



Don Lewis Cook

January 28, 1928 - November 7, 2016

Don Lewis Cook of Bloomington died on November 7, 2016 at the Meadowood Health Care Pavilion from complications of Parkinson's disease. Born on January 28, 1928 in Craig, Colorado, Don was the only child of Lewis Ersie Cook and Leora Saylor Cook. The family experienced hard times in Colorado during the depression and in 1933, they moved to California and settled in Bakersfield.

After attending Bakersfield Junior College and UCLA, Don enlisted in the US Navy. He graduated from Officer Candidate School, Newport RI, in 1951 and was on active duty from 1951 to 1955, serving during the Korean War on the destroyer USS John W. Thomason and AMCU 26 USS Kestrel. He was in the Navy Reserve from 1956 to 1969 and retired with the rank of Commander. At UCLA Don met Betty (Becky) Walker of Hollywood, California. They were married in 1952 and lived in Los Angeles while Don completed his Ph.D. in American Literature at UCLA. In 1959, they moved with their two daughters, Cynthia and Julia, to Bloomington, Indiana where Don began his teaching career at Indiana University.

Don taught at IU from 1959 to 1992. He was Professor of English at IU and in addition, he was one of the foremost editors of American literary texts, and a well-known expert in textual editing. Don was general editor of A Selected Edition of William Dean Howells. He served four years as chair of the Modern Language Association Committee on Scholarly Editions. He was president of the Association for Documentary Editing and an active member of the Board

of Advisors of the Library of America. He taught overseas as a Fulbright professor of American Literature in Japan (1968-69) and a visiting professor at the University of Kent at Canterbury in England (1982-83).

Don found immense pleasure in music, art and the theatre. His garden, to which he devoted many happy hours, was always a showpiece. He loved animals and doted on a series of house pets. A man who enjoyed good food and good company, he was an enthusiastic host and raconteur.

Becky Cook died in 1983. In 1984, Don married Jean Strohm of Bloomington. Together they enjoyed 32 years of being grandparents and traveling, finally moving to Meadowood Retirement Community in 2013. Preceding Don in death were his parents and daughter Julia Loftis. In addition to his wife Jean, he is survived by his daughter Cynthia Mary Cook, sons-in-law Ernest Cook and Robert Loftis, step-sons Jacob Strohm (Caroline Fisher) and John Strohm (Heather), and six grandchildren (Elizabeth Cook, Emma Loftis, Anna Strohm, Bennett Strohm, Elijah Strohm and Sophie Strohm).

Memorial services will be held at a later date in California.

Tribute Wall

JM

“Don was the kindest, most generous and helpful scholar with whom I interacted over several decades. His talent was as genuine as his personality; his professional skills as remarkable as his sensitivity in social situations; and his intelligence as keen as William Dean Howells'. What a great guy!
Joseph R. McElrath

Joseph R. McElrath - June 03, 2023 at 03:01 PM

AA

“Professor Cook directed me toward majoring in English, and he instilled in me a love of American novelists, especially William Dean Howells. He was a thoroughly good person and teacher. He gently teased me about loving Steinbeck, but he did not sway my loyalty too much! If memory serves, I took two of his courses, and I would have taken more, had time allowed. My belated condolences to his family.

Amy Ardington - March 26, 2019 at 11:10 AM

BA

“ Dear Jean,

I came to Indiana University's English Department in 1988 as a graduate student, from a small Master's degree program in which Mr. Cook said that I was obviously, "A big fish in a small pond." I took several seminars from him, the first of which looked at the works of Willa Cather and Edith Wharton. I was stunned by the care and attention he gave to my writing. His small penmanship, always written in well-sharpened pencil marks, catapulted me into becoming serious about my writing, about my own scholarship. I was so honored and encouraged by the great care he gave my work. He made me feel like I WAS a scholar, even though I always doubted myself. He was the reason that I continued in graduate school, and completed my Ph.D. He continues to be the example I follow as I teach students to write. I learned from him that what inspires a student to excel is a belief in their potential and continual, respectful correction, a constant pointing in the right direction, backed by a solid belief in the ability to get there. Oh Jean. He mattered in my life. He made a difference. I pray the same can be said of me in the lives of others.

