

DON E. CRABTREE

Don E. Crabtree was born on June 8, 1912 in Heyburn, Idaho to Ellis E. and Mabel Morgan Crabtree. He is the second of three children, having an older sister, Virginia (Mr. Lewis Hack) and a younger sister, Helen Rose (Mrs. J.T. Anderson) both of Twin Falls, Idaho.

At the time of his birth his Father was a Minister in the Methodist Church, serving as pastor for both the church in Heyburn and in Burley.

in 1915 the family was transferred to Salmon, Idaho where his Father was the Pastor of the Salmon Methodist Church as well as Postmaster for the town. It was here that Don first became interested in Indians and their tools. His Mother would have him run errands to the next-door neighbor and, as a reward, this lady would give Don an arrowhead which her husband had gathered. Young Don became fascinated with these tools and, even at this early age, he began to wonder "why" and "how" they were made. There were, at this time, still many Indians in Salmon and their custom was to sit flat on the sidewalk with their legs stretched in front of them. Don found it great fun to jump over their legs and to talk with them, for which he was severely reprimanded by his Mother.

For the next few years the family was transferred by the Church to parishes in Richfield and Filer where young Don occupied his time collecting arrow-points and spent much time studying them and wondering why there were so many different shapes and kinds.

When Don was six, his Father's health failed and, therefore, he gave up the ministry and moved to the Salmon Tract in Twin Falls where the family proved up on forty acres. This was desert country and Don spent most of his time hunting the desert for artifacts and campsites and building his collection of Indian tools.

When Don was 8 the family purchased 10 acres on what is now Falls Avenue in Twin Falls and Don transferred from the Berger school to the Twin Falls school system. The acreage was just a stone's throw from the Snake River Canyon and Don spent every possible moment hunting the canyon, collecting from campsites and caves, and adding to his collection. When the County graveled the road in front of his home, Don found, among the gravels, bits of broken artifacts and nodules of obsidian. He collected the obsidian and, at the age of 10 he began to try to reproduce the artifacts. This meant more and more trips to the canyon for material, and Don was constantly in trouble with his Father for being away from home so much, for the many cuts on his hands and the unremovable blood-stains on his clothing. Many is the spanking he received for coming home after dark, but even this did not cure him of his quest for knowledge of the Indian and his tools. One day he became so fascinated with a campsite that he failed to notice the setting Sun and, in his hurry to get home before dark and avoid a spanking, he climbed the metal structure of the Perrine Memorial bridge. This was observed by a neighbor, who stood rooted to the spot until the young boy had safely reached the top and then, knowing of his Father's disapproval and punishment, kept this secret from his parents until Don was 21 years old. At one point, his Father became so disgusted with Don spending so much time on knapping that he offered to pay him \$100.00 if he would promise never to make another arrowhead. Don wanted a bicycle and gun so badly, that he considered this offer for some time, but the love of Indian lore won, and he told his Father he could not give up his attempts to make tools as the Indians had.

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When Don was 12 he was still trying to knapp, without a great deal of success, and for some reason which, at the time, he could not explain, he started to thermal treat the agates and jaspers and, as a result, he found he had much greater success with the treated material. His Mother tells of constantly finding a pan of sand and rocks in her coal range and even discovered rocks among the hot coals of the furnace. Unlike his Father, his Mother was very patient with Don and encouraged and tolerated his use of her range and pots and pans and overlooked the piles of chippings left in the backyard, basement and barn. In bad weather, she would even find this young man chipping in the living room, and one day came home to find him boiling the head of a deer on the coal range into which he had shot an obsidian point to determine penetration.

By the time Don was in High school, he was reproducing a very satisfactory arrowhead and had built quite a reputation, locally, as an amateur archaeologist and paleontologist. I note from an old newspaper clipping, that he was invited, at this time, to speak at the noon luncheon meeting of the Kiwanis Club and they were fascinated by his speech on archaeology and his demonstration of knapping.

Don graduated from the Twin Falls High School in June 1931. At this time, the family was living in a large home on West Addison Avenue in Twin Falls and his Father was busy furnishing the State with pickles under the business name of Twin Falls Pickle Company. The great depression was at its height and so Don had to give up his dream of an education in archaeology and, instead, went to work for his Father in the pickle business.

During this time, as a member of the National Guard, Don competed with riflemen in the State of Idaho and, as a result, he was sent to the National Rifle Matches at Camp Perry, Ohio, where he placed second in the State of Idaho for rifle shooting and 17th in the National Navy Match.

