



Ernest "Pokey Pete" Petersen

April 4, 1925 - December 24, 2017

Cedar Falls – Ernest “Pokey Pete” Petersen, age 92, of Cedar Falls, died Sunday, December 24, 2017 at Stanard Family Assisted Living of Western Home Communities.

He was born April 4, 1925 in Cedar Falls, the son of Adolph and Martha (Keller) Petersen. He graduated from Osage High School in 1943. He served in the US Navy from 1943-1946. On March 9, 1947, he married Arlene Schulz in Nashua, they later divorced. On April 16, 1960 he married Juanita (Conery) Metzger in Waterloo. She preceded him in death on February 20, 2007. He worked as a custodian at Orchard Hill School, working for the Cedar Falls School District.

Survived by: a brother, Frederick of Gulfport, MS; a sister, Alice of Cedar Falls; 6 children, Sharon Petersen of Kansas City, MO, Janet (Jerry) Somers of Holt, MO, Jerry Petersen, Linda Sunseri of Santa Fe, NM, Jim Petersen of Waterloo, and Kathy Lavanz of Waterloo; five grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; and three great-great-grandchildren.

Preceded in death by: two brothers, Elvin and Donald.

A memorial gathering of friends and family will be from 4-6pm Friday, December 29 at Richardson Funeral Service, Cedar Falls.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be directed to the Salvation Army or Western Home Communities.

Online condolences may be left at www.richardsonfuneralservice.com

For over 40 years, Pokey Pete gave rides on his little red train to the children

of NE Iowa.

Previous Events

Gathering

DEC **29**. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (CT)

Richardson Funeral Service
615 Main Street
Cedar Falls, IA 50613
(319) 266-3525
richardsonfuneralservice@gmail.com
<http://richardson.funeralplan2.com>

Tribute Wall

DA

“ Our kids rode his train many times at Waterloo events. Pete was beloved by more people than you'll ever know. David and Deborah Adams

Deborah Adams - January 04, 2018 at 03:48 PM

BW

“ I rode the train when I was a little girl and so did my kids! What a great memory for all of us!! Thanks "Pokey Pete", you are a beautiful soul and I am sure Heaven will enjoy you too :-)

Brenda Whiteside - December 29, 2017 at 05:38 PM

 Blake Robinson

“ I went to Orchard Hill back in the 80's and vividly remember Pokey Pete and the train rides at the annual Fun Fair. He also had a great trick on Halloween. He'd turn the lights out in the janitor's room and lay on one of those mechanic's boards used for sliding under cars. As the kids walked by the room, he'd slide halfway out of the doorway, head first, and make a whooping sound for a couple of seconds. Then he'd slide back in and wait for the next group of kids to walk by. It was great! The little kids squealed with joy and the older kids laughed. Even years later, I'd see him out on a walk in the neighborhood and he'd give a smile and wave.

Blake Robinson - December 28, 2017 at 07:29 PM

GH

“ Thoughts and prayers go out to your family. I remember riding on his train when I was growing up in the 70's He was such a nice man to all of us little kids. Very patient and he provided us so much fun. Not many folks like him around these days. Such a great man.

Greg Haugen - December 28, 2017 at 10:42 AM

RH

“ Jim and family's, I didn't get to know your father as well as some but he would walk through College Square Mall back in 2014 when I worked there and he and I would talk about his train. He was so proud of what he had done. He was a very sweet man. My thoughts and prayers go out to you during this time.

Roxanne Herold - December 28, 2017 at 08:49 AM

ST

“ My brother went to River Hills and I have fond memories of Pokey Pete giving all the kids rides in his train. He was a selfless man who always loved helping others. He was a good friend of my Dad as they both volunteered together at Salvation Army. Pokey Pete will be missed!

stephanie - December 27, 2017 at 09:19 PM

AT

“ I have many wonderful memories of Pokey Pete. I first met him in the 1970's as I started my teaching profession. Pokey Pete seemed to be around whenever there were preschool county wide activities. Later hen I started teaching at the Humpty Dumpty Preschool in Hudson, he would come to our end of school Preschool Olympics and gave rides to everyone. He was a wonderful, special man and I am sorry that he is gone. My deepest condolences to his family and friends.

