



Ernest Joseph Collette Jr

May 10, 1926 - February 12, 2023

Ernest Joseph Collette, Jr. born May 10, 1926 to Alice (née Maddock) and Ernest Collette, Sr., in Grand Forks, ND passed very peacefully from this world on Sunday, February 12, 2023.

Ernie aka Bunky Collette graduated from St. James High School in Grand Forks where he proudly played backup quarterback for the high school football team.

Ernie recalls, "I graduated from high school on the last Friday of the Month of May and two days later I was on a troop train to Farragut, Idaho as a new U.S Navy recruit during WWII. I went to electrical school for six months, had leave Christmas 1944 and then was assigned to USS Caldwell, a destroyer still in repairs from an air attack in the South Pacific. We sailed back to the South Pacific on patrol then sailed down close to Borneo and we could see the Japanese were setting fires to the oil fields. The captain set sail back and forth to head off the enemy. However, we sailed out of the area free of magnetic water mines and as we were turning, we hit one of the mines that damaged the fantail of our ship, but we were still able to sail back to the Philippines for repair. We were lucky, the repairs meant we did not have to be in the invasion of Okinawa. The Japanese were having very young men flying plywood planes like human bombs. The war was over in August of 1945 and we sailed back to The States through the Panama Canal to Boston and on to South

Carolina. I was discharged in June 1946 as a 3rd Class petty officer.”

Following his return home to Grand Forks, Ernie enrolled at University of North Dakota. He was an active member of Theta Chi Fraternity. Upon graduating in 1950, Ernie embarked on his life’s journey and to Montana with his first job at Standard Oil Company, this is where he met Myra Mattern, a lovely lady he would spend 35 years with and raise five children together.

Ernie lived in many places including Billings, MT; Denver, CO; Fort Morgan, CO; Albuquerque, NM; back home to Grand Forks, ND and a summer home in Cass Lake, MN while the kids were growing up. Retired he moved to Bellingham, WA; Vancouver, WA; Redmond, WA; Wenatchee, WA.

Ernie was known by his family, colleagues and friends as a man who always had a smile on his face and a joke to share. He was an avid racquetball player, he enjoyed snow skiing and served as a board member for many local organizations in Grand Forks including Kiwanis Club, YMCA, Elks Club, Knight of Columbus, SCORE with SBA and Holy Family Church.

Professionally Ernie started Interstate Realtors in Grand Forks in the early 1960’s and continued the Collette family tradition in real estate. Ernie stated, “I had a 5-year appointment to the North Dakota Real Estate Commission which gave me state and national recognition. I was later elected president of the North Dakota Real Estate Board and elected State President and National Vice-President of the Air Force Association. I had over 80 hours of flying in the U.S. Air Force planes and sat in the cockpit on landings and takeoff. While flying, we would refuel jets.”

Ernie is survived by Vicki Heimark (Ron), Chelan, WA; Renee Collette, Gilbert, AZ; Dianne Bergstrom (Scott) Seattle, WA; Janine Weber, Eden Prairie, MN; and Craig Collette, Tampa, FL. Nineteen Grandchildren, and countless Great Grandchildren. Ernie is also survived by his brother John (Ann) Collette, and

many nieces and nephews.

Ernie was preceded in death by his parents, his sisters Ellen Rose LaSeur, Pat Meagher and Marjorie Fromm, Loria Kelly, his brothers Terry Collette and Denzil Collette.

A service will be held at a later date.

Tribute Wall



“ *My condolences and prayers to Ernie's family, he was a great guy and smile. Keep memories strong. RIP*
Diane Rudrud Nielsen

Diane Nielsen - June 29, 2023 at 10:47 AM

RH

“ *My name is Roger Hegland. I was in the Air Force at Grand Forks AFB and retired in October 1988. We had never bought a house before and I knew Earnie thru working with him on the Chamber of Commerce. He actually sold us our First House in Grand Forks. I think he was as excited as we were! He was a good friend. Our condolences to all his family.*

Roger & Corki Hegland - May 06, 2023 at 05:45 PM

BB

“ *What a beautiful tribute you have written for your father. I was really only around Uncle Ernie when I was a child but I can actually still remember his laugh. He was such a charismatic and charming man who lived a full, rich life. I am sure he will be greatly missed.*

Bonnie Bickler - February 16, 2023 at 06:36 PM

BH

“ *Grandpa Ernie, how you will be missed. Growing up we didnt see grandpa often but when we did he made the time we had enjoyable and full of laughter. He'd sing all sorts of silly songs to my siblings and myself and never failed to tell us the same joke twice. The years full of laughter and love will always be imprinted on my heart. We love you always, grandpa.*

Bailey Heimark - February 15, 2023 at 11:32 PM