

# DONALD A. PETESCH



Donald A. Petesch passed away Thursday, September 19, 2024, after a prolonged illness.

He was born in Dubuque, Iowa, to John and Marjorie Petesch, the second of three sons. The family moved often, as his father's career as a civil engineer during the Great Depression took them from Iowa to Texas.

After a short stint in the Army, Donald completed his first degree at the University of Texas. He attended graduate school, pursuing sociology at first, and then earning his PhD in English. While studying in Austin, he met Natalie Maines, whom he would eventually marry.

Donald enjoyed a 39 year career at the University of Pittsburgh, where he helped start the Black Literature program. He also spent time at other institutions, including the University of Florida and Johns Hopkins. He spent a year as a Fulbright Scholar in Monterrey, Mexico.

His interests were varied. He enjoyed sports, such as ping-pong, tennis, and running. In his later years, he could be seen walking up and down Forbes Avenue in Squirrel Hill with his wife Natalie. He wrote and published poetry. Above all, during their 62 year marriage, he was a devoted husband.

With his wife he was a political activist, and an avid supporter of the Civil Rights Movement. They marched in Selma. His book, *A Spy in the Enemy's Country*, was an important book in Black Literature.

He is survived by his brother, Tom; son, Nick (Rebecca); step-daughter, Rachel Maines; grandson, Gabriel; step-granddaughter, Rachel Pottinger (Steve); and two great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Natalie LM Petesch; and his brother, John "Jack" Petesch.

Friends will be received at **JOHN A. FREYVOGEL SONS, INC.**, ([freyvogelfuneralhome.com](http://freyvogelfuneralhome.com)) 4900 Centre Avenue at Devonshire Street on Monday from 9 a.m. until an 11 a.m. Service in the funeral home.

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