

## **Don Cress ( 1918 - 2017)**

Don Cress was heavily involved in the heart of the Flint Hills Chapter, serving as president for many years. He was one of the organizers of the trail ride that took place along the Santa Fe Trail, and coincided with arrival in Council Grove, KS in conjunction with the June celebration parade for Wah-Shun-Ga Days. He had a love for the trail, wagons, and stagecoachs. In fact, he and Doris bought a stagecoach that they would use in parades and other events. He helped with "Voices of the Wind People" pageant and was proud of the history of Council Grove, Kansas.



Don Cress, a farmer, rancher, businessman, and historian was born December 29th, 1918 and passed away February 5, 2017.

His parents were Alonzo V. Cress & Sarah Bird Cress. When Don's mother died in January 1919. Don was raised by his aunt, Mary Elizabeth (Bird) Moynihan and husband Frank, on the Bird family farm South of Council Grove, KS. At 13 Don moved to live with his father Alonzo and stepmother Hattie on a farm near Dunlap, KS. During his youth he hunted, fished, rode horses and played around the Kaw Indian ruins. Don graduated Council Grove High School in 1937 and began farming. In May of 1940 Don bought the Bird family farm and in October 1940 Don married Doris M. Wild. Along with Doris, he ran the family farm for nearly 70 years raising three children: Carole Irene, Donald Charles, Lynn Eugene. Don started a registered Short Horn cow herd in 1948. In the mid 50's Don started selling life insurance for American General and later expanded to selling crop insurance throughout the State. He was always interested in the history of the Santa Fe Trail that passed through Council Grove and helped organize re-enactments of historical events presented by the community during Wa-Shun-Ga Days in Council Grove. In 1987 he was one of the original founders and later president of the local chapter of the Santa Fe Trail Association called "Heart of the Flint Hills". That same year he began organizing an annual trail ride along the Santa Fe Trail, that was open to the public, and started each year at different points along the trail. He would lead or participate in the trail ride for the next 12 years. He built his own stagecoach and Doris and he enjoyed giving rides at many parades and events around east central Kansas. In 1990 he helped secure national landmark status for a stone barn built in 1873 by Council Grove founder, Seth Hays, and worked on its restoration that began in 1989. Don and Doris Cress received an Award of Merit from the Santa Fe Trail Association in 1999 and in 2009, Donald and Doris were awarded the Morris County Conservation District Grassland Award for improvements made to the land on the family farm. That same year they moved to Olathe, KS to be near family.

Submitted by Mark Eric Brooks