



Poul V. Steffensen

March 26, 1922 - February 17, 2010

Poul V. Steffensen, 1922-2010

Poul Vilhelm Steffensen, a long-time fixture in Danish and Scandinavian communities throughout the Midwest, passed away on February 17th at the age of 87. He is survived by his wife Elie, sons Paul (Des Moines) and Carl (Houston) and their respective families, and sister Anne Nielsen (Taastrup, Denmark).

Poul was born on March 26, 1922 in Copenhagen, Denmark. His father worked for the city of Copenhagen as a gardener and his mother was a seamstress. His parents divorced when he was 6 years old, an event which began a 5 year transient lifestyle in which Poul and his father moved repeatedly, and Poul spent much of his childhood years with his grandparents and numerous aunts and uncles. After his father remarried Poul was brought to a home for boys from broken families, where he stayed until the age of 21. At age 14 he started his machinist apprenticeship and after 4 years graduated from the Trade School for Machinists in 1940.

Poul obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Marine Engineering in 1944 from the College of Marine Engineering in Copenhagen. Things were bleak in Denmark after the war, so he took a position as First Assistant Engineer with the Danish Steamship Company C. K. Hansen. His first assignment was

aboard a newly christened ship in Copenhagen harbor, where he would be responsible for scuttling the ship should the Germans try to take possession of it. Finally in 1945 he left Copenhagen aboard the merchant ship "Dansborg" and spent the next 7 years sailing to the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, and other places around the world.

But Poul was especially fond of ports in the U.S., and on a return trip to Copenhagen from New York in 1951 met a young Danish immigrant on the dance floor of the first-class lounge. When they docked in Copenhagen, a 3-month courtship began in earnest. On July 18, 1951, Poul and Elie Pedersen were married in Copenhagen's City Hall. Poul had already started the process to immigrate to America, and he and Elie moved to Brooklyn, New York. Poul found work as a designer in the Mechanical Design & Drafting Department of a large power plant construction company, and the following year their first son, Paul Alan, was born the day before Elie's birthday.

In 1955 they decided to join the rest of Elie's family and moved to Chicago, Illinois. Poul worked his way up from Designer, to Draftsman, Mechanical Engineer, and eventually to Departmental Manager at a number of different companies in downtown Chicago. In 1958 Poul and Elie welcomed the arrival of their second son, Carl Kristian, who shares the same birthday as Elie's brother Paul Pedersen.

Denmark was never far from Poul's mind, and he and Elie were tireless volunteers in Chicago. He served as President of the Danish American Athletic Club from 1960-65 and taught Danish language classes there for 17 years. He served as President and a member of the Board of Directors of the Danish Home, and was a representative for Dansk Samvirke. In 1972 Poul was presented with knighthood in the Order of the Dannebrog by Queen Margrethe II, an honor of which Poul was immensely proud.

In 1978 Poul and Elie surprised everyone in Chicago by moving to Omaha, Nebraska where Poul had found the ideal job. It didn't take long for Poul and Elie to become entrenched in the Scandinavian culture of Omaha, with much of their time devoted to the Scandinavian Folkdancers of Omaha where Poul assumed directorship shortly after arriving. Poul lent his construction expertise to the Building Committee of the Danish Immigrant Museum in Elkhorn and served on its Board of Directors from 1986 to 1992. Poul retired from Nashua paper company in 1992 after overseeing a massive expansion of their facility not far from Poul and Elie's home on P Street.

Poul began showing signs of dementia following an automobile accident in 1998. The progression of the disease resulted in Poul and Elie moving to Houston Texas in 2007, where they live near Carl and his family. They became members of the Danish Club of Houston.

Poul was admired as a man of principle. While in college, Poul was a member of the Danish Resistance and delivered underground newspapers around Copenhagen. He was shot by the Germans one evening for being out after curfew, but managed to flee before being apprehended. Poul was also known for his love of music, dance and art. He began dancing at age 16 and won many trophies in ballroom competitions, and he used his artistic talents throughout his life. During a career discussion with a supervisor in 1969 Poul spelled out priorities that defined his main goals in life: happiness for himself and his family, and to be able to provide his family with the better things in life. That he did, and so much more.

In lieu of flowers the family requests that donations be made in Poul's memory to the Danish Immigrant Museum in Elkhorn, Iowa or the Danish Home in Chicago.

Tribute Wall



“ *Poul V. Steffensen*

October 08, 2023 at 10:52 AM



“ *Poul V. Steffensen*

October 06, 2023 at 01:12 AM



“ *Poul V. Steffensen*

October 05, 2023 at 09:45 AM



“ *Poul V. Steffensen*

October 05, 2023 at 01:54 AM



“ *I had the pleasure of meeting Poul and Elie on the dance floor at the German American Society of Omaha, Nebraska, many years ago. They introduced me to Scandinavian dancing at a workshop in 1988, and brought even more dancing joy and new friends into my life. Poul was not only a marvelous, graceful dancer, but a wonderful teacher of dance. He taught me so much! And always with a smile, no matter how clumsy I was being. My deepest sympathies go out to Elie, and to all of his family.*

*Love and prayers,
Fran Knapp Kilty*

Fran Knapp Kilty - April 12, 2010 at 01:26 PM

RK

“ I met Poul and Elie many years ago in Brooklyn, NY. When Elie had Poul Allan and I had Kent, and a year later I had an other little boy, Kevin. My husband, Flemming, and I shared some great times with Poul and Elie. I have the best Memories when we sat around Elie's dinner table and had "DANISH SMORREBROD." I could keep telling you all about the good times. I know Poul will be missed a lot. He had a great family! I will be thinking of all of you.

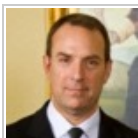
Love,
Ruth J. Kressler

Ruth Kressler - March 21, 2010 at 01:16 PM

BR

“ Poul taught me much about Scandinavian Folkdancing with a Danish twist. He & Elie were always so graceful together. He created a dance we call the "Homesick Waltz" here in Omaha & we use it as our signature dance for every performance & give Poul the credit as many knew him. He will be missed. Beth Rosenquist / Omaha

Beth Rosenquist - March 01, 2010 at 06:19 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Photos



David Dettling - February 21, 2010 at 02:38 PM

FS

“ Poul was the best father in law a daughter in law could have! He was quiet and respectful, but had a hint of fun too! I loved seeing him with his granddaughters. He will always be missed.

Frances Steffensen - February 21, 2010 at 02:25 PM

FS

“ 2 files added to the album Photos



Frances Steffensen - February 21, 2010 at 02:24 PM



“ Candle lit by



David Dettling - February 21, 2010 at 01:16 PM