

A Tribute to Donald W. Nugent, 1941-2018

It is with much sadness that the Club notes the passing March 5, 2018, of our loyal long-term Benzie Spartan, friend and Club supporter, Donald W. Nugent. Don was involved with our Club since its inception in 1995 and was often in attendance at our social events together with his wife, Gail. To Gail and to his surviving family we extend our most heartfelt sympathies and also our thanks for all that Don, Gail and family have accomplished in support of Michigan State University and Benzie County.

For young people of today, Don was an over-the-top example, yes -- inspiration, of what a college education can lead to, particularly when coupled with on-site business experience (in his case agri-business). He bought a farm at the age of 19 and attended MSU on a "six-year" plan: taking classes in fall and winter and going back to farming the rest of the year. He graduated from MSU in 1965 with a bachelor's degree in horticulture. From that point he rose, as any reading of his career and life accomplishments will reveal, to be a major presence in Benzie County and the State of Michigan. These career highlights, and awards bestowed upon him, have been revealed in detail in recent published obituaries. We do not repeat them all, but rather highlight two of local interest and focus upon his support for advanced education.

He founded or served on Boards of several companies, at least two of which have had a direct and positive impact on the economic welfare of Benzie County. In 1973, he acquired the Elberta Packing Company and transformed it into the Frankfort-based Graceland Fruit Cooperative, known for producing and marketing infused-based dried cherries, cranberries, blueberries and apples. To this day, the company is one of the larger employers in the County. In addition, he co-founded and was Chairman of the Board of West Michigan Bank & Trust (acquired in 2016 by West Shore Bank). Amid all

his business and agricultural involvements, he managed to find time to serve his alma mater for 16 years as a member of Michigan State University's Board of Trustees. During this tenure he enlightened Club members at an annual dinner with a stimulating talk about MSU's expanding international presence, much of which still involves assisting developing countries in improving agricultural production – a topic close to Don's heart. When his Board term ended, the Club honored him in 2011 for his service to the University by establishing a Club scholarship under his name. Fittingly, Don presented the first Donald W. Nugent scholarship to a future agriculture student, Hannah Fallowfield.

Don's enduring educational contribution, indeed—a legacy, lies in encouraging the development of the Club's scholarship endowment fund to help local high-school students attend Michigan State University. Seed money pledges provided by Don and the late Terry Herban provided the impetus for more donations that enabled the initial 5-year goal of \$90,000 to be surpassed within three years; an amazing achievement for a Club of its membership size. In 2017, interest yield from this fund enabled \$1,900 scholarships to be awarded each to three MSU-bound high-school students. Donald Nugent's support for advanced education and enthusiasm for Michigan State University was unwavering during his life and will continue on through these scholarships. Don will be missed, but these scholarships mean that he will not be forgotten.

As suggested in his obituary, those wishing to make a memorial contribution in Don's honor may do so by supporting the Club's Endowment Fund, which in turn supports the Donald W. Nugent Scholarship. Instructions for donating to the Endowment Fund may be found elsewhere on this web site.