

A legacy of ideas: Roy D. Holt, 1955–2003

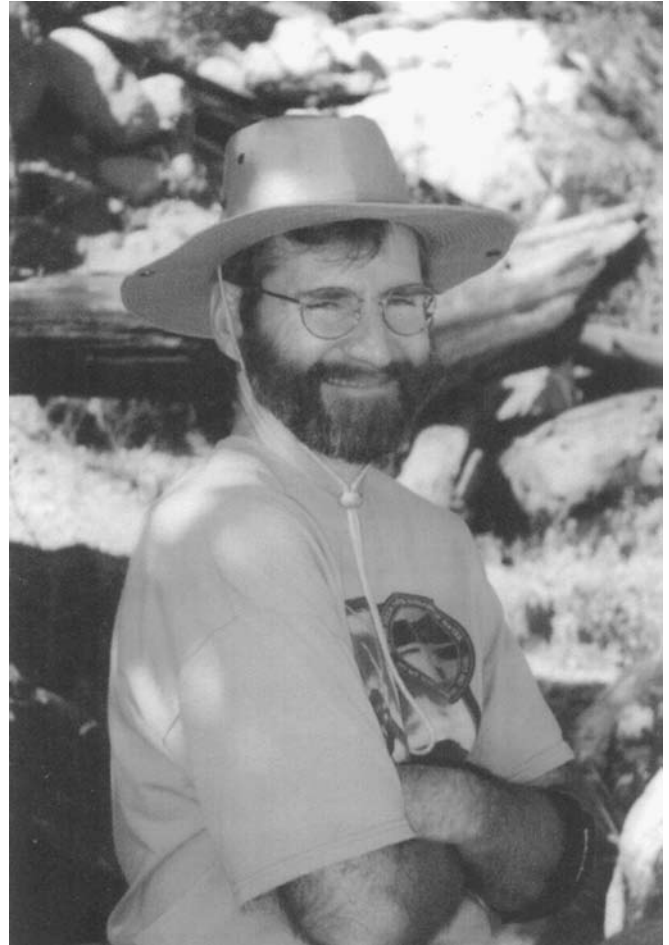
D. Russell Humphreys

In September 2003, an unexpected coronary thrombosis swept one of the finest creationists I've know, Roy Holt, into the presence of his Lord and Saviour. He was only 48, the same age at which, back in the 19th century, God took home another fine creationist physicist, James Clerk Maxwell. Roy admired Maxwell's equations and clear thinking. Unlike Maxwell, however, Roy was not as well known as he should have been, even among creationists. I attribute that to his almost excessive modesty. He believed strongly that he should not advance his scientific views by arguments with fellow believers, showing a humility that not many of us practise. But his family and hundreds of friends around the world know that was only one of many Christian virtues he exemplified, such as rock-solid integrity and deep respect for the Word of God.

I first met Roy in 1985 when he walked unannounced into my office at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA. He was on a visit from Kansas City, where he worked at Allied Signal Aerospace Corporation, designing electronic components for Sandia. He had read a few of my papers in the *Creation Research Society Quarterly* and wanted to meet the author. I saw that Roy had an uncommonly strong streak of common sense, both in science and in the rest of life. He also had an uncommon enthusiasm for creation science. He was very active in the Creation Science Association for Mid-America, and was a speaker much in demand in Kansas City.

In the summer of 1989, Roy married Melanie Joy Beenken in Missouri, and they moved to Albuquerque, where Roy began working for Sandia National Laboratories. He built a house with a spectacular view in the mountains east of Albuquerque. Over the next seven years, the Holts had three children, whom they homeschooled. After his death, his wife and children moved back to her relatives in southern Minnesota, where they are doing well.

In 1990 Roy helped found the Creation Science Fellowship of New Mexico and became an active speaker. He was very interested in our local 'Temple of Evolution', the New Mexico Museum of Natural History. He wrote a creationist guidebook for the museum and conducted tours of it. We videotaped one of the tours and condensed it to several pages on our website.¹ The tours were so interesting that many extra people, including museum guides, would gather and follow along. Roy collected many fossils and museum displays of his own, hoping to convert the basement



Roy Holt was a quiet achiever in the field of creation science and will be greatly missed.

of his home into a creationist museum. Poor health in the last five years prevented him from achieving that dream. But I'm sure he would be pleased to know that his books and materials are now at the *Answers in Genesis* museum in Kentucky.

Starting a cosmology

One of the most important legacies Roy left was a set of fruitful ideas in creation science. He stimulated the creationist cosmology I presented in my book *Starlight and Time*.² I remember well the lunch with several creationists in 1989 where we were discussing the big bang theory. At the time, I was beginning to study that theory seriously, but I still held the very common misconception (even among scientists) that it claims to have started as an explosion of a very small 'cosmic egg' in an otherwise empty three-dimensional space. Roy, having had the same misconception I had, pointed out in his usual common-sense way that because of the extremely high concentration of mass, such an explosion would have to have started deep in a black hole!

