

IN MEMORIAM

DONALD ROBERT WOODS
(April 17, 1935 - April 26, 2013)

Don Woods, Professor Emeritus at McMaster University and former member of CEE's Publications Board, died April 26, 2013. He was 78 years old. Don's beloved family includes his wife of 52 years, Diane; his children, Russell Glen (predeceased), Suzanna Lynn Peters (Denis Dallaire), and Cynthia Jane Veals (Scott); and five grandsons, Caleb, Marcus, and Andrew Veals and Nicholas and Benjamin Peters.



Don was a chemical engineering professor at McMaster University from 1964-2000 where he used innovative teaching methods and won many teaching awards (and three honorary doctorates, from Queens, Guelph, and McMaster). In the words of Phil Wood, Associate Vice President (Student Affairs) & Dean of Students, "Don was the greatest educator in McMaster's history."

In 1986, Don was named to the inaugural cohort of 3M National Teaching Fellows. He is perhaps most widely known as a pioneer of McMaster's distinctive learning strategies: inquiry and problem-based learning, as well as a recognized expert on teaching and learning within the engineering academic community. He was author/coauthor of more than a dozen books including *Problem-based Learning* and was on the editorial board of *The International Journal of PBL* and *The Journal of General Education*. He edited the newsletter *Problem Solving News* for 20 years and wrote a column, *Developing Problem Solving Skills*, in the *Journal of College Science Teaching* for 10 years.

During his career and well into retirement, Don gave more than 500 workshops on effective teaching and process skill development, problem-based learning, and motivating and rewarding teachers to improve student learning. Befitting his research focus, he was a regular and valued contributor to *Chemical Engineering Education*.

This report was compiled from obituary notices prepared by the Canadian Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and by the family.

A remembrance from CEE Associate Editor Phil Wankat . . .

Don Woods, one of the great originals of engineering education, has passed on. My first impression of Don was of energy—he was a force of nature. But I learned that he was much more than that. Underneath the energy Don was a very caring person who believed in his students. Everyone who attended one of Don's workshops was a student, and Don did his absolute best to reach and teach every student whether there were four or four hundred. Because Don believed I was a better, more capable, teacher than I thought I was, I was able to become that teacher. He had the power to improve people by believing in them—great teachers do that. He was interested in everyone—student, professor, and janitor. Probably because he was so helpful Don was able to graciously accept help and that oxymoron, constructive criticism, from others. Don received honors during his career, but not others that he should have received. When I asked about one, it was clear that Don was hurt by this lack of recognition, but I never heard him say a mean or cruel word about anyone.

The morning I heard that Don had died I cried and did not want to have to withstand the pain. But Don's enduring message is that the pain of reaching out, caring, and teaching is worth it.