessons. We had many road trips together, but the one that sticks out the most was flying to national cross country in Wisconsin. a farm kid from the small town of Regent ND we had a great time. I will always remember coach and the visits we had. God Bless Randy Binstock*

Randy Binstock - October 20, 2024 at 09:19 PM

JV

“ There are so many memories which could be shared. One thing for sure, cause limitless was always respected by his athletes. He preached discipline and and coach the athlete as well as a person. I think everyone respected the discipline which was a strong part of his philosophy. From a wrestling standpoint, the 1974 Viking undefeated in dual mates was a highlight of the four years. My brother and I spent and value his state. Coach Lemnus coach many fantastic wrestlers over the years, including swampy marsh Dennis Friestad Jerry Rochleau, Joel Zimmerman and Del Schwartz to name a few. When the wrestling season was over, we always enjoyed having that team party at the Lemnus residence. It was always so much fun and brought together the entire family and the wrestling team after long season. That was always really a good time for everyone. I must share a bit of information from a wrestling trip to Minneapolis in 1974. There was a rumor that some of the wrestlers may have been having a beer or two. We recall getting a knock on the door that evening, but of course we were innocent until approved otherwise. I think the people in that room was still plead the fifth amendment enough said. The closing I think most people would share this sentiment that Don and Jane always did their coaching together. Jane was as involved as much as Don was in the Viking wrestling program. To me it was very noticeable that they were very happy together and were a perfect match for each other all these years. May the many memories sustain you for years to come.
Sincerely Joe Vandrovec

Joe Vandrovec - October 19, 2024 at 10:18 AM

CM

“ I think the Maresh family and Lemnus family go hand in hand. So many memories of wrestling matches at the bubble watching the Vikings including my older brother Bob ("Swampy"). I also remember a Christmas when Santa Claus (aka my father with Swampy driving the snow machine) delivering a puppy to the Lemnus garage. Last time I saw coach was at Swampy's memorial service at the Eagles. The words that coach said about my brother Bob were meaningful to our family. May the Lemnus family be wrapped in all the memories of Bob...Go rest high Coach. Say hi to Mom and Dad and the Maresh brothers.

Connie Maresh - October 15, 2024 at 03:42 PM

MT

“ Mike Tenuto lit a candle in memory of Don Lemnus



Mike Tenuto - October 06, 2024 at 02:19 AM

MT

Coach Lemnus was an Icon at VCSU He was a great Professor and a great Coach. He will be missed.

Mike Tenuto - October 06, 2024 at 02:23 AM

ET

“ *Mary Jane and family. Rita called Gary to let him know that Don had passed. May he rest in Peace! Gary is Mary Jane's 1st cousin from Bismarck, ND. Gary/Elaine Taszarek*

Elaine Taszarek - October 03, 2024 at 03:33 PM

JF

“ *Jeff and Kristi Johnson Family purchased the Joyful Memory for the family of Don Lemnus.*



Jeff and Kristi Johnson Family - October 02, 2024 at 06:32 PM

JF

“ *Jeff and Kristi Johnson Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Don Lemnus.*

Jeff and Kristi Johnson Family - October 02, 2024 at 06:32 PM

CR

“ *I don't know where to start. When lost, Don could find me, when arrogant, he could bring me back to reality, when down, he could pick me up. That's a coach, mentor, friend, and confidant! I had the good fortune to wrestle for "The Mex" for one quarter after returning to farm with my dad. Don called me, asked me to help coach before using my last quarter of eligibility. The assistant coaching job kept on until Don moved to the AD job at Dickinson. Valley City took second on that deal! In my years coaching with Don, I saw him bring family to the team, and his team to his family. A Christmas party at the Lemnus home with the wrestling team alongside Jane, Patty, Debbie, Susie and Bob was a real memory. Somewhere Erni Brodsky is still playing his trombone. Don's teams were always in shape. His trademark! I envy the football guys as they saw a side of Don I missed, let alone the baseball guys. His skills as a dad and husband were his greatest attribute. He was definitely family first. I knew him well and am proud of it. Rest in peace Don. This time the next sporting season will have to find an alternate coach. They can never replace you!*
Chuck Riedman

Chuck Riedman - October 01, 2024 at 09:02 PM

JT

“ John Thomas purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Don Lemnus.



