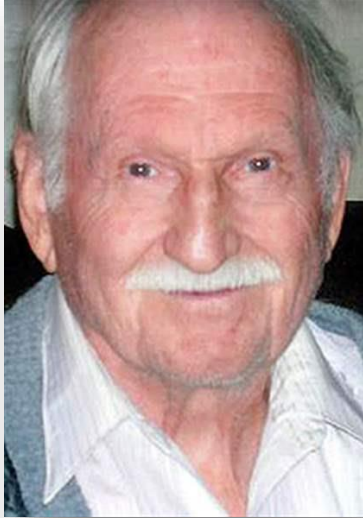


Donald M. Brill

Today, our father finished his race and was welcomed into a blessed eternity with the Lord. Donald M. Brill, 95, of Wisconsin Veterans Home – Chippewa Falls, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2017, at St. Joseph's Hospital, with his wife, Meredith, faithfully at his side.



He was born in Elk Mound (Dunn County) WI, Sept. 8, 1922, to John and Grace (Mayo) Brill, the third of four children. Their farming family struggled with homelessness in the 1920s after losing everything material in a 1924 farm fire and then again in the Great Depression. Don grew up hunting, trapping, logging, tenant farming, and freezing in winter. He was good with a rifle, which came in handy later on.

In 1942, Don joined the Army, and, as an outstanding student, was selected for engineering studies with the Army Scholar Training Program (ASTP). That did not last long – in late 1943, ASTP was disbanded and students were reassigned. Don was a sharp shooter assigned to rifle infantry regiments. As a Private First Class, he served the entire WWII battle and occupation tour with the 301st Infantry Regiment (in 94th infantry division). He was on occupation duty facing the Russian Army until November 1945, and then briefly in an artillery unit awaiting discharge. During his U.S. Army service 1942-45, he earned many awards including two Bronze Stars, 4 battle stars, 6 medals, unit commendations, and several combat infantry awards. In 2015, he was knighted and received the highest award of the country of France – the French Legion of Honor – for his service.

Don thanked the Lord for many occasions of miraculous survival during the war. This included many near misses from snipers, 88mm shells, and mines which killed those around him. He kept his Bible with him everywhere. Like many of his friends, he had Psalms 91 bookmarked and prayed a lot. With losses from those killed, wounded, frozen, or losing their grip in battle, his regiment went through four to five replacements per position in combat companies, and against great odds, Don survived the entire duration.

Postwar, Don completed his bachelor's degree at UW-Stout in 1947, where he would later serve as an adjunct professor at the end of his career. He earned his master's degree at the University of Minnesota in 1949. He married the love of his life, Meredith Wright of Eau Claire, WI, on June 25, 1955; they moved to Madison in 1958 where they raised a family of four children. While working full time, Don went on to earn a PhD at UW-Madison. His work from 1958 through the 1970s included coordinating the original design and setup of Wisconsin's Vocational Technical and Adult Colleges, making current-technology training accessible to all Wisconsin citizens. He was a member of Phi Delta Kappa and was in Who's Who in America and Who's Who in Education for more than 40 years. Don loved nature, science, music and every discipline of learning. He insisted on academic achievement and work excellence from all his children.



Protecting and defending this country in every way was dear to him, and he was active many years in the Republican party, nationally and locally. Don was from a long family line of American Colonial and U.S. war veterans back to the mid 1600s. He served as president of the Tainter chapter of Sons of the American Revolution from 2004—2010. He was a descendant of seven Jamestown and Mayflower families, many American Revolution soldiers from New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, Sgt. John Brill from the war of 1812, and a grandfather who served in a Wisconsin Civil War regiment. He was a life member of the Descendants of the Mayflower Society.

Throughout his postwar life, Don had difficult memories and flashbacks, and never forgot the “real heroes”—the many soldiers left in the cemeteries of Europe, including many of his friends. The destruction of so many brilliant ASTP students in combat was something that always grieved him. He wrote, “Who is there to remember them except those who fought with them?” He rarely talked about the war until the last decade when he spoke to a WWII high school history class and also took a Freedom Honor Flight to Washington D.C. to see the WWII Memorial. Then he spoke often of his experiences and greatly appreciated his time at the Veterans Home, where he felt honored and revered for his service. He called the VA Home “fantastic” and was happy to be around people who understood and appreciated his war experience and “treated him like royalty.”

Don is survived by his beloved family and friends.

As a father, Don lived the example he taught—love and respect for the Lord, family, others, and country. Don lived a life of service, love, humility, charity, integrity, sacrifice, and long-suffering for his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, his family, and his community. He embraced other cultures with his military travel, then with his family—hosting international students, studying foreign languages, and loving and mentoring four adopted grandchildren from around the world. There are no words of praise which can do our father justice, he was a living miracle.

We thank all who helped, honored, and appreciated him and were his friends in this life. In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be sent to the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls or to the Chippewa Valley Technical College Foundation in Eau Claire.

A celebration of life will be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday, September 16, 2017, at Hulke Family Funeral Home and Cremation Services. Pastor Loyed Arnold will officiate. Military honors rendered by the American Legion Post #53 will conclude the service. A greeting time will be held on Saturday, September 16, 2017, at the funeral home from 1 p.m. until the time of the service. Private family inurnment will take place at a later date in the Lakeview Cemetery in Eau Claire.