

Donald M. Hoskins (1930-2018)

Pennsylvania State Geologist 1987-2001

Don Hoskins was born in the small town of Lyons Falls, New York, on May 22, 1930. He was first introduced to earth science at Lyons Falls High School, where he graduated third in a class of six. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree in geology from Union College and a master's degree from the University of Rochester. Between degrees, in the summer of 1952, he was employed by Atlantic Richfield in Wyoming as a field assistant, mapping potential oil prospects. After graduating from Rochester in 1954, Don was drafted into the Army Corps of Engineers. He served in Germany as a topographic mapping specialist. His wife of one year, Barbara, joined him in Germany, where they traveled widely through the countryside on weekends.

Don returned to the States in 1956 and started his 43-year career with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey, as a geologist specializing in mapping and paleontology. In 1958, he took a 2-year leave of absence to pursue a Ph.D. in paleontology at Bryn Mawr College. Don then returned to Survey, becoming Chief of the Geologic Mapping Division in 1962, Chief of Staff Services in 1963, and Assistant State Geologist in 1968. In 1987, Don was appointed State Geologist, serving as such until he retired in 2001.

As State Geologist, Don guided the Survey through periods of government spending cuts, and worked hard to raise the profile of geologic work in state government. Always a great fan of topographic maps, Don pursued an aggressive program of cooperation with USGS to update Pennsylvania's topographic quadrangle maps (back in the days of paper maps!). A loyal member of AASG, he served as Secretary-Treasurer, Vice-President, President-elect, and President. While President of AASG in 1994, he played a critical role in enhancing the National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program, particularly the STATEMAP component.

Retirement did not mark the end of Don's work with the Survey. Shuffling of staff by the new State Geologist moved one of the Survey's groundwater geologists into the Mapping Division. Don returned to help him get back into the mapping groove and tutor him on the geology of central Pennsylvania. Ultimately, the two collaborated on five bedrock quadrangle maps. Don then moved on to the interns and the newer geologists on the staff, going in the field with them at every opportunity, teaching them geological skills and creating enduring friendships. Eventually, he started his own mapping project, which he would work on whenever he could. He was in the office working on that map, and planning his next field day, the day before his unexpected death on December 5, 2018.

Don was not only a geologist. He was an active member of the Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, and a consummate family man. His children relate that he had numerous hobbies, including "making wine (mostly bad), growing roses (often prize winning), and sailing his 28-foot boat Galadriel on the Chesapeake Bay (only occasionally going aground)." Don touched many people, and he leaves a great legacy.

Written by Gale Blackmer, Bureau Director and State Geologist