He worked on his knapping, which was improving, continued to search the deserts, Snake River Canyon and even the Chamberlin Basin and the Stanley River country in search for further knowledge to help him reproduce not only the shape but the flake character of the Indian artifacts. He also corresponded with various Universities and Museums throughout the U.S. and met and talked to the Director and Curator of the Field Museum in Chicago and, as a result, filled their order for a mountable skeleton of a rare three toed horse which he procured for them in the Owyhee Desert. To the Bronx Zoo in New York he sent a diminutive, dinosaur type lizard, which he caught by placing a well-aimed shot under its stomach. He also worked as research assistant to Richard P. Irwin of the Boise State Museum. He conducted a fossil-hunting trip for a Millionaire whose hobby was archaeology and took a Harvard University party out to collect fish skeletons. He assisted C.P. Singleton during the time he was working in the Hagerman Valley for the Smithsonian Institute and the following year he again worked for Mr. Singleton for Amherst University.

By 1934 he had saved a little money and went to Long Beach Junior College in the hopes of starting his education as an archaeologist. While going to college he worked for the Lang Transportation Company to supplement his income. At the end of his first year in college, Don had a bad throat infection, numerous doctor bills and found that he was unable to continue financing his education and so he returned to Twin Falls to work for the Idaho Power Company. He worked on Hydro-Electric Power Plant construction

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and had a part in the construction of the Twin Falls, Swan Falls, Upper Salmon and Clear Lake Power plants. He continued work with the Power Co. until he, later, went to work for the University at Berkley.

During this time he continued his knapping and hunting and, as a result, of his desire for an Indian skeleton, he almost becamed jailed by the local sheriff. He and a companion were digging in what they thought was an old Indian burial ground south of Hansen, Idaho when they were startæed to look up and see Sheriff Prater and Charles S. Wolgamott. By this time, the boys had exhumed two complete skeletons which greatly upset Wolgamott as the people buried here had been his close friends. Overcome by emotion, the aged frontiersman, Charles Wolgamott, explained to the boys their mistake, naming his personal friends who had been buried there more than a half-century. Unfortunately, one of the uncovered graves was that of J.R. McNire, a freighter who was crushed between moving freight wagons and who was a personal friend of Wolgamott. After a severe lecture by the sheriff, the boys were ordered to re-bury the skeletons and had to promise not to disturb any other pioneer sites.

In 1936 Don donated Paleo material to the Los Angeles County Museum as a result of correspondence with Dr. W.A. Bryan.

In 1938, Don went to San Francisco looking for work and, as a result of a chance meeting with Dr. Charles Camp, was hired by the Museum of Paleontology at the University of California at Berkley. He was made supervisor of the Vertebrate and Invertebrate Laboratories and also did field work with Dr. Reuben Stirton. While doing this work, Don spent as much time as possible with Dr. Krober and Professor Gifford at the Museum of Anthropology, and they both encouraged him to continue his study of knapping and technology. Many of the artifacts he reproduced were donated to the University and recently Dr. Robert Heiser told Don that these specimans are still being used for instruction purposes.

During the time Don work for the University, he was introduced by Dr. Hodge of the Southwest Museum to Joseph Barberi who lived in Pasadena, California and was a very accomplished flint knapper. He was able to compare techniques with Mr. Barberi and learned much from this contact.

In August 1939, Don became ill and returned to Twin Falls to consult with his friend and doctor, Harwood Stowe. After an examination, it was learned that Don had a fast spreading type of cancer. Dr. Stowe operated and removed the tumor and then sent Don to Boise for a complete body X-ray treatment. This therapy was quite new at this time and, as a consequence, Don was over-treated and became very ill. He was returned to Twin Falls where he was hospitalized for nine months. After eight months, he was down to 72 pounds and Dr. Stowe said there was no hope of saving his life. At one point Don was pronounced dead by the intern doctor and was being transferred to a cart when Dr. Stowe entered the hospital and said "This man is not dead". After a direct injection into the heart, Don was revived, but the doctors could give the family no hope for his survival. Unable to retain food or liquids, Don was slowly starving to death. At this point, his Mother asked permission to give him some of her "home-made" grape juice. This he took only a spoonful at a time, but was able to retain it. In a week, he was literally drinking gallons of grape juice and was fast improving. After a month, he was able to eat and left the hospital. When he was dismissed, Don weighed only 80 pounds and was left with a phlebitis of the left leg and was unable to walk. To help his convalasance and to try and forget the pain of the leg, Don turned to his knapping with a vengeance. With the use of a cane, he would hop out to the barn and there spend all day pressure flaking and studying flint technology. By the time the leg was better, Don had improved his knapping and was now able to reproduce almost all artifacts with the exception of the Folsom.

