



Mike Fitzgerald

Aug. 27, 1942 - May 29, 2024

Michael Joseph Fitzgerald, 81, of Morganton, passed away in his home on May 29, 2024.

He was born August 27, 1942 in New York to the late William and Mimi Fitzgerald.

The lifelong cowboy exhibited grit, determination and a deep love for family and friends. He instilled a work ethic in his family, chosen and blood, that has been passed through many generations. The self-made nurseryman was a role model and inspiration to many. He had the unique ability to make anyone feel like a “true pal”.

His love for adventure was absolutely contagious. The years he spent as an elk and big horn sheep guide in Wyoming have provided countless photographs and stories that showcase his quick-witted and stoic persona.

Michael and his late wife Paula Fitzgerald created a home for all. Everyone was welcome on the farm, which has been honorably called one of the most magical places in the world.

He is survived by his 3 children, Suzy, Mike (Cam), Sally (Jonathan); his grandchildren, Alicia (Clay), Adam, Shawn (Ember), Mike (Hillary), Paul (Hannah), Molly, as well as the precious gift of 5 beautiful great grandchildren, Carter, Bryden,

mony as well as the precious gift of 5 beautiful great grandchildren, Carter, Brayden, Skylah, Audrey, Penelope, Eleanor, Maren and Anson. Many lovingly referred to him as "the old man" and, most commonly, "Big Mike".

A memorial service will be held at 2p.m., Monday, June 3, 2024 at Oak Hill United Methodist Church.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Oak Hill UMC 2239 NC 181, Morganton NC 28655. Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall



Just got the news on Mike. He was a great guy that always managed to put a smile on my face. Heaven got a winner!

—Glenn Schneider

Mike was such an awesome man. The true balance of Kind, Strong and Tough. I learned so much from him knowing him through the mules and his friends. I loved hearing the many stories of his adventures. I bought an awesome mule from him who was called Cammy. I renamed her Sadie Mae but she was well known by all because of her great training she received from Mike. The kind of Horseman/Muleman that Mike was is so rare these days. I still remember Sadie looking for him when we went to events! A true testament to the kind of person he was and will always be remembered for.

—Shannon Hoffman



—Vance Loven





Sending our prayers and condolences for the whole family.

—Gra-Mac Distributing Co.

I moved back to the Mountains about the time Mike and Paula moved to Simpson Creek, Mike was a Mentor and Friend maybe kindred spirits born 100years too late. He worked and played hard and I learned a lot about being a nurseryman just by watching Mike Fitzgerald, I will Miss You My Friend. PEACE !

—Wayne Holden

Mike had been on my mind last week. I thought about calling him and am very sorry I did not. He will leave a big void in the world. William and I spent many happy evenings with Mike and Paula. These are memories I will always cherish. I am sorry I didn't find out in time to make it to the service. You are all in my heart and prayers.

—Mary Aldridge

So very sorry for your families loss. He was a wonderful man. Sending love, hug and prayers.

—Doug & Michelle McClurd

Sending sincere condolences to Mike, Cameron and family. May God bless you during this time of your loss.

—Robin Denton

Fitzgerald Family, you are in my thoughts and prayers as you remember Mike in the days ahead. I respected Mike. I sincerely admired his grit, how he cared for his friends and family, and his attentiveness to his livestock. I am grateful that

we crossed paths in this life and will miss him. Peace be with you all.

—Dr. Justin Jornigan

So sorry to hear about Mike it's a tremendous loss he was a great great man will always remember time spent driving the fields thoughts and prayers to you guys
Ken Allison

—Ken Allison

So sorry to read this. Mike's passing is a huge loss to the family and community. A man of honest and practical wisdom, I learned from him on each meeting. Generous to a fault, he gave much more than he received. Peace and Blessings.
Bo Cash

—Bo Cash

Rube – Suzy – and Sally, Very Saddening —

—Jerry & Joanne



—Linda & David Cuthbertson

Pop will be missed ... always enjoyed our conversation .. some in depth and lots of stories about the world affairs ... and lots of stories about our work history...
Rest assured he is in God hands now !

