



John Peterson

July 27, 1926 - February 2, 2008

John Peterson of Corvallis passed away at home Saturday.

John was one of five boys born to Vera and John Peterson of Harrold, S.D. He grew up on the family farm in rural South Dakota and graduated from Highmore High School. Following high school, John entered the Navy in 1945 and was honorably discharged in 1946. After his time in the service, John continued his education. He attended the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology for a year, and later graduated with a B.S. in Agricultural Engineering from South Dakota State College. John then worked as a self-employed carpenter, building pole barns and even a house for his brother Lester's family. During these years, John purchased and enjoyed flying a small plane, taking off and landing in cow pastures.

Then John attended graduate school. He earned a master's of science in civil engineering at University of Illinois. While working on his master's, John was offered the opportunity to take a temporary position teaching at Kansas State University. It was there that he met his future wife, Alberta, on a blind date. John and Alberta married in Las Cruces, N.M., in 1959. The newlyweds moved to Madison, Wis., where John earned his Ph.D, and where their first two children were born.

John accepted a civil engineering teaching position at Oregon State University in 1964, and the family moved to Corvallis. Following this move, John and Alberta completed their family with one more child. They purchased the fixer-upper of their dreams and settled in for a long and happy life in Corvallis. John

enjoyed a long teaching career in the College of Engineering until his retirement in 1997. He was especially interested in wood structures, designing and testing full sized glulam beams for the timber industry. Throughout his tenure, John's love for teaching touched the lives of many students.

A hard worker, John put his skills and sometimes the skills of his friends to use on their house. He enjoyed the big challenges where he could put his engineering knowledge to use. He completely transformed the house over the years, solving problems in his own unique way. John's garden was a neighborhood staple for many years. He loved to share produce in their close-knit neighborhood. His generosity also made his yearly organic fertilizer delivery from the chicken farm more acceptable.

In the 1970s John became an inventor. He patented the Peterson Solar Fruit Drier, and enjoyed his 15 minutes of fame when he and his fruit dehydrator were mentioned on the Paul Harvey Show. Later, he focused his passion for recycling on a fuel log project. In the early years of this project, he collected phone books, stuffed them into leftover cardboard tubes and donated them as fuel logs for low-income families. His project grew and eventually changed to phone book recycling. He gave all of the proceeds from this time-consuming venture to the Old Mill School. In 1997 John received the Oregon Recycler of the Year Award. This project of John's heart lasted for many years until the onset of ALS made it just too hard.

John is survived by his wife of 48 years, Alberta Peterson of Corvallis; daughter Margaret Montgomery, and her husband, Alex, of Seattle,; son Charlie, his wife Kimberly, and their two children, Emily and Andy of Long Beach, Calif.; and daughter Connie Carr, her husband Matt, and their two boys, Oliver and Avery, of Hillsboro; his brother, Bob, of Georgia; and numerous loving nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be at 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 9, at First Presbyterian Church in Corvallis, followed by a fellowship gathering at the church.

Remembrances can be made to the Old Mill Center for Children and Families in Corvallis, or the ALS Center of Oregon at OHSU.