

# **John Cleve Petersen II and Neva Lorraine Boldan Petersen**

by Pastor David and Kathy Erichsen

**Neva:** Is there a doctor in the house? A doctor? John, that's your cue!

**John:** A doctor, why yes, I believe I might fill the bill. Let me introduce myself. I am John Cleve Petersen Jr. People around here call me "Doc Pete." I was born in these parts and I came back here to live and work.

I was born in Sanborn, Iowa on April 30, 1915 to John Cleve and Christine Olson Petersen, Sr. I graduated from what was then Sanborn High School. I wanted to be a doctor and attended medical school at the University of Iowa. I graduated from their College of Medicine in 1941.

My wife, Neva, and I came to Hartley after I finished my internship in Duluth, Minnesota. Since Hartley is having this big celebration, I thought we would come back for a visit. You see, we left Hartley very suddenly on Saturday, November 11, 1972 when we were both killed in a car crash while returning home from a University of Iowa football game. We loved those games!

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Being a doctor in Hartley was quite an experience. Polio, cancer, heart disease and other childhood diseases, as well as ignorance, took some of my patients – even though I doctored them the best I knew how. I delivered babies and tended to the sick at the old Hand Hospital alongside Dr. Brown.

Dr. Brown and I purchased the hospital from Dr. Hand who began the hospital when it was just a house. It served us well for a number of years. Then as Hartley grew, so did the needs of the medical community. So we all worked together and built the Hartley Community Hospital, which you folks have now made into the Hartley Health Center.

I recall many experiences at the Hand Hospital. Dr. Brown and my good friend, Dr. Carl Jacobs, from Sioux City performed surgeries while I assisted. You may remember I was about 8" shorter in those days! Dying must do something to a person!

And my limp is gone! You see, during childhood I contracted a polio-like disease which left me with quite a limp. So I wasn't able to participate in athletics while I was in school. But since I was quite intrigued with any sport, I participated from the side-lines while growing up, and later I became the unofficial team doctor at all high school events.

And let's not forget my love for the University of Iowa. I lived for those sporting events, as long as some mother didn't decide to give birth right before we were ready to leave. I enjoyed children, and they always knew when the office visit was over old Doc Pete would have oranges for them.

People often ask what my life was like. Well, there were no office hours in those days. When I finished seeing patients in the clinic, I checked on my hospital patients, and then headed out to make house calls on anyone in the area who needed to be seen in their homes. But evidently my life's profession didn't have an adverse effect on my family, for my two sons are now physicians and one of my daughters is a nurse.

But I should let my wife carry on now. Neva?

**Neva:** Yes, John. Those were the days, weren't they? And how lovely to be back in our old hometown! Hello folks. My name is Neva Lorraine Boldan Petersen and I too grew up in Sanborn where I met your Doc Pete. Of course he wasn't a doctor then, just a handsome senior while I was a quiet freshman. We married on May 30, 1942, while Doc was interning at Duluth. Some people say I was the quiet presence behind the powerful doctor.

Hartley was a grand place to raise our four children: John, also known as Jack, Jill, Jeffrey, Jan and Joni. You folks were so loving and supportive when we lost our dear Jill to leukemia. Those were really difficult days, but we had lots of wonderful times as well.

"What did I do to keep busy?" you might ask.

Well, raising five children was a full time job in itself. And those were the days many mothers didn't work outside the home. I loved being a mother and faithfully followed our kids' many activities. I also loved to sew for our children. Heaven knows that after we were suddenly killed, my family and

friends found bolts and bolts of fabric when cleaning out our house. All were intended to make items for our children.

And being married to Doc Pete, you might ask? The Lord couldn't have chosen a more wonderful, caring man for me to marry. He was a gem, as his patients would attest. The nurses who worked for him might have complained that he spent too much time with his patients and got behind in his schedule. But that was Doc. He loved spending time chatting with his patients.

"Sometimes men and women alike," he would say, "just needed a person to listen to their troubles and give them the encouragement they needed to go on."

"True medicine," he would say, "doesn't always come in the form of a pill. Just a smile or kind word goes a long way in bringing healing to patients."

And me, well, I was usually found evenings waiting with a hot meal for Doc when he came home. His fondness for his occupation and the people, along with the long hours often kept him from making it home in time for family meals. But we always made plenty of time for our family.

Doc delivered hundreds and hundreds of babies, maybe some of you here today. He loved seeing those little ones come into the world. And I enjoyed serving the community he served. I was involved with many clubs and organizations in Hartley such as PEO, Tri-T, the Library Board, Meals on Wheels, as well serving our beloved Lord through our church. I was once chosen Future Homemakers of America Mother of the Year.

But our wonderful life ended much more quickly than we had planned when a car crossed the median strip of the interstate we were traveling and crashed into our vehicle. So we would say today, congratulations, Hartley, and thank you for the memories!