



Donald Summers

March 24, 1951 - March 3, 2021

Coleman Funeral Home of Oxford

Don Summers, 70, resident of Oxford, Mississippi, passed away on March 3, 2021 at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Oxford with friends at his side.

Don was a professor of Physics at the University of Mississippi, where he taught Astronomy for many years and made significant contributions to the department's astronomy programs.

He attended St. Peter's Episcopal Church and was a generous donor to its many social programs.

He loved stamp and coin collecting, chess, history of the U.S., and caring for stray animals. He was an outdoorsman, an Eagle Scout, and told stories of long hikes about Yosemite National Park and the Sierra Nevada Mountains where he loved to venture. He visited Philmont Scout Ranch in NM on several occasions. Outdoors, he fell in love with the stars.

As a student he learned machining and had a special love for hand tools and precious metals. In his long tenure as a scientist, Don participated in several important international physics experiments and is associated with hundreds of important scientific publications.

He was born on March 24, 1951 in Santa Clara County, California to the late Helen (Cordiner) and Joseph Summers.

Surviving relatives are Robert Summers (brother), Anna Doe (cousin), Kay and Matt Summers (niece-in-law and nephew) and their kids Ellen (13) and Luke (9).

A small and private outdoor service will take place for Don at St. Peter's in Oxford MS.

Please leave online condolences on the Tribute Wall at www.colemanfuneralhome.com

Tribute Wall

TL

“ I first met Don in 2011 when I went to Mississippi for my postdoc interview. Don was super nice and introduced me the muon collider and MICE with great enthusiasm. He also showed me the beautiful photographs of the galaxies that he took. It was a great pleasure to work with Don. He had so many creative ideas on different aspects for the muon collider. As my supervisor, Don was always very supportive, encouraging, and with great patience. I will miss him deeply. My sincere condolences to Don's family.

Tianhuan Luo

Tianhuan Luo - March 31, 2021 at 02:28 AM

LC

“ Our Friend Don

I met Don at Fermilab when we were students. Later we traveled together on many research trips and side adventures which he always had planned. There are too many stories to tell. A little Remembrance below:

Don was kind and generous, but not always a gentle soul if you knew him well. I believe he read the Bible daily in many parts of his life. He was an educator who impacted many students. He had a passion for physics and astronomy, exploring the outdoors, Tolkien, chess, and metals shop. He had many good friends who enjoyed his company. Don needed his friends to help him along as he slowed down in life later years. But his friends also needed Don for his stimulating conversations, and interesting points of view on history, economics, and politics. He was always kindling (scheming) some new idea on how to improve the status quo. You always left a conversation with Don confounded, astounded, informed, and in some highly excited state. Don left us too soon but he carved a deep imprint on our lives, his students, and his science.

Byrds-

To every thing there is a season, turn, turn, turn, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to reap , A time for war, a time fo peace, a time of love. its not too late.

Lucien Cremaldi - March 30, 2021 at 02:18 PM

DK

“ Don was a key contributor of novel ideas to the Muon Collider research and development projects and had a big impact on the designs and their ongoing evolution. (The Muon Collider will be a big, international particle accelerator facility using particles (muons) that live only for microseconds, which most people used to think was impossible.) Don's unique insight and creativity will certainly be missed! If you needed to do something people thought was impossible, he was the ideal person to prove them all wrong! And to do it with charm, panache, and humor.

Dan Kaplan - March 29, 2021 at 05:25 PM

MP

“ Milind Purohit purchased the Healing Tears - All White for the family of Donald Summers.



Milind Purohit - March 28, 2021 at 09:47 AM

MP

“ Don, who won every single unspoken contest for pot stickers at Old Peking, at that tapas place called Meson Sabika (I think), and of course at Pal Joey's, was easily the coolest character on Experiment 791 at Fermilab. His inimitable belt-and-suspenders look made him perhaps the most recognizable physicist at the lab.

When I think of Don, the shine in his eye when he and Steve Bracker came up with a design for the data acquisition system that they envisioned for E791 still comes to mind. And when I first heard about Exabyte tapes from Don, that's when I was sure these guys were nuts. And when we repeated these fantasies around Fermilab, everyone else thought *_we_* were nuts! Except maybe Sten Hansen, whose lab was where the good ideas turned into gold. Time has proven them all right, and for precipitating this big data revolution that has now taken over the world, Don will be remembered for long.

Not only were his contributions to our data acquisition system core to our success as a collaboration, he was also a great friend to us all, always bubbling with creative ideas in a spirit of fun that made our collaboration so enjoyable and that I will truly miss.

Milind Purohit - March 28, 2021 at 09:39 AM

TB

“ *My deepest condolences for your loss.*

Don Summers was my senpai (senior classmate) in graduate school at UC Santa Barbara. At the time, I did not know anything about experimental physics. Don taught me a lot and with patience. He was always a very kind and warm person. After our early work at Fermilab, we reconnected in recent years on Belle II, the experiment in Japan. As a scientist, Don was both detail oriented and very innovative. He could definitely think far outside the box. He will be greatly missed.

