Donald B. Hayden

(*April 30, 1945 – November 20, 2011*)

Donald B. Hayden was born in Toronto in 1945. His family subsequently moved to the London area where he attended high school and obtained both his undergraduate (B. Sc. Hon. Biol.) and graduate education in the Department of Botany (now the Department of Biology) at the University of Western Ontario. For his thesis, he studied isozymes of malate dehydrogenase in maize endosperm, under the direction of Dr. Frank Cook. After receiving his PhD in 1971, Don stayed on at Western, joining the Department as Assistant Professor.

Early on, Don developed an interest in the composition and organization of chloroplast thylakoid membranes. Following a chance meeting with Phillip Thornber in the early 70s, this interest became focused on chlorophyll-protein complexes. Up to this point in time, chlorophyll protein complexes associated with Photosystem I and the light harvesting complex (LHC) had been identified but the reaction centre for Photosystem II (PSII) had not yet been found. Believing the PSII complex might either be “buried” by the LHC or less stable, Don was convinced that we could find the ”missing” PSII by modifying the methods for isolating chlorophyll-protein complexes and “getting rid of” the LHC. At the time I was studying the effects of light and temperature on chloroplast development and had a maize mutant that was chlorophyll b-deficient (and consequently lacked the light-harvesting complex). Don’s instincts proved correct and, with this system, we were the first to identify the chlorophyll-protein complex associated with Photosystem II. The paper describing this find (Hayden and Hopkins, Can. J. Bot. 1977) has been widely cited and recognized as a seminal paper in the study of chlorophyll-proteins.

Don was well known for his easy manner, his enthusiasm, and wide-ranging (and often innovative) interests. Throughout his career he served on numerous departmental, faculty, and university-wide committees. In 1977, Don was appointed Director of Part-time Studies in the Faculty of Part-time and Continuing Education, followed by a term as Associate Dean of Science (1979-1984). In 1984 he moved into the senior Administration as Assistant to the President. This path led to an appointment, in 1987, as Director of Commercial Development, where his most significant initiative was the founding of a research park at Western. Don then served as a Founding Director and CEO of the UWO Research Park, which now stands as one of Canada’s leading science and technology parks, with campuses in London and Sarnia. The UWO Park is the largest technology incubation centre in Ontario and the largest biotechnology incubation centre in Canada.

Don’s talents were not limited to the academic world. He was also active on the Boards of the Institute for Chemical Science & Technology, the London Development Advisory Board, the London Community Small Business Assistance Centre, and the London High Technology Association.

Although very active in administrative posts, Don never lost his core interests. He continued his research on chloroplast membranes and other topics as well as the direction of graduate students, with his last publication appearing in 2011. Although he retired from the Department of Biology in 2009, Don continued with his interest in the University. Combining his two loves of teaching and intercollegiate athletics, took up a post-retirement position as Academic Counsellor to the Western Mustangs football team.

William G. Hopkins