

Remembering Don Pszczola

IFT's *Food Technology* magazine Senior Editor Donald E. Pszczola, 54, passed away on Sept. 28, after a long illness. A key member of the *Food Technology* editorial staff for 26 years, Don's commitment to provocative, enlightening, and comprehensive coverage of the world of food and beverage ingredients and product development—often with a humorous touch—was unwavering. Staying abreast of ingredient advances and trends was a labor of love for Don as the reflections on the next page, penned a few months before his death, make clear.

"Having covered the food industry for more than a quarter of a century, Don witnessed many trends come and go and then rise again, such as sodium reduction. His experience and knowledge of the evolution of food ingredients and their functionality brought a unique insight to formulating food and beverages. He combined that insight with personal stories about his food cravings, likes, and dislikes to both inform and entertain readers. An original foodie, Don will be missed on many levels—his writing style, wit, intellect, and passion for and commitment to his craft and the IFT organization," declared Bob Swientek, Editor-in-Chief.

Don's monthly *Ingredients* column was a reader favorite, and many have called and written to express their sense of loss upon learning of his death. Linda Kragt, Director of Technical Services for Morton Salt, remembered Don as a "great writer," whose columns she frequently enjoyed on her train rides home from work.

Food Technology Editor Emeritus Neil Mermelstein, who worked with Don for many years, was a fan of his "thoughtful, informative" style and praised his prolific output.

"I really liked his offbeat

but sincere approach," reflected Joseph O'Donnell, a former colleague at the National Dairy Council and now Executive Director of the California Dairy Research Foundation.

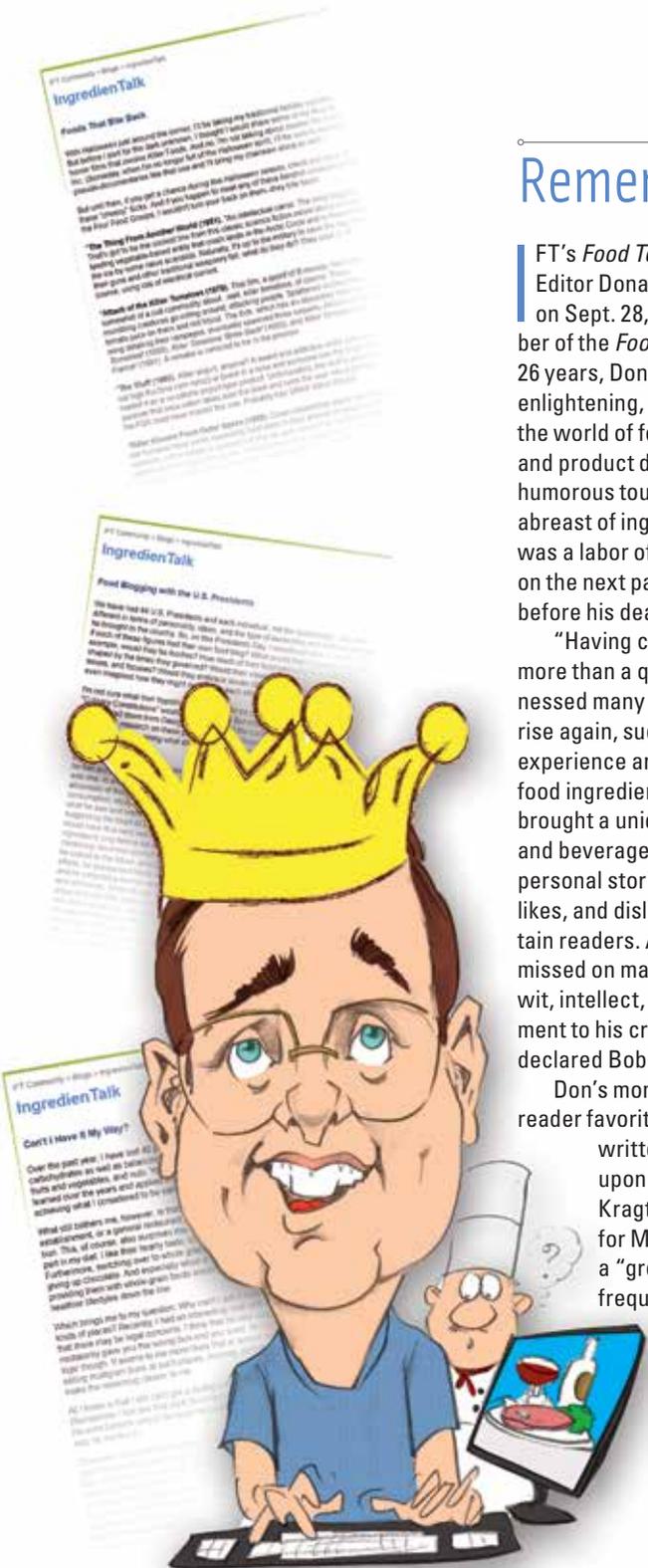
"He was a great guy and really knew his stuff," recalled Eric Borchardt, Director of Marketing, Glanbia Nutritionals. "He and I had a lot of conversations over the years, from food ingredients to Halloween decorations. It's a big loss to our industry, and he will be greatly missed."

Marketing and creative services strategist Jim Andrews of the firm Tango described Don as one of his favorite editors. Andrews applauded his way "of cutting very quickly to the meat of the news" and noted that "Don's curiosity seemed always to drive him to dig deeply and push further into any topic he covered."

Prior to joining IFT in 1987, Don held editorial positions at the National Dairy Council and *The National Provisioner* magazine. He received a bachelor's degree from Augustana College and a master's degree from Washington University in St. Louis.

He was a familiar face at IFT's Food Expo as well as many other food-related conferences, trade shows, and meetings. In 2010, Don debuted the blog *IngredientTalk* on ift.org. It was an ideal outlet for his uniquely insightful spin on ingredient news and trends, liberally sprinkled with personal anecdotes and whimsical observations.

Outside of the office, Don was an ardent movie fan and amassed a collection of more than 16,000 films. He had a particular fondness for the horror genre, and in a related vein, loved creating elaborate Halloween displays at his home. In fact, he decorated for many holidays, including Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. During the summer months, he was an avid gardener. Don shared his home with a charming Chihuahua named Bubbles, who was his faithful companion on long walks around the neighborhood.



Despite the rigors of medical treatment and his declining health, Don stayed connected to IFT and the ingredients realm, continuing to write his beloved Ingredients column until shortly before his death. His final column for *Food Technology* appears in this issue.

Although Don was a private person, his writing offered a window into his one-of-a-kind view of the world of food—a view that those of us who admired and followed his writing—will surely miss. Just as we will miss Don himself.

TO MY READERS:

I have seen strawberry fields covered in what looked like popcorn but were actually white flowers of the strawberry plant. I have waded through pools of water that were red with cranberries that had risen to the surface. I smelled the intoxicating perfume of vanilla beans. I was there when irradiated strawberries and chicken were sold for the first time in a Midwestern store. I covered a food show during 9-11 and learned how fragile life is and how one act can affect so many. I rode in the co-pilot seat of a private airplane as we flew over farmlands one early morning, and I remembered how green it was below while the clouds above were orange. I tasted savory cupcakes and chia seed puddings. In a Tennessee woods, on a crisp fall day, I learned how smoked flavors were made. Yes, fat replacers. I covered those. I never did figure out what “natural” meant. And I still have somewhat of a problem with the term “clean labeling.” I laughed with CEOs when others might have talked business. And at media events my table was always the most boisterous and trouble-making. I don’t know why. I tasted alligator in New Orleans, and in Orlando I rubbed the belly of an alligator until he smiled. I once lunched in a walnut orchard where the trees were whitewashed to protect them from the chill of the night. I tasted chocolate made with chili peppers long before it became fashionable. I chatted with dairy farmers—the most independent people I ever met. I patted the heads of a few cows in my lifetime, and if I could be reincarnated as an animal, I would probably come back as a cow. Their “earrings” are pretty cool, too. I was there when chefs began appearing at the Food Expo. I have seen a proliferation of sweeteners and the growing

dominance of natural colors. I sampled a fusion of flavors that at one time would have been unimaginable. There were no blogs when I started. You couldn’t do one on a typewriter. On Halloween, ingredient suppliers would sometimes stop by my haunted castle to see what kinds of surprises I could cook up. My first stories I ever did for the magazine were on cyclodextrins, encapsulated aspartame, and the manufacture of a new sweetener, high fructose corn syrup. I’ve written more than a 1,000 stories, and I probably broke every rule in the book. My articles were more like conversations: informal, sometimes humorous, and always ongoing. And I always imagined my reader nearby. These were just some of the experiences I have had over the past 26 years, and I have indeed been a lucky man—luckier than most—and I want to thank the ingredient suppliers and you the reader for letting me share in these experiences and be part of their evolution. I only wish that I could have been part of the next 26 years as well, but unfortunately pancreatic cancer wouldn’t allow me that privilege. I can only be there in spirit, but I hope that every ingredient writer that follows in my footsteps will have the same amount of excitement that these ingredient developments afforded me, and do their best when communicating that information to you. Finally, over the years I have been called different things. That’s probably because most of you couldn’t pronounce my name. In any case, sometimes I have been referred to as “the ingredients guru.” Never liked that title—for me, learning on the job is always ongoing. If you really want to keep learning, avoid considering yourself an expert. Rather, I like to think of myself as the “Ingredients Guy.”

*And so, with all my love and respect,
Donald E. Pszczola—The Ingredients Guy*