

Mr. Donald Kitchell Conover [Obituary](#)



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Mr. Donald Kitchell Conover

- July 25, 1931 - March 28, 2017
- Newtown, Pennsylvania

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"I'm sorry for your loss. Your father's mantra is a great one. He sounds like a terrific person."

1 of 5 | Posted by: Glenn Paul - [Titusville](#), [NJ](#)

"I was first introduced to Don through our mutual interest in the world of bullfight literature. We met several times at tertulias hosted by members...[Read More »](#)"

2 of 5 | Posted by: Ross Phelps - [La Crescent](#), [MN](#)

"My fondest memories of Don, my boss and sometimes tennis partner, were mornings when he'd come in my office and plop down in the visitor's chair and...[Read More »](#)"

3 of 5 | Posted by: Jay Wright - [Anderson](#), [SC](#)



"Hi Pat and Family, I am so sorry for your loss, my thoughts and Prayers are with you and your family during this most difficult time of sorrow, Don...[Read More »](#)"

4 of 5 | Posted by: Terry Lambright - PA - Coworker

"The Manhattan College alumni community shares the grief, and is now praying for our fellow "Jasper Maker" and the family at this time. Staff --...[Read More »](#)"

5 of 5 | Posted by: fjohn reinke (mc1968) - Keene, NH

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Don Conover passed away on Tuesday, March 28th near his home of thirty years in Newtown, Pennsylvania. He was eighty-five years old. He went peacefully and in gratitude for a full life, knowing he was loved deeply by friends and family alike, and in the arms of Patti Kohlmayer Conover, his wife and true love.

Born on July 25th, 1931, in Brooklyn, NY, Don was the son of Earl, head of the Math Department at Poly Preparatory Academy, and Hazel, a homemaker who had once worked in the secretarial pool for Thomas Edison. He is pre-deceased by his older sister, Patricia Lott, and survived by his younger sister, Sally Andersen. He is also survived by his two sons, Malcolm and Paul, and Paul's two children, Catherine and Matthew.

Most who knew him would describe Don as distinctly "old school." Like so many from the so-called "greatest generation," he had a sense of decency and humility, and a commitment to positive contribution that, to him, was more important than the accolades that came along with his accomplishments. In describing his own childhood, rather than focus on the privations of the depression or the war, he'd speak of his good fortune – subway trips with his father to visit the World's Fair, visits to an uncle's farm or, later, a simple beach house on the Jersey shore,

attending Poly Prep on a scholarship and spending idyllic summers at Camp Hawthorne in Maine. Writing about his life, Don described himself simply as "a very lucky boy, growing up in the warm embrace of family, friends, school and church."

Don graduated from Princeton University in 1953 with a Bachelor's Degree in Engineering. Later, in 1964 and 1965, he attended MIT where he was awarded a Sloan Fellowship and earned a Master of Science degree in Industrial Management. For most of his career, Don was in the Bell system, first with Western Electric and then with ATT. He served on the management team of several factories, including the famous Hawthorne Works in Chicago where he directed engineering and manufacturing of electro-mechanical switching equipment for the telephone network. He became Western Electric's Director of Corporate Planning, a post he held for nearly ten years, and ultimately held the position of Vice President of Corporate Education for ATT, running the Corporate Education Center in Princeton, New Jersey, and heading up business education worldwide.

Like his maternal grandfather, Don was a "Telephone Pioneer" and took great pride in having helped to build something of fundamental value in our society. But, especially after the breakup of the Bell system, he worried about the erosion of loyalty between employers, customers, and employees. In time, he came to evaluate decisions against a deceptively simple mantra: "Choose actions that shorten response time and which increase trust." The idea of shortening response time, and providing excellence in the customer's terms, is easy to understand in today's hyper-competitive world. The idea of increasing trust is perhaps more subtle. As organizational relationships are less defined by hierarchy or chain of command, what is the glue that can hold us together? For Don, that glue was an active effort to build trust and human caring across the organization. Modern thinking for an old school guy!

Don could also be considered ahead of his time in quietly rejecting the prevailing model of "the organization man," a model suggesting that one could and should give all to the company and, in turn, could expect near complete fulfillment in that role. He was deeply satisfied in his professional life, but he also understood the importance of a balanced life.

For Don, that balance certainly included "giving back." For years, he was an active member of the Princeton Chamber of Commerce and the Princeton Rotary Club, serving as President for a term with each organization. He was a member or officer of the Board Advisory Group of the Girl Scouts, the Business Advisory Council of

Manhattan College, the World Future Society, the Academy of Management, the American Society of Training and Development, and the Board of Directors for the Thomas Edison State College Foundation. After a long absence from any church, he came to St. Andrew's in Yardley, PA, where he was a devoted member for nearly twenty years.

His idea of balance included a quiet passion for so many things! He built and flew kites and model planes with his boys, read thrilling poems and stories aloud to them, painted perhaps a hundred worthy canvasses, wrote stories and essays and reflections. Don stayed in deep touch, over great distance and time, with many, many dear friends. He joined discussion clubs and he respectfully sought out those who might think differently. He had a nearly lifelong obsession with Spain in general and the pageant of bullfighting in particular, becoming an officer in at least three taurine fan clubs. He worked out at the Newtown Athletic Club for decades. He was a tireless builder of sand castles with his grandchildren. He loved to snorkel. Even when he had turned frail, his grandchildren noticed how he would come alive with power, grace and fascination when underwater. He did his best, with his dear Patti, to travel every corner of the world. As long as they were together, it probably didn't matter all that much, but Don was always planning a trip to somewhere new, and a return to this or that "favorite" place.

In this and every favorite place, we will miss him.

A celebration of Don's life will be held at 11AM on Saturday, April 22, at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 47 W. Afton Ave, Newtown PA 18940.

UPCOMING FUNERAL SERVICES

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

Saturday, April 22

11:00 AM 

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

47 W. Afton Ave, Newtown, PA 18940

[Get Directions](#)