

# Donald Budlong Doud: The 2005 Albert S.

**John J. Harris**

*The American Society of Questioned Document Examiners is now into its 7<sup>th</sup> decade of existence. The success of the ASQDE over several generations is due to the hard work and devotion of many individuals. The **Albert S. Osborn Award of Excellence** was created to recognize those individuals who have contributed above and beyond what is expected of a Society member. It is entirely appropriate for these individuals to be recognized by their peers for their exceptional contributions.*

*The criteria for the ASO Award are as follows:*

*A. The recipient must be a living member in good standing of the ASQDE and may be either a Regular or Life member at the time of the nomination.*

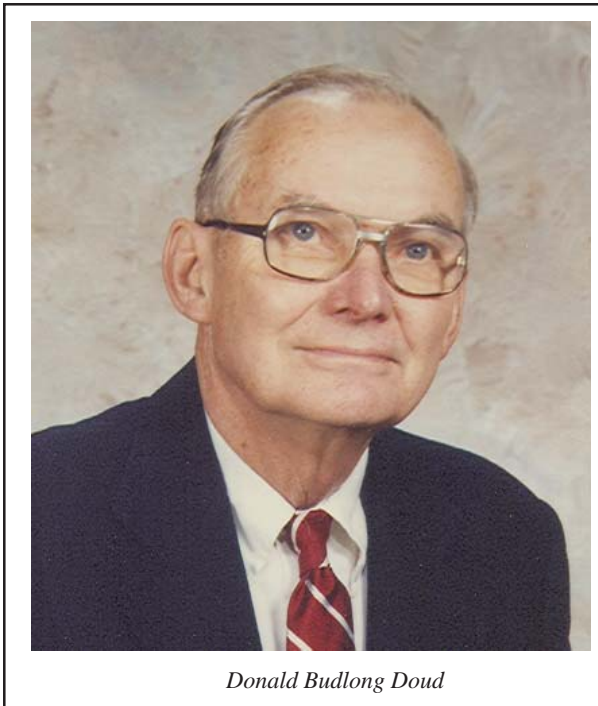
*B. The recipient must have been active in the field of questioned document examination for a period of at least 25 years and must have been a member of the ASQDE for a period of at least 20 years.*

*C. The award shall only be bestowed on persons who have attained exceptional distinction in terms of:*

*1. Cumulative activities, such as professional research or literary accomplishments which advance the field of questioned document examination, and*

*2. Outstanding service to the ASQDE over a long period of time, such service resulting in generally recognized and beneficial improvements in the Society.*

On March 23, 2005, our esteemed colleague, Donald Budlong Doud, passed away at the age of 88. If we could make a TV serial about his life it would have to be entitled: *Everyone Loved Don.*



Donald Budlong Doud

Several months before Don passed away, the ASQDE Board of Directors named him as the recipient of the 2005 Albert S. Osborn Award of Excellence. This is the highest honor the Society can bestow on a member. Don was never one to seek awards, the recognition he received during his long career came to him. Although in poor health, his outgoing e-mail volume picked up and the tone of his correspondence was upbeat and filled with enthusiasm. He and his family were thrilled. This tribute truly perked up his life. He made plans to attend the Montreal meeting but unfortunately, fate intervened. Instead, his wife Jane,

daughter Nancy and son Robert stood in for him.

Most who reach 88 pass away quietly. Some never have a funeral. But Don had one. An overflow crowd of more than 300 friends and relatives showed up to celebrate his remarkable life and pay their respects to his equally remarkable wife Jane, sons John and Robert, and daughter Nancy.

After the service, a couple whom Jane either did not know or remember introduced themselves saying they were former neighbors back in the 1950s in the same apartment house, and that they had read about Don's passing in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. Back then he had examined a disputed contract and testified for them during a successful court fight with the landlord. Having little money, their next worry was Don's bill. When it came, it was for only \$50.00.

They wanted Jane to know that even after all these years they still remembered and appreciated Don's expert assistance and act of kindness. A document examiner couldn't receive a finer tribute. It summed up Don's life. Many document examiners have also been recipients of Don's large-heartedness. To name a few, just ask Jan Beck, Jan Masson, and Dan Purdy how he took them under his wing when they first attended a professional meeting.

