

Renowned economist Mancur Olson is buried in Grue Cemetery near Buxton, N.D.

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Several people who are aware of the late Mancur Olson's notoriety want him to be honored with the North Dakota Roughrider Award and are gathering information and writing letters on his behalf.



This portrait of Mancur Olson is by artist Andrew David Stark, NDSU assistant professor of practice in visual arts,. (Portrait provided by the NDSU Center for the Study of Public Choice and Private Enterprise)

BUXTON, N.D. – Mancur Olson, one of the most famous sons in the field of economics, is buried in a prairie cemetery near Buxton.

The grave of Olson, who died in 1998 at age 66, is in the Grue Cemetery, northeast of Buxton, where his father, Mancur Sr., and several other family members also are buried. Sally Hoff, a former Grand Forks resident who now lives in Colorado, is raising money for a historical marker, which would be placed at Olson's grave in Grue Cemetery.

Manur Olson Jr., born in 1932, grew up on the family farm near Buxton, graduated from NDSU, then attended University College, Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar. In 1963, Olson earned his doctorate in economics from Harvard.

After getting his Ph.D., Olson worked as an assistant professor at Princeton and later as deputy secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in Washington, D.C. He joined the faculty of the University of Maryland, College Park, in 1969 and remained there until his death.

Several people who are aware of Olson's notoriety want him to be honored with the [North Dakota Roughrider Award](#) and are gathering information and writing letters on his behalf. Meanwhile, the Gyden Varden Sons of Norway in Grand Forks have nominated Olson, whose grandparents immigrated from Norway, for the Scandinavian Hall of Fame.

Olson was well known for his doctorate dissertation, which was published in 1965 as a book with the title of "The Logic of Collective Action and the The Theory of Groups," said [Frayne Olson, an NDSU Extension grain marketing specialist](#) who is Mancur's nephew.

Collective action, which crossed the disciplines of economics, sociology and political science, was a theory that asked "How do you get people to achieve a common goal?" Frayne Olson said.

Frayne Olson recalls that there was nothing his uncle loved more than a good debate.

"He had a very unique personality. He'd always want to get into a discussion or debate about different perspectives, whether that would be something that was on the national news or the movie you had just watched," Frayne said.

Though Mancur Olson was a renowned economist, that wasn't what influenced his nephew's decision to be in the same field.

"I just knew him as my uncle," Frayne said. "I really didn't know about his specialty area until I started going to school. It really wasn't until I was in my master's program that I realized and understood what he was proposing."

[Though many North Dakota residents may not have heard of Mancur Olson, he was known and respected in the economics field,](#) Frayne said, noting that the Economist magazine editor wrote a feature obituary about him when he died.