

Don Pederson

Don Pederson, 92, of Grinnell died May 27, 2017, at the Mayflower Community Health Center.

A celebration of life gathering is pending later this summer. Memorial contributions may be designated to the Don Pederson Memorial Fund. Smith Funeral Home in Grinnell is handling arrangements.

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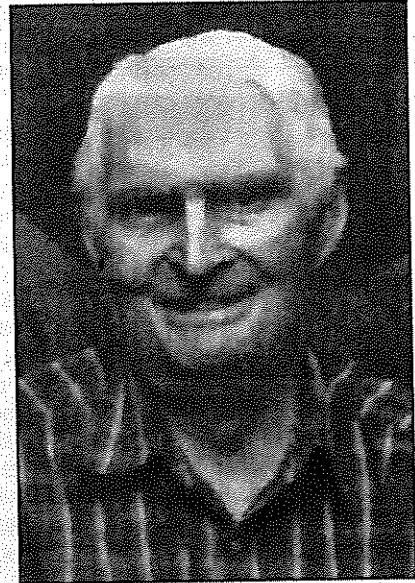
Don Pederson

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Don Pederson, 92, of Grinnell died peacefully the evening of May 27, 2017, at the Mayflower Community Health Center.

Don was born February 17, 1925, in Grinnell, Iowa, to Leonard and Augusta (Mehlin) Pederson. He was raised in Grinnell and was a 1942 graduate of Grinnell High School. Following his high school graduation, he enlisted in the army and fought in WWII.

During WWII, Don served with the 87th Calvary Mechanized Recon 7th Armored Division under Lt. William Knowlton, later commandant of West Point. Don always kept



in touch with Bill and many others from his unit. He enjoyed telling stories of their adventures as a recon unit. His ability to tell a story led to requests for him to give presentations to various clubs in Grinnell, and he frequently gave lectures to U.S. History students at Grinnell High School.

After the war, Don hopped a train headed for Grinnell. When he arrived back on the farm, his dad let him have the rest of the day off before beginning farm work the next day. Don continued working until he could start classes at Iowa State University. While at ISU, he met Audrey Jean May, and eventually walked her around Lake Laverne three times, which, according to legend, meant they were engaged. In May, 1947, Don graduated from ISU with a degree in Agricultural Engineering, and on July 27th, 1947, he and Audrey were united in marriage in Waterloo, Iowa. Following their marriage, the couple lived in Ames and Greenfield, where Don worked for the USDA designing ponds and terracing and promoted various soil saving practices.

In 1952, Don and Audrey moved to Grinnell to take over the farm operation from his father. After returning to the farm, he passionately continued to introduce all forms of sustainable agriculture to the farming operation. In 1978, Don purchased the Spaulding farm, a former large dairy operation of the car manufacturing family. He added the land to the row crop and cow/calf family farm operations until 1987 when he turned the management role over to his son, Eric. The family farm gained century farm status in 1998 and Don and his family were given special recognition at the Iowa State Fair. Don continued fieldwork until 2015 and enjoyed referring to himself as a share cropper. During their lives together, Don and Audrey enjoyed an active lifestyle of square dancing, playing bridge and traveling to numerous countries. They loved taking their children on road trips to nearly all 50 states as well as Canada and Mexico, and he was scheduled to travel with his sons and their families to Norway in June 2017. Don continued his active lifestyle by playing bridge daily and was an active member of multiple bridge groups throughout 2016. He was also known to still kick his heels up and dance whenever the opportunity to do so arose.

While living in Grinnell, Don became very involved in giving back to the community. Education was very important to him so he served on the Grinnell-Newburg School Board, and served as president in the late 1960s. He retired from the school board soon after his wife became a school teacher in the district. Don was also concerned about mental health issues and served as an original member of the Poweshiek County Mental Health Board during its foundation and original building drive. His other memberships included Fortnightly, a college and community literary group, the Grinnell Masonic Lodge, and the Toastmasters. He was also a longtime member of Kiwanis and remained active until his health began to decline in 2017. As a Kiwanian, he loved serving coffee at the annual pancake breakfast and especially enjoyed sharing a cup of coffee and a story with attendees. Don was also a lifelong member of the Chester Royal Grange and remained active into 2017. In the late 1950s he and Audrey were selected National Young Couple of the Year and were able to travel across the US promoting the Grange. He also enjoyed all the grange parties and even participated in 2016's Ugly Christmas sweater party. Don also felt lucky to serve as a host to many international journalists through Al Pinder and The Grinnell Herald-Register. In typical fashion, Don stayed in touch with many of the visitors and developed a lasting friendship with an Australian journalist who paid him a visit in the summer of 2016.

In August 2003, Don was severely burned while working on the farm. Instead of asking for help, he drove himself to the hospital and from there, was airlifted to the University of Iowa Burn Unit. He did not recover until the middle of 2004. Upon recovery, he was so overcome with gratitude to the staff in the burn unit, he decided to donate his body to the school to help further the study of how to effectively treat burn victims. Don enjoyed returning to the burn unit many times over the years since then and the staff always loved to see him, their Miracle Man.

Don was a very humble, giving and loving man. He delighted in delivering fresh-picked corn, tomatoes and various other treats to his friends and family. He loved visiting with everyone and made sure he spent quality time with all. He routinely visited friends in all three Grinnell nursing homes and traveled across Iowa to stay actively involved with friends and family. He wanted them to know they were loved and mattered very much to him. We will greatly miss his wonderful, loving soul and are better people for having known him.

Don is survived by his children, Kirsten (Tim) Fisher of Manassas, Virginia, Eric (Anne) Pederson of Grinnell and Roald (Carrie) Pederson of Roseville, California; a son-in-law, Gregory Carmichael of Iowa City; one brother, Roger (Mitzy) Pederson of Grinnell; a sister-in-law, Betty (Kinsey) Reeves of Costa Rica; nine grandchildren, Reed (Ashley) Fisher, Wellman, Iowa; Ryan (Sarah) Fisher, Chicago, Ill.; Beret (Sean) Spera, Manassas, Va.; Emmett Carmichael (Brittany Haddock) Iowa City, Iowa; Gemma (Greg) Raleigh, Des Moines, Iowa; Alexandra Pederson (Calvin Brackins) Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Christopher Pederson; Jordan Pederson; and Samuel Pederson; nine great-grandchildren, many nieces and nephews; and his good friend for many years, Wilma Vosburg of Grinnell.

Don was preceded in death by his wife, Audrey, in 2009; his daughter, Candace Carmichael in 2011; his father, Leonard Pederson in 1989; his mother, Augusta Pederson in 2005; his sister, Norma Kainsand in 2016; and his older brother, Leonard Pederson, Jr. in infancy.

A celebration of life is planned for 1:00 p.m., July 15th, 2017 in Buckley Dining Room, at the Mayflower in Grinnell. Memorial contributions may be designated to the Don and Audrey Pederson Memorial Scholarship or to the University of Iowa Burn Unit.