



Peter W. Olson

April 3, 1935 - April 3, 2025

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.”

Our father, Peter Warren Olson, loved this quote from *Walden*, a book written by Henry David Thoreau in 1894. Dad made it a point to live his life purposefully, to choose his path independently, subject to his own reasons and no one else's. A common theme in condolences to our family has been the fact that he lived his life the way he wanted to...and here we are, to celebrate a life well-lived.

Peter passed away peacefully on Thursday, April 3, 2025, on his 90th birthday. He was born to Warren and Alice Olson on April 3, 1935 in Middleton, Wisconsin.

Peter became involved in athletics and fishing very early in his life. He was a member of the 1948 Middleton Grade School football team that achieved an 8-0 record and outscored their opponents 215-4. That was the beginning of a life full of athletics and coaching. His fishing career began young as well, often fishing with his father Warren, getting started with a cane pole and bobber.

Peter attended Middleton High School where he was an exceptional athlete.

He lettered in football, baseball and basketball all four years of high school and was named All-Conference in football and basketball for three years. In 1952-53, the first year of the Badger Conference, he led the conference in scoring with 255 points as a star prep player, also being named most valuable basketball player. In February 1953, his senior year of high school, his basketball career unfortunately came to an end when he suffered a broken elbow in a game against Edgerton High School.

He had wonderful memories of his youth in Middleton and often talked about the people he grew up with. Many of them have remained in touch and were lifelong friends. There is a cherished photo on the wall at home of the Middleton 1952 Home Talent Baseball League Championship team that he often looked at in his later years and reminisced about his friends.

It was at Middleton High School where Peter met Annette Biederman, his high school sweetheart who would become his wife. She was the perfect life companion and in 1959 they began their 65 year adventure. She remembers him in high school being a young man who thought for himself, knew what he wanted to do and didn't care about the current trends of the time. He was a leader, not a follower. Together they raised three daughters, Maren, Inge and Tola, and are grandparents to grandson Peter and granddaughters Olivia and Genevieve. Peter took great delight in celebrating their achievements. From attending athletic events to encouraging their success in academics, he was there to give any advice that he could. You can't be a family member of Peter Olson and miss out on any of the lessons. The conveyed values and wisdom will never be forgotten. He was a living example of hard work and striving for excellence in everything that you do, no matter if it's academic, athletic, or just the mundane tasks that we all do everyday in our lives. He taught us to always strive to do everything to the best of our abilities. Excellence is something that is achieved by daily practice, over and again. Never stop, never give up.

Peter attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison, playing freshman baseball and basketball, eventually earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Education in 1957. He entered the United States Marine Corps shortly thereafter and his love of athletics followed him. He starred in the Marine Corps baseball league, playing shortstop and hitting at .362. Proving he was an all-around athlete, his bowling team won the Marine Corps Force Troops title in 1959. There are many well-known core values of Marines and Peter was proud to embody these traits and would teach future students and athletes these values in the hopes it would improve their lives. Integrity, knowledge, courage, dependability, initiative, endurance and enthusiasm were just a few. When his tour with the Marines ended Peter returned to school at UW-Madison, earning a Master's degree in 1960.

Madison Central High School was his first teaching experience. He taught Physical Education and Driver's Education as well as Biology and General Science. He coached varsity baseball at Central for two years, and in 1963 his baseball team won the Big Eight Conference and was runner-up in the WIAA state tournament. Peter also assistant coached varsity football and was the JV basketball coach for three years while at Central. It was at Central where Peter met his mentor, Coach Bob "Boomer" Harris. Peter always appreciated Boomer's influence on his life and coaching. Bob and his wife Ruth became like family to the Olson's and they spent much time together.

In 1963 Peter made the move to Madison LaFollette High School where he taught Physical Education and Driver's Education. While at LaFollette he coached varsity baseball for twelve years, was varsity assistant football coach, working with Otto Breitenbach, another Madison Sports Hall of Fame member, and was the varsity basketball coach for thirty years. During his tenure as varsity basketball coach, the LaFollette basketball team won four

conference championships, twelve regional titles, four sectional titles and six Holiday Tournament titles. In addition to this, the 1977 and 1982 varsity basketball teams won Wisconsin State Basketball Championships. He was the 1977 UPI All-State Coach of the Year, as well as 1974, 1985 and 1986 All-Big Eight Conference coach of the year and Wisconsin State Journal all city coach of the year in 1970, 1974, 1980, 1985 and 1986. He coached six 1,000 point career scorers: Gary Anderson, Craig Anderson, Rick Olson, Steve Amundson, Mark Paulson, and Tony Giombetti.

