

GEORGE BENTLEY 1915-1953

George Bentley came professionally to the University of North Carolina Library in the summer of 1947. His delightful informality won our hearts on his interview visit looking toward possible appointment. After the usual introduction, he apologized for being a little late, saying that he had "stopped up town to get his trousers pressed!"

His service as Head of the Circulation Department began on June 2, 1947. There he was more than just the head of a department, for his interest and sympathetic understanding were felt in all the activities of the Library, and every one on the staff shared in the warmth, the friendliness and the spirit of helpfulness of his rare personality. One of his most charming characteristics was a keen sense of humor. Often the atmosphere in tense situations was cleared by some quick and clever witticism which brought laughter and good will.

It was fitting and natural that he should be promoted to a position on the Administrative Staff through his appointment as Assistant to the Librarian on the first of April in 1951. To the duties of this post he gave wholeheartedly of his intelligent interest and tireless energy, soon becoming so valuable that his position will be difficult to fill.

The Library felt genuine pride in his growing participation in the work of the North Carolina Library Association and the Southeastern Library Association, as well as in several professional groups in Chapel Hill, and in his increasing interest in writing for professional publications. Only a few weeks ago he registered in the History Department of the University for the final courses leading to a master's degree. In recent months he had become actively associated with plans for the new Episcopal Church of the Holy Family and the elementary school, both located near his home.

Following his service in World War II, he retained his membership in the Active Reserve of the U. S. Army, in which he held the rank of Captain.

His great and bubbling-over pride was in his family—his beautiful wife, the former Doris Broussard, and their five lively, stimulating children. Together they were planning to enlarