

Remembering Donald Winston (1931-2022)

On March 2, 2022, Professor Donald (Don) Winston passed away peacefully at home, just shy of his 91st birthday. He is survived by his wife, Bente, their children, Tor and Francisca, and three grandchildren

Growing up in Minnesota, Don spent summers on Lake Minnetonka. He graduated with a geology degree from Williams College in 1953, and went on to earn MS and PhD degrees in geology from the University of Texas at Austin, where he worked with Charlie Bell and Bob Folk. He joined the faculty at the University of Montana in 1961, where he spent his entire career. He split his time between living in Missoula and a nearby ranch in the Jocko Canyon, where he and his family spent many happy days hiking, fishing, cross country skiing, gardening, and watching the chickadees feed. Don's love of the mountains led him to enthusiastically support local and national environmental and conservation causes.

In terms of geology, Don's passion was the enigmatic Belt Supergroup, a 15 km thick succession of ~1.5 billion year old sandstones, siltstones and carbonates that now cover much of western Montana, parts of Idaho and western Canada. Don and his colleagues identified and explained Belt sedimentary structures and the processes and environments that formed the rocks. His intimate knowledge of Montana geology was unparalleled, and Don's career body of professional work vastly illuminated the scientific understanding of Earth's early surficial environments. Don was a longtime member of SEPM and published several of his important works related to the Belt Supergroup in JSR. To extend his field research well into retirement, Don raised a herd of llamas, which he packed into the mountains of western Montana and beyond.

Don is remembered as an inspiring teacher and mentor. He shared his ideas openly and honestly with students, whose theses and dissertations were subjected to many rounds of Don's editorial green ink. Don's emphasis on field-based learning and deductive reasoning—grounded in meticulous field observations—produced generations of students who have gone on to successful careers in academia, industry, and the private sector. Even after retiring, Don continued to mentor students and lead geology field trips for the Geosciences Department at the University of Montana.

Beyond geology, Don was a devotee of American folk music from the Great Depression Era. Playing the claw-hammer banjo brought him great joy, whether he was picking out a tune to relax by himself or playing with fellow musicians around a campfire. At his famous annual party, the "Belt Bash," Don would entertain partygoers with "Worried Man Blues", "The Wabash Cannon Ball", and countless other folk songs.

Those of us lucky enough to have known Don as a colleague and friend know that he was a one-of-a-kind geologist who was intensely passionate about his work and who deeply cared about the success of his students and colleagues. He welcomed everyone into his classes and field trips, regardless of academic ability, appearance, or background. His generosity and sense of camaraderie were unrivaled. Don Winston will be deeply missed by many.

A full obituary is available at: <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/missoulian/name/donald-winston-obituary?id=33874888>

Tracy Frank, Annie Scott (nee Gellatly), and Robert Thomas