Ann Tannreuther - December 27, 2017 at 05:59 PM

DS

“What a truly distinctive, genuine and unparalleled soul, sweet Pokey Pete! He redefined giving in so many ways, I remember how he enriched many decades of Nordic Fests and it was an honor to work with him when I volunteered to write a book on the 50 year history of the event. He was the very embodiment of one of the quotes he shared during our interviews:

“A volunteer is an engineer with a train load of happiness. A coal car filled with smiles and a caboose loaded with laughter. Your trip down the tracks of life will always be pleasant as a whistle and clear as a bell if you are a volunteer,”

Blog notes from the project may be found here:

<http://nordicfest50.blogspot.com/2014/07/pokey-pete-returning-to-decorah.html>

<http://nordicfest50.blogspot.com/2014/06/more-pokey-pete-do-you-have-photos-to.html>

<http://nordicfest50.blogspot.com/2014/06/pokey-pete-nordic-fest-and-ne-iowa.html>

Deepest sympathies to his family, in gratitude for how you shared him with all of eastern Iowa.



Dawn Svenson-Holland - December 27, 2017 at 05:10 PM

SK

“ I am so sorry to hear about your loved one....When my "kids" were small he brought so much joy to all of us, as Pokey Pete! My mother in law was also at the Western Home. "Pete" and I had a few good conversations that brought back so many memories. We were so fortunate for him to touch our lives.....My thoughts and sympathy is with you, Shirley Kohler

Shirley Kohler - December 27, 2017 at 11:44 AM

MS

“ Michelle Schipper lit a candle in memory of Ernest "Pokey Pete" Petersen



Michelle Schipper - December 27, 2017 at 10:11 AM

CI

“ Wonderful memories as a child with his train turned into blessings as an adult visiting with "Pete" in the TV room at SFAL after seeing my parents. The worldly stories he'd share of helping children around the world. Spreading his love! This summer, walking with him on the sidewalk, reminding me to be my best, find my passion, and share the love. My heartfelt deepest sympathies!

Cindy - December 27, 2017 at 08:13 AM

MB

“ Our hearts thoughts and prayers are with you during this most difficult time.

Pokey Pete made ever child feel so very special ... as if they were the only child in the world and who had known them forever. I went to kindergarten at Orchard Hill also and have very fond memories.



Margo B - December 27, 2017 at 02:21 AM

SG

“ I was flooded with memories after seeing the obituary of Ernest, “Pokey Pete”. Our daughter, Meghan loved this dear man and his train. Pokey would come to River Hills school each year and give the kids a ride on his train. He was dearly loved, and so gentle and kind to the kids. Meghan had a little tee shirt with “Pokey Pete” on it. Her cabbage patch doll wears it now. RIP Ernest and thank you for such priceless memories.

Susan Gielau - December 26, 2017 at 11:28 PM

JM

“ Jim, so sorry to hear about your Dad. My thoughts and prayers are with and your Family. Hugs.

Jolene Massina



Jolene Massina - December 26, 2017 at 08:26 PM

KB

“ I went to Orchard Hill I when I was a kid. I can still remember Porkey Pete smile. He will be missed. My thoughts and prayers to his family.



Kelly Burdick - December 26, 2017 at 08:21 PM

CZ

“ Pokey Pete was one of my favorite people growing up. I went to Orchard Hill and he was always smiling and happy. The train rides were something to look forward to when the school carnival came around. He will be greatly missed!

Cindi Zars - December 26, 2017 at 03:59 PM

BN

“ Much love to the family and loved ones of Ernest "Pokey Pete". Ernest was one of my early childhood memories of growing up in Decorah and Nordic Fest each Summer. I had the amazing opportunity to spend some time with Ernest in 2016 while compiling this article for Inspire(d) Magazine here in Decorah. Ernest was one of the most unique and giving people I have ever met. May he rest in peace. <http://iloveinspired.com/probits/probituary-celebration-life-ernest-pokey-pete-peterson/>

Benji Nichols - December 26, 2017 at 03:39 PM

BC

“ god bless this man,rode on the "pokey' train as a kid. even as a adult I would see him with kids and smile,because I remember when I was that young! thoughts and prayers to all his family!

bill crinigan - December 26, 2017 at 02:54 PM



“ When people talk about heroes, "Pokey Pete" is indeed, one of the best. His constant devotion to uplifting others, helping causes, and bringing smiles to thousands will live on in our hearts and memories. I can't think of a better role model...

