

# **Frederick T. Bent**

*November 13, 1921 — March 2, 1987*

Throughout its history the faculty of Cornell University has been blessed with many members of quiet dignity for whom the word gentleman has been an apt descriptor. Frederick T. Bent was such a man. He was a man of principle who lived by, and fought for, what he believed in. But win or lose, he was loyal to his school and to his university.

Fred Bent was a private person but one who established deep and lasting friendships. He could put others at ease. He was a good listener. Open-minded. Receptive. Responsive. Warm. Humorous. Unpretentious. An effective advocate. Competent. Articulate. Diplomatic. Reasonable. Fair.

Fred was a person who inspired trust and one who trusted others. He tried to see the best in people, and that is what he was able to bring forth from them. His integrity showed through in all his dealings. Those factors, combined with his intelligence and good judgment, made him a candidate for assignments of responsibility, leadership, and trust throughout his career.

One of his most visible achievements was the founding of the new School of Management at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, where he served as the first director. A further monumental achievement was the organization of its Executive Development Program, a program that succeeded in drawing clientele from, and achieving harmony among, the many diverse factions in the Middle East.

These assignments followed many prior ones. Fred was a member of the initial survey team that established the relationship of what is now Cornell's Johnson Graduate School of Management with the Middle East Technical University of Ankara, Turkey (METU). He served as the school's liaison with METU for the first two years of the contract with that university. He then exchanged jobs with Seymour Smidt, taking over as the Cornell faculty member in residence at METU. Later Fred was a member of the school's survey team that established the exchange program with the University of Leuven in Belgium. He was the faculty coordinator for that program for years, as well as an exchange professor.

Fred worked for the Ford Foundation as a consultant to the government of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf, serving several tours in various assignments. He also worked with Robert Nathan Associates on assignments in Africa and the Middle East.

Fred was asked to be the director of the Johnson School's International Programs, a position in which he served until his death. He was a recognized authority on the Middle East and appeared often in the media in that role.

Most recently Fred worked energetically—despite his illness—to develop a comprehensive new yearlong course entitled “The Manager in the International Environment.” He was to have offered that course for the first time in the fall of 1987. The course was to have been the centerpiece in the Johnson School's increased emphasis on international business.

Fred Bent's family, their church, and their extended circle of friends formed a central focus in his life. He took great pride in the achievements of his wife, Nancy, and of all their children, each with his or her own unique flair. Holidays always signaled the time for a gathering of the clan for festivities and feasting. And there was plenty of both, as we would learn from Fred when work resumed.

Fred Bent was also proud of his midwestern background. No doubt it was those roots that nourished his labor and love for the Bent “spread” in Lansing. He was at his happiest when reclaiming grass from encroaching stubble or protecting gardens and shrubs from marauding deer. Fred Bent was one of the few among us for whom four hours of mowing was a true labor of love and source of renewal rather than a chore.

A member of the Johnson School's faculty since 1958, Fred received his B. A. degree from Ohio State University in 1943, his M. A. degree from the University of Chicago in 1947, and his Ph.D. degree—for which he majored in political science and minored in industrial relations—from the University of Chicago in 1954.

He was the social science representative on the Fulbright Selection Committee in 1959 and a member of the executive committee of the Social Science Research Council in 1959-60. He was the associate director of the Center for International Studies in 1963-64 and in 1968-69. In 1970-71 he was a senator in the first Cornell University Senate. In 1986 he was a member of the University Committee on Freedom of Teaching and Learning. At the Johnson School he was the acting editor and book review editor of *Administrative Science Quarterly* in 1959-60 and in 1963-64. Bent served in the army from 1943 to 1946. He was married to the former Nancy Pettingill. The couple has three children, Rodney, Laurie Angiolillo-Bent, and Timothy.

Frederick Bent was a whole man who lived life to the fullest. To paraphrase a current saying, “Nobody didn't like Fred Bent.” And many loved him.

*John McClain, Seymour Smidt, Alan McAdams*