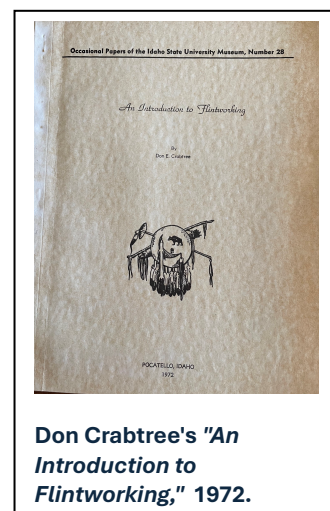


Don Crabtree Testimonials: 2025

From Julia Anderson, a Don Crabtree niece.

Lorann Pendleton, lithic specialist, Emeritus North American Archaeology Lab Director, American Museum of Natural History, New York City, N.Y.

Dave Thomas forwarded your email inquiring about the current state of Don Crabtree's relevance to contemporary archaeology. I've recently retired as a lithic specialist who mentors our students (2025). I've attached the first publication I assign, as it is still the bible on flintknapping. It also serves as our primary dictionary of flintknapping terms. Without this publication, the entire field of lithic analysis simply would not exist. RARE is the scholar who can foster an entirely new field of study. Don Crabtree did that and his work is ageless.



James Woods, M.A, Idaho State University, anthropology, College of Southern Idaho, anthropology professor emeritus; Herrett Center, Director (retired), Twin Falls, Idaho.

As a matter of perspective, Don Crabtree collaborated with archaeologists all over the world, not just those working on issues related to North American prehistory. He was not solely focused on making copies of American Indian artifacts. He was engaged in the stone technologies of Europe, Asia, Africa, Central and South America. In the 12 years I knew him, he expressed very little interest in getting wrapped up with local artifact collections or collectors. He continually turned down requests to look at local collections, give demonstrations to local scouts or church groups, or get distracted from his real mission. **In a nutshell, he wanted to focus on how to use the scientific method to better understand the mechanics of stone artifact production** and the many regional and temporal variations preserved worldwide in the archaeological record.

Barbara Purdy, (1928-2024), Ph.D., Professor Emerita, Department of Anthropology, University of Florida; Curator Emerita of the Florida Museum of Natural History.

It is impossible to calculate how many times references to Don Crabtree's work have been cited in the archaeological literature over the past 20 years (1984). Citations must number in the thousands, which is pretty good for someone who was not an archaeologist. The observation has been made before that the greatest contributions to a field of study often come from individuals who are not restricted by the rather narrow view that results from indoctrination into a discipline that requires each member to learn and adhere to a certain set of principles. Most people are aware of Don's studies

of lithic techniques have enabled archaeologists to infer behavior about processes of manufacture and uses of chipped-stone implements in ways that had not been explored previously. A very informative but not widely known article (by Crabtree) about the flintknapper's raw materials appeared in *Tebiwa* 10, no 1 (1967). Here the reader gains an insight into the vast information that Don possessed about lithic materials and their properties. Don E. Crabtree died on 16 November 1980. His contributions to archaeology are among the most significant in the twentieth century." – A 1984 dedication to Don E. Crabtree in the forward to ***“Prehistoric Quarries and Lithic Production***, (Cambridge University Press), edited by Purdy and Johnathon E. Ericson.

Charles Andrew Speer, Ph.D., University of Texas, Associate professor, anthropology, Idaho State University. Don Crabtree was super important to the field of archaeology because he influenced researchers' understanding of debitage. He understood stone tools and the decisions you make at different points in the manufacturing process. A whole generation of archaeologists were inspired by what he was doing. I still tell my students about Crabtree. He influenced a lot of people to do a lot of big things.

William Andrefsky Jr., Ph.D., Binghamton University, anthropology; Washington State University Graduate School, Dean, (retired), WSU Department of Anthropology, chair, Emeritus, and former president of the Register of Professional Archaeologist (RPA). Don Crabtree was one of the first to recognize the value of experimental approaches in stone tool technology. There were others that came before him, working in Europe and even in the Americas. However, he was probably the most influential person in this field because he reached so many people. Crabtree's insight into stone tool technology was astounding. That insight was generated by his knowledge and abilities as a lithic craftsman. He was a master craftsman who translated his knowledge to the academic community. His monograph, *“An Introduction to Flintworking,”* swept through the discipline and influenced everyone working with stone tool analysis for the next half century and it is still used today. Crabtree was the first to comprehensively define, illustrate and explain the shapes and characteristics archaeologists were seeing in the stone artifacts they were excavating. The terms he used to characterize various techniques and morphologies were expertly explained and diagramed. As a result, students and professionals gravitated toward his monograph for instruction and analysis. His impact on the profession was Herculean.