Tom Browder - March 27, 2021 at 04:08 PM

LG

“ *Loggi & Krish Gounder purchased the Peace, Prayers & Blessings - Blue and White for the family of Donald Summers.*



Loggi & Krish Gounder - March 27, 2021 at 01:46 PM

PK

“ A couple of cherished memories of my friend and colleague, Don Summers.

I met Don in 1982 in Santa Barbara, California where Don was a graduate student in physics at the University and I had just begun my job in the physics department there working on the same project as Don. He was quite a character! There are two stories I would like to share.

Don had an unusual (!) living arrangement. He lived in a camper in a nearby state park. One evening he invited a few of us to dinner there and cooked the most wonderful Chinese cuisine with an hoisin sauce out of this world. I can still taste it!

As part of the physics project we worked on, we would travel to other universities to attend meetings. At one of them, Don had rented a car to take us between the hotel and the university where the meeting took place. On the first morning, he was waiting for us in a “limosine”! His graduate advisor (his boss) was furious! Why did he waste so much travel money renting a luxury vehicle? Don explained that he took advantage of a “great deal” at the rental company and so the limo cost no more than the usual compact budget car we were accustomed to. Something about that incident stuck with me. A few years later when I was ready to buy a car, I thought, “why not look for a used limo inspired by Don’s escapade?” I have owned (used – good deal) Lincoln Town cars for the last 30 years or so thanks to Don’s inspiration!

In beloved memory,

*Paul Karchin
Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan*

Paul Karchin - March 26, 2021 at 07:34 AM

LA

“ I thoroughly enjoyed my classes with Dr. Summers and am so sorry to hear of his passing. I hope that all his loved ones may find peace.

Linda Arrington - March 17, 2021 at 01:24 PM

ST

“ More than setting up the farms, he was one of the principles in the initial trials of the unix workstations for analysis. This at the time Dave Quarry said at a CDF meeting that unix would never be used for analysis because physics code couldn't be ported. It was apparently an effort to convince Silicon Graphics that there wasn't a need for a monitor for every machine purchased. Thanks to those efforts, Dan Green took wicked pleasure in having more compute power in the physics section than in computing. From a bit later I still have Steve Bracker's email to Jeff Appel entitled: "The hidden value of fossils" urging him to sell the Amdahl before it lost all of its value, having cost \$12 million initially. The machine was surplus for nothing not long after. I had the photo of the three pirates (Bracker, Summers, Stairs) in my office. There was also the envelope from Don containing the job application for technician at Ole Miss. The surprise that I didn't jump at the opportunity was a running gag. What they say about Charles Barkley was true for Don. He was the steel ball in the spray paint can. He stirred things up. The things we built for E769 (list driven Camac controller, processor based LeCroy TDC readout controller replacement) and E791 (VME latch) were the beginning for me of working on significant designs.

Sten.

Sten - March 13, 2021 at 11:36 AM



“ *Peace, Prayers, & Blessings- Lavender and White was purchased for the family of Donald Summers.*



March 13, 2021 at 11:34 AM



“ *I met Don in the late 80s when I was a student at Fermilab. Don was a great guy, very friendly and supportive of the new students that were starting a career in physics. He was always ready to help us and guide us through the intricacies of the experiment. My condolences to his family.*

Hélio da Motta, Rio de Janeiro

Hélio da Motta - March 11, 2021 at 08:03 PM



“ *I was deeply saddened to hear about the death of Don. He was a very witty, humorous person. Working with him at the Tagged Photon Lab at Fermilab was an enjoyable experience with late-night pizzas at the lab. He had an in-depth and critical view of the world. Don was instrumental in setting up the conditions for a few Brazilian students to continue their Ph.D. work in Brazil with his help in the analysis software. I owe him quite a lot. My sincere condolences to his family.*

João de Mello Neto, Rio de Janeiro.

João Torres Mello - March 11, 2021 at 03:32 PM

AR

“ Don was a great physicist. I haven't had the chance to spend much time with him, but the time I had was enough to make me admire him for his capacity, willingness, sense of humour and a big heart. We had good times having lunch at Chez Leon, at Fermilab. My sincere condolences to his family.
Alberto

Alberto Correa dos Reis - March 11, 2021 at 02:21 PM

KA

“ I remember him at the 11:00am service every Sunday as he walked down for communion. His gentleness and kindness shone on his face. I also saw him on television talking about the stars with such a soft voice He was such an inspiration to me and his presence will be sorely missed. With sympathy, Kathy Allen

Kathy Allen - March 09, 2021 at 08:27 PM

BP

“ I knew Mr. Summers as a parishoner of St. Peter's. I would be surprised to learn that he ever missed an 11:00 o'clock service. His slow walk to and from the altar for communion every Sunday manifested considerable determination, dignity, and faith. I wish I had known him better. My condolences to his family. Barbara Phillips

Barbara Y Phillips - March 09, 2021 at 04:19 PM



“ Don was such a faithful member of St. Peter's Episcopal Church. His presence was an inspiration to me and he will be missed.



Tom Fowlkes - March 09, 2021 at 04:01 PM