



A TRIBUTE TO DON WALTER



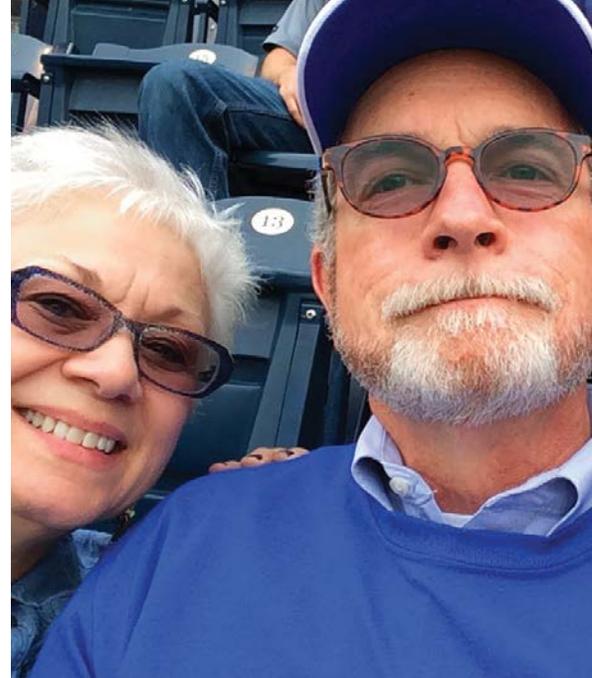
DECEMBER 13, 1952 - MARCH 26, 2019

MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE lost a good friend with the passing of Don Walter on March 26, 2019. Survivors include his wife of 40 years, Kathy; daughters, Alyssa and Amanda; and grandchildren, Max, Abby, and Lyla.

Don's call as a young man was to serve the Lord as a pastor, and he prepared for that career by attending MidAmerica Nazarene College and Nazarene Theological Seminary. After graduation, and several years into his work as a minister, he received another call, this in the form of a phone conversation with Dean Wessels, who was director of Pensions and Benefits Services. Wessels wanted Don to return to the Kansas City area to serve as part of his office staff.

Don began work for P&B in September 1983. His early responsibilities included stuffing pension checks, stocking the snack closet, making occasional runs to Dairy Queen for staff treats, and generally trying to keep the atmosphere upbeat.

It wasn't long, however, before his true gifts were recognized. He was appointed office manager, began taking on more responsibility, and, in 1994, was elected by the Board of General Superintendents as the new director of Pensions and Benefits USA. In this position, he was responsible for overseeing a ministry that serves more than 17,000 church employees and spouses with financial assistance, such as retirement benefits and life and disability insurance. During his tenure, Nazarene benefit plan assets grew from \$200 million to more than \$600 million.



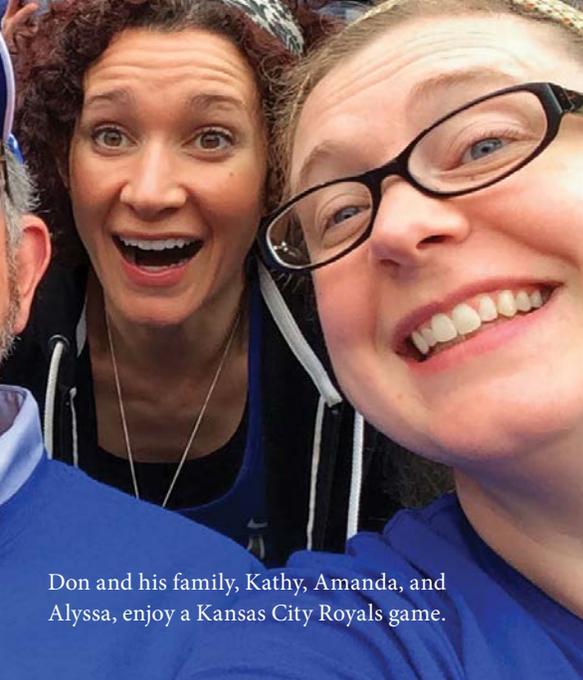
“Don Walter exemplified the Nazarene spirit of generosity, compassion, and genuine care for those who selflessly serve the Lord and His church,” said Gustavo Crocker, chairman of the Board of General Superintendents. “Only heaven knows the vast number of ministers who have been helped by the ministry that our brother Don so passionately and faithfully led.”

