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## Donald Morgan Anderson 1930–2005

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OBITUARY

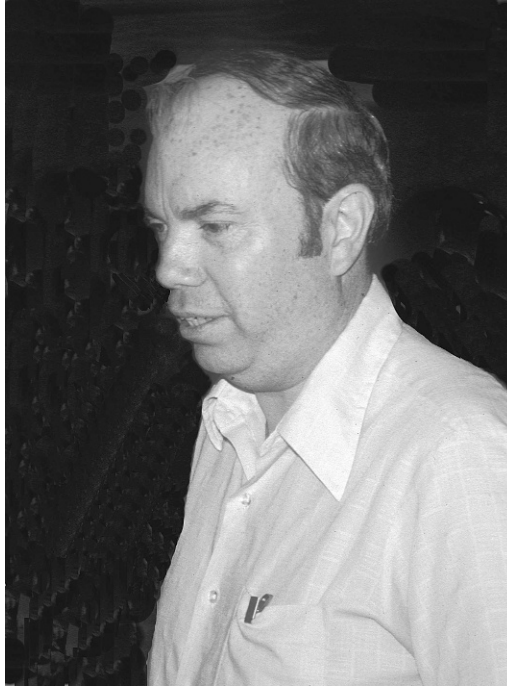


Photo by G. Hevel

Donald Morgan Anderson  
1930–2005

“By Golly” was Don’s strongest oath. He was a gentle, unassuming person, a conscientious scientist, and a dutiful colleague. Don passed away on his 75th birthday, Dec. 27, 2005, of congestive heart failure at a nursing home in western New York. He had retired in 1990 from his position as research entomologist in the Systematic Entomology Laboratory, USDA at the Natural History Museum in Washington, DC. Following his retirement he had worked every day of every other week at the museum, spending his alternate week in Hinsdale, New York. In Jan. 2002, while looking after his sister’s affairs in Wisconsin following her death, he suffered a severe stroke, after which he lived in nursing homes in Wisconsin and New

York, looked after in both places by good family friends and loyal cousins.

Don was the son of John Kenneth and Alice Morgan Anderson. He was born Dec. 27, 1930 in the Maryland suburbs of Washington DC where he lived for most of his life. The family had a farm and property in Hinsdale, New York that eventually fell to Don to manage later in life. His one sibling, Dr. Janet Anderson, was a professor of art history at the University of Wisconsin. Don was nephew to the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Maxwell Anderson, for whose plays the family always had front-row seats on opening night.

Don received his BA degree in 1953 from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio and his Ph.D. from Cornell University,

Ithaca, New York in 1958. He taught biology as assistant professor at the State University of New York in Buffalo for two years before joining the Systematic Entomology Laboratory (SEL) in 1960.

His job in the SEL involved identification and curation of, and research on, beetle larvae as well as on all stages of weevils and related families. This was an extremely large and difficult assignment that he bore without complaint. Don was chiefly committed to the identification part of his job. He was thorough and meticulous, but perhaps a bit too determined to find a species name for every specimen that came under his microscope. He was a boon to coleopterists and others who needed to know these names and the species' relevant information for their own further research. While Don's personnel file accumulated thank you letters for this task, the chore and his own contentment with that aspect of the job bogged him down to the point that his publication record suffered. He nevertheless published about 50 papers during his career. These include keys he developed for identification of weevil larvae in support of books edited by others, contributions that remain largely as useful as when they were prepared. His papers exhibit a gift for writing and great care and expertise. The research he was proudest of involved the worldwide genus *Smicronyx* (Curculionidae) that fascinated him throughout his career. Don's series of publications on that genus began with his thesis topic and his discovery that *Smicronyx* larvae feeding on parasitic dodder plants eventually outgrew the dodder vines before their ultimate instar and crawled into goldenrod stems, host to the dodder, for their further sustenance.

Don was a faithful supporter of the Entomological Society of Washington and served as the Society's president in

1985. A 1980 letter by an earlier-serving president, T.J. Spilman, well illustrates Don's devoted service to the Society:

"Because of your years of active participation on the Program Committee, especially in providing projection equipment and in projecting photographic slides at meetings; because you have provided these services in such a constant and faithful manner; and because you have done this without the recognition of a Society officership, the Executive Committee has voted to recognize your contributions with this letter of appreciation. Therefore, on behalf of the Executive Committee and surely with the agreement of the general membership, I thank you for all you have done for the Society. We are most grateful."

Don was interested as well in Scottish genealogy. He belonged to the St. Andrews Society of Washington and the Clan Anderson Society. For the latter society he served as editor of the newsletter from 1979 to 1985, treasurer from 1985 to 1990, and president from 1990–1992. He proudly wore his kilt to march each year in the Scottish Days festivities in Alexandria, VA.

Don was a quiet institutional memory. He was freer than most to do as he wished, not having a family to support. Don enjoyed perhaps most of all talking and thinking about entomology. His epitaph could be his great generosity in sharing with colleagues and students his time and knowledge of weevils.

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