John Thomas - October 01, 2024 at 08:19 PM

TC

“ Coach Lemnus had a way of getting the most out his players. A real motivator. I had the upmost respect for him. Proud to call him and Jane my friend. My thoughts and prayers are with the Lemnus family. He is at peace now and he deserves it. A true hero to me. Todd Christiansen

Todd Christiansen - October 01, 2024 at 08:15 PM

MC

“ He could sell ice to an Eskimo ! He had an uncanny ability to read people/athletes and knew how to motivate you as a person and for you to reach the potential that you were unaware you had. It didn't matter what side of the ball you played, offense or defense he was motivating you because he was present. We all respected him and he lives on as he impacted so many of our lives. He made you believe in yourself! I am proud to have known him. Mike Callahan

Mike Callahan - October 01, 2024 at 04:34 PM

FM

“ Don was a great guy and a good friend, I had not seen him for some time I remember him well. Francis Punk Dahl

Francis Dahl Billings, Mt. - October 01, 2024 at 04:22 PM

CA

“ Don Lemnus was more than a coach—he was a guiding light and a pillar for all who had the privilege to know him. His legacy at VCSU and in our community goes beyond the game. He shaped his players into men with work ethic and values that will carry on through generations.

I will always remember him as an iconic and one-of-a-kind figure whose impact will forever be a part of the fabric of VCSU.

RIP Lem. You've earned it.

Cory Anderson - October 01, 2024 at 04:13 PM

AB

What a man. As a wrestling coach at Napoleon and a brother-in-law forever. Never had a bad word about anyone. Truly a man of family & God!!!!

alex bitz - October 07, 2024 at 07:46 PM

JW

I was fortunate to have known Don wrestling for him at VCSC and then sharing memories at his winter home at Viewpoint Mesa sharing Sunday morning breakfast after church. Will miss you, Don.

Joe Welder - October 09

Joe Welder - October 09, 2024 at 08:50 AM

JS

I did not know Don personally, but my husband, Jim Schneider, was a coach at the same time, and a friend. God bless his family at this time. Jane Schneider

Jane Schneider - October 16, 2024 at 10:00 AM

RW

Don was more than just a coach to HIS athletes! He was a Coach to ALL athletes!! As a Jamestown Jimmie wrestler, i admired him as he would actually come and personally talk to us after a hard fought match! We certainly were rivals to anything connected to Valley City, but this mountain of a man brought civility to every situation and always had kind and encouraging words! I know how respected he was by HIS athletes (like Swampy for instance) but was equally respected by his rivals and their teams. The OLD coaches like him and Rollie Greeno made us all feel like we were "werth" them investing their time in helping us succeed! Rest Peacefully Don! You have earned a weel deserved REST!! Love ya!! Russ Werth Bowman ND!

Russ Werth - October 17, 2024 at 12:12 AM

RH

I remember when Don was lifeguard at the LaMoure swimming hole on the James River. He coached me as a jv football player at V.C. and recruited my son to wrestle at V.C. Don reffed many matches at Carrington and numerous tournaments. My favorite story was at the end of the football season 1962(all games were over) he insisted the jv have "1 more practice"/ he was inundated by flimsy excuses to miss practice// i walked in and asked to be excused, and he said "what's your excuse"/ I said, "well, my wife's going to have a baby, and I kinda would like to be there"! He always brought that story up in later years. Loved that man. Ron Humphrey East Helena, mt.

Ronald Lee Humphrey - October 17, 2024 at 01:38 PM

AO

I didn't play football at VCSU, but I can tell you that many VCSU football alumni have told me stories about playing for Coach Lemnus. The alumni I'm speaking of most often played defense on VCSU conference championship teams. These men were proud of their teams and treasured their VCSU experiences. Many times I've heard the statement, "Best coach I ever had." Coach Lemnus was deeply admired and respected by his players. His impact on these men extended far beyond their days at VCSU.

Alan Olson - October 25, 2024 at 04:45 PM

JH

What a guy we lost, Had many great times with you Don. Thanks for standing up for me at my wedding, countless times golfing , poker parties, and late nite talks about families and friends.....You did a great job with him Jane and he'll be missed by all. Rest in peace friend,you deserve it. Jack Holm

john holm - October 29, 2024 at 01:13 PM