

CAREER HERE STRETCHES BACK 70 YEARS

GH-R  
9-19-2019

# H-R publisher Dorothy Pinder dies at age 97

Dorothy Jeanne Watt Pinder, a long-time journalist at and publisher of The Grinnell Herald-Register who devoted countless hours over decades to the community of Grinnell and to sturdy support of its residents, died peacefully Thursday, Sept. 5, at Grinnell Regional Medical Center, surrounded by the love of her family. She was 97. A celebration of her life will be held at a later date.

Her life was inspired by her love of journalism, her community service in Grinnell, her deep family ties, her faith and her connection with nature. She won multiple awards for her dedication to journalism and civic action and was always ready to lend a hand at a PTO or city function, comfort those who were suffering, or make a gourmet-quality meal for a visiting delegation of foreign diplomats or a pile of cookies for a crowd of kids.

She wrote two books, "In Old Grinnell" and "Grinnell: Then and Now," rooted partly in a series of immensely popular historical essays she wrote for the Herald-Register about the history of Grinnell, on topics ranging from the Monroe Hotel and the Spaulding Buggy Company to the Old Stone Church and the grave of a baby buried along the Mormon Trail in southern Grinnell. The books connect local residents and newcomers to places and events important to the community's history.

Dorothy Jeanne Watt was born Aug. 29, 1922, in Des Moines, the daughter of Lawrence Barton Watt and Hazel Mae Erickson Watt.

Her ties to journalism and printing ran deep. Her father began his long career in publishing at age 14 as a "printer's devil" with the Adams County Union-Republican and then the Villisca Letter where he learned to hand set type and run a small press before he arrived at Grinnell College in 1910. He was a 1914 Grinnell College graduate and worked part-time in the newspaper industry here while earning his degree. He was working at University Publishing Company, a commercial print shop which performed all printing for the state, in Des Moines when Dorothy, the couple's first daughter, was born.

The family soon moved to Storm Lake where the Watts purchased The Storm Lake Register which later



Dorothy Jeanne Watt Pinder • August 29, 1922 – September 5, 2019

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**Dorothy Jeanne Watt Pinder**

Dorothy Jeanne Watt Pinder, 97, of Grinnell died peacefully Thursday, Sept. 5, 2019, at Grinnell Regional Medical Center, surrounded by the love of her family. Services are pending with Smith Funeral Home.

# Pinder —

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career included working in the test kitchens of Libby, McNeil and Libby; in the public relations department of Swift & Co.; and as a food writer for the National Livestock and Meat Board — all hubbed out of the storied Chicago stockyards where her Swedish grandfather Gustave Erickson had traveled by train in stock cars from his farm in southwest Iowa to sell his cattle.

While employed in Chicago — in addition to working in test kitchens — she wrote technical and how-to papers on products and was among the business women in the post-war 1940s who began to travel for their work, including flying when civilian flight was still rare. She toured extensively, doing product introductions, including the rollout of the then-new concept of pre-packaged baby food.

While working in Chicago, Dorothy Wait met and became engaged to a dashing young Army warrant officer named Al Pinder, who was stationed in Chicago during and after World War II. By then her parents, who had purchased The Grinnell Herald-Register in 1944, had moved from Storm Lake to Grinnell.

On Feb. 19, 1949, Dorothy and Al were married in Grinnell, and Al, who grew up in suburban Philadelphia, took a job at the newspaper, explaining he would work there for a "one-year trial period," and the couple would then

move to a city. Instead, Dorothy voted service to Grinnell was matched by that of her husband, who never left Grinnell and died here in 2011. They accomplished full ownership of the paper over a period of years; the Herald-Register has been privately owned by one family since 1944.

Her life and that of her family continued to be woven into Grinnell history. In 1954, Al and Dorothy Pinder in pioneer costumes drove a team of oxen pulling a Conestoga wagon in the Grinnell centennial parade. In the year of the sesquicentennial, 2004, they were honored for service to the community by being chosen grand marshals of the Fourth of July parade and by being named guests of honor at the Mayor's Gala that year.

Her warm hospitality and fine cooking were enjoyed not only by many local residents but also by the 500 or so foreign visitors who streamed to the Pinder house on Country Club Drive and homes throughout the Grinnell area through a State Department visitors program which Al Pinder administered for many years. The program gave U.S.-sponsored groups of foreign journalists and diplomats what was often their only chance during their U.S. visit to be hosted in American homes and eat at a regular American dinner table with children taking an active part in the conversation — at the time a radical departure from an endless diet of pre-programmed ceremonial banquets.

The Pinders had six children, and

Dorothy's time when they were young was occupied with raising those children while volunteering to work on her many community interests. She made it possible for all of her children to get a grounding in journalism which turned into life's work or a foundation for life's work for all six. She taught them how to read critically and write clearly and cook and sew and how to be a good citizen of the world.

