

# Memories of the Late Don Patton

## July 17, 1925 ~ December 13, 2014

On December 13th, the Mountain Motorcycle Association of Arizona's oldest and life member Don Patton passed away. One could write a book about this man. Many of our newest members didn't know him, mostly because he was 89 when passing and hadn't been on a bike in some time. Then again, those of us who knew him will never forget him.

You cannot write anything briefly about Don because he was unique and very interesting. Where can I start???

He joined the Navy during WW II at age 17 and was one of the first frogmen doing underwater demolition during the Iwo Jima and Okinawa invasions; earning two Bronze Stars. He wouldn't talk about it much ~ only to say he woke up on a hospital ship.

After the Service, he did potash mining in Carlsbad, New Mexico where he met our member Ed Pearman's father. Don had a pilot's license and for a bottle of White Lightning [so the story goes] he flew Ed's father back to a small town in West Virginia to visit Ed's mother and sister. That's a longer shortened story in itself.

Don then became a hard hat diver and was one of the best underwater welders in the country. According to what he related to me, there were about eight of them.

Don ended up in the Petrified Forest and became an expert on Petrified Wood, knew how to find the buried wood, slice it, polish it, etc. On one ride we took through the Petrified Wood Forest he led the way and stopped at numerous scenic locations and spoke about what we were observing. At one stop there were several out-of-state tourists and when Don stopped talking they gave him grateful applause. His face lit up with a big shit-eat'n grin.

We had a big Bar-B-Q Rally at his and wife Edna Mae's house which included a dance band. He had covered his empty large swimming pool with 2x6 boards, making the entire area accessible for eating and dancing. We called this ride the "Deadwood Round Up" as we could scour his property [legally] for Petrified Wood.

Don also had a habit of "showing up" unexpectedly when we went somewhere on a ride like to Page or to Cottonwood, plus other places.

He had a large pond on his property that had ducks and geese. What did he decide to do??? He

built [by himself] a walkable bridge that crossed over the pond. Exactly *how* he did it I don't know. But that was another aspect of Don.

He was a rascal of sorts, with a sense of humor. For his private plane he graded his back 40 for a landing strip and posted a sign at the entrance to the property that said "Petrified Forest Airport". I could go on and on but I hope by now you get the picture. This man had quite a life. There's lots more to tell and we *will* ~ when reminiscing... especially if the Winners Circle's Gerald Briggs is around.

Ed Pearman, Gerald Briggs, and I attended his Memorial Service at the Holbrook Cemetery. The American Legion did an Honor Guard Service, followed by food and a Memorial Service at Holbrook's Elks Lodge. There were about 10 bikes at both, in spite of the winter weather. And so, sadly, another one of the "Greatest Generation" has left us.

*Dick Tush, one of Don's many friends  
photos from Yukon Rick*

*photo left w/ Yukon, right w/ Yukon & Tush*

