



Donna Lee Brown

August 29, 1940 - December 17, 2025

Donna Lee Brown left the bonds of her earthly existence and reunited with her beloved husband Norm on December 17, 2025. She was 85. In a life well-lived, Donna peacefully passed away at the farm she called home for the past 51 years.

She was born to Vernon Lewis and Emma Marie (Donaldson) Ewing on August 29, 1940 at the hospital in Sterling, Colorado. Though she was born in Sterling, home was Sedgwick, CO where her family farmed. In elementary school, Donna experienced the loss of her father and sister, Verna Marie, in successive years. The loss was keenly felt by her.

In 1958, Donna graduated from Sedgwick High School. She matriculated to Colorado State College (now University of Northern Colorado). Eschewing the tradition of the time, Donna did not seek a Mrs. degree. Rather she focused on becoming a teacher, starting first as a secondary science major before graduating with her BA in Elementary Education in 1962. Due to her diligence of taking courses over the summer, Donna graduated early and spent the spring of 1962 teaching at an elementary school in Clifton.

The next fall, Donna joined her mother, who had recently moved to Wellington, CO. Donna secured a position with Poudre School District, first teaching at Harris Elementary and then at O'Dea where she a member of the staff that

opened the school.

In the fall of 1964, her good friend Jean Mackimmie, and her husband Mac, introduced Donna to Norm Brown, an Extension County Agent from Pennsylvania, who was pursuing a master's degree in Extension Education from Colorado State University (CSU). After an inauspicious first date, where Norm wore mismatched socks, Donna and Norm grew closer and closer together resulting in a wedding on March 18, 1965.

Norm had to go back to Pennsylvania to fulfill an agreement to work for Penn State Cooperative Extension in exchange for their financial help with his master's degree. During the first three years in her new home state, Donna worked as a kindergarten teacher and later as a substitute teacher. She also gave birth to two children: Russell in 1967 and Trisha in 1969. After the birth of Trish, Donna stopped teaching to focus full-time on raising her children, as well as managing the Arabian horse farm that she and Norm were starting.

A move back to Colorado happened in 1974, when Norm secured a job as a County Extension agent in Adams. After much discussion, it was decided that Norm and Donna would buy half interest in her mother's farm while Norm commuted to work. This would be the last place Donna called home, living there for 51 years before her death.

Once in Colorado, Donna continued with her job of raising her children and running a growing Arabian horse farm. Donna broke the gender barrier in 1981, when she became the first woman to preside over the Colorado Arabian Horse Club (CAHC), which was the second largest Arabian horse club in North America at that time. After defeating the fierce opposition from those who did not feel a woman should be president of such a large and prestigious organization, Donna showed the skills and work ethic that made her a successful teacher, earning the Distinguish Service Award from the

International Arabian Horse Association (IAHA) in 1982.

After serving a then-record three years as president, Donna stepped aside from the CAHC and resumed her career as an educator. She started as a paraprofessional at Wellington Junior High (1982-84) before moving to Eyestone Elementary as a full time second-grade (1984-88) and sixth-grade (1988-1999) teacher before her retirement. During her tenure at Eyestone Elementary she was the building representative to the Poudre Education Association.

However, Donna remained active in her retirement. Until March 2020, she substitute taught in Poudre School District including some long-term stints that kept her busy. Arguably, her preferred teacher to sub for was her favorite son Russ, who was grateful to have a quality sub at his disposal.

In addition to work, Donna continued to volunteer for the Colorado Arabian Horse Club, serving multiple years on the Board of Directors for the Northern Division and even manager of the Estes Park Horse Show. She was also active in the Friday's Council Tree chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Colorado Women's Sports Fund Association.

Perhaps her biggest wish fulfillment was having the opportunity to travel with her husband Norm. They had the chance to see many places in the US, two trips to Europe, and another trip to the Caribbean. Thanks to the work of her husband, Donna became a big sports fan, especially women's athletic competitions. While she attended numerous events, her favorite was the CSU women's volleyball team where she was a long-time season ticket holder (first with Norm and then with Russ, after Norm's passing).

