

In Memoriam: Dr. Donald Betts

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IN MEMORIAM

BETTS, Donald Drysdale, B.Sc. (Hons.), M.Sc., Ph.D., FRSC. "Don" – 83. Donald died at home on 23 October, 2012 in Halifax with his loving wife and soul-mate Patricia at his side. His peaceful passing followed more than a decade of suffering from Fronto-Temporal Dementia.

Born in Montreal, Don spent his formative years in Wallace and Halifax, Nova Scotia where he had many happy memories of exploring the world around him, and developing his inquisitive mind. Donald was pre-deceased by his parents, Wallace and Mary (Drysdale) and several cousins. Don is survived by his wife and best friend Patricia, "Trish" Betts, (Giles, McWilliams), his first wife Vilma (Mapp) - Edmonton AB; his children Malcolm (Chantal) -Gatineau PQ, Eric (Eleanor) - Sydney, Australia, Sylvia - Vancouver, BC, Doug (Victoria) -Halifax, and step-sons, Stewart, and Andrew (Alison) -Toronto, ON. Don adored all his grandchildren Nina, Nicky, Camille, Julie, Kieran and Harrison. Also surviving are Brothers David (Patricia "Trixie") Sturminster Newton, Dorset, UK and Andrew (Sarah) Grainger IN, and nieces and nephews Lisa and Luke, Ann and Colin. Many cousins and second cousins join the immediate family sharing a great sense of loss for this optimistic, loving and warm-hearted man.

Among his many happy childhood memories was the day young Donald was present at the unveiling ceremony of a memorial at Wallace River dedicated to Simon Newcomb. After leaving Wallace, Simon Newcomb became a prestigious 19th century astronomer, rising to the rank of Rear Admiral in the US Navy. This pivotal moment set Donald on the road to becoming a highly respected and world-renown physicist.

After moving to Halifax, Don both worked and played hard. He participated in activities that included hockey, baseball and badminton, and continued his scouting activities. His competitive spirit and love of learning enabled him to enter the University of King's College on scholarship at the end of grade eleven! Don's sense of social justice gelled when along with his scouting buddies; they formed a Rover's group, whose major goal was invite young boys who lived in more isolated communities to participate in scouting activities though correspondence. During this time Don continued his fight for social justice through working to support the election of Lloyd Shaw - the local CCF candidate.

Donald completed his Baccalaureate-first class honours, receiving the Dalhousie-King's University Medal in Physics, (1950) and his M.Sc. (1952) at Dalhousie University before entering McGill University to complete his Ph.D.in theoretical mathematics (1955). It was during this time that he met and married his first love, Vilma, through the Student Christian Movement.

Upon completing his doctorate, Donald and Vilma moved to Edmonton where after serving a year

as a Post Doctoral Fellow, before he was appointed as a faculty member in the physics department at the University of Alberta. He rose through the ranks to a full professor during the next 24 years (1955-1980). During this period Donald's pursuit of excellence and academic integrity in both teaching and research are highlighted through the many academic distinctions and research support he has received over the decades. In particular, he supervised many graduate students through their master's and doctoral degrees and worked with post-doctoral fellows. Taking a leadership role, displaying a strong sense of integrity and always striving for academic excellence, has enabled many of Don's undergraduate and graduate students, and research fellows to establish their own distinguished careers in academia, government, industry and teaching across Canada, the US, and internationally. His research publication record also reflects the high standards he set for both himself and others. Associated with his research are the roles Don took on in administration. Don was appointed Director of the Theoretical Physics Institute at the University of Alberta (1972-78). In addition, he took on several executive roles within the Canadian Association of Physics (CAP), serving as president (1969-70), As Chair, of the 1972 Annual congress of CAP, Don was instrumental in inviting physicists from the People's Republic of China to attend the Edmonton conference. This was the first time that PRC physicists were allowed to leave the country, and the hospitality shown by Donald and Vilma to these visitors has led to Donald being held in high esteem by the Chinese physics community to this day! Among other achievements for which Don is noted is the establishment of the Herzberg Medal, awarded annually to the most outstanding physicist under 39 years of age.

As chairman of the Canadian National Committee of the prestigious International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP), Donald introduced the triennial Boltzmann Gold Medal for outstanding achievement in research in thermodynamics and statistical mechanics (1975) served on the selection committee until 1980, and continued as a member of the Canadian National committee until 2000. Don also held offices for STATPHYS international conferences from 1978-1992. Simultaneously, he continued to teach and to present results of his own research at numerous conferences and seminars over the years.

His concern for social justice continued through membership in organizations such as the Friends of Canadian Peace Research, Science for Peace, the Basement NDP group in Edmonton and the Pugwash Movement. He picked up a banner on many occasions marching for peace and social justice on variety of issues. Don was also a strong supporter of introducing the public to science and issues related to science, this work included hosting a popular, weekly science programme on Edmonton's CBC radio.

The time he spent with his children was precious to Don. He encouraged his children to learn about their world. He reinforced his support by participating as a leader in some of his sons' interests such as scouts, soccer and hockey. He joined all his children on the ski hill, and together the family learned board games such as chess and Go. Donald supported his daughter as she practiced figure skating and became editor of her high school newspaper. During sabbatical leaves the family took extending trips through Europe, not only in order to spend quality time together, but also to experience different cultures.

