

Don L. Halvorson (1934 – 2003)



Don Llewellyn Halvorson died March 18, 2003, in Phoenix, Arizona at the age of 69. Don was born January 18, 1934 in Wildrose, North Dakota to Conrad and Alice Halvorson. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1952 to 1956, after which he received his bachelor's degree in earth science from the University of Colorado in 1965, his M.S.T. (Master of Science Teaching) in 1971 and doctorate in geology from the University of North Dakota in 1979.

Don began working part-time for the North Dakota Geological Survey in 1977. He was employed full-time in 1980 and was named State Geologist and Chairman of the University of North Dakota geology department in 1982. He served in that capacity until 1985. Don was the first State Geologist of North Dakota who was a native of the State.

Don's geologic speciality was mineralogy and geochemistry. He did extensive work in the Black Hills in South Dakota and Wyoming, particularly in the area of Devils Tower, prior to joining the North Dakota Geological Survey.

Following his tenure as State Geologist of North Dakota, Don and Dawn moved to Arizona where he taught geology at Northland Pioneer College and at Northern Arizona University Extension in the White Mountains (Arizona), retiring in 1996. He loved teaching and enjoyed woodworking. Don was an accomplished carpenter. He was almost always working on some building project—ranging from a piece of furniture to a whole house.

Don had a variety of other interests and abilities. In 1951, during his junior year at Wildrose High School, Don played guard on the high school basketball team that won the state championship. He downplayed his athletic ability saying that his real contribution to the championship team was seeing that their star player got to school and practice every day, and writing all his reports for him. Don went on to coach basketball, football, wrestling, and track while he was teaching in the public schools in Colorado and Wyoming, and it gave him great satisfaction that his teams were consistently successful.

Wherever he went, Don was involved in a variety of public-service activities. He was active in Lions Club for many years and served as Chair of the annual North Dakota Bike Ride Against Diabetes Committee. He was active in scouting and served as Program Director for the Northern Lights Boy Scout Council in 1981. Don, and his wife Dawn, were always involved in Church activities. They caught Sunday school and served on church councils, boards, and committees.

Besides his academic involvement at both the public school and university levels, Don and Dawn also owned and operated several businesses through the years. These included a jewelry store in Colorado, where he made and sold gold jewelry, including small gold trilobites.

Don, and his brother Doug ran a steakhouse near Hulett, Wyoming near Devils Tower in the early 1970s. He had a commemorative Theodore Roosevelt Winchester rifle hung on the wall of the steakhouse he had gotten it because it was Teddy Roosevelt who declared Devils Tower the first national monument in the United States.

Survivors include his wife of 44 years, Dawn Halvorson; two sons, a brother and a sister.

When I was preparing this memorial for Don, I contacted his wife, Dawn for help, and she sent me a letter with some suggestions of things I might include. I'll close this memorial with a part of her letter:

On a personal level, our sons and I always knew that his commitment to and his love for us was deep and unconditional. He also had a keen sense of brotherhood and caring toward all people. He had an inquiring mind and an adventuresome spirit. He enjoyed a different challenge and a new adventure. Professionally, his great love was teaching, and he savored an opportunity for thoughtful discussion. He saw geology both a basic and an inclusive science, essential to understanding our planet, how it works, how we should live on it, and how we relate ourselves to the universe.

I know how sincerely Don hoped that what he was able to do was beneficial to the Survey, to the State and to the people of North Dakota, all very dear to his heart. Don valued very much his association and friendship with the other state geologists, and on his behalf I extend warm greetings to all of you."