

Norman Richard Petersen, Jr. was born August 25, 1933, in Chicago, Illinois to Norman R. and Mildred Petersen. He is survived by his wife of 68 years Antoinette (Toni) DeRosa Petersen and three children: Kristen Petersen, Mark Petersen and his wife, Louisa, and Jobi Cates and her husband Tom Cates. They have six grandchildren: Shayna Farmelant, Andrew, Owen and Walt Petersen, Soren Dorr and Rowen Cates. Petersen is also survived by his brother Richard and wife Donna, and niece AnneMarie Petersen.

He earned the rank of Sergeant in the U.S. Army for which he served from 1952–54. He was awarded the B.F.A from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, where he majored in Painting and Graphic Arts. He emerged from the vibrant New York School of Abstract Expressionism. After Pratt, he attended the Boston University School of Theology. He earned a Ph.D from Harvard University Divinity School in 1967 where he specialized in New Testament and Christian Origins and wrote his dissertation on “The Literary Problematic of the Apocryphon of John.” He began his teaching career in 1963 at Wellesley College in Massachusetts and between 1969-1996 he taught in the religion department at Williams College also in Massachusetts.

During his fifty years in the SBL, both in the Society and apart from it, Petersen was active and a leader in groups formal and informal discussions devoted to the literary and sociological aspects of the ancient texts, especially the Gospel of Mark, and he served on the Society’s Research and Publication Committee, the editorial board of the *JBL*, and as an associate editor of the journal *Semeia*. His book length publications include: *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (1978); *The Gospel of John and the Sociology of Light: Language and Characterization in the Fourth Gospel* (1993); and *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul’s Narrative World* (1985), in which he broke new ground extracting a sociologically aware narrative from an epistle, and for which he won the 1986 Biblical Archaeology Society’s award for the best scholarly book on the New Testament and early Christian history.

In his retirement, Petersen returned to painting in the abstract expressionism style. His primary influences were Philip Guston and Franz Klein. He exhibited his work in New England and in nationwide-juried shows. He was a member of the Imago Gallery in Warren, Rhode Island for over five years and has been a contributing member of the Attleboro Arts Museum, the Bristol Art Museum, and the Newport Art Museum. Petersen has also exhibited at the Hope Gallery in Bristol, the DeBlois Gallery and the Spring Bull gallery in Newport, the Wickford Art Association, and the University of Rhode Island Providence Campus Gallery. He was also a regular exhibiting artist at the Alta Luna Gallery in Bristol, Rhode Island.

In addition to painting, Petersen was a devotee of opera and an enthusiastic hiker. His favorite place to hike was Big Bend National Park in Texas.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Society of Biblical Literature or Arbor Acres, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where he and Toni lived and were cared for in their retirement.

Kristen Petersen

George Nickelsburg