

## **Dale Peiffer**

Dale Peiffer is the oldest active member of the Brownsburg Lions Club. Active is an understatement. He attends meetings, works in the kitchen, helps set up tables and chairs, works in both kitchen and corn tent during the Extravaganza, and provides a sparkle to Lion gatherings.

Dale was born in 1927 in Elizabethtown Pennsylvania in the Pennsylvania Dutch area. His parents and relatives worked in the local shoe factories. His first paycheck was in 1943 at age 16 for stacking plywood at the Middletown Air Depot. In high school he met Betty, the love of his life. They didn't marry right away, because there was a war going on, and fighting the war was everyone's responsibility.

Dale joined the U.S. Navy and served from 1945 through 1946. He was an Apprentice Seaman aboard the USS Midway during her maiden voyage. He entered the Navy as an Apprentice Seaman and was discharged as Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class. The ship was 1000 feet long and preparing to lead an assault on Japan, but there was a problem—the ship was too large to pass through the Panama Canal, and so contingency plans were made.

Dale was in the navigation division and vividly remembers helping direct the ship through ice-fields north of Labrador to see how she responded to the cold and sometimes frozen Atlantic Ocean. He described enduring a hurricane, where the list for this huge aircraft carrier was 19 degrees. Winds were so fierce that the hanger doors were blown in.

His biggest thrill was riding the backseat of an SB2C Helldiver that was target practicing on targets towed by the Midway. Dale still has a framed "Plankholder Certificate" that commemorates the Midway's maiden voyage.

After the war, Dale and Betty started planning their future together. Dale attended college, painted houses and saved money. They were married in 1948 in a wedding that was attended by virtually everyone in Elizabethtown. Betty and Dale were only children, but they had three boys. Steve and Jeff were born in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania and Mike in Flat Rock, Michigan. These boys brought them two grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren. Betty and Dale were married for 61 beautiful years before Betty passed in 2009.

In 1949 Dale graduated from Elizabethtown College with a degree in biology. While waiting for a teaching position to become available, he painted houses. Finally, in 1950 a teaching position opened in West York Pennsylvania. West York was about 40 miles from Elizabethtown and the pay was about \$2000 per year. To make ends meet Dale continued painting houses part time.

Dale worked at Wyeth Biological Laboratories for seven years, and oversaw the production of tetanus toxin and toxoid, helped in the production of penicillin, and was involved in the production of Dextran, a plasma expander for times, when no transfusion is readily available. Dale was truly a part of the biomedical renaissance in the United States.

But teaching was in his blood, and he left Wyeth to teach high school biology in Flatrock, Michigan, followed by a stint in Denver Pennsylvania. In Denver Dale started working part time for Wickes Lumber, and in a short time was hired as a full time assistant manager in Northumberland before getting his own store as a full manager in Wanatah, Indiana. He worked for Wickes for 22 years, and left only because Wickes declared bankruptcy in 1982, and his store was closed. From 1984 until 1998 he worked as a contract sales person for Wolohan Lumber. At age 75 he tried retirement.

However, Dale Peiffer was never one to sit around, and so he helped create the Polk Directory, helping to establish a manual reverse telephone lookup. After that he finally retired from Porter County services, where he helped do setups in the convention center.

Dale moved to Brownsburg in 2002 and joined the Brownsburg Lions Club. He has served on the parade committee, the audit committee, and the scholarship committee. He also provided insight and guidance into the creation of the [www.brownsburglionsclub.org](http://www.brownsburglionsclub.org) website, and headed the Fruit Sales Project for two years. Dale has been a Tail Twister and also an integral part of the vision screening program in Brownsburg. In 2005 he was named Lion of the Year by his fellow lions, but he never slowed down.

Service to others through the Lions is only a small part of Dale's life over the years. In high school he was president of the Luther League, a youth group of the Lutheran Church. In Flat Rock, Michigan, a town of about 5000 people, he was president of the JCs. He is 32nd degree Mason and a member of the Scottish Rite in South Bend, Indiana, and also a member of the Brownsburg Conservation Club.

At Eagle Creek Park, not far from where he lives, he continued his dormant art of painting by painting the interior of the Ornithology Building.