“The Church of the Nazarene, and particularly the ministers of the church in the United States, have greatly benefited from Don's leadership,” said Geoff Kunselman, chairman of the Nazarene Board of Pensions and superintendent of the Northwestern Ohio District. “That Nazarene ministers throughout the U.S. have access to excellent services and programs at reasonable costs is directly attributable to him.”

Don was a thinker—a person who understood the value of



Don was a kid at heart, so it was easy for him to have fun with his grandchildren, Lyla, Abby, and Max.



Don and his family, Kathy, Amanda, and Alyssa, enjoy a Kansas City Royals game.

staying informed. After returning to P&B, He earned a master's degree in business administration (MBA), because he knew it would better equip him for his assignment. And he never stopped learning. He was constantly reading and consulting with others to stay abreast of what was happening in the world of finance, government, and ministry.

Don recognized there was wisdom in the counsel of others, so he hired the most qualified staff and located the most informed consultants and attorneys he could find in the benefits field. He relied on all of them to assist in the development of plans and resources to help Nazarene church employees get the best benefits and services possible.

Roger Creeden, P&B administrative director who worked with Don for 26 years, said, "If I could pick a common theme of the hundreds of meetings we shared, it would be that we all need to work harder and smarter

**THE
DON
WALTER**
*memorial fund
has been created
for the benefit of
retired pastors.*

*Gifts may be
sent in care of
the Church of
the Nazarene
Foundation,
17001 Prairie
Star Parkway,
Lenexa, KS
66220.*



to make sure the servants of the church have basic benefits and are ready for life events, such as retirement, an untimely illness, or death. Don made sure that everyone in our office and all of our business partners understood that we are here to take care of our ministers."

Part of Don's broad approach to learning involved affiliating with those who held similar responsibilities in other organizations. Don's good friend and biking buddy Nevin Dulabaum serves as president of the Church of the Brethren Trust and is a member of the Church Benefits Association (CBA) and the CBA Mid-Plan group. Nevin said Don's influence helped

After years of running, Don switched to bicycling, and chalked up hundreds of miles riding trails and in events such as this one (RAGBRAI) in Iowa.





Don served as the organizer and de facto leader of the Mid-Plan group of the Church Benefits Association until his death.

ministers beyond the Church of the Nazarene:

“Sometime early in his tenure, Don began attending the Church Pensions Conference, an annual gathering of faith-based pension plans. Don was elected chair at a time when he and others thought all participating denominations could benefit from more than just an annual meeting if they committed themselves to formally working together. During his tenure as chair, the Church Pensions Conference membership organized and the Church Benefits Association was born.

“When Don’s term as CBA chair concluded, he realized that while the issues and needs of the big- and mid-plan groups (those with assets of less than \$1 billion) sometimes overlapped, sometimes they did not. And so an unofficial Mid-Plan subgroup of CBA CEOs

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was formed, and Don took the lead of that group. Until his death, he was the only leader the group ever had. He was committed not only to serving the Church of the Nazarene, but to ensuring that CBA member denominations have the tools they need to serve their clientele effectively.”

Don was unique. He was witty, thoughtful, smart, ornery and a bit sarcastic at times, honest, had a great memory, and tried to anticipate the future. He was deeply grieved when the stock market tumbled in 2008, affecting the retirement savings of pastors. Nevertheless, he encouraged ministers to hold steady. He believed the economy would stabilize and that stock prices would come back. Many were happy to see he was correct.

Don lived what he would call a “robust” life. He enjoyed fishing with his grandchildren, watching the KC Royals, taking long rides on his bike, refurbishing old fountain pens, and, most recently, handcrafting items out of leather. He truly enjoyed having fun and spending time with others, including retirees. He was often asked to speak at meetings of the Association of Retired Ministers and Missionaries (ARMM) in Bethany, Okla.

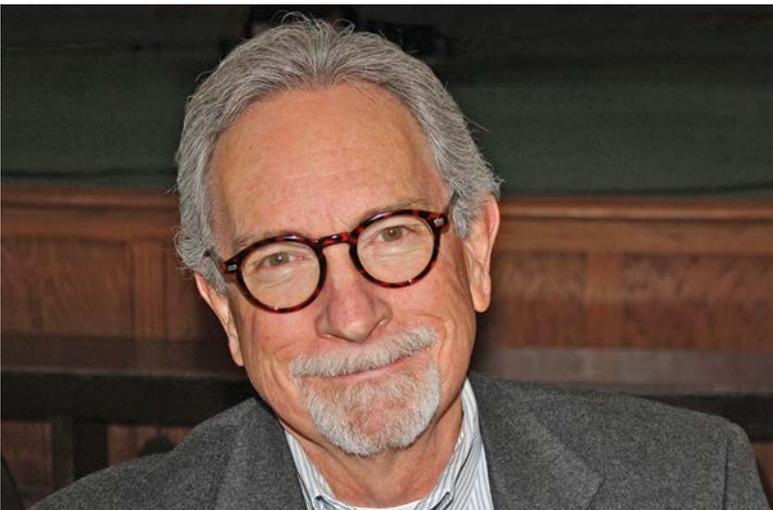
Also, Don traveled a lot—to business and actuarial meetings, and to the many workshops he