Barbara - March 11, 2017 at 03:59 PM

SW

“ Dear Jean,

I have been out of town and just learned of Don's passing--I am so sorry. Don was the best colleague any young faculty member could ever have. When I arrived at the IU English department 31 years ago, he was unfailingly kind to me and helped me in more ways than I can count. When I took on administrative chores, he and the late Paul Zietlow supported me and chaired committees that required the kind of calm leadership skills that Don possessed in great abundance. I have never forgotten their encouragement and will always be grateful for it. More than this, Don was always such a generous spirit and great person to spend time with. I will miss him.

Steve Watt

Stephen Watt - November 28, 2016 at 10:09 AM

EB

“ Dear Jean and Cynthia:

I am deeply saddened by the news that Don has gone from us. Though I did not see him very frequently, I always greatly enjoyed the sporadic meetings and conversations we did have. And my fondness for him goes back all the way to 1962, when I first arrived here from Berkeley on the Greyhound =, ahead of the family, to begin my IU career by teaching a "post-session. Since I did not have a place to stay right away, Don and Becky put me up, and fed me, in their small duplex on South Swain for several days. Their warm hospitality and the charm and liveliness of their two young daughters did more than anything else to make me get over my nostalgia for Berkeley and begin to feel at home in Bloomington. I have never forgotten their generous welcome, and I have an inkling of your sense of loss. My fellow ex Californian and UCer, ave atque vale!

Ernest Bernhardt

Ernest Bernhardt - November 21, 2016 at 03:46 PM

RS

“ Dear Jean:

We send you our condolences on the loss of Don. He was a wonderfully talented person and a great spirit. We value our friendship with both of you.

warm regards,

dick and susie stryker

Richard Stryker - November 18, 2016 at 02:33 PM

PB

“ Dear Jean, Like everyone else who had the privilege of knowing Don, I was saddened by the news of his death. During my thirty-eight years in the English Department, Don was one of my most reliable, honest, and trusted colleagues. And of course he became my friend. He rarely had a harsh word to say about anybody. He was also a great conversationalist, who loved to talk about movies or plays he'd seen. I know, too, how highly other members of the Dept. such as Chris Lohmann thought of him. We will all remember him fondly. Best wishes to you and to his family, Pat Brantlinger.

Patrick Brantlinger - November 17, 2016 at 06:56 AM

SD

“ Dear Jean,
You have been in my thoughts and prayers since Don's passing. I'm surrounding you with Love and Light,
Susan Dabkowski

Susan Dabkowski - November 16, 2016 at 08:43 AM

GT

“ I was a student in two of Don's classes in the late 1980s, and I always enjoyed being in class with him. Don was a very good lecturer who always held the interest of his students. A gracious man, he welcomed questions and discourse on the subject at hand. I will always remember him as a true gentleman.

Glenn Taylor
West Harrison, Indiana

G. R. Taylor - November 15, 2016 at 06:50 PM



“ I have only lived in Bloomington the last ten years but was a neighbor of Jean and Don and shared their love and commitment to IU theater students. Don had an amazing career and his family must feel tremendous pride in his accomplishments. I truly respect the breadth and depth of his knowledge and interests. The world would be a far better place with more people like Don. - Anne Bright

Anne Bright - November 14, 2016 at 12:59 PM

JA

“ I am sad to learn of Don's passing. I remember his many generousities and the occasions of culinary pleasure I enjoyed in his home. I also remember his warmth and liveliness.

I recall one occasion that bears on Don's love of animals. My husband and I had taken to deporting the overabundance of pesky squirrels at our bird feeders. Learning of our undertaking, Don asked that some be released on his property because his neighborhood lacked squirrels, and his dog, a friendly long-haired dachshund, needed more visual entertainment. Of course we obliged him.

Judith Anderson

Judith Anderson - November 13, 2016 at 05:04 PM