

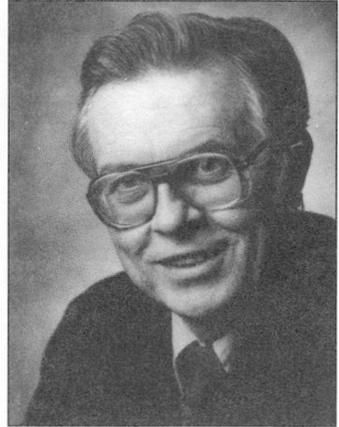
# Memorial to Donald William Levandowski (1927–1994)

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Donald William Levandowski (“Don”, “Bill”, or “Levy” to his many friends) died April 8, 1994, in Lafayette, Indiana, of medical complications that followed major surgeries in August and December 1993.

Don was born December 20, 1927, at Stockett, Montana, to Tony and Ann (Hudak) Levandowski. Today, Stockett is a bedroom community for Great Falls, about a dozen miles northwest, but in 1927 it was one of a half dozen closely spaced “company towns” of the Great Northern Railroad, clustered along Sand Coulee. This ravine was one of many High Plains draws, distinguished only by an abundance of outcropping Tertiary coal seams and sand roses growing on treeless hillsides. Occupants of the coal towns trained the roses to cover picket fences in front of modest but neatly kept “company houses.”



If, indeed, a person’s life is shaped by early family surroundings, perhaps Don chose his parents well. His father, Tony, was born in Poland but went as a baby to nearby Belt, Montana, with his parents. In 1912, the family moved to a ranch in the Salem area, very near the coal fields. Thus, perhaps it is not surprising that Tony left home to become a miner at age 16. One personal recollection in a colorful, well-illustrated, 1990 centennial volume entitled *The Gulch*, a history of the Sand Coulee area, says Stockett was the “melting pot of the world.” Miners of Italian, Polish, Slavic, Irish, Finn, and other Scandinavian origins, many apparently “right off the boat” flooded into the district; only about 10 percent spoke English. It seems that Tony Levandowski was a popular interpreter of the meaning of union contracts for other miners. *The Gulch* is rife with such remembrances and replete with historic photographs, many taken during Don’s childhood in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Although \$3 to \$4 a day then was considered a fair wage, streets were dirt, and the privies very cold on not uncommon minus 40°F winter mornings, an impression emerges of happy people living simple lives amidst drab surroundings.

What prompted a young man from a dreary, treeless, grassland ravine, limned only with coal camps, to drive forward to success? To old-timers who remember the days of soap-opera radio, all elements are in place for a male version of “Our Gal Sunday.” Apparently, Don Levandowski was encouraged not only by his parents, but by an unsung principal at the local Centerville High School. Perhaps Don’s interest in geology and mining was engendered by his mining-camp background. Graduating with honors in geological engineering in 1950 from Montana School of Mines at Butte, he was attracted to graduate study at the prestigious University of Michigan, where he received M.S. (1952) and Ph.D. (1956) degrees in mineralogy.

I first met and learned to appreciate Levy at Ann Arbor in 1952. The mineralogy department at Michigan then was separate from the geology department, as a result of some ancient internecine faculty strife. However, the departments physically were adjacent, and there was free circulation and dialogue between students and faculty. Little did either of us then know that 15 years later, Purdue University would sorely need a mineralogist to help staff my newly organized Department of Geosciences. Our chance encounter, in a hotel corridor during an AGU meeting

in San Francisco, showed how this need could be met. Fortunately, higher administration at Purdue concurred, and Don Levandowski came as an associate professor in 1967. He remained at Purdue for the rest of his career. Promoted in 1975, Levandowski also became an exceptionally fair, honest, and respected head of the Department of Geosciences (later, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences), until voluntarily relinquishing the position in 1988. Don also was director of the *Indiana Mining and Mineral Resources Research Institute* from 1980 to 1993. In 1968, he received the honorary degree of geological engineer (*Honoris causa*) from his alma mater, Montana School of Mines.

On graduation from Michigan, Don Levandowski became involved with the oil business, a natural route for a new hire in the late 1950s. He first worked as a research geologist for Chevron Oil at the research facility in La Habra, California, where he remained from 1955 to 1964, when he became managerial assistant for research for a year. From 1965 until 1967, when he left for academia, Don worked as a geophysicist for Standard Oil California, also in La Habra. During this period, he wrote more than 75 proprietary research papers for Chevron. Most of these papers never saw formal publication. Despite administrative duties, he contributed to more than two dozen publications, proceedings papers, or abstracts while at Purdue. Don was especially proud of getting publication permission and senior authorship on a 1973 paper in the *AAPG Bulletin*, an article on sedimentary cementation processes related to oil accumulation in the Lyons Sandstone of the Denver basin. This paper, a *tour de force* of sedimentary petrology, was typical of Don Levandowski's broad, extensive background in geology; he recognized and appreciated that the science has many equal facets and does not rest solely on some sort of theoretical minutiae. Perhaps this attitude and ability is why, at a time when many departments had dropped petroleum geology from their curriculum, he continued to teach a successful and well-received course in the subject at Purdue until a few months before surgery.

When remote sensing became a new aspect of geological exploration, Don found a natural home as a research geologist (1970–1978) in the Laboratory for Applications of Remote Sensing (LARS) at Purdue. There, he developed techniques for spectral classification of rocks and hydrothermally altered zones and mapping of lineaments on satellite imagery, and showed the potential of using these data for selection and identification of districts of strongly promising ore potential. Eventually, Don became a remote-sensing consultant to the International Atomic Energy Agency; this and other roles took him to such places as Chile, Iraq, and Bolivia. His expertise also was in demand in the private sector, and he was able to explore for precious metals in Nevada and New Mexico, and define reef and other structural features for petroleum prospecting in Indiana, Montana, and Nevada.

Don also had extensive field geology experience with such agencies as the U.S. Bureau of Mines, the Geological Survey of Canada, and the Quebec Department of Natural Resources. Thus, it is no surprise that he was a Fellow of the Explorers Club, the Geological Society of America, and the Geological Association of Canada, in addition to membership in other professional societies. Don also was a certified professional geologist in Indiana, and active as an officer in the Indiana Section of AIPG. The remote sensing work brought the ERDAS Best Science Award in 1992, as well as the Autometric Award for superior publication on satellite imagery interpretation. These, and other significant achievements, are profiled in *Who's Who in America*, *American Men of Science*, and other bibliographic works.

Don was revered by students, was a very effective instructor, and was one of those rare individuals both liked and respected by colleagues. At times he seemed low-key, even dour, yet he was also a gifted jokester with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of ethnic stories. Most of all, Don was an absolute master of appropriate, impromptu one liners. These usually were delivered in a loud, resonating voice at unexpected moments or situations in crowded hotel lobbies, airport terminals, or smoky conference rooms.

The extent of our deprivation is best shown by a true statement, made soon after Don's death, which must be taken in the intended context. A rather crusty, field-oriented senior colleague, well known for an acerbic tongue, one day said, almost plaintively, "I'll never forgive that d... Levandowski for dying on us." Indeed, we truly have undergone the untimely loss of a great friend and valued colleague.

Don married Martha (Midlik) in Windsor, Ontario, in 1955. Martha was a registered nurse at the University of Michigan, where she met Don. She survives, as do two daughters, Mari Ann Jackson and granddaughter of Indianapolis, and Laura Levandowski of suburban Chicago. Don also is survived by one brother, L. Ted Levandowski, of Silverdale, Washington.

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