



Donald W. Harris

July 9, 1928 - October 22, 2020

Donald W. Harris, Renaissance Man, paterfamilias There was a generation of people raised during the Great Depression, known by some as the Silent Generation or the Greatest Generation. They fought in World War 2 and Korea. They eradicated polio. They walked on the moon. Out of necessity some became self-sufficient, innovative “Jacks of all Trades”; renaissance men and women along the lines of Leonardo DaVinci. Donald (Don) William Harris was born in Spokane, Washington on July 9, 1928. A few years later his mother Virginia moved him, his twin sister Dorothea, and older sister Virginia to Portland, Oregon. He had a typical childhood, had a paper route to make extra money, and attended school at Laurelhurst Elementary and Washington High School. At the age of 12 he met a girl who lived on the next block over by the name of Lois Hansen. They spent the next 80 years together as friends and husband and wife. At the age of 14 he bought his first set of drums with his paper route earnings and set out to become a jazz drummer. He joined the musician’s union and started playing professionally at the age of 16. His love of jazz remained with him all his life. During Don’s high school years World War 2 was ending. The war was over by the time he graduated from high school, so he volunteered for the draft. After basic training he shipped to Japan to join the post-war Army of Occupation. His occupation there was manager of the gasoline dump. The draft ended less than a year later so he was discharged and sent home. He joined his sweetheart Lois at Oregon State College where he majored in Chemical

Engineering, notorious as being one of the most difficult majors on campus. He joined Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, played in jazz groups for dances at campus fraternities and sororities, went on dates with Lois, and was diligent in his engineering studies. Don's college career was interrupted by a bout of tuberculosis. At that time TB patients had to be isolated in a TB hospital. Don had to spend a year at this TB hospital. At the hospital he got visits from Lois, learned to knit, and played hooky with the help from Lois. He was one of the first recipients of a new antibiotic treatment for TB. After the TB hospital stay, Don returned to his studies at Oregon State. In the last quarter of his final year at Oregon State, he was working in the chemical engineering lab when a piece of equipment exploded. He was severely injured in the blast and was taken to the local hospital. Fortunately the attending emergency room surgeon had spent time in Korea at a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) unit and so was able to repair the damage done by the explosion. Thanks to this surgeon's expertise, Don recovered well. Don was able to complete his engineering studies via correspondence while supporting himself as a professional photographer. He married Lois in 1952 and graduated with a degree in chemical engineering in 1953. After graduation Don worked in various paper mills as a process instrumentation engineer. He also worked as a professional photographer and jazz musician. In the mid 1960's he transitioned from engineering to technical sales. He remained in this profession for the next 20 years until his retirement in the mid 1980's. Don had an interest in the stock market, and post-retirement he was able to make a living through investments. He remained an active investor for the rest of his life. In retirement Don also worked around the house, maintained the cars, and worked on his computer. He enjoyed spending time with his children Lisa and Kevin; his grandchildren Heather and Melissa; and his great-grandchildren Adelyn, Abe, and Asher. Although he lived to the age of 92, his friends and family still think his time on earth was too short. We will miss listening to his stories and partaking of his wisdom. The world is a lesser place with his passing and won't see his like again.

Cemetery Details

Willamette National Cemetery

11800 SE Mt Scott Blvd
Portland, OR 97086

Tribute Wall



“ *Donald W. Harris*

January 28, 2023 at 02:51 PM



“ *My Uncle Don was a wonderful man. My childhood was full of great family memories. He was very generous with his time and had a way of making everyone feel special. Through the years he shared that same gift with my own children, as well. I loved talking with him about everything because he knew something about everything. He was the best and I will miss him. Love you, Uncle Don!*

Sue Wentela - November 13, 2020 at 05:03 PM



“ *3 files added to the tribute wall*



Heather - November 12, 2020 at 09:41 PM



“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*



Kevin Harris - November 12, 2020 at 12:15 AM

KH

“ 4 files added to the album Don



Kevin Harris - November 12, 2020 at 12:02 AM

MB

“ *Ode to Gramps*

Wearing the classic style of a plaid button shirt, jeans and white laced tennis shoes; he sits quietly reserved in his chair reading his iPad. His foot is tapping to the beat of the drums from the jazz music playing in the background. As you approach, he peers over his glasses ready to discuss the latest topic on his mind or giving his fatherly advice from the wisdom of his experiences. The lessons he taught included; using a camera, playing chess, car maintenance, finances, and making a fire (to name a few). His personality was a magnet that drew you in. Gramps has put on his bucket hat to exit for the last time. He was loved and he will be missed.

melissa b. - November 11, 2020 at 10:59 PM

HE

“ My grandpa was an amazing man. I considered him both grandpa and dad. He gave me advice about life and how to maintain a budget. He was always there when I needed him. He was an amazing grandpa and an amazing great grandpa. I remember when Grandpa gave me pearls in my 20s. He said that in his day that was a gift that was given to daughters/granddaughters. I still cherish and will always remember him through those pearls. I know my kids miss him too. He was a great Papa to them.

Heather - November 08, 2020 at 12:16 PM

LH

“ My dad was the most wonderful person. He was there for all my ups and downs in life, supporting me even when he didn't agree with my decision. I loved to listen to him practice drums in the basement. He was a fantastic drummer. I loved him so much and it will be very hard not to have him here for advice or just to talk. He is greatly missed

Lisa Harris - November 07, 2020 at 03:36 AM

DH

“ Don Harris

A long time friendship between Kevin Harris introduced me to Don and Lois Harris over 57 years ago .

Having lost my dad at age 8 to a job death, Don Harris was a huge inspiration for me to always think positive.

I remember Don shaping my winning pinewood derby car of “best looks” as I was a webelo scout on his shop smith Mark V.

Most of all, I admired Don , knowing he had accomplished many memorable achievements but always there to listen to me, as always Don , ever so humble !

You will be missed Don , as I think about you , I always smile .

Duane Hathaway - November 07, 2020 at 12:10 AM

SG

“ Don was a lovely man. I met him 25 years ago when I started dating Kevin. I lost my father when I was 18, and Don always made me feel like a beloved daughter-in-law, a relationship I treasured. He will be sorely missed.

Shelley Griffith - November 05, 2020 at 11:39 AM