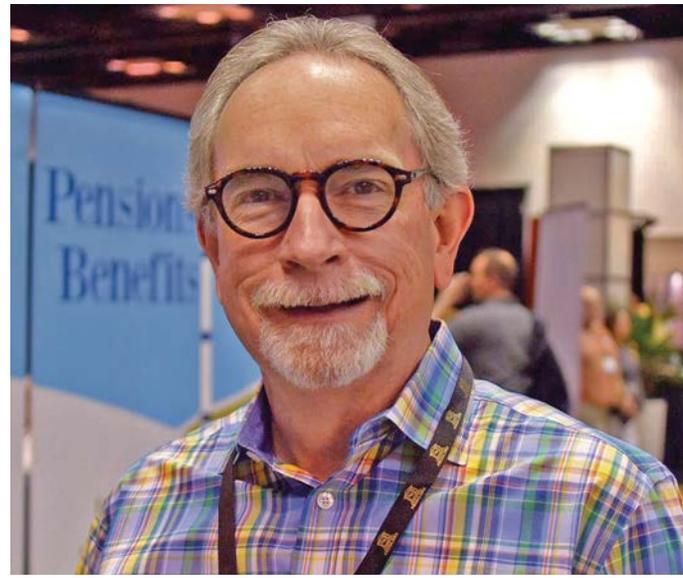
Don spent countless hours answering questions and sharing information at church meetings, like this PALCON.

held to teach pastors about taxation, compensation, and the plans of Pensions and Benefits USA. He also enjoyed getting away for days at a time on his bike. Don wrote about one of his cycling adventures in his Jan-Feb 2009 column, "Minute with Don." Entitled "The Church Still Stands," it serves as a fitting testimony to his faith:

"I am not a person who does his best thinking in the middle of crowds and confusion. So, a few days ago I sought out one of my favorite places for solitude and reflection. I took my bike to a section of the KATY State Park trail system in central Missouri. In the late 1980s, the former



Don's warm and mischievous personality was caught on camera by photographer William Duke.



Don in the P&B USA booth at the 2017 General Assembly.

Missouri Kansas Texas Railroad decided to abandon the stretch of tracks that went from near St. Charles to Clinton. The state acquired the right of way and turned it into a hiking and biking path. Over the past three years, I've ridden nearly the entire 225 miles of the path in both directions. It's a great place to get a fresh perspective on life.

"Among other sites, the trail travels within a few yards of the front door of St. Marcus Church near Rhineland. This part of Missouri was settled by German immigrants in the mid-1800s, and the St. Marcus Evangelical Church was first built by some of those folk in 1891. According to local information, you can still attend services there every Sunday morning. On the day I rode by, fall harvest was at full throttle

and nearby farm machinery contributed a constant hum to the sounds of nature, along with a little extra dust to the air.

“I sensed genuine comfort in the moment as I was reminded of the true meaning of stability. In the 117 years since the church was built, there have been at least three financial panics, two World Wars, and one Great Depression—but the church still stands.

