



## LCol Donald D. Pongrace

April 18, 1929 - October 3, 2014

Rye – Lieutenant Colonel Donald David Pongrace, USAF, Ret., 85, passed away on Friday, October 3, 2014 in Rye, with loving family by his bedside.

Don was born April 18, 1929 in Fond du Lac, WI, a son of the late James and Fern (Gohde) Pongrace. He graduated from Fond du Lac High School in 1946, and in 1947, following in his older brother's footsteps; Don enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps. He was selected for officer and flight training and graduated in 1950 in the first navigator class of the newly-formed United States Air Force.

Don found the love of his life during his first months of navigation school. He married Mary Louise Maury and together they raised five sons and later welcomed eleven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Don's family was, and always remained; the center of his world and the Pongrace homestead in Rye was their forever home.

As a navigator for the USAF, Don met the nation's security challenges in three wars: the Korean Conflict, the Cold War and the Vietnam War, as well as the Cuban Missile Crisis. During the Korean Conflict he flew 47 B-29 combat missions. Don's singular war achievements led to his selection to become one of the first B-52 Navigators. During the Cold War, Don flew numerous Chrome Dome nuclear airborne alert missions; and his knowledge and experience of

B-52 operations were brought to the forefront during the Vietnam War where he acted as Mission Director for numerous B-52 air strikes during his two tours of duty. He was twice awarded the Air Medal for his heroic actions during these conflicts and was also awarded the Bronze Star for his career achievements. His esteemed military service spanned 23 years and he retired in 1970 from Pease Air Force Base.

A pillar of the community and a man of God, Don never met a stranger. He welcomed everyone he met with an open heart and open arms. Don was a leader of the Rye Congregational Church for 47 years, serving as a deacon. He was also the President of the Rye Lion's Club and ran Boy Scout Troop 181 out of Rye for many years.

In addition to Mary, his cherished wife of over 64 years, Don is survived by his sons and their wives: Michael and Sue, Donald and Olwen, Joseph and Ellen and James; his grandchildren, Michelle, Marya, Erin, David, Steven, Matt, Kathleen, Sarah and Aidan and his great-grandchildren, Gavin, Lily, Delaney, Sarah and Callen.

He was pre-deceased by his son David and his grandsons, William and Jake.

Visiting hours will be from 4-7 PM on Monday, October 6, 2014 in the Remick & Gendron Funeral Home-Crematory, 811 Lafayette Rd., Hampton. Services will be held at 10 AM on Tuesday at the Rye Congregational Church, 580 Washington Rd., Rye. Burial will follow in the Central Cemetery, Rye.

Relatives and friends are respectfully invited. Family flowers only please. The family suggests memorial donations may be made in Don's name to the Alzheimer's Association, Five Bedford Farms Drive, Suite 105, Bedford, NH 03110.

# Cemetery Details

## Central Cemetery

20 Central Road  
Rye, NH

# Previous Events

## Visitation

OCT 6. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Remick & Gendron Funeral Home - Crematory  
811 Lafayette Road ·  
Hampton, NH 03842  
(603) 926-6500  
[info@remickgendron.com](mailto:info@remickgendron.com)  
<https://www.RemickGendron.com/>

## Service

OCT 7. 10:00 AM (ET)

Rye Congregational Church  
580 Washington Road  
Rye, NH

# Tribute Wall



“ *LCol Donald D. Pongrace*

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September 18, 2022 at 12:49 AM



“ *Dear Mary and Family, Being at the church service for Don and hearing of the many stories of his life gave even more meaning to the person he was. It was always a pleasure when Mary and Don would attend the Rye Over 55 Club. Don with his pleasant smile and a little joke or two made both of them very special people to us. Don was one of the worlds true gentlemen, a kind and caring person to all. HE will be missed by many. R I P Don*

*David and Meg*

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**Meg Cartwright/David Holton** - October 10, 2014 at 02:50 PM



“ *Mary and Family,  
My deepest thoughts and prayers are with you as you go through this most difficult time. Don was a terrific man and will be missed by many.*

*Love,  
Dot Perham*

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**Dorothy Perham** - October 07, 2014 at 03:56 PM

CY

“ Thinking of the entire Pongrace family, and all the fond memories I have of growing up next door to "uncle" Don. From cowboys and Indians on his mower, to pumpkin carving, every day was an adventure!

- Cynthia

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**cynthia** - October 06, 2014 at 04:01 PM

HK

“ Jim,  
so sorry to read of your dad's passing.  
howard and sue koeppel

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**howard koeppel** - October 05, 2014 at 06:02 AM