

Donald E. Grinolds

1930-1998

1996 Military Educator of the Year

Don Grinolds believed in giving his students an education anytime and anywhere, whether that meant at the bottom of a missile silo or on deployment in a foreign country.



Donald grew up on a farm south of Palermo, North Dakota, during the “Dust Bowl” days of the thirties. There were seven children in his family, and life was hard. Their home was small without today’s comforts of electricity or running water, and the only source of heat was an old cookstove in the kitchen and a small coal-burning heater in the living room.

The kids all worked hard from the time they were young, and Don was determined to go to college. The only educated people Don knew were teachers, and Minot State Teachers College was just fifty-six miles away; so he enrolled at Minot State and, now on his own, supported himself with jobs in the school cafeteria and at a shoe store.

After completing one year of college, he accepted a teaching position in a one-room, rural school near Carpio, North Dakota. The following summer he was drafted into the U.S. Army. He was sent to leadership school and finished in the top thirteen with the rank of corporal. He was sent to Korea, given top-secret clearance, and stationed at a prisoner of war camp at Pusan in charge of the teletype. He was discharged from the Army on September 3, 1953.

Don spent the next year and a half working for Amerada Petroleum Corporation before returning to college. He worked summers for Amerada and completed his degrees in business education and education administration. He and Janis McNalley were married June 2, 1957, and in the spring of 1958, Don graduated from Minot State Teachers College.

He returned to his job in Tioga, North Dakota, and in the fall of 1960, accepted a teaching position in Myrtle Creek, Oregon, where he and Janis

remained for five years. During that time, he earned his master’s degree in school administration from the University of Oregon. They returned to North Dakota where Don spent two years as principal for Midway High School in Inkster. Later, Don served five years as superintendent for Montpelier Public Schools. They then moved to Erskine, Minnesota, where Don was superintendent. During this time, Don completed a specialist degree from the University of North Dakota and the Bush Public Schools Executive Fellow program sponsored by the Minnesota School

In 1987, Don accepted a job at the Grand Forks Air Force Base as academic outreach officer for Lake Region State College. That spring, Don had to undergo triple bypass surgery, and he and Janis moved to Grand Forks, North Dakota.

Don was well respected in his position at the Air Base. In addition to increasing class offerings and enrollments on base, classes were offered to service men and women stationed in Saudi Arabia and at Thule Air Force Base in Greenland.

In 1996, Don was proud to be honored with the University Continuing Education Association’s *Military Educator of the Year Award*. He remained with Lake Region State College until his death on August 26, 1998.

His family—wife Janis; sons Delaney, Donald, Shawn, Kriss, and Erik; and grandchildren Justin, Christina, Donald, Tyler, and Erin—wanted Don’s dedication to education to live on. They established the Donald E. Grinolds Military Educator of the Year Endowment to provide assistance to GFAFB students who enroll in the LRSC Outreach Program at the Grand Forks Air Force Base. ♦