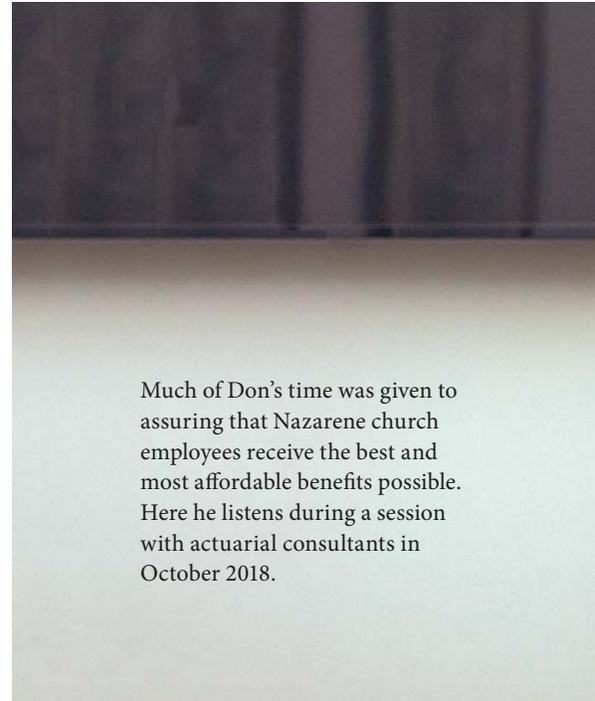
“A couple of things caught the attention of my spirit as I prepared to depart from the location and head on down the last few miles of the day. The first was the cross atop the steeple. That symbol of God’s divine intervention into humankind’s history is a reminder of why the church stands. The second thing was the St. Marcus Cemetery perched on a hilltop just east of the church. With every morning’s sunrise the little church, in a very real way, rests in the shadow of a mighty cloud of witnesses. No doubt the earthly remains of some of the immigrants who envisioned a church home on this site in 1891 rest in that cemetery.

“As I rode on toward the end of the day, an old song came to mind with words that say, ‘This world is not my home; I’m just a-passin’ through. My treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue.’

“Whether times are calm or volatile we need to keep them in perspective. Fortunes rise and fall, empires come and go. But as

“ONLY
HEAVEN
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THE
VAST
NUMBER

*of ministers
who have been
helped by the
ministry that our
brother Don so
passionately and
faithfully led.”*



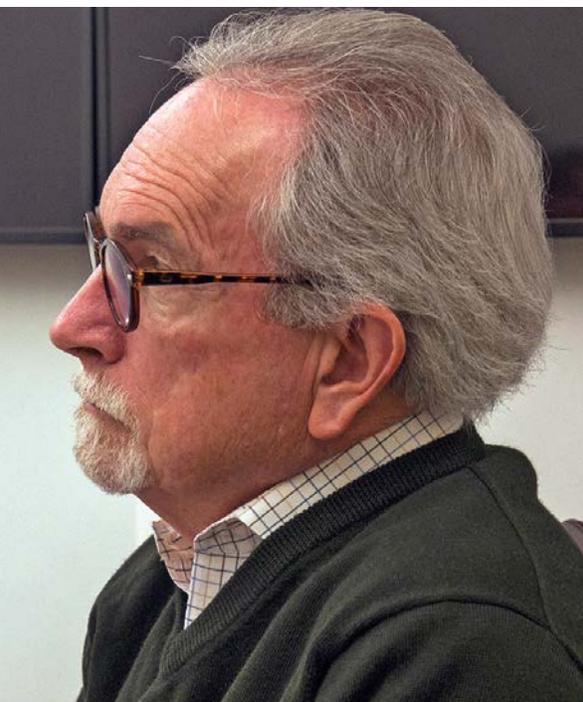
Much of Don’s time was given to assuring that Nazarene church employees receive the best and most affordable benefits possible. Here he listens during a session with actuarial consultants in October 2018.



Don loved participating in the meetings of the Association of Retired Ministers and Missionaries in Bethany, Okla. Here he visits with John Williamson, Mel McCullough, and Orville Jenkins, Jr.

citizens of an everlasting kingdom, we can rest in the assurance and hope which is the possession of all who live with the awareness that sunrise is still yet to be.”

Don had planned to retire in three years, just after the 21st General Assembly. We deeply



Don's staff planned a special time of celebration to mark his 30th year of service to the general church in 2014.

regret he never got to enjoy that well-deserved experience for which he had worked and encouraged so many others to plan for. In preparing for his own departure, however, he was confident in the personnel and systems of his office. The work would go on. And it does. We continue to pay benefits, take calls, respond to emails, conduct webinars, and do the myriad tasks involved in an office of 16 staff members who serve the thousands of ministers, spouses, widows, and other employees of the Church of the Nazarene.

Don is missed by many, but he would urge us to build on the legacy he himself built upon. Today, a search is on for a new director of Pensions and Benefits USA, and that person should find comfort in knowing that he or she will step into a situation with a solid foundation that was laid by others who came before, including Don Walter—a good man who loved and faithfully served the Lord and His people.

Mark Graham is communication resources manager and editor for Pensions and Benefits USA for the Church of the Nazarene.

DON'S OBITUARY

*and a video
of his
memorial service
may be found at
pbusa.org.*





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