

I wasn't so lucky as to have Donn as a formal academic advisor, but he became a mentor, role model, and one of my very very best friends.

We met when I came out here to USC for a year in absentia from my PhD program back east, an effort to get some formal training and immersion in sed geology – Donn said 'sure' in response to my letter equivalent of a cold-call, and that year transformed my life. For one thing, it turned out that Donn was only part of a larger, wonderful department. It was Dave Bottjer's first year teaching, so he let me sit in on his paleo seminars and tag along whenever Bill Easton took him out to see good outcrops for student fieldtrips... I was allowed to sit in – those were the days – on courses by anyone, to go along on departmental fieldtrips, and was generally adopted for years and years... SC turned out to have a very low bar to honorary alumni-tude! You all should treasure that.

But it was Donn who was the total revelation. He showed by the best example what a graduate program and academic life could be. Here was a man who was *much more famous than my PhD advisor, was incredibly busy with SEPM past-president and editorial duties, teaching undergrad and grad courses, advising what seemed like an army of students, and arm-pit deep in what I later realized was the 1975 BLM survey of the southern California shelf... and yet he simply lived among the graduate students, patiently and hilariously answering our questions and soothing our upsets, and generally acting like we were the only thing that really mattered in the world, even though his formal record showed that we were anything but. He interrupted our hard work every afternoon by bursting in with a 'coffee coffee coffee coffee?' and then charged over with us trotting behind him to the Union, where he'd of course order tea and usually not have his wallet on him. He would then quiz us about what we were finding or otherwise up to, point out movie stars to me and hoot as my jaw dropped, and then charge back to Hancock with an 'ok ok ok ok'. Once I started working with grad students, I understood what it was about, what he had taught me – that one of the great pleasures and privileges in life is to work with people who are finding their vocation... he did it 110 times, just to count the formal advisees. No matter how important your own research, no matter how great the other demands on your time and energy, to cut yourself off from that experience, by permitting or accepting a stratified academic system or by trivializing the advising relationship to one of simple supervision, was to impoverish your life.

Since that year, I'd try to stop by whenever flying in/out of LAX, and our friendship continued to grow, first over the Neogene to Recent of the Salton Trough and Baja, where he took generations of students on fieldtrips (including giving me my first taste of these treasures), and finally, in the last 15 years, over the modern Southern California Bight, where my own research had gravitated in response to the wealth of historical *biological data, some from that 1975 BLM survey. So, at what turned out to be our last dinner at the Water Café downtown, we were madly comparing notes on the PV and Santa Monica shelves, where he had been the grad RA for KO Emery's early seafloor survey back in the 1950s, preparatory to construction of the Hyperion plant. It took us almost 30 years to really have a lot in common scientifically, but we finally made it.

I got a lot of great advice from Donn over the years. And knowing him was a passport to a world of marine geologists who were either his former students or his admirers.

But the word "advice" is utterly inadequate to describe the legacy of Donn's life, which was a model of generosity. He could both laugh and be skeptical, but he had a fundamental trust in humanity and in the entire enterprise of science and education. Generosity is another word for courage, for stepping up.

First, he was generous – courageous, a model -- in thinking out loud – which is one of the most helpful things a successful scientist can do for a student. From listening you grasp how to construct an hypothesis and argument, you realize the constant trial and self-correction that goes on inside even the most successful person, the willingness to be (temporarily) wrong, the all-importance of integrity, and the fundamental fierceness and passion of it all – the planning, the gathering, the writing, the pride in the product -- and that having and showing such passion is totally ok.

Donn was also the model of a generous professional – in his service to departmental teaching and advising, to SEPM... it was important to say yes, to carry through, to be the colleague you wished others to be. Donn was utterly *not ‘me me me’ -- he left his ego outside the door.

Finally, Donn was generous in placing such a low barrier to letting joy into his life ... it was clear from his delight in fieldtrips and shared dinners, and after retirement in advising the undergrad ‘chipmunks’... we were swept in as if true family. His favorite word was ‘marvelous’, with at least one exclamation point and a hoot; ‘heavens’ and ‘good lord’ registered concern, ‘for goodness sakes’ was for when he was pretty exasperated, and then there was the totally exasperated ‘*UN-be*lievable’ with his arms shot straight up overhead and him stalking about in a small circle. It was always a passing storm, followed by ‘ok now, what to do, what to do...’ and he’d just get on with it. Life was soon marvelous again. What better role model...

Donn was generous and courageous and a model to the end – his final gift was to let us know he was dying, not to go without giving us a chance to say goodbye, and he had Jess to help him do that. He told me he had thought about what to do with the news he had gotten, but decided, ‘what the hell, I’ll just tell everybody!’ ... pure Gorse, as was his arranging this gathering. By chance, I had written a note to him last February telling him what he had meant to me. And so, because I knew *he knew, our last visit in May was like just about every encounter we’d had over the previous 36 years -- focused because our time was *always short, scientifically wheeling, and honest, in short wonderful... although this time, when I arrived that Sunday afternoon to his home rather than his office, he gave me a hug and said ‘OK, here’s what I want you to do’. The job we had started the previous year, organizing his legacy data, is now continuing without him, and I welcome your advice and help. But in those 2 days in May I finished our basic inventory. He convinced me about the priority of the x-radiographs, we puzzled out some odd folders, and he laughed over an old mid-term discovered in the bowels of a file-cabinet – he had gotten a 91 in oceanography, which was probably a pretty good grade from KO. We didn’t actually say goodbye because we never said goodbye, only see you next time, although that was an unknown this time. And that was Donn’s final, incredibly kind gift: simply saying ‘ok see you in a few weeks, take care’. What can any of us say about Donn, other than his own word ‘marvelous’, with half a dozen exclamation points, and that we must try to be half as good.