



## Vernon F. Peterson

October 12, 1932 - September 15, 2025

Vernon Frank Peterson

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On September 15, 2025, after a battle with bile duct cancer, Vernon Peterson passed away at the age of 92 in his home of 67 years in Ridgefield, Washington. Vern was born at home on a farm in Mist, Oregon on October 12, 1932 to his parents, Ira and Elsie (Beerman) Peterson.

Vern was proud of his humble beginnings in Mist. When Vern was born, his home did not have electricity and they used an outhouse. Vern attended elementary school in a one-room school house. Although Vern could not count to ten when he entered first grade, he learned quickly, finished eighth grade early, and read the entire set of encyclopedias while he waited for others to finish their schoolwork. Though Vern's parents kept him busy milking cows, caring for chickens, and other general farm work;

Vern earned pocket change by starting tomatoes, cabbage, and asters in soil he sterilized. He then sold plant starts to the neighbors.

Vern attended a boarding high school, Laurelwood Adventist Academy, and to help pay

his tuition, he worked 20 hours a week on campus doing carpentry work, plumbing, and

keeping the boilers running. Vern earned spending money, some of which he used to

play elaborate pranks, by sneaking off campus to pick walnuts or filberts and hoe

strawberries.

After graduating from Laurelwood, Vern worked in a sawmill in Vernonia for a year.

Then in 1951 Vern decided to go to Walla Walla College to become an engineer, but he

did not like the time-consuming lab work and changed his major to business administration. This first stint at Walla Walla College only lasted a quarter and Vern

ended up back in Mist working at a sawmill.

In February of 1953, Vern was drafted into the U.S. Army. Fortunately, the Korean War

ended just when Vern was selected to go to infantry school and he was sent to an Army

hospital in Würzburg, Germany. Vern traveled around Europe, did office work in the

hospital treasurer's office, and was soon promoted to corporal. Vern was discharged

from the Army in January of 1955.

While Vern was in Germany, Jelene Bafus got Vern's address from her aunt (Lorraine)

who was married to Vern's brother (Norman). Jelene sent a letter to Vern asking him for some addresses of soldiers who would like to correspond with her and her friends. Vern decided to write to Jelene and a long-distance romance ensued. Just five months after Vern's return home, Vern and Jelene were married in Vern's family home in Mist, Oregon. After their wedding, Vern went back to work in a sawmill for the summer and then they moved to Walla Walla, Washington where Vern worked while going to school and starting his family. Vern graduated from Walla Walla College and then went on to Willamette University School of Law for a year. When Vern's GI Bill money ran out, Vern got a job at Mickelwait and Brown, CPAs in Vancouver, Washington.

In 1962, Vern started his own CPA practice in Vancouver. At the beginning, Vern also worked nights as a security guard and in the mornings for an accounting firm in Portland. Soon, Peterson and Associates was thriving, and Vern had a rewarding career where he enjoyed winning battles with the IRS until he retired at the age of 80. Outside of work, Vern enjoyed his family, backpacking, biographies, classical music, flying, gardening, golfing, and tree farming. Vern also generously donated to many non-profit organizations and volunteered many hours encouraging organizations to

be

fiscally responsible.

Vern held leadership positions in many organizations including: Building Industry

Association of Southwest Washington; Clark College Foundation; Clark County Historic

Preservation Commission; Clark County Homebuilders; Clark County United Way;

Columbia River Economic Development Council; Fort Vancouver Kiwanis; Greater

Vancouver Chamber of Commerce; Northwest Small Business Finance Company;

Salvation Army, Vancouver Corps; Vancouver National Historic Reserve Trust; and

Washington Society of CPAs.

Vern was also presented with many awards including: Building Industry Association

Lifetime Achievement, Clark College National Presidential Award for Excellence, Clark

County First Citizen, Columbia River Economic Development Council Pillar of Economic

Development, Community Foundation Friend of the Foundation, Greater Vancouver

Rotary Club Paul Harris Fellow, National Council for Resource Development Exemplary

Contribution to Resource Development, Rotary International Service Above Self, Walla

Walla University Executive of the Year in Leadership, and Washington Society of

Certified Public Accountants Vincent A. Gervais Award.

Vern was preceded in death by his wife of 63 years, Jelene, who passed away

on

September 2, 2018. Vern will be missed by his daughters Carmen (Larry) Toll, Cindy

(Brad) Coad, and Denise (Steve) Anderson; grandchildren Jeremy Lawson and Gillian

Anderson; step grandchildren Kendra (Coad) Thompson and Kayla (Coad) Shaw; and

Jeremy Lawson's partner, Amy Moore, who provided unparalleled loving care and

companionship during Vern's final months.

Vern was a passionate supporter of, and fundraiser for, the Clark College Foundation.

In lieu of flowers, donations in memory of Vern may be made to the Clark College

Foundation ([clarkcollegefoundation.org](http://clarkcollegefoundation.org); 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver, WA

98663-3598; 360-992-2301) and the Peterson and Associates Scholarship fund.

A Celebration of Vern's life will be held at Evergreen Memorial Funeral Chapel 1101 NE 112th Ave., Vancouver, WA 98684.

# Previous Events

## Chapel Service

OCT 17. 12:30 PM (PT)

Evergreen Memorial Gardens Cemetery & Funeral Chapel  
1101 NE 112th Ave.  
Vancouver, WA 98684-4950  
<http://www.evergreenmemorialgardens.com>

## Graveside

OCT 17. 1:30 PM (PT)

Evergreen Memorial Gardens Cemetery & Funeral Chapel  
1101 NE 112th Ave.  
Vancouver, WA 98684-4950  
<http://www.evergreenmemorialgardens.com>

## Hospitality

OCT 17. 1:30 PM (PT)

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Vancouver, WA 98684-4950  
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# Tribute Wall



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**Evergreen Memorial Gardens** - September 25, 2025 at 01:51 PM