



## Mr. Donald Don Vesley

November 7, 1932 - June 19, 2018

Vesley, Donald Don was born on November 7, 1932, in Astoria, NY, and grew up in Whitestone. His mother and father were first- and second-generation Czechoslovakian Americans respectively; Veselsky was changed to Vesley. Don fondly recalled his childhood New York experiences such as visiting the 1939 World's Fair in Flushing Meadows and seeing the 1941 World Series. After graduating a semester early from Bayside High School in 1950, he left the Big Apple to work at a farm in upstate New York, an entrance requirement for the program to which he was admitted at Cornell University's College of Agriculture. After gaining experience inspecting food facilities for the New York State Department of Health, Don was offered the chance to advance his career via a master's degree in public health, and he was accepted at the University of Minnesota in 1957. Upon returning to New York, he began to train other health inspectors, discovering a love of teaching. He eventually taught as a professor, because the University of Minnesota invited him to come back and work as a researcher while pursuing a doctorate. Starting in January of 1960, Don's first research project involved studying hospital solid waste handling with the goal of reducing staphylococcal infections. He "hit it off" with a student worker named Catherine Barnes, and the two were married in 1962, moving to her family's neighborhood of Northeast Minneapolis. Under contract from NASA, Don developed clean-room sterilization procedures for the Viking Mars lander. This research was the basis for his Ph.D. dissertation. Over the next decade Don's team conducted short courses at agencies and universities around the country on laboratory safety techniques for handling cancer viruses and then-revolutionary recombinant DNA procedures. Don became a tenured professor at the U of MN in 1977, and in 1980 he became the University's Director of Environmental Health and Safety. In 2001, Don consulted on anthrax decontamination for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. By the time he retired from teaching and research in 2003, Don was the author or co-author of more than 100 scientific articles and a book, and he had advised and mentored scores of students. Don and Cathy lived in Nordeast until 1997 and then moved to Columbia Heights, where they were both active in the successful campaign to erect a new city library. Don brought thoughtfulness and dedication to everything he did. He loved his family (including two Dalmatians), his students, the Vikings and Twins, playing golf, DFL politics, and quiet

moments looking out at Clover Pond. Don died at home early in the morning on Tuesday, June 19, 2018, of colon cancer. He was preceded in death by his brother Hank as well as by his parents. He is survived by wife Catherine, son Mark (Kristine), brother Allan (Pan), and nieces on both coasts, all of whom will miss him deeply. A celebration of Don's life will be held on Friday, June 29, from 4-7pm (with an informal service at 5pm) at the Washburn-McReavy Miller-Heights Chapel, 4101 Central Avenue N.E., Columbia Heights. Memorials are preferred to either the University of Minnesota School of Public Health Environmental Health Sciences Fund or the Columbia Heights Library Foundation.

# Comments

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“ Kristine Vesley lit a candle in memory of Mr. Donald Don Vesley



**Kristine Vesley** - June 23, 2018 at 11:21 PM



“ A light for my father-in-law on his way.....

**Kristine Vesley** - June 23, 2018 at 11:23 PM



“ As for many others, Don Vesley had a key role in launching my 34-year career in public health. He was the reason I came to the U of M in 1980 to enroll in a new double-major program for my MPH. Don was an excellent instructor and advisor with a terrific dry sense of humor. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

**Allan Williams** - June 24, 2018 at 05:45 PM