In one article written about him, when thinking back over his career, Peter said, "I don't think that basketball memories are the most important. My best memories are having some of the people I coached up to my cottage to go fishing with me as alums, college graduates, and good citizens in the community. I always told our kids that there are many more low points than high points during a basketball season. The way kids learn to overcome, that's how they become successful as people."

Peter was also involved in different aspects of sports than just coaching. He hosted Wisconsin Coaches Association summer clinics for several years, and conducted rules interpretation meetings for the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association for both baseball and basketball. He played Home Talent Baseball, enjoyed being a member of the sideline officiating crews at UW home football games, and he spent as much time as he possibly could out on the water fishing.

Peter loved coaching young people in basketball so much that when he and Ann decided to retire and spend winters in Clearwater, Florida, he stopped off at the nearby high school gym to find out if he could help. They welcomed him with open arms as an assistant coach and while he was at Clearwater, his team made it to the Florida Final Four in 1995, in 1996 they were undefeated in conference play and were county champions. Many more lifelong

friendships began in the Clearwater High School gym.

Peter was inducted into several Halls of Fame between 1995 and 2016, several in sports and one in fishing:

Wisconsin Coaches Hall of Fame 1995

Madison Sports Hall of Fame 1997

Clearwater High School Hall of Fame 2013

National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame 2016

When he wasn't teaching or coaching, Peter was fishing. He pursued many species of fish, but hunting the musky was his first love, fishing mostly in northern Wisconsin and Canada. He was called "The King of Musky Fishing" or simply "The King" by those who knew him. He caught multiple trophy muskies, with replicas, photos and awards found in many rooms of the house as a testament to his prowess. His largest musky was 55.5", otherwise known as "the triple nickel." He enjoyed fishing with family and friends, and many of Peter's ex-players were good friends and fishing partners. We are grateful for the gift of their friendships as they gave Dad so much joy throughout the years. Thank you to all of them for bringing him so much happiness. Peter was just as proud of his fishing accomplishments and success as his athletic and coaching achievements. He felt that the prerequisites of patience and discipline were instrumental in his fishing achievements just as they were to his coaching and basketball success. He petitioned and received authorization to add a fishing course to the physical education curriculum when he taught at LaFollette. Fishing is a life long sport, it gets people outside in fresh air and by the water which is a source of relaxation, and it provides a supplement to the food supply. He felt it was a skill that provided innumerable benefits throughout a person's lifetime.

Reading was another important hobby for Peter. He kept detailed records of all the books he read, grabbing a blank piece of paper and filling it with

minuscule writing so he could fit as much information on one page as possible. These were not organized in any way, alphabetical or otherwise, but he knew what was on his lists. The Boulder Junction library was aware of his favorite authors and would set aside new books for him as they came in.

Peter's life philosophy and values were the foundation of his success. His philosophy of coaching and teaching was that DISCIPLINE wins. He always had high expectations for himself and all of his players... academically, socially, athletically. He believed in trying to achieve with good kids and students first and the desire was always to win by outworking and overachieving against more talented opponents. Winning with a solid work ethic and attitude were at the foundation of what he taught. Good character was stressed and he was always just as proud of the guys on the bench as he was the stars, because he knew all of the hard work they put in just like everyone else. Peter's PRIMARY goal was to develop successful young men with good morals and ethics that would serve the community as role models.

Dad came across the following item in an obituary that he read in the newspaper, he cut it out and saved it to share. Wonderful words, and he is sharing them with all of you...

“Togetherness—Death is nothing at all. I have only slipped away into the next room. Whatever we were to each other, we still are. Call me by my old familiar name. Speak to me in the same easy way you always have. Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes we enjoyed together. Play, smile, think of me, pray for me. Life means all that it ever meant. It is the same as it always was. There is absolute unbroken continuity. Why should I be out of your mind because I am out of your sight? I am waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near, just around the corner. All is well. Nothing is past. Nothing has been lost. One brief moment, and all will be as it was before –

only better. Infinitely happier. We will be one, together forever.”

Peter is survived by his devoted wife of 65 years, Annette, daughters Maren Olson, Inge (Bob) Shaw, Tola (Craig) Neils, his grandchildren Peter Lundberg, Genevieve (Alex) Hammond, and Olivia Lundberg, brother Paul (Judy) Olson and nieces Pamela Bakken and Cindy (Mike) Lubahn.

There is so much more to share, there isn't enough space here...stories, memories, anecdotes, friendships. Please join us for a Celebration of Life service at Gunderson Funeral Home on May 3, 2025. Visitation starting at 2:00 PM with the service at 3:00 PM and a continued visitation going until 5:00 PM, speaker at 3pm. Gunderson Funeral Home is located at 5203 Monona Dr, Monona, WI 53716

The family would like to thank Careview Rehab and Compassus Hospice for their thoughtful and attentive care of our father. Memorial donations can be made to the UW Carbone Cancer Center (cancer.wisc.edu) and Compassus Hospice (1571 Highway 51 North, Suite C, Arbor Vitae, WI 54568).

