

The legacy of Emeritus Professor Donald Alexander Bailey, Ph.D.

O legado do Professor Emérito Dr. Donald Alexander Bailey

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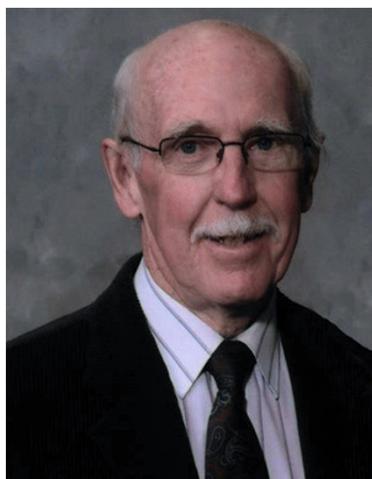


Figure 1. Saskatoon Jan 5th, 1934 - Jun 3rd, 2023.

I never forgot my first contact with Don Bailey in 1978 when I was a national guest speaker at an international sports science event in São Paulo. Don was one of the leading international speakers at the same event. After the event, I had the privilege of showing him the city of Rio de Janeiro alongside G. Lawrence Rarick, former professor from the University of California at Berkeley. We began a friendship there that had a unique meaning for me. During our conversations, I mentioned that I discussed with Dr. Donald K. Mathews the possibility of attending grad school at Ohio State University (Columbus, Ohio, USA). Don promptly told me that if I wanted to study the growth and development of children, the University of Saskatchewan was the place to be. Fortunately, I listened to his arguments and immediately showed interest in the program. A few months later, I received a letter of acceptance from the College of Kinesiology (former College of Physical Education) to study for a master's degree under his guidance, with co-advisership of his former Ph.D. student, Robert L. Mirwald.

On September 8, 1981, I arrived in Saskatoon with my wife and a 5-month-old son to start an utterly unknown journey, except that I was moving from a year-round summer country to an extremely cold Saskatoon (Saskatchewan, Canada).

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Don drove us from the airport on his little old truck to his house, where he and his wife, Donna Bailey, had prepared a room for us in their basement, complete with a crib and toys for the baby. We felt protected and at home. That was Bailey's style.

Don was simple, humble, kind, with a great sense of humor and admirable generosity, disguising his extreme academic competence, excellence in teaching, creativity, and patience with those less prepared, like me at that time.

I soon noticed that behind his simple and uncomplicated way was someone respected academically, not only in Canada but internationally, for the years of work dedicated to studying the importance of physical activity, not only during growth and development but for the whole adult life, including aging. Physical activity was his way of life, and teaching that was almost an obsession carried on with a solid background.

In the two and a half years working under his guidance, I knew firsthand that the treatment I received was the same as many others experienced over the years. He was always like that, sharing his knowledge with everyone and being transparent in his attitude.

Donald Alexander Bailey, Don Bailey, Bailey or simply Don, was born on January 5, 1934, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, to Bill Bailey, a railroad engineer, and Lillian-Helena, a schoolteacher. Don showed an early interest in the sport and was a baseball fan. After attending Victoria Elementary School and Nutana Collegiate (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan), he received his BA at the University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada) and a MA from Bowling Green State University (Bowling Green, Ohio, USA). Subsequently, Don earned his Ph.D. from Indiana University (Bloomington, Indiana, USA).

Upon returning to Saskatoon, Don was offered a position at the College of Physical Education (now College of Kinesiology) at the University of Saskatchewan, where he dedicated his career from (1959 to 1994) which culminated with an Emeritus Professorship after formally retiring from the university, but still active for several years. In 1986, Don went to Australia for a visiting professorship at the University of Western Australia in Perth and spent many years in Brisbane as a visiting professor at the University of Queensland.

As an investigator, Don led the internationally well-known ten-year "Saskatchewan Longitudinal Growth and Development Study (SGDS)", which significantly contributed to the knowledge of the effects of physical activity on children's health, generating several dissertations (including mine), publications in many peer-reviewed scientific journals, books chapters, and many oral communications at national and international events, including in Brazil. Definitely, the SGDS was a great study, well-known in many countries¹⁻⁶ (see the extensive list of references in reference 9 - internet address).

Another significant contribution of Don Bailey was the "Saskatchewan Pediatric Bone Mineral Accrual Study" (SPBMAS)⁷. The study started in 1991 aiming to investigate bone mineral accretion in 228 elementary school children. It involved collecting dietary and physical activity information, anthropometric growth and maturity measurements every six months, and dual-energy X-ray absorptiometer (DXA) bone scans of the whole body. In 2016, 140 children were still enrolled in the study.

The impact of his studies can be measured by the number of citations of some of his publications. During his productive academic career, he was also one of the leading forces behind a national non-profit organization launched in the 1970s by the Canadian government called PARTICIPATION, which promotes healthy living and physical fitness⁸. After a few years of being canceled for financial reasons, PARTICIPATION is back on. His involvement with PARTICIPATION demonstrates his desire to promote these values beyond the academic realm and into broader society.

Hopefully, it is clear from my description that Don Bailey was an accomplished academic, compassionate, and generous individual who had a lasting impact on those he interacted with. His dedication to physical activity, growth, and development, as well as his role in significant research studies like the SGDS and the SPBMAS, highlights his commitment to advancing scientific knowledge to improve children's health and well-being. Don co-authored many scientific papers, books and papers in scientific meetings around the world with other outstanding scientists including William (Bill) D. Ross, Robert Malina, Clarence Stuart Houston, Gaston Beunen, J.E. Lindsay Carter, Barbara Honeyman Heath Holl, Noel Cameron, among many others⁹.

The personal anecdotes I've shared about my interactions with Don Bailey in the early days of my academic journey in Saskatoon and the friendships formed during that time reflect his profound impact on my life and many others. Individuals like Don Bailey leave a legacy through their academic contributions, the meaningful connections they build, and the inspiration they provide to those who follow in their footsteps. His simplicity, humility, approachability, and academic excellence set him apart as a remarkable mentor and individual.

Don died peacefully at home with his family near him on June 3, 2023, at the age of 89. He leaves his wife of 65 years, Donna, and their children, Bonnie, Byron, and Jonathan, and grandchildren Mark, Mireya, Jacob, and Sam, and one great-grandchild, Lily.

We will miss Don for all that and much more not mentioned here.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Supplementary material accompanies this paper.

Supplementary File 1: Free access in <https://osf.io/4j3yb/>

This material is available as part of the online article from <https://doi.org/10.1590/1980-0037.2023v25e96347>