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In 1941 Don was employed by the Ohio State Museum to reproduce many types of artifacts. There he met Holmes Ellis and Dr. Shetrone who encouraged him in his work and asked him to keep notes and eventually write a book on flint technology. While there he attended the American Association of Museum meetings and gave demonstrations. Dr. E.W. Gifford took special interest in his work and encouraged him to continue.

During this time, he also visited the Museum of Natural History in New York where he met Dr. N.V. Nelson and also visited with Dr. H.H. Roberts at the Smithsonian and was able to study the material from the Lindenmeir site. This study helped him with his Folsom work and, as a result, he was now able to reproduce a Folsom and Clovis artifact.

The war with Germany was declared and Don, unable to enlist in the army because of the cancer history and the phlebitis in the leg, again went to Long Beach California to help in the War effort. There he worked as Coordinating Engineer for the Bethlehem Steel Company.

In 1943 he met and married a Long Beach girl, Evelyn Meadows, who was then Southern California Divisional Manager for Investory Syndicate. They built a home in Long Beach and both continued to work throughout the war.

In 1946 they moved to Twin Falls and purchased a Motel which they operated until 1953. During these years Don worked part time for the Crown Mfg. Company as a jewelry repairman. Mr. Bob Summerfield became interested in his work and sent him to school in Salt Lake where he learned diamond setting and jewelry design. He later became manager of the Crown Mfg.Co. for Mr. Summerfield. At night, Don was working on his knapping and he feels that this diamond setting aided him in the use of his hands and actually improved his knapping technique.

When the Standard Oil Company purchased his Motel in 1953, Don and his wife took a years vacation which they spent hunting campsites and working on improving his knapping and making notes on his past work.

In 1954 he was employed by the Agricultural Stabalization and Conservation Service of the Department of Agriculture and later was made County Supervisor for Twin Falls County. He continued in this employment until 1963.

In 1958 Don and his wife spent two months in Mexico trying to learn the secrets of making the Mayan Flaked blades and Polyhedral Cores. Also, at this time, Don met Dr. Earl Swanson of the Idaho State University who helped and encouraged him in his work. In 1959 Don again went to Mexico where, through the help of Swanson, he was able to attend the Congress of Archaeologists in Mexico City. In 1961 they again spent 30 days in Mexico visiting Uxmal, Chitzen-Itza, Cozumel and the Pyramid of the Sun. As a result of these visits and bringing back genuine cores, Don was able to reproduce the Mayan Flaked blades and the Polyhedral Core.

On Memorial Day, 1962, Don was hunting material at an Indian quarry site about 22 miles out of Arco when he was stricken with a heart attack. His wife and a friend drove him the 22 miles to the Arco Hospital where he was placed in Oxygen and given medication and his life saved. However, the 22 mile ride to the hospital and the lack of oxygen enroute had taken its toll and Don had suffered a Coronary Occlusion and was left with a damaged heart. He was hospitalized for four months and then tried to return to his work at the Department of Agriculture, but was unable to continue. On the Doctors advice he was retired on a disability by the A.S.C.S.

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Since that time he and his wife have spent their time improving Don's health and making notes on his past work. This retirement has given Don much free time and he has spent most of his spare time working on improving his many techniques, experimenting with thermal treatment and training a young man in knapping.

With the help and encouragement of Dr. Earl Swanson and B. Robert Butler of Idaho State University, he has now made his knapping a full time hobby and, thru their efforts, was able to attend typeology meetings in Pocatello, Portland, Eugene, Reno and Pullman and also to attend the Technology conference in Les Eyzies, France. With their help, he is getting his notes in order and preparing a paper on the Folsom.

Don's future plans and hopes are to work further with Swanson and Butler and, with their help, get down on paper the facts of flint knapping and an explanation of flint and flake technology. With their help and encouragement, he hopes to produce a handbook which will be available to all ~~xxxx~~ Universities and will contain much of his work for the past forty years.