RJ Lundgren - December 26, 2017 at 12:33 PM

KR

“ I loved Pokey Pete as a child and rode his train many times. As an adult I would see him riding the bus and volunteering at the Salvation Army. He was always friendly and had such a great attitude. He always talked of living simply and helping others. Pokey Pete was a childhood hero and will be greatly missed!

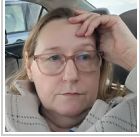
Kari Rindels - December 26, 2017 at 12:15 PM

RH

“ Pokey was one of a kind here in the Cedar Valley. Our children were treated to some of his train rides and conveyed sadness at his passing when told of the news of his death. My wife and I had many visits with him while he lived at the Stanard Assisted Living Center. Up until not long ago he would be out walking on his daily rounds. You would often see him waving at cars going by, and I would always honk at him when I drove by where he was walking. He truly touched a lot of lives as shown in the many comments on this website. Rest In Peace, Pokey.

Ron Heth

Ron Heth - December 26, 2017 at 12:11 PM



“ *My little brother was hospitalized for a week when he was 3 years old and Mr. Peterson visited him and gave him a coupon for a ride on the train. I'm sure he did that for tons of kids, but my little brother thought it was special for him and thought of Pokey Pete as a personal friends for years!*

Tonia Hansen - December 26, 2017 at 11:53 AM

DO

“ *Pokey Pete was a legend in the Cedar Valley. I remember he & his train from my childhood and so do my kids. Several years ago, while shopping in College Square mall in CF, my son recognized Pokey and went to talk to him. Pete acted like he remembered my son too and gave him a big hug. He was a sweet man. Prayers to the family*

Donna - December 26, 2017 at 11:51 AM

DD

“ *Ernie brought his train to Overman Park for the children to ride on during our CF Municipal Band summer concerts many times in the '80s. He was so kind, always with a warm thought, and was a great example of selfless service to others. We plan to remember him again next summer. Peace to his family.*
-Dennis Downs, CFMB director

Dennis Downs - December 26, 2017 at 11:24 AM

LM

“ *As an elder at First Christian church I have visited Ernie the past several years. We had many walks and talks from his Western Home apartment. I am sorry I am out of town and won't be able to attend his service on Friday. Please know that the family is in my thoughts and prayers at this time. Linda Morgan*

Linda Morgan - December 26, 2017 at 10:56 AM

ND

“Pokey Pete was the sweetest man and patient I ever had! Always so glad to see you whenever we met! And he remembered me every time! He will be giving his train rides in heaven!
Nikki Demuth, Waterloo, formerly from Osage

Nikki Demuth - December 26, 2017 at 10:01 AM

CL

“It was my pleasure for me to have known him. I was on Decorah's Nordic Fest Board when I received Pokey Pete's Train he used at Nordic Fest. Decorah Newspaper did a very nice article at that time and Nordic Fest honored Ernest during a Fest. For several years my wife and I would drive the train at towns in NE Iowa. It is presently with the Decorah Lions Club, is operated and can be ridden at Nordic Fest. It still giving joy to hundreds of children and adults each year.

Charles Lore - December 26, 2017 at 08:40 AM

MR

"If you've got a dream you'd better get after it."

Michael Ralston - December 26, 2017 at 11:23 AM

PE

“I use to ride his train also when I went to Mckinstry in Waterloo. It was just this year we ran into him and said hi and we had a great conversation with him outside the western home 😞 prayers are with his family

Peanuts2198 - December 26, 2017 at 07:16 AM

PE

My real name is Nicole

Peanuts2198 - December 26, 2017 at 07:18 AM

TE

“ I sure remember pokey Pete , he came to see me when I was in the hospital getting my tonsils out , told me I had one leg longer then the other . He was a great guy . Had a heart of gold . RIP. My friend .



teresa - December 26, 2017 at 05:19 AM

SH

“ A great memory from my childhood.

