

# Ron Rude

Ron Rude was born October 22, 1943, in Ada, Minnesota, to DeFloren and Edna (Olson) Rude, in some of the most fertile land in the world. A horse was probably nearby. He grew up in western and northern Minnesota, helping with family and neighboring farms and, of course, riding horses.

In addition to horses, two other passions were constant throughout Ron's life: reading and naps. He was a voracious reader, from classic literature to magazines to spy novels. Books were always nearby, and he made sure his kids were well read, too. As for naps: anytime, anywhere. On the trail with a rock for a pillow, on the couch, in the leather shop, wherever. A day wasn't really complete without a good nap.

He met the love of his life, Karen Knickerbocker, in Red Lake in the late 1950s, where both of their fathers were teachers. She was definitely not a horse lover, but being a patient

and organized soul, she was the perfect partner to tolerate his equine obsessions.

Every college kid needs a summer job, so why not get paid to indulge your passion? Ron set his sights for Montana and spent a couple summers on the Spike Van Cleve Ranch riding horses and wrangling dudes in the Crazy Mountains near Big Timber. Although he moved around for a few more years, Montana and the mountains made their permanent impact.

In the mid-60s, Uncle Sam was calling for young men, so Ron volunteered for three years in the Army. Sergeant Rude was a cavalry scout (a good fit) with a trusty "horse" named M113 (an armored vehicle) tasked with helping hold back the Soviets from West Germany. During his tour, he married Karen in January 1967, and they spent a year traveling Europe and taking pictures which featured in slide shows for many

years during gatherings of family and friends. Karen returned to Kalispell for the birth of their first son, Steve, while Ron finished his tour.

After the Army and teaching in Troy, Montana, Ron and Karen settled in Plains, where their other sons, Jeff and Mark, were born. Of all the places in the world to be a teacher, Plains was a natural fit due to its mascot: the Horsemen. He taught high school English for 23 years and was the superintendent for 9 more before retiring in 2002. While he enjoyed those jobs, they were mainly a funding source for his horse-related habits: hay, trucks, trailers, saddles and tack, vet bills, and trips. When he wasn't working or doing horse stuff, Ron also wrote for magazines (Western Horseman, for instance) and the local newspapers, and he wrote three books.

After retiring Ron kept riding, and he also took up a new hobby: leather work. He turned it into a small

business and, in addition to building over 30 saddles, he kept family and friends well equipped with leather goods and mentored some friends and kids along the way. Leather work, reading, writing, riding, maintaining trails, and visiting family kept him occupied and productive.

Finally, after a full life and a long battle with cancer, Ron dismounted his horse and settled down for his last nap on March 1, 2024.

He is survived by his dedicated wife of 57 years, Karen; his three sons Steve (Tanya), Jeff (Brittany), and Mark (Jeannie); 10 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; and his brothers Steve (Becky) and Mike (Jane).

The family requests memorials be given to Clark Fork Valley Hospice or the Cancer Network of Sanders County.

A memorial service will be held at 10 a.m., June 8, 2024, at First Lutheran Church in Plains, Montana.