J. Jeffery Flenniken, Ph.D., Director, Laboratory of Lithic Technology, Washington State University, Pullman, Wash. Don Crabtree had a holistic perspective on the manufacture of stone tools. He was just as interested in the unfinished bifacial blank as he was in the finished product. He understood that ancient people recycled tools and that the manufacture process is not a straight linear reduction sequence. **Don's gift to**

archaeology? Experimental archaeology, stone tool replication. He was a pioneer, one of the first. Was he a genius? I'd say so. He also was obsessed. He had to know how it was done. He could see things that I didn't. He could see things in three dimensions. I can't name anybody who came close to Don Crabtree.

As a little kid, Don was heat-treating flint in his mother's woodburning stove. He rediscovered this process that had occurred throughout prehistory. He was the one who brought all that into archaeology. Don Crabtree deserved every bit of the recognition that came with his honorary degree from the University of Idaho.

Phillip H. Shelley, Ph.D., Professor of Anthropology; Graduate School Dean, Eastern New Mexico University, Portales, N.M. "Don was a true expert. He freely shared his knowledge and experience with all who wanted to learn about flintworking. His knowledge of various technologies and techniques was vast both geographically and temporarily. He knew more about stone tools than most academic archaeologists working at the time. In addition to his expertise, he was one of the nicest men I ever met. He made a significant impact on the field of archaeology that has lasted to today."

Yuumi Danner, M.A. Anthropology, College of Graduate Studies, University of Idaho. Professor, Cultural Anthropology, Imperial Valley College, Imperial, Calif. and Crabtree biographer. "In my undergraduate work at a school near Clovis, N.M., I learned about Clovis points and stone toolmaking. I decided to go to the University of Idaho for grad school, and within the first couple of weeks, I was introduced to the (Alfred W. Bowers) Lithic Lab. I became interested in experimental archaeology and Don Crabtree. I had to know more about him. In 2017, I wrote my master's thesis: ***"Reflections in Stone Tools: A life Story of Don E. Crabtree."*** I see Crabtree as a creative genius, who, in his childhood, found that he was great at making stone tools. He found the strength to go on developing that for the rest of his life. He was into experiments and learning, exposing himself to innovative ideas and new technologies to relive past technologies. There was no limit or goal to the work. He taught by demonstration and communicating about what he was doing. His methods go beyond lithics studies, even anthropology, and can be applied to general technology (research).

John E. Clark, Ph.D. University of Michigan, anthropology; Brigham Young University, professor anthropology, emeritus. Crabtree almost single-handedly moved lithic studies from taxidermy and description to explanatory concerns dealing with the manufacture of specific artifact forms. He was never satisfied with his own level of understanding of various technologies. Crabtree was a consummate craftsman and meticulous worker. He was a man of questions. Each new fact, each new experience, each conversation generated more questions, which he wanted to answer.

One could not talk to Don without realizing his vast knowledge and enthusiasm for making and understanding chipped stone tools.

Terry Ozbun, M.A. RPA, senior archaeologist and lithic technology specialist, Archaeological Investigations Northwest Inc., Portland, Ore. Don Crabtree's contributions opened the door to a way of understanding lithic technologies that is infinitely expandable. That is, the use of experimentation to replicate ancient technologies applies to over 2 million years of lithic technological development and we have only scratched the surface of what can be learned using this approach. Experimental flintknapping provides a window into understanding the complex combinations of techniques and decisions people made in the past. Although he has been gone, now, for nearly half a century, Don Crabtree continues to be the single most important person in the history of anthropological and archaeological understanding of ancient and modern stone tools. His groundbreaking publications demonstrated the power of experimental analogy and have influenced thousands of archaeologists to this day. I continue to use ***"An Introduction to Flintworking"*** as a basic text in workshops that our company teaches. These workshops are geared towards archaeologists and Native people who want to learn how to recognize and analyze stone tools and particularly the byproducts of their manufacture and maintenance. ***Careful analysis of flakes (byproducts of flintknapping) allows reconstruction of lithic technologies and the steps involved in the process of making stone tools from quarrying stone to tool manufacturing, to repair and resharpening of those tools. This is particularly important for understanding how people made decisions about their use of lithic tools in different contexts. Don Crabtree was the key pioneer in this approach."***

Nicole Schwend, M.A, Anthropology, Boise State University; Canyon County, Idaho Parks Director. Don Crabtree learned to revitalize the ancient skills of flintknapping by experimentation through trial and error, not due to an academic journey or career path, but purely out of his own intense curiosity, interest, and tenacity beginning at an early age. Don's later academic and career associations with archaeology proliferated out of his lithic skills; archaeologists, scholars, researchers and students sought out those skills. His work caused archaeologists to think beyond simply labeling artifacts and to go further and consider the entire life cycle of an artifact. Don's thinking and skills went beyond what archaeologists were doing at the time. Don considered lithic artifacts according to the stages of production, the variety of processes needed and used from start to finish, procurement and transportation of raw materials, the time-and energy expenditure from start to finish, breakage or damage during and after production, signs and methods of repair and re-tooling of artifacts. While Don was focused on lithics, his hands-on experimentation and analysis of the entire lithic process spread beyond just lithics and archaeologists started asking these same questions about all artifacts not

just stone tools (but basketry, clothing, structures, foods, pottery, anything created or manipulated by humans).

