

Donna Conley Pierce Pampa High School Class of 1952



Donna Conley Pierce was born May 8, 1934, in Pampa Worley Hospital to Don and Sylvia Conley. Two brothers followed in 1940 and 1946: Donald Robert Conley and William G. Conley, IV (named for his grandfather, former Governor of West Virginia).

Don Conley was Safety and Personnel Director for Cabot Carbon Company. Mother, Sylvia, wrote the "Peg of Pampa" column for the Pampa Daily News. Donna's zest for life can be traced back to her family, her childhood friends and the great outdoors of the High Plains – a perfect background for meeting the wide world that Donna decided to know.

From Sam Houston Grade School to Pampa High, it took many activities to satisfy Donna's hunger for action. She was active in the Pampa Harvester Band, National Honor Society, Tri-Hi-Y Club, Interscholastic Typing, Senior Play, Latin Club, Harvester Staff, Girls Sports Club, Girls Basketball, Girl Scouts, Sigma Delta Sub-Deb Club and Pampa Presbyterian Church. Graduating in Class of 1952, Donna entered Rice Institute (now known as Rice University) that same year, majoring in Architecture.

At Rice, Donna met and married architectural student John Allen Pierce. They built a home in Dallas, and attended Highland Park Methodist Church while rearing their children. She now serves as member of Communion Committee at St. Andrews Methodist Church in Dallas. First daughter, Susan Conley, was born in 1957. Son, J. Allen, arrived in 1958, daughter, Sarah Beth, in 1961, and their last child, Randy Crutchfield, arrived in 1964. Donna is blessed with their spouses as if she had chosen them herself! With 11 grandchildren family camping trips are a special time for Donna and her family.

In 1965 Donna found Astronomy as a Junior League Docent at the Dallas Health & Science Museum. Highland Park Independent School District hired her in 1979 to run their Planetarium at Highland Park High. Donna served as docent at the Hall of State in 1963, Dallas Museum of Fine Art in 1964, and Chairman of the Museum Program in 1968 and 1969. She was appointed to the McDonald Observatory Board of Visitors in 1980, and made a Lifetime Member in 2007. Recently honored at the Observatory, Donna served two terms as President of the Southwestern Association of Planetariums. In both 1980 and 1982, SWAP awarded Donna their highest honor: the H. Rich Calvird Award for professionalism in the planetarium field. Since 1980 she has been an active member of The International Planetarium

Society as SWAP Council Representative, Gibbous Gazette editor of the IPS journal, The Planetarian, 1989-95, and was made an International Planetarium Society Fellow in 1988.

In 1977, NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory invited Donna to participate in the Voyager II Launch. Donna was not chosen for the '86 Challenger Teacher-in-Space flight, but as compensation Highland Park I.S.D. sent her to observe that launch with its tragic end.

As school sponsor for American Field Service Student Exchange Club, the Pierce family has been actively involved in hosting students: a girl from Austria in 1974; a boy from Sweden in 1979; and daughter Sarah participated in the AFS Americans Abroad Program in 1979. Donna has been able to visit hosted students over the years in her travels around the globe. Currently she is preparing to tour a Taiwanese group. Donna taught Junior/Senior Astronomy classes at Highland Park High from 1987 to 2001. She was a Chatauqua Lecturer, and was awarded Highland Park ISD Award of Merit in 1988, 1989 and 1999. Semi-retired in 2001, Donna stayed on as Planetarium Director. In 2006, Highland Park Education Foundation presented Donna with their prestigious Howie Award for her hours of service opening up the world of Astronomy to groups of students, parents, alumni and friends. "In so many ways, she is THE ambassador, not only for the planetarium, but also for all of HPISD."

Donna completed her B.A. in Art/History from the University of Dallas in 1987, and obtained her Master's Degree in Science from Texas A&M/Commerce in 1992. Allen and Donna were married 35 years before divorcing in 1989. In 1990 Highland Park High appointed Donna Coach of Girls Golf. She was known as the coach who didn't play golf, but the team went to State playoffs 8 out of Donna's 8 years of coaching, winning 3 consecutive State Championships. Elected President of the North Texas High School Golf Coaches Association, Donna was honored as Metroplex Golf Coach in 1999, National Golf Coach of the Year in 2000, and was honored with North Texas High School Golf Coaches Association Competitive Achievement Awards in 1995, '96, '97, '98, '99 and 2000. One of Donna's favorite memories is of her Highland Park player shooting a score of 67 on Donna's 67th birthday at State!

Those who know Donna best know that she is an outdoors-kind-of-gal. She has served on the Dallas Council Camping Board for Camp Fire Girls, Inc., 1971-76. Donna is today Service Unit 160 Manager of Girl Scouts of North East Texas, receiving their Appreciation and Volunteer Awards. She has been a Merit Badge Counselor for Circle 10 Boy Scouts since 1970.

In 2007, Donna appeared in Cambridge Who's Who Registry of Executives and Professionals. She was recognized in Who's Who Among America's Teachers in 2002 and 2005. However, being inducted into the Pampa Harvester Hall of Fame reaches the zenith, according to Donna, who says "Pampa will always be home."