—Stewart Fisher



Suzi, Sally & Rube and all the grandchildren, We can't tell



you all how heartily sorry we are for all of you. Mike & Paula were the best parents & friends anyone could ever have. God bless them & all of u!! We have so many wonderful memories with your family, we could never begin to list them or prioritize them all. Between the family trips

together & all the fantastic times we spent with u in NC. Of course Steve & Michael's favorites were the backpack trips to Cody, WY I've been missing Paula terribly but now it feels so final. How very sad!!! We've always felt lucky to have such great friends & now more than ever we know how blessed we were to have Mike & Paula in our lives (& of course all u kids too). The best part for them is that they're happily together again in Heaven!!! Wish we were closer so we could give u all huge hugs!!! Steve wants me to add his favorite mantra cuz it fits Mike to a tee too! "Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty & well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and proclaiming, 'Wow, what a ride!!!' " All our love & hugs & prayers forever, Suki & Steve, Mike & Sue, Kelli & Sean, Dani (in Spirit), and all grandchildren and great grandbaby too!!

—Steve & Suki Duhamel



Being around Big Mike for the past 12 years was much like having a 2nd father for me. And what a blessing it has been. I'm sure there are many others who feel the same way. He would always let you know what he thought about a situation and whether you agreed or not, he was almost always right all the time. I have learned so much from working with him and just being around him. His funny and sharp witted sayings will live on forever for all of us who have heard them. It has been a great honor to spend these years with him. He will be greatly missed, but he will never

years with him. He will be greatly missed, but he will never be forgotten. He was truly a unique individual, one of the last great cowboys. We will miss you Mike.

—Phil Hart

Big Mike ALWAYS made me feel welcome from the first day I met him 25-30 years ago. I looked forward to what wisdoms he would share with us those mornings at the nursery office while getting nursery stock loaded before my trip back to Georgia. He made you feel like one of the family and you always left with a smile. Hard shoes to fill but he and Paula raised a great family ready for the challenge. With love and thanks that I knew him(just not long enough) Dennis

—Dennis Simeone

To the family, Consider yourselves lucky to have a dad like you did! Remember the good times and know hes riding those old rough trails that will lead him back home to your mom!

—John Hewat

We are so sorry to hear of your dad's passing. Many prayers for you all as you grieve his loss. He and your mom raised some fantastic kids! May God be with you all.

—Dina, Byron & Alexis Boyd



I am so sad for the world to lose Mike - Grandad. He was always such a friendly, accepting, down-to-earth, sensible, and loving guy to all of my family. Our granddaughter loved him so much!!! She would talk about him all the time. I know she is going to remember all of the stuff he talked about, even though she is only 3 1/2. Like teaching her how to tie a knot, looking for wampus cats, telling her to "get that plug out of your mouth" (her pacifier), and swimming in

his pool together - just some of the things. I know the Fitzgerald family will miss him so terribly. He has been the patriarch for a long time. Rest in peace, Sweet Grandad, and we will see you again.

—Julie Barlow

Mike was truly a wonderful man. So kind and loving. He will truly be missed!!

—Judy Rogers

I will never forget the feeling I felt when I walked into their home. Immediate acceptance and love. The smile and the pat on the back felt so warm, and I will always cherish the memories I've had at their magical place they were lucky to call home. Love and hugs to the whole Fitzgerald family.

—Sylvanna Schiefele

Suzy, Sally and Mike. Your dad was the sweetest and nicest man. I always sat across from him at church and he always was so kind with a smile. Your mom I'm sure was happy to see him and he to see her too again. Our prayers are with you all. If we can do anything for you all it would be a honor and blessing. Please let us know Love. Patsy and Foy.

—Patsy and FoyMcNeely

What a super guy heaven has gotten. Prayers and love to all the family.

—Lisa and Stan cutts



Mike will definitely be missed. He was such a kind man, a hard worker and good to his employees. There will never be another Mike Fitzgerald!

—Steve& Alesia