Don took on many students, both men and women, who went on to incorporate and proliferate experimental archaeology in their careers, academic circles, and with their own students thereby solidifying experimental archaeology as a valid and integral branch of archaeological research and analysis. Experimental archaeology has moved beyond flint knapping, into all facets of archaeology, from basketry and pottery to sites and construction (think cliff dwellings and Stonehenge), from cooking and food processing to petroglyphs and pictographs. Experimental archaeology is broadly applicable and allows for better understanding and interpretation of the past and provides researchers with an avenue for scientific testing of hypotheses.

Don Crabtree's work and influence pushed the field of archaeology to see the importance of considering more than the final product, more than just an artifact label, and to delve into the entire life cycle of human manipulation and creation and all that it might mean and what might be learned from it. One needs only turn on the history channel or any archaeology documentary to witness how modern archaeology uses experimental archaeology directly in their research, or they cite the experimental work of others. Don Crabtree's influence on archaeology has led to a much deeper and meaningful understanding of the past and superior archaeological interpretation by ensuring archaeology is hands on beyond excavation and identification.

Daron Duke, Ph.D., RPA, principal, Far Western Anthropological Research Group Henderson, Nev.; Society of American Archaeology, Crabtree Award chair 2025.

Don Crabtree was a seminal figure in archaeology because he was a master craftsman in stone toolmaking, but more importantly because he was the go-to guy for every interested academic who needed these insights. His perspective is woven into many key archaeological books and articles. There's hardly been anyone like him, so these perspectives are still relevant, and almost anyone who does know something was either trained directly by him at field schools or by someone trained by him and so on.

The Society of American Archaeology has been handing out the **Crabtree Award** since 1985. The Crabtree Award is not limited to people who do flintknapping, but oriented toward people whose efforts in a similar vein have had great impact on academic research and the training of archaeologists.

Richard L. Rosencrance M.A., Ph.D candidate at the University of Nevada, Reno and instructor at the University of Oregon Museum of Natural and Cultural History Archaeology Feld School. "Don Crabtree is in a mythical place, in my mind, in the ethos of American archaeology. This is at least the case for those of us who seriously study stone tool technology. Don Crabtree's pioneering flintknapping replication work, aimed at producing replicated items to better understand stone tools from the archeological record, set in motion decades of reform in how we approach and

consider lithic (stone) analysis in American archaeology. This is largely because he was one of the first from modern Western society to remaster flintknapping as a skill. His replication taught us basic tenants of flintknapping principles and physics. This informs dozens of studies since that have investigated flaking mechanics, the consistency and accuracy of replication studies, and how to interpret final products of stone tools and waste debris in the archaeological record. His work remains relevant, as I've noted, because it really forms a foundation from which most modern scientists, at least working in the Americas, understand stone tool production and reduction."

Ken Reid, Idaho State Archaeologist, retired; Idaho Historic Preservation Office, administrator, 2000-2018, Ph.D., archaeology University of Kansas. Don Crabtree made large contributions to Idaho archaeology, lithic technology, and experimental archaeology. I often cited his work in those subjects, as well as in historic archaeology.

John Fagan, Ph.D., RPA, Washington State University. Senior archaeologist, Archaeological Investigations Northwest Inc., Vancouver, WA. Don introduced archaeologists in the Americas and Europe to the benefits of experimental archaeology in interpreting archaeological artifacts and sites and providing a means of understanding past human behavior. Don offered workshops in lithic technology through the **National Science Foundation between 1969 and 1974** where he provided training to a wide range of archaeologists that were able to apply what they learned in their teaching, fieldwork, analysis, and writing. Don also prepared several videos and wrote articles on lithic technology topics and did demonstrations involving flintknapping. His influence on his students has spread through them to other archaeologists. There has been a massive increase in lithic technology literature in major archaeological journals that can be attributed to Don's influence on his students and their students since the early 1970s. Is his work still important? ***Don's work was and still is important today and has contributed to a better understanding of past human behavior related to the manufacture, use, trade, and distribution of stone tools and their byproducts.*** His work provides a way to understand how flakes and other byproducts of stone tool manufacture can provide information about how tools were made and what decisions the ancient flintknappers made in the production process. Having hands-on experience through experimental archaeology provides an archaeologist with a better understanding of what goes into breaking rocks in a controlled manner to produce useful stone tools. Experimental use of stone tools contributes to a better understanding of how to interpret wear patterns on cutting edges and impact scars on projectile points. Understanding lithic technology helps to differentiate between tools that were broken in manufacture as opposed to those broken in use and allows for an interpretation of what people were doing at a location that became an archaeological site. Artifacts are keys to the past, and Don's work has

provided a means of understanding the people who made and used these tools in their daily lives.