In 2003, Don and I were reflecting on our early days and he wrote:

## Osborn Award of Excellence Recipient

*“My entering the profession was an act of desperation on the part of JCS (James Clark Sellers). Everyone else, including you and Dave Black, were in the service, and DBD’s 4-F (draft board) rating (due to tuberculosis) was a blessing in disguise. With my new Bullock’s department store double breasted suit hanging on me like a shroud, plus a horrible polka dot tie and squeaky shoes, the great JCS must have gagged a few times when he hired me at the magnificent sum of \$1.50 per hour. (Don had had training in photography.) He had a backlog of trial preparation a mile long and it had to be done immediately if not sooner. For the most part, I learned the details of QD work from your dad (John L. Harris) during the courses he gave at the University of Southern Cal., although I did try to review all of Clark’s cases on my own.”*

Don was one of those unique humans whose gentle personality and good intentions were so apparent that no one could take offense at anything he said or did. But he did at times frustrate people, me included, and Dave Black in particular. Right after the war, the two of them worked together for three years at the Sellers office. It was a precursor of *The Odd Couple* show. Dave was organized to a fault and neat to an extreme. Everything, even pencils, not only were stored in their designated place and properly sharpened but also pointing the right direction. Let’s just say Don was the opposite. At times he had difficulty finding a pencil. Felix and Oscar in *The Odd Couple* shared an apartment, while Dave and Don were jammed in one tiny room and jointly used a still tinier darkroom. I’ll leave the rest to your imagination.



By 1948, it was time for Don to move on. This was another one of those blessings in disguise because in the process he received a QD education that is both unique and unsurpassed to this day. He had one aim, and that was to become a document examiner, so he didn’t mind being shuttled from pillar to post. These were some pillars and some posts. By the time he settled in Milwaukee in 1951, he had spent six years in Los Angeles with Clark Sellers with added tutelage from my father, J. L. Harris. Next, for over a year, he worked at the Osborn office in New York, followed by a year with H. J. Walter in Chicago. And finally, in 1951, he settled in Milwaukee with John F. Tyrrell. His mentors were all charter members of the ASQDE of which he said H. J. Walter was his idol. Moreover, through an improbable coincidence, after living most of his life in California, he had landed back in the state where he was born. Don summed it up in a letter dated April 29, 2004, *“And it was a grand ride as the Irish say. Wouldn’t have changed anything for the world.”*

During his long career, Don had his share of well-known cases, including the Alger Hiss prosecution, the Clifford Irving-Howard Hughes forged

autobiography, and the Howard Hughes “Mormon” Will Contest. He was also president of the ASQDE (1964-66), chairman of the QD Section of the AAFS (1960), and served on the Board of the ABFDE (1983-89). He authored many technical papers including a letter-form survey in the 1960s, well before Daubert.

While Don was a kindly soul, don’t get the idea that he was a pushover. He had “an edge” (which Jan Beck says all good document examiners have) and became uncompromising when standing up for what he believed was right. His son, John, recalls an incident when his dad took him to court to hear him testify and to listen to the testimony of an opposing graphologist. Afterwards they were in the men’s room, and in walked the graphologist who immediately began to praise Don to the skies, telling him what an honor it was to have worked on the same case and to be in court with such a distinguished expert. Don looked him straight in the eye. John said he held his breath when his father proceeded to tell this graphologist in no uncertain terms that he shouldn’t even be in this or any other courtroom, that he didn’t have a clue about what he was doing, and that he should do something worthwhile with his life. I don’t know whether this graphologist took Don’s good advice, but I’ll bet that he took little or no offense at the way it was offered. Don could do that.

Earlier this year I asked him what he considered his most important contribution to our field. He wrote back:

*“If I had to list the accomplishments I am most proud of it would be the hundreds of talks I gave to bar*

## ASO Award: Donald Budlong Doud (continued)

*associations, American College of Trial Lawyers, law schools, civic groups and QD meetings from coast to coast and in several other countries. I lectured for twenty years before Fred's (Inbau) scientific evidence classes as well as the Ford Foundation Prosecutor's and Defense Attorneys annual seminars."*

On the lighter side, there was a little of Garrison Keillor in Don. He and Jane spent vacations at their cottage on Three Lakes, and perhaps that was

Don's Lake Wobegone. He never took himself too seriously, was a happy person, a good writer, and had a well developed, dry, self-deprecating sense of humor. His witty Christmas letters are classics. People read them and complained if they didn't receive one.

By every measure, Don's life was a success. He overcame a three-year stay at Barlow Sanatorium in Sunland, CA, "with feet never touching the floor" and lived on to be 88. A "chance

*encounter with Clark Sellers"* began his long career, during which time he was regarded as one of this nation's outstanding document examiners. He and Jane enjoyed a marriage lasting 53 years. They raised three offspring and reveled in their seven grandchildren. He always gave more than he received. What more can a person ask out of life than to have a loving family, a successful career, and to be loved and respected by friends and peers? Don did it all. We'll truly miss him.



*Donald Budlong Doud's family proudly accepts the Albert S. Osborn Award of Excellence on his behalf. From left, son Robert, wife Jane, and daughter, Nancy.*