

# DEADWOOD WALL OF FAME 2005



## Don Ostby

Born: August 9, 1920

Died: April 1, 1999

Although Don Ostby left his ranch to come to Deadwood, the entrepreneur simply couldn't keep the cowboy spirit out of his blood. So the noted horseman came up with the most logical solution: he brought the ranch to Deadwood.

Don Ostby owned a small ranch near Glad Valley, a small town located on the Cheyenne River Indian Agency in north central South Dakota. But the flat prairie landscape and its warm and windy weather slowly wore on Don, and in 1959 he and his wife Nora sold their family farm. The couple, eager to find a new business, forged out across the grasslands for the Black Hills, where Don figured entrepreneurial opportunities were plentiful.

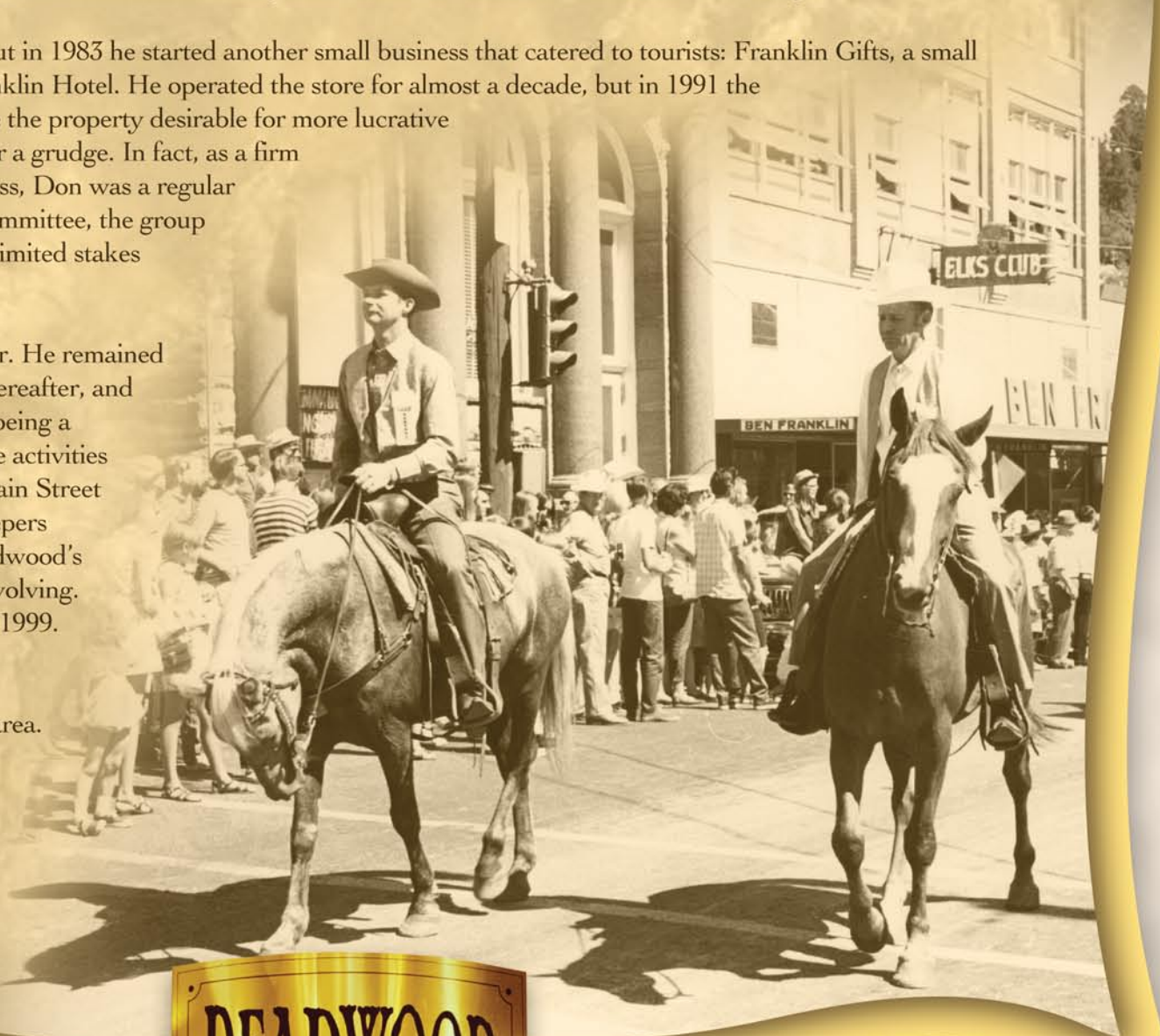
His hunch was right. Later that year Don and Nora purchased the '76 Motel in Deadwood, a small motor lodge located at the junctions of U.S. 85 and U.S. 14A. Though Don had only ever visited the southern Black Hills, he immediately found his niche in the Northern Hills town of Deadwood. The lifelong rancher became active in the Deadwood Chamber of Commerce and began to help with the Days of '76 committee, the community organization responsible for the town's annual rodeo and parade. He later went on to become chairman of the group.

In the late 1960s Don obtained his real estate license and opened Associated Realty, a firm which later became known as Century 21. Shortly thereafter Don made his entry into local politics, serving first as a city commissioner and later as Deadwood's mayor. His friends and relatives recall that after his political experience, Don thought that everyone should take a turn being the mayor in order to fully appreciate the hardships of public service.

Even though Don was active in the Days of '76 parade, often riding one of his horses down Main Street with the other cowboys, he missed the ranching way of life. Fortunately, Don owned quite a bit of property above his hotel, where he established a small ranch and several horses. Eventually Don moved his ranch to flatter land near Sturgis.

In 1971 Don sold his hotel, but in 1983 he started another small business that catered to tourists: Franklin Gifts, a small retail store located in the Franklin Hotel. He operated the store for almost a decade, but in 1991 the legalization of gambling made the property desirable for more lucrative activities. But Don didn't bear a grudge. In fact, as a firm believer in change and progress, Don was a regular volunteer for the You Bet! committee, the group responsible for the advent of limited stakes gaming in Deadwood.

Don retired the following year. He remained a fixture of the community thereafter, and was perhaps best-known for being a storyteller. Among his favorite activities was walking up and down Main Street to talk to visitors and shopkeepers alike, telling them about Deadwood's past and how the town was evolving. Don passed away on April 1, 1999. His three children – Kenneth Ostby, Terrill Ostby and Joy McCracken – still live in the area.



DEADWOOD  
SOUTH  
DAKOTA

A National Historic  
Landmark