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 3. 2:00 PM (CT)

Gunderson Funeral Home
5203 Monona Drive
Monona, WI 53716

Visitation will continue after the service concludes

Celebration of Life

MAY 3. 3:00 PM (CT)

Gunderson Funeral Home
5203 Monona Drive
Monona, WI 53716

Tribute Wall



“ A grove of 5 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Peter W. Olson.

May 06, 2025 at 04:14 PM



“ So sorry to hear of Pete's passing. We saw him regularly fishing the waters on Boulder Lake and got to enjoy his and his family's company at 4th of July parties. Our condolences to Ann and the family. God bless. The Schroeder Family

Scott Schroeder - April 21, 2025 at 10:20 PM



“ A sympathy card was purchased for the family of Peter W. Olson.



April 20, 2025 at 10:40 AM

GC

“Pete Olson was an exceptional teacher, coach and human being. He was a teacher and coach who expected discipline in his classes and on the basketball court. He also cared deeply for his students and athletes. Pete was a human being whose values were the same values that made the United States an exceptional nation. At a UW football game Pete was working the sideline, I happened to be on the sidelines so we started talking. He told me he had retired and were living in Clearwater, Florida in the winter. He was one of the basketball coaches at Clearwater High School. A few years later my wife and I decided to spend the winters in Clearwater. When we got there we drove past Clearwater High School and I remembered Pete was coaching there> I quickly called Pete and for the 17 winters we spent many days and nights with Pete and Ann at Clearwater games, going out to eat, spending Easter together. Several players that Pete coached ended up playing in the NBA. It was very apparent that his player's really liked Pete. In fact, one of his former players was just named high coach at Florida State. Pete adored Ann and his three daughters. My wife Betty and I learned much from Pete and Ann as how life should be lived. We are grateful that we can say we knew Pete and Ann Olson
George & Betty Conom

George Conom - April 17, 2025 at 07:41 PM

PA

“My wife Eileen and I met “the King” and Ann while visiting my brother John and wife Trish Ackerman in Florida several times. Pete is now enjoying fishing with the Apostles, hauling in record catches each and every time! May he rest in eternal peace and may Ann have peace knowing that Pete awaits her to continue their bond for all eternity....
Paul and Eileen Ackerman, Columbus, Ms

paul Ackerman - April 17, 2025 at 02:02 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Peter W. Olson.

April 16, 2025 at 01:28 PM



“ Ultimate Snacks Gift Basket was purchased for the family of Peter W. Olson.



April 16, 2025 at 01:28 PM

WM

“ I have lost a great friend and mentor and am truly saddened to read of Pete's passing. Our relationship began at Central High School and continued as we both grew older and wiser. I was one of the fortunate few to be invited to fish with Pete on Boulder Lake and his patience with me in his boat is the stuff of legends. I will never forget his delivery and explanation as to what I meant to his coaching as a member of the 1963 Central High baseball team. As I was rarely on the field as a utility back up, Pete explained that "I was everything coaching was meant to be for him as he struggled to find a place on the team for someone of my limited athletic ability!" This was just the beginning of memorable fishing trips with him and I learned much about the pursuit of Musky's. I even made one of his "leader boards" with a catch of a memorable fish in the "play pen." Sharing Spring preparations with his LaFollette buddies was also a highlight and Ann always had the good judgment to be away from the chaos and Pete's boys! I have many memories with Pete, and he was much more than just a coach. He was a principled man of great character, a true father figure, and an inspiration to all lucky enough to have shared his wisdom and humor. I will mourn him whenever I see a beautiful sunset or reflect on the days I was privileged to walk in his shadow.

William Meddings - April 16, 2025 at 01:22 PM

PA

“ Paul Ackerman planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Peter W. Olson.

Paul Ackerman - April 15, 2025 at 12:17 AM

PA

“ Paul Ackerman purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Peter W. Olson.



Paul Ackerman - April 15, 2025 at 12:17 AM

PA

“ My dad, John, knew Pete from their days playing baseball for UW. Many years later I was lucky enough to head north with my dad and brother and stay with Pete and Ann and do some musky fishing. The King taught me how to fish for muskies and even gave me some of his best spots to try in the LOTW. I always enjoyed razzing him especially after catching one of “His” muskies on “His” lake. He definitely liked to give it right back to me if I took the “donut” at his place or if I failed to land a musky in Canada. I miss those many good times and the times he’d call me on a weekday afternoon to see if I was out of bed yet. RIP Pete and my sincere condolences to Ann, Maren, Inge and Tola.

