



A MEMORIAL
to
DONALD SINCLAIR BOLON
Professor Emeritus of Management

Don Bolon, friend and colleague, died May 31, 2008, at the age of 77 following a brief illness. He was born on October 4, 1930, in Columbus, Ohio, to Dallas and Louise Bolon. His father combined successful careers as a faculty member in the Accountancy Department at Ohio State University and as a founding partner in the accounting firm of Parker, Bolon & Company. It is from this rich heritage that he shaped his personal and professional life and successfully passed that legacy on to his students, his colleagues, and his only son, Douglas, who is currently an Associate Professor in the School of Health Sciences at Ohio University. His mother, Louise, was a homemaker and an active member in many Columbus-area community and religious organizations. Don was preceded in death by his parents and an older brother, Edwin, who died during early childhood in a traffic accident.

Following graduation from Ohio State University in 1953, Don enlisted in the U.S. Air Force Reserve as a 1st Lieutenant, and, more importantly, met the love of his life, Joyce Goodwin, from Rochester, New York. Don and Joyce were married on June 18, 1955, in Rochester. They were married for 52 years. Their only son, Douglas, was born on December 28, 1956.

Don earned his B.Sc. degree in business administration from Ohio State University in 1953 and then served as a Value Analysis Specialist for General Electric. He earned an M.B.A. degree in 1959, also from Ohio State, and immediately joined the faculty of Ohio University as an instructor in Organizational Science. He was promoted to Assistant Professor in 1962. During his time on the faculty at Ohio University, Don continued his graduate work at Ohio State and in 1971 was awarded a Ph.D. in Business Administration. Ohio University promoted him to Associate Professor in 1974. In 1976 he resigned from the faculty at Ohio University and joined the School of Business faculty at Miami as an Associate Professor of Management. He was promoted to Professor of Management in 1980 and retired in 1999 after nearly 40 years in the profession.

Teaching was Don's first priority. Throughout his career he was a deeply caring and compassionate teacher who worked tirelessly to create a classroom environment that enhanced and supported student learning. Through his investment of a significant amount of time and talent, many of his students successfully moved into positions of importance in the public and private sectors in the field of human resources management, particularly the compensation area. He frequently called on former students who were eager to return to Miami to share their experiences and to help his current students better understand the importance of the content of his courses. Don was particularly interested in helping students move forward in their careers and was very successful in placing students after graduation, as well as creating an informal network of his former students who were looking for recent graduates or for contacts with whom they could advance their own careers.

Don was curious about the behavior of humans in certain situations, and therefore his research interests could best be described as eclectic within the field of human resources management. Early in his career he published several articles and presented numerous papers on organizational culture in the international arena. He was particularly pleased to co-author an article with his son in the *Journal of Managerial Psychology*.

Don also spent a considerable amount of time thinking about the factors that made for a satisfied and productive workforce. He believed that compensation was an important motivator, but that open communication channels in the workplace mattered as well. He felt that “open doors”, literally and figuratively, contributed positively to morale by encouraging direct communication between supervisors and employees. Obviously, he practiced what he preached. Don’s “door” was always open to anyone and everyone—current and former students, faculty members, or anyone who wanted to talk. One of Don’s main disappointments with the changes taking place at Miami was the movement away from this “open door” policy. The antithesis of what Don believed to be proper management technique was the revised layout of the top floor in Roudebush Hall with a “gatekeeper” receptionist sitting in a hallway lined with doors with security locks leading to the administrators’ office suites.

During his working years, Don maintained a high profile in Laws Hall. He regularly participated in the Business School’s daily “coffee klatch” in the faculty lounge. He was often in the hallways, always dressed in a coat and tie, usually carrying a Styrofoam cup filled with coffee, with a smile on his face and a friendly word for everyone but never engaging in gossip. Whenever a conversation would drift that way, he would redirect the conversation. In addition to his caring and concerned attitude, Don will always be remembered for his unique ability to, without warning, completely change the course of a conversation to a topic that, on the surface, appeared to be unrelated, unconnected and almost irrelevant. However, upon reflection, this was clearly Don’s way to make sure that you were given a full opportunity to talk about the issues that were most troublesome to you. He was completely consistent in his treatment of those around him. It did not matter to him if he was with the dean, a student, a staff or faculty member, or a custodian. He treated everyone he encountered the same because he viewed everyone as equals.

Don understood and eagerly embraced his obligation to be a good citizen of the profession and the local community. In addition to his membership in the Academy of Management and Beta Gamma Sigma (business honorary), he was an Elder in the Oxford Presbyterian Church and a long-standing member of the Oxford Kiwanis Club. His work ranged from organizing professional sessions at national meetings of the Academy to selling Kiwanis Pancake Day tickets. Don could be counted on to give an effort of 110 percent.

On a personal level, Don had a wide variety of friends who could always count on a regular invitation to join him for lunch or, with Joyce, for an evening of bridge. With respect to lunch you could always count on Don calling you or coming to your door; you were never given the opportunity to pick him up. Not only would Don pick you up for lunch, but he would do whatever he could to pick up the check! Don did not let relationships pass. He must have kept a notebook or calendar to remember that a certain amount of time had gone by since you last had lunch with him. It was during these precious times that he always lent a sympathetic ear to the things that were bothering you, found words to let you know that he cared about you, and that there will always be better days ahead.

During these times, when one would attempt to turn the conversation toward the personal issues on Don's agenda, he would almost always deflect the conversation back to your concerns. It was as if Don did not want to "bother you with his troubles." For this reason many of us were unaware of the seriousness of his health issues until a few days before he died. Thank you, Don, for these conversations and for your caring support. You will be remembered as a loving, caring man that brought real meaning to the word "gentleman."

In addition to his loving wife Joyce, Don leaves behind his son Douglas, daughter-in-law Lisa, and grandson Drake of Athens, OH, as well as cousin Barbara Adams of Beaver, PA, and cousin Joan Bailey Clay of Kirkwood, MO.

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