Max Pavesic, Boise State University, anthropology professor, (retired). Don was a pioneer in experimental lithic technology. Self-trained but early in his studies he was part of a research group in lithic technology at the **Ohio Historical Society** during the Great Depression. He inspired and taught many students, primarily through summer workshops sponsored by the **Idaho State University Museum**. He was always open to sharing his knowledge with others. He is recognized internationally and is considered the dean of North American lithic studies. Researchers continue his efforts to understand relationships between cultures and time.

Robert “Lee” Sappington, Ph.D. Washington State University, anthropology; University of Idaho, associate professor, Dept. of Culture, Society and Justice.

Archaeology has been a field for a long time, but its origins often dealt with rare items or things associated with the wealthy. During the 1950s, there was an effort to make archaeology more anthropological and to examine commonplace or typical things. Stone tools have been made for millions of years but very few people tried to understand how they were made or used prior to that time. ***Various scholars, especially in France, began studying stone tools in the 1960s. Don Crabtree was doing the same in Kimberly, Idaho, and he was self-taught.*** When he was “discovered” by archaeologists from ISU (Idaho State University) in the early 1960s he became an international celebrity and was one of the founders of the field of lithic studies. Making and understanding the manufacture and use of stone tools became an international field and coincided with the development of experimental archaeology in general. ***Don Crabtree helped to revolutionize archaeology.*** He taught field schools that were attended by people from around the world and the students spread the knowledge that he shared so freely with anyone who was interested. He authored and co-authored numerous articles that are still relevant. Lithic studies are now part of the mainstream and the foundation for much of prehistoric archaeology around the world.

Mark G. Plew, Ph.D., University Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Department of Anthropology, Boise State University, Boise, Idaho. Regarding Crabtree's contributions to archaeology, I believe they remain quite relevant though time has changed how often Don's work is the sole citation for anyone doing lithic analysis. In this regard, I find that students now are more familiar with lithic analysts of the past 25 years. What's important to remember is that while there were others like (Alonzo W.) Pond (1894-1986) who were conducting replication experiments in the early 20th century, it's Crabtree in 1972 that framed lithic analysis as a scientifically valid study, created standard means of referencing lithics and set aside debates regarding artifacts vs ecofacts (natural objects modified by humans). The fact that there are now numerous

lithic analysts speaks to how important his work was and has remained. For those of us who knew Don personally he will forever be remembered for his calm manner, good spirit and willingness to engage with both academics and members of the public.

Anthony J. Ranere, Professor Emeritus, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA. B.A., Harvard University (1964), M.A. Idaho State University (1968), Ph.D., University of California at Davis (1972), all in anthropology.

I not only attended the 50th year celebration (2019) of Donald Crabtree's Field School, but I was probably one of his first students in 1967 while enrolled in a Master's program at Idaho State University in the Anthropology Department. These were short informal sessions, some at his home, some at the university, but I learned how important knowing how stone tools were made - and knowing oneself how they were made - and I became a flintknapper and a lithic specialist for my entire career and I, in turn, taught lots of students flintknapping.

Don was one of the very few early flintknappers who approached in a systematic scientific way not to make pretty spear and arrow points but to replicate the way ancient flintknappers made tools. He was also one of the few world famous flintknappers and his publications are still worth reading. He will always be a major figure in any discussion on the history of incorporating knowledge gained through replicative flintknapping into standard archaeological analysis. Perhaps even more importantly, He trained a large number of students who went on to train a large number of students who also went on to train large numbers of students.

Don Crabtree remains relevant today (2025) because some of his published contributions can be considered "classic." And of course, his approach to replicating and studying ancient tool manufacturing techniques was passed on to a younger generation of archaeologists, who in turn passed them on to a still younger generation. I'll also say to you that Don was a wonderful person. He was not particularly impressed by his own celebrity and was gracious in his relationship with everyone, including students like me.

Daniel S. Meatte, Washington State Parks archaeology program manager. "Don Crabtree laid the foundations for lithic studies in North America - and elsewhere - while inspiring an entire generation of archaeologists to utilize replication studies as a fruitful line of archaeological inquiry. However, in my estimation, it was Don's willingness to share his enthusiasm and curiosity with everyone he met that was so inspiring.