—Paul Ackerman

Paul Ackerman - April 15, 2025 at 12:03 AM

SS

“ Pete Olson, he was the most unique teacher and coach I ever encountered. He had a way about him that was elusive yet engaging. He was very observant, and had a way of breaking down (analyzing) and building up students. I was pretty much a guy who went through LaFollette and cruised to graduation. But Mr Olson had a way of making your day with his deadpan tone. He was unforgettable, inspirational, and a humble man for all time. Gonna miss you Mr Olson. God’s blessings to family that remains,

Scotty Schara - April 14, 2025 at 09:15 PM

DK

“ I heard of Pete's passing with great sadness. I was a senior at Central High School 61-62 his first year as a coach and simply wish I could have played for him longer. The times on the sidelines at UW games and all the games I was able to officiate for LaFollette when he was the Coach were always special times filled with fun. I have been blessed to have known him and his entire family for all these years and Ann, thanks for supporting him so well for so long. Rita and my condolences. I will remember him until I am gone and always smile because he was a great human, friend and mentor.

Dave Kelliher - April 14, 2025 at 05:47 PM

RC

“ When I was in my youth, early 60's, I had a Capital Time paper route that extended onto Brooks Street, with a good number of nice apartments. Mr Olson was one of them. When I collected, usually on Friday evening I always looked forward to seeing and talking to Mr. Pete Olson as he was a really good person for me to Model after. I remember a Friday near Christmas he payed in silver dollars! What a treat! What a special Person!

Ron Capacio - April 14, 2025 at 03:44 PM

RB

“ Mr. Olson was the reason I joined the Marine Corps. He always had a way to make you better. He had a nickname for everyone... Using that nickname to push us to be better. He proved that discipline will take you a long way! As my gym teacher there was no one better. Back then I would of never known I could also call you my Brother... Marine brother that is!! Thank you for that guidance! “Keep your face toward the sunshine, and shadows will fall behind you”. Rest in peace Marine! -Roger B.

Roger Bentheimer - April 13, 2025 at 04:58 PM

AB

“ Peter Olson was my Gym teacher for one year in '92/'93. At that time I spent a year as a foreign exchange student (from Germany) at La Follette Highschool. Already back then I appreciated how he managed to make us support each other and work as a team. We all were in very different shape but already in our first lesson he revealed what mattered most to him: He valued dedication, that we were working hard on always being better than yesterday. That was not just a lesson in sports, that was a lesson for life! My condolences to his family, Axel Blankenagel

Axel Blankenagel - April 13, 2025 at 02:43 PM

KC

“ As stone faced and stoic Coach Olson appeared, he also had a wonderful, unique sense of humor. My best memory of this was junior year Phyed, (he was my Phyed teacher all four years). The subject of class for this day was the rings of gymnastics and to impress coach, I enlisted a gymnastics friend of mine to teach me the basic support hold several days before. As the class stood there in front of the rings Mr. Olson asked if there were any volunteers, then looks right at me. Raising my hand and waving enthusiastically, “pick me coach, pick me”.

“Okay class, Cooley’s going to show us”!

Somebody helped me jump up to grab the rings. As I fought and struggled to get into the support position I hear Mr. Olson announce:

“Cooley, you look like a spastic!”

There was no manner of discipline in me, or the class, to keep from laughing. Eventually, I just hung there like a side of beef on a hook, laughing uncontrollably until falling to the mat. I turn to catch Mr. Olson looking down at me, clip board behind his back, maybe a teeny tiny hint of a smile.

“Are there any other volunteers?”

Kevin Cooley - April 13, 2025 at 01:15 PM

CR

“ I was fortunate enough to have coach as my drivers ed teacher in 1984. At that time he was in search of a “fishing boat”. He was ALWAYS on the lookout for that fishing boat! Glad to see he found the right one! I was often around the gym with the girls basketball team. I can still hear him calling me “reeds”. “Reeds, what are you doing” (not a question but a statement) Reeds” get away from that riff raff” He didn’t miss a beat. He really had students best interest in mind. I literally can’t recall 99% of my high school teachers—but I recall coach—and never had him as a classroom teacher, just drivers ed. He touched the lives of so many students-just another set of eyes and voice to guide you in the right direction. What an amazing life lived! Condolences to the family, God gained a good one.

Cristine Reda Reid - April 13, 2025 at 10:08 AM

DM

“ Dave M. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Peter W. Olson.

Dave M. - April 12, 2025 at 07:12 PM

DM

“ Dave M. purchased the Shimmering Silver Gift Tower for the family of Peter W. Olson.



Dave M. - April 12, 2025 at 07:12 PM

DM

“ *I learned more from Pete in two years than I learned from anybody else my entire life. I am not sure Pete is the kind for I love you's, but I love you, Pete.*

Dave Moyer - April 12, 2025 at 06:52 PM