

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Celebrating Fertilizer Icon Bob Peters

Chris Beytes

GrowerTalks received word from Cari Peters that her grandfather, Robert “Bob” Peters, developer of that famous blue water-soluble fertilizer, passed away peacefully in Allentown, Pennsylvania, on July 17 at the grand age of 97. As his family stated, Bob was “a true floriculture chemist” who formulated the earliest Peters Fertilizer products that still carry his name.

Bob began his life-long career in plant nutrition in 1947, after a stint in the U.S. Army Special Services during WWII and earning a degree in floriculture from SUNY Farmingdale. He founded Peters Horticultural Services in his mother’s garage in 1947 and did much of his research at Cornell University in the ’50s and ’60s. He started crafting his own fertilizers while traveling the East Coast visiting greenhouses and taking water and soil samples back to his home lab for analysis. He loved helping growers solve the problems they faced when growing plants; he’s affectionately remembered for driving his army jeep from hot house to hot house. He formulated many of the most popular water-soluble blends that are still popular with growers today, including Peat-Lite Special and his patented Excel technologies.

Today, his son, Jack, and granddaughter, Cari, run J.R. Peters Inc. We sent a note of condolences to Cari and asked for her thoughts on her granddad’s impact on the business and her career. Here’s her reply:

“This week has been packed with so many shout-outs of love by our family and our many friends in the industry. It really fills me with such respect for what a wonderfully thoughtful group of people we have the pleasure to work with in the green industry. We are so thankful to have had so many years with my Grampop, especially at the end. He was so happy to see my kids as the fourth generation of our family company! One of the neatest things that he used to say was, ‘Live ALL your life.’ I think that mission was accomplished for him and I can only hope to follow in his footsteps.”

And for those of you who’ve spent years with blue hands:

“My Grampop used to always tell me how mixing our blue fertilizer literally by hand was the best pep cocktail anyone could ever conjure up for ‘plants or otherwise.’ Maybe the 75-plus years of doing that actually paid off.” On the JR Peters website they’ve got a great page dedicated to Bob that includes a link to a 1983 Florists’ Review article about his life. You can visit it at www.jrpeters.com/Our-Company/Remembering-Bob.html. **GT**