Throughout her life, Donna was active in managing the finances of the

Arabian horse farm. And while she did not compete as frequently as her mother and daughter, Donna did find time to show her Arabian horses. In 2013, Donna completed the Century Club Ride on Trisha's Arabian gelding Amie Phoenix+. They became just the 138th horse and rider team to join this prestigious list (where the age of horse and rider total at least 100 years).

Donna is survived by her two children Russell (Jackie Meier) and Trisha, who were both inspired to become master teachers by their mom; and her sister-in-law Jeannette as well as countless people to whom she was a mentor and second mother and valued friend. She was preceded in death by her parents Vernon and Marie; her sister Verna Marie; her daughter-in-law Aadria; and her brother-in-law Kenneth.

In lieu of flowers or donations, the family would appreciate your support of "Charis Youth Ranch" (1851 Brightwater Dr., Fort Collins, CO 80524; Venmo @Tracy-Cookman) or "Pine Ridge and You" (make checks payable to "PRAY" at 14756 Osage Ct., Westminster, CO 80023)

A celebration of life ("Donna Fest") will take place in mid-2026. Contact the family for additional details.

Tribute Wall

CB

“ A GREAT friend and neighbor. Kathy and I spent many happy hours with Norm and Donna. Miss them VERY MUCH

curtis bridges - May 05 at 07:52 PM

JB

“ Donna and I met over the annexation of farm land to be developed into a large subdivision, spreading Wellington onto the east side of I25. Over time, our friendship grew stronger and stronger, with Norm, Donna and I enjoying lunch every Tuesday at Culvers in Fort Collins, and sharing many trips to support the CSU women's basketball and volleyball teams. We had season tickets together to first women's basketball and later women's volleyball for literally 20+ years. Donna was a strong, determined woman, champion in so many ways, and a beloved friend. She will be missed by many. Joan Bowen

Joan S Bowen - December 30, 2025 at 05:05 PM

MS

“ As a career educator in Poudre School District myself, Donna was well known and highly respected in Poudre Education Association circles. I learned a lot from her about how to support colleagues as a building rep. Then, when I joined DAR and saw her in my chapter, I was happy to get to know her in another light. She was a generous supporter of many charitable initiatives our chapter worked on, and a mentor once again to myself and others. Her spirit was then, and will always remain a guiding light for all who were blessed to know her. Rest in strength, love and peace, Donna. You lived an excellent life on this Earth. With endless love and respect, Mary Beth Solano

Mary Beth Solano - December 30, 2025 at 11:04 AM

BO

“ She will be missed. I always enjoyed our wide ranging conversations. Regards, Bob Vrooman

Bob - December 30, 2025 at 10:47 AM

DH

“ Russ and family - my condolences to you as you honor your Mom and a life well-lived and loved. I had just recently talked with her at a Christmas concert. I always enjoyed our chats in the IB office at Poudre High School when Donna was on lunch break from subbing our IB history classes (taught by her son, Russ). Such a sweet spirit! Peace to you all. ❤️ Debbie Hover

Debbie Hover - December 24, 2025 at 02:36 PM

CH

“ I always looked forward to visiting with Donna when she substituted for Russ. She always had a smile on her face and when prompted, revealed amazing stories about her life on the ranch. She was so proud of her children and truly enjoyed being with students of all ages.

Christine Hays - December 24, 2025 at 10:04 AM

NJ

Donna was a wonderful person and dear friend and colleague. She will be remembered fondly. Nancy Jacobs

Nancy Jacobs - December 30, 2025 at 09:34 PM

WF

Donna was my spiritual foundation at Eyestone when I returned to classroom teaching after 16 years away. We became very good friends with her, Norm, and the children. Our family visited the Brown Farm regularly to chat around the kitchen table or watch daughter Erin learn about riding and caring for horses from Trish. RIP, dear friend.

Wendell Frey - January 06 at 08:49 PM