

## A Grand Old Man Passes

by WESLEY LAURITSEN

(Ed. Note: We regret that the following article could not be printed last spring, but we feel that all readers will be pleased to have this biography of one of MSD's most illustrious faculty members and former students.)

P. N. Peterson, 95, departed this life on Thursday, April 23, and was laid to rest at Maple Lawn Cemetery, Faribault, on Monday, April 27.

Mr. Peterson, affectionately known as PNP to his friends, lived a good, full, and active life. Because of his many good deeds he was given the title of "The Grand Old Man Among the Deaf of Minnesota." At the time of his passing he was one of the oldest living graduates of the Minnesota School for the Deaf.

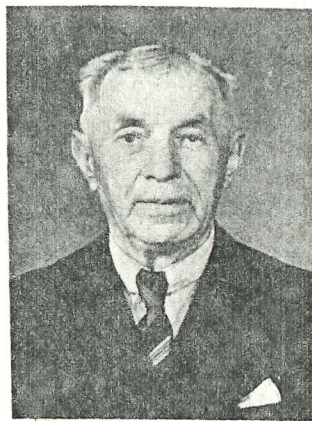
Mr. Peterson was born in Sweden and came to Minneapolis as an immigrant a few weeks before his 19th birthday. A few days after his arrival here he became severely ill and a headache turned into brain inflammation which caused him to become totally deaf. He entered the Minnesota School for the Deaf at the age of 22 and was graduated in 2 years. He was awarded a scholarship to Gallaudet College and there he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1898. Later he was awarded a Master of Arts degree.

Mr. Peterson taught sloyd at the Minnesota School for the Deaf from 1899 to 1937. In his own words he enjoyed keeping rendezvous with the boys in his sloyd shop. He had a wonderful influence over the youngsters and they loved him. On returning to Faribault to visit the old school they always made it a point to call on him and go over old days.

Mr. Peterson married Lillie McGowan, a graduate of the Iowa School for the Deaf, and one of his college classmates, at Ocheydan, Iowa, on August 24, 1902. Two sons were born to this union.

Mr. and Mrs. Peterson have always taken a pardonable pride in their sons who have made outstanding records. Robert, the older son, was for a time a newspaper publisher in Oklahoma. Now his sons run his newspapers and radio station and he is professor of journalism at the University of Oklahoma at Norman. The younger son, Edwin Gallaudet Peterson, received his Master of Arts degree at Gallaudet College and was for a time superintendent of the Montana School for the Deaf and also of the Saskatoon School for the Deaf in Canada. His interest in the deaf continues and he is now in the hearing aid business in Portland, Oregon.

Mr. and Mrs. Peterson lived in their own home across the street from the school campus for about 60 years. In 1962 they celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. As an octogenarian and a nonagenarian Mr. Peterson loved to putter around his home and he kept a neat lawn and garden. In winter he was always the first one on the East Side to have the snow shoveled from his sidewalk. At this ripe old age he was active and often walked downtown to buy groceries and supplies for his home. In the summer of 1962 when he was 93, he was seen perched on the top of a step ladder trimming some five-foot high bushes. Robert Lauritsen, counsellor to the deaf in the State Department of Education, happened by and stopped to greet his old friend. PNP



P. N. Peterson

came down from the ladder and after a hearty handshake said that he would finish that cutting soon and wanted to know if the counsellor could help him get a real job.

During his lifetime PNP took an active part in local, state and national organizations of the deaf. He served the Minnesota Association of the Deaf as president and secretary. He was for a time a trustee of the Charles Thompson Memorial Hall, St. Paul, and he was a member of the Cosmos Club, the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf, and the Ephphatha Church.

PNP was a great sports fan and up to two years ago attended all home games at the School for the Deaf. In appreciation of his interest he was a few years ago awarded an honorary Letter M which he promptly had Mrs. Peterson sew on his sweater. He proudly wore this. It was the only honorary Letter M ever awarded by the school.

PNP had a keen sense of humor that endeared him to all his friends. He had a remarkable memory. He edited the school paper, THE COMPANION, for 2 years, 1935-1937. He kept a careful record of all students who had attended the school and even after his retirement helped to get out statistical numbers of THE COMPANION.

Up to a few weeks ago Mr. Peterson was in good health for one of his age and enjoyed cracking jokes with his friends. Several days after Easter he emulated Astronaut John Glenn by taking a fall in the bathroom. This really hurt him and then he got the flu along with many Faribault residents. This, together with complications and his age, was the immediate cause of his passing while in residence at the St. Lucas Convalescent and Geriatric Care Center.

When word of his death reached the School where he had taught so many years, the school flag was lowered to half mast where it remained until after the funeral.

Private services for the family were held at the Ephphatha Church, Faribault, at 1 o'clock Monday, April 27, with the Reverend Ingvald M. Thvedt officiating.

Final tribute was paid to this Grand Old Man at the Ephphatha Church at 2:45 that afternoon. The church was filled with friends and the numerous floral offerings indicated the high regard in which he was held. Many memorial gifts were also received.

The beautiful memorial service was opened with the hymn "Abide With Me." Mrs. Lorraine Bjorlie was the soloist while Mrs. Dagny Thvedt was at the organ. The hymn was rendered in graceful signs by Marjorie Card, Colleen Sherwin, and Sheryl Peterson, students at the Minnesota School for the Deaf. Pastor Thvedt read the Scripture, "In Heaven Above" was sung by Mrs. Bjorlie. Pastor Thvedt then spoke words of comfort to the members of the family. The closing hymn was "Beautiful Savior." This like the other two hymns, was sung by Mrs. Bjorlie and signed by the three students attired in choir robes with Mrs. Thvedt at the organ. After the benediction the body was taken to Maple Lawn Cemetery and laid to rest.

Honorary casketbearers were Albert C. Esterline, Clarence Sommer, and Wesley Lauritsen of Faribault, Willis Sweezo, Herman von Hippel, and Oscar Lauby of the Twin Cities. Active casketbearers were Edwin T. Johnson, George Hanson, Henry Haugley, Roy Rodman, Marvin Marshall and Clarence Ramstorf.