She devoted endless time and energy to the activities of her children, driving to swimming meets, serving as a Bluebird and Campfire Girls mom and contributing to two Boy Scout careers. Separate from her own children's experiences, she encouraged and mentored other young people.

She dedicated countless hours to enhancing the quality of life in Grinnell, as a member of the founding

committees of the Grinnell Community Theatre, Grinnell Community Day Care and the Grinnell Arts Association, predecessor of the Grinnell Area Arts Council; serving on the Grinnell Parks and Recreation Board, which expanded and upgraded parks and the city's recreation department, as well as being active in Trees Forever; helping to create and sustain availability of local mental health services while on the Poweshiek County Mental Health Center Board; spearheading the fundraising which furnished the Station Clubhouse; and supporting both Grinnell College and Iowa Valley-Grinnell. She was a long-time member of PEO and the Magoun Club.

She twice served as co-chair with AF of the Grinnell College Town-Gown fundraising drive, conducted for several decades by members of the wider Grinnell community to support Grinnell College financially and bring college and community closer together.

Among her favorite pastimes were cooking and teaching others how to cook. She never met an ingredient that confounded her and enjoyed adding new tastes and dishes to her knowledge of foods and new recipes and cookbooks to her extensive collection of food-related information.

She loved nature and was an avid gardener in the plot behind the big brown house on Country Club Drive where she planted trees and shrubbery, transforming the back yard from a reclaimed cornfield into a cozy habitat for kids and wildlife. She fed and loved watching birds all her life and only half-heartedly battled the squirrels that sought to take advantage of her bounty. Her back yard also sheltered rabbits, giving rise to her many Around the Town columns recounting conversations she claimed to have overheard on topics from local to global between those resident bunnies.

Dorothy worked on the family paper after her marriage until she "retired," as she put it, to raise children. When the youngest of her children completed high school in 1979, Dorothy returned to full-time journalism, taking up roles at the Herald-Register including women's page editor. Grinnellians and visitors flowed through the newspaper's offices, bringing her news

She was an active member of the St. Paul's Episcopal Church congregation, taking part in the Altar Guild, Sunday school teaching and other responsibilities. She was a leading member of the church's Happy Birthdays Unlimited fundraiser in which women of the church baked cakes ordered by families living elsewhere for Grinnell College students and delivered them along with birthday wishes to students in their dorm rooms.

Among the many honors she received was being named a Master Editor-Publisher by the Iowa Newspaper Association in 1999, an industry honor also previously bestowed upon both her father and her husband. In 2011, Dorothy and Al were honored with a lifetime achievement award from the Grinnell Area Chamber of Commerce.

She is survived by one son, Joe Pinder of Washington, D.C.; four daughters, Peggy Elliott (Doug) of Grinnell; Jeanie Pinder of Pelham, N.Y.; Anne Pinder of Madrid, Spain; and Martha Jane Pinder (Royce Wolf) of Grinnell; two granddaughters, Juno Pinder and Phoebe Pinder, both of Los Angeles, Calif.; her sister, Mary Ellen Collinge of Rochester, N.Y.; and many nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her husband, Al; one son, Larry Pinder; her parents; and one sister, Elizabeth Elk of Storm Lake.

Memorials can be donated to any of the many community organizations she supported or sent to Dorothy Pinder Memorial Fund in care of Smith Funeral Home, Post Office Box 368, Grinnell, Iowa 50112.

Those who knew Dorothy will long remember her perpetual "attitude of gratitude," consistently thanking all those around her for their "time and talent." And now we thank her for hers. A fellow media professional provided perhaps our favorite summation: "Dorothy was a special edition."



While working in Chicago in the 1940s, she met a dashing young Army warrant officer



Wedding rehearsal dinner, Monroe Hotel, 1949





1954: Dorothy & Al Pinder rode in a Conestoga wagon in the Centennial parade / 2004: named Sesquicentennial 4th of



July grand marshals and guests of honor

## Dorothy Jeanne Watt Pinder

A memorial service for Dorothy Jeanne Watt Pinder will be held this Saturday, Dec. 7, at 2 p.m. at Grinnell College's Herrick Chapel. The family will greet friends with a reception immediately following the service at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Sixth & State. People are welcome to attend both or either.

Pinder, a long-time journalist and publisher of this newspaper, died

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peacefully Thursday, Sept. 5, 2019, at Grinnell Regional Medical Center, surrounded by the love of her family. She was 97. A full tribute to her appeared in our Thursday, Sept. 19, edition.

Memorials to honor her memory may be donated to community organization of the donor's choice, or sent to the Dorothy Pinder Memorial Fund in care of Smith Funeral Home, Post Office Box 368, Grinnell, Iowa 50112, to be directed to any one of the many community organizations she supported.