Shane - December 26, 2017 at 01:15 AM

 Caleb Staley

“ In 1982 I was 7 years old. I was in the hospital having my tonsils out and pokey pete came to visit me and gave me a lifetime free pass to ride his train. Though it happened 35 years ago it was a memory that has stayed with me. His caring and generosity is something I have strived to make part of my life ever since.

Caleb Staley - December 25, 2017 at 11:25 PM



“ My name is Tracy born in Grundy Center IA. I'm 45 years old. And I have wonderful memories of Pokey Pete giving me train rides. I know he put smiles on thousands of children in his lifetime. Sorry to his family for your loss. He will be remembered by many.

Tracy Creson - December 25, 2017 at 11:19 PM

SB

“ Pokey Pete visited me in the hospital when I was four or five years old. Forty-some years later I still remember like it was yesterday. Future generations will miss out on a gem!

Sue Buege - December 25, 2017 at 10:54 PM



Nicki Mahan

“ I was one of the many children who got to ride on his train, a very happy memory from my childhood. RIP Pokey, you will never be forgotten!

Nicki Mahan (Hayes)

Nicki Mahan - December 25, 2017 at 10:11 PM



“ Marlys Morrow lit a candle in memory of Ernest "Pokey Pete" Petersen

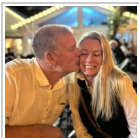


Marlys Morrow - December 25, 2017 at 10:05 PM



“ I so enjoyed his visits with his train to our school. So sorry for your loss.

C. Crew - December 25, 2017 at 09:15 PM



“ I got to talk to him at the western home assisted couple of times this year. He had such an amazing attitude, he walked several miles a day and he said when he thought he was done...he'd push a bit more and go further. Will always have great memories of him at fairs and antique acres. God speed Pete! 🙏🙏

Joyce Buss - December 25, 2017 at 07:13 PM

JA

“ My heart aches today. From being a student at Orchard Hill, I always got my hug from Pokey. Even as an adult he would remember me, we would hug and then talk about the many phases of life that we have been thru. After the bohs dad died and I was having a rough time with that, we talked and somehow he made even that seem like it was a survivable thing. I remember the day I was working in the school office answering the phone at lunch. Someone called for Pete, politely told them there was no one with that name here. That was the day I learned Pokey Pete was not his real name. To me you will always be special and very loved. May the trains ride forever in heaven Pokey. I will need my hug when we meet again dear friend.

jane - December 25, 2017 at 03:53 PM

PK

Me and my kids rode on his train. Great memories. R.I.p pokey Pete

Pauline klemz - December 25, 2017 at 05:25 PM

BC

I've had the pleasure of talking to Pete over the last 4 1/2 years at the Western Home Stanard Family facility. Pete was always walking and had a friendly word! I remember riding Pokey Pete's Train also. He will be missed! Such a special man! RIP

Barbara Chapman - December 25, 2017 at 08:14 PM

AN

I was really to big to ride the train when he started- but when he saw that I really was disappointed he let me ride anyway. I tolda him how much that meant when I saw him out several yrs. ago.. He was the sweetest man.

Andrea - December 26, 2017 at 07:30 AM

MS

I will miss Pete at Hymnsing when I go to play my flute. He always loved to sing "The Old Rugged Cross".
Marcia Street

Marcia Street - December 26, 2017 at 04:53 PM

BL

I went to Orchard Hill back in the 80's and vividly remember Pokey Pete and the train rides at the annual Fun Fair. He also had a great trick on Halloween. He'd turn the lights out in the janitor's room and lay on one of those mechanic's boards used for sliding under cars. As the kids walked by the room, he'd slide halfway out of the doorway, head first, and make a whooping sound for a couple of seconds. Then he'd slide back in and wait for the next group of kids to walk by. It was great! The little kids squealed with joy and the older kids laughed.

Blake - December 27, 2017 at 08:09 AM