In 1980 Donald returned to his alma mater, Dalhousie University, to take up the positions of Dean of Arts and Science (1980-88), Dean of Science (1988-1990) and Provost of the College of Arts and Science (1988-89). He continued as a Professor of Physics until his retirement in 1994 when Don was awarded the honorary position of Professor Emeritus in physics. In addition to the related and

required administrative activities during his tenure as Dean, Donald took on many leadership roles. Highlights include membership in the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Committee (MPHEC) and the Decanal committees of the Atlantic Provinces Council on the Sciences (APICS), and the Atlantic Provinces Education Committee (APEC); all committees are responsible for developing and supporting policies to improve the status of education in many fields. Don was highly visible in supporting and encouraging faculty in their pursuit of high quality in teaching and research, - both within Dalhousie and across Canada. Among the many examples are the establishment of an annual Excellence in University Teaching Award in the Science Faculty, and the establishment of cohorts for first year science students, in order to ensure that small groups took most of their classes together in each of their chosen subjects together,

Within the broader community, Don introduced the CAP medal for Excellence in Teaching in Physics (1984) serving as chair of the selection committee (1984-86), Don also served as chair and later as a member of the Selection Committee for the Rutherford Medal in Physics (1986-87, 1998-2002), for the Royal Society of Canada. He served on the executive of the Nova Scotia Institute of Science (NSIS) 1996-2002, serving a term as President (1999-2001). In addition, Don rescued the Canadian Journal of Physics (CJP) from its near demise when he became editor of the journal (1992-97).

Donald continued his research and publication activities, receiving more than 50 years of continuous research funding, most of which was awarded by the National Research Council (NRC) and later the National Science and Engineering Research Council (NSERC). Among the honours he received for his contribution to science and education were: the induction as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (FRSC) (1982), receiving the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Award (1982), the Peter Kirkby Medal for Life-Long Contribution to Physics presented by Canadian Association of Physics (1996), the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal, presented by the Royal Society of Canada (2003), and being recognized by his Canadian and international colleagues at the Theoretical Physics Institute of Alberta Symposium Honouring Professor Donald Betts (2004). Just as important to Don was the opportunity to work with colleagues internationally. Over his lifetime he has taken short-term sabbatical leaves in different parts of the world, enabling him to develop collaborative research projects, and teach.

After returning to Nova Scotia, Donald was able to spend more time with his brothers David and Andrew and their families, and to strengthen his friendships with extended family, boyhood and lifelong friends. Spending time with his grown children was also very important to Donald, especially after his grandchildren arrived. He loved sharing activities with them all.

It was during this time that he met the love of his life, Patricia (Trish). The instant chemistry that attracted each to the other took place during their participation in a symposium held at the University of Alberta sponsored by the Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science and Technology (WISEST) (1986). After a whirlwind romance Trish moved to Nova Scotia where they were married on the Great Seal of Dalhousie University. Together they supported each other's research and teaching and political interests, competed against each other in fun through activities such as Scrabble and hiking and swimming, shared interests in gardening, music and theatre and building a retirement home in Wallace. They also continued fighting for environmental and social justice in many areas. That Trish was so warmly welcomed into the family, close friends, and the Dalhousie and, Halifax and Nova Scotia communities is a testament to the high esteem that Don was held at so many different levels. Sadly, Don's dementia eventually prevented them from retiring to their

Wallace home.

As the insidious disease moved through Donald's body, he became increasingly incapacitated. Donald was cared for at home for the first seven years after diagnosis. Patricia (Trish) received strength from the support of the medical profession - especially Drs. Chris MacKnight and Mark Stender, many friends and family - and in particular from her sons Stewart and Andrew. When it was appropriate, Don was taken into fulltime care; his last extended care came from the staff at the Fishermen's Cove wing of Harbourstone Extended Care Facility in Sydney, Nova Scotia. At the end of August 2012, Trish retired and brought Donald home to Halifax in order to care personally for him. Nursing Donald was made easier through the extended care of members from the Capital Health Authority, including the Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy teams, the VON staff, close friends and neighbours, St. Andrew's United Church community and the Aeolian Singers. Additional support was provided family, the Canadian Red Cross and the Metro Transit System. In particular, very special thanks are extended to Dr. Kim Plaxton and to Trish's son Andrew and his partner Alison. Words cannot express the heartfelt thanks Trish has for you all. We will all miss Don's sense of humour, his integrity, his passion for making the world a better place, his love and friendship, and above all his wonderful smile.

A celebration of Donald's life will take place at St. Andrew's United Church, (6036 Coburg Road, Halifax, B3H 1Y9) Monday, 5 November 2012 at 11 a.m., the Reverends, Russ Daye and Martha Martin officiating. Family flowers only please. A reception and time for sharing memories will follow in the community hall attached to the church. An additional celebration and sharing of memories of will take place Sunday 4 November, 2012 at the University Club at Dalhousie University 2.30 - 4.30 p.m. 6259 Alumni Crescent (off South Street), Halifax, B3H 4R2. Cremation has already taken place and an internment ceremony will occur at a later date.

As an expression of sympathy, donations may be made to establish the Dr. Donald D. Betts Memorial Fund, c/o External Relations, Dalhousie University, PO Box 15000, Halifax, NS, B3H 4H2 (Tel: 902-494-8801 or Toll Free 1-800-565-9969). The fund will be used to support undergraduate research and teaching.

Alternatively, donations may be made to any organization of your choice supporting environmental and/or social justice, medical research related to dementia, or a charity of your choice. For condolences please visit <http://www.jasnowfuneralhome.com>

"My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world" (Jack Layton, 20 August, 2011).