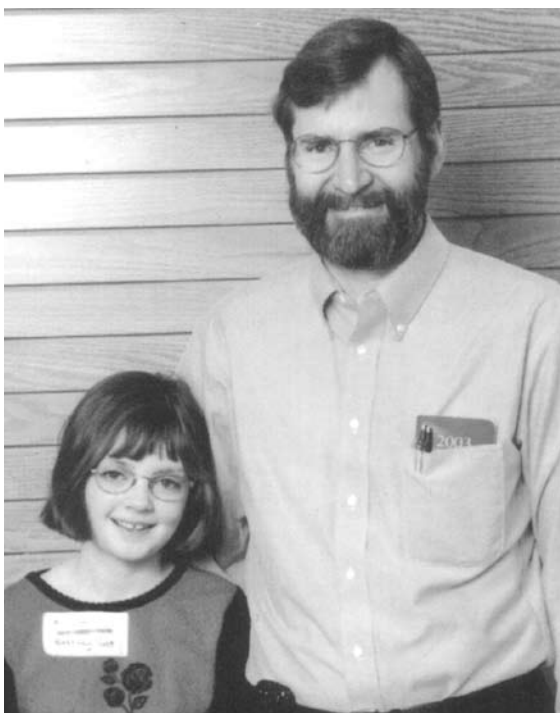
It was a logical consequence of the picture of the big

bang we had in our heads, but I knew from my studies that the actual theory did not claim that the big bang started in a black hole. After a moment, I realized that the problem was the ‘otherwise empty three-dimensional space’ we were imagining. The mathematics of the big bang theory assumes, in a not-so-obvious way, that there was *never* any empty space. *All* space, it alleges, was always filled with a roughly uniform density of matter and energy. That eliminates the concentration of matter within an empty space that would produce a black hole. It was a forehead-smiting ‘Why-didn’t-I-see-that-before?’ moment. The result was a cosmology that made the inverse assumption, thanks to Roy. In my book,³ I briefly acknowledged his contribution, but I am glad for the opportunity to clarify what he did. In the late 1990s he gave me another good cosmological idea, based directly on Scripture, which I am working to develop.

Reversing land and sea

Another big idea dominated his creationist intellectual life, but few have heard of it. That was the thought that, somehow, *sea and land reversed their roles* during the Genesis Flood. Before the Flood, the continents we now stand on would have been the floors of shallow seas. The dry land of Genesis 1:9 would have been elsewhere.

To develop that concept, Roy suggested that the created pre-Flood continents consisted of less-dense material (such as lime, gravel, sand and dirt) than the granites of today’s continents. The Genesis Flood would then have swept those lighter materials, mixed with land plants and animals, into the lower-altitude seas.



Roy Holt and daughter on a visit to Sadia National Laboratories

First, mud from the land would bury seafloor life, such as the shellfish fossils we find in Cambrian strata. Then it would catch and bury more mobile sea life, such as the fish we find mainly in Devonian strata. Next, we would have shoreline plants and small reptiles (Carboniferous strata), followed by low-altitude swamp-dwelling animals such as the dinosaurs (Mesozoic strata). Finally, there would be larger mammals and plants from the interior of the pre-Flood continents, high plains and mountains, depositing the Cenozoic (Cainozoic) strata atop the others. Then the present continents would rise up out of the world ocean. The waters running off would erode much of the Cenozoic strata, grinding up the larger fossils and dumping the mud into our present ocean basins.

This simple picture explains the fossil order (mainly of ecological zones) more satisfyingly than any other creationist Flood model I know of. In particular, it explains how the delicate fossils of the Cambrian, such as crinoids, could be buried in place without the rough transportation that might have destroyed them. It also explains another difficult pair of puzzles: where most of the sedimentary material came from, and why most of it is piled on the continents instead of elsewhere.

Roy knew that this role-reversal picture contradicts the presuppositions of some Flood modellers. Consequently, he planned a series of articles presenting the idea in logical steps over many years. The first of these articles was on the stratigraphic location of the Flood/post-Flood boundary.⁴ It made his case with 59 pages of detailed data and over 300 references. But poor health prevented him from writing the rest of the series. I believe it would be helpful to Flood modellers to know what his aim was, perhaps stimulating them along similar lines. We will miss Roy very much.

References

1. Holt, R.D., Storming the gates of evolution, website tour by Creation Science Fellowship of New Mexico, <www.swcp.com/creation/museum.htm>, November 2004. Video by Mark DeSpain of actual tour is available on the same site.
2. Humphreys, D.R., *Starlight and Time*, Master Books, Green Forest, AR, 1994.
3. Humphreys, ref. 2, p. 128.
4. Holt, R.D., Evidence for a late Cainozoic Flood/post-Flood boundary, *TJ* 10(1):128–167, 1996.