



Date of Birth  
**Sep 02, 2016**

Date of Passing  
**Jan 17, 2016**

## **DONALD PROGULSKE**

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PROGULSKE, DR. DONALD ROBERT, 93 Dr. Donald Robert Progulske, age 93, passed away peacefully at his home in Gainesville, Florida, on October 17, 2016, surrounded by his family, after a courageous battle with Parkinson's disease. He was born on Sept. 3, 1923 in Springfield, Massachusetts, to the late Theodore and Florence Progulske. Don's love of nature was nurtured at a young age, being lucky enough to live 1 block from a pond. Since he could not afford flies for fishing, he tied his own and became a professional fly tier by his early teens. He also built his own canoe at age 12 and he and his brothers constructed an underwater breathing apparatus from an old 50 gallon barrel and a bicycle pump. Don graduated from Springfield Technical High School and was subsequently accepted into the Navy V12 program, studying at Harvard. He was chosen and assigned to Port Chicago, CA, as a member of the first racially integrated naval unit. He met his wife Eunice Hopler, a 'Rosie the Riveter', while working in a machine shop prior

to entering the Navy during WWII. Because she was not scared by a large bug, their love blossomed and they married after the war was over. The first 9 years of their marriage Don was a student, with Eunice working as an RN. During this time he earned a B.S. from the University of Massachusetts, a M.S. from Virginia Tech and a Ph.D. from the University of Missouri in Wildlife Management. He went on to chair the Wildlife and Fisheries Science Department at South Dakota State University for 14 years followed by 18 years as chair of the Forestry and Wildlife Management Department at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He published extensively and his research interests were varied. Notable was his decade-long project researching the history of General Custer and his 1874 expedition through the Black Hills of South Dakota, the first recoded expedition of white men into this area. Don collected and used glass plates made by the official photographer of the expedition in documenting and comparing the condition and ecology of the forest before and 100 years after the influx of the white men into the area, thereby documenting the white man's impact on this environment. Because of this work, he was an early supporter of controlled burning for maintaining healthy forests. This work resulted in two books, 'Yellow Ore, Yellow Hair, Yellow Pine' and 'Following Custer'. He also discovered, cared for and studied the only black footed ferret known to exist in the world at the time. For a few weeks, it lived in the garage of the Progulske home until better housing could be built for it. He also spent a year in Taiwan studying the giant flying squirrel. Don mentored countless students and instilled the love of wildlife and appreciation for the environment in them as well as his children and grandchildren. Many of the grandchildren spent time each summer visiting their grandparents, thereby attending 'Pa's Nature Camp' which included an organized curriculum and numerous field trips, to the great delight of the children. Due to his respect for all people, he was an early supporter of racial and women's equality, encouraging women to consider the field of wildlife forty years ago. His daughter is extremely thankful for introducing her to the microscope and the wonders it reveals at age 6, in 1956, when girls were not considered to be potential scientists. In addition to his professional career, Don was an avid ice hockey player and organized and coached the first teams in the state of South Dakota in the late 1960s. Being a man of many gifts, he designed and built the family home in South Dakota. As a passionate outdoorsman, hunter and fisherman, he gave innumerable time and applied his expertise

to significant causes, including serving as an advisor from the National Wildlife Association to Congress. He was a Paul Harris Fellow, president of the Rotary Club of Amherst and a member of Rotary for 50 years. Don is survived by his wife of 69 years, Eunice Miller Progulske and four children, Dr. Ann Progulske-Fox (Bill) of Gainesville, Donald R. Progulske, Jr. (Barbara) of Sebastian, FL, Alan Progulske (Martha) of Thousand Oaks, CA, and Carol Progulske Doak (Robert) of Gainesville. He was so proud of his nine grandchildren, Tanya (deceased) (Richard), Jessica (Ryan), Brittany (Joe), Adam, Justin (Alicia), Alexander, Tyler, Caitlin and Liam and one great grandchild, Kayla. He is also survived by his brother Theodore Progulske and wife Shirley. The family would like to thank his wonderful caregivers, including Jojo, who became part of his family in his final years. Don will be forever remembered for his love of humor and compassion of all who entered his life. Memorial services will be held Friday, October 28 at 1:00 at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, 301 N Main St, Gainesville, FL. Interment will be held in Amherst, Massachusetts at a later date. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to either Haven Hospice of North Central Florida, 4200 NW 90th Boulevard, Gainesville, FL 32606 or The Fisher House, 5106 NW 8th Ave, Gainesville, FL 32605.

## Memories of DONALD

