

M. F. Peterson
Tree Recipient May 1994
Presentation by Wayne Sanstead

M. F. Peterson (Marvell) was born near Reeder in Bowman County, the son of Martin and Fannie (Strand) Peterson. He moved with his parents to the family farm near Nome, North Dakota where he attended grade and high school.



He received his B.A. from Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota and his M.A. from the University of North Dakota. He served as a teacher, principal, superintendent and high school athletic coach before coming to the Department of Public Instruction in 1947 as Deputy Superintendent under L. B. Nordrum. Upon Mr. Nordrum's departure was appointed State Superintendent by Governor Brunsdale in 1951 and re-elected until his retirement in 1976.

He served 26 years in that position, which was longer than any North Dakota Superintendent of Public Instruction. Significant changes occurred during his tenure in that office. The increases in areas of responsibility and the changes in school district organization required staffing changes to provide the necessary services. The enactment of special education, and federal program laws were a large portion of the increased responsibility. A state foundation program of financial support was adopted, the laws and regulations for reorganization of school districts were improved, teacher's examinations and elementary certificates were eliminated, and a minimum of four years of training (bachelor's degree) was required for all teachers in North Dakota. Credential requirements for specialized personnel in school districts were also established.

M. F. served as President-Elect of the Council of Chief State School Officers during 1966-1967 and President in 1968-1969. He is listed in Who's Who is America, Who's Who in American Education, Who's Who in the Midwest and Who's Who in North Dakota.

Locally he joined the Kiwanis Club in 1951 and served as its President in 1973. Both M. F. Peterson and his wife Gladys were members of Sverdrup Sons of Norway.

M.F. Peterson passed away on December 26, 1996 in his home of a heart attack. He was a member of Trinity Lutheran Church in Bismarck.

M. F. Peterson was married to Gladys. They had three daughters, Gail Graves of New York and Carole Kline who lived in San Diego, California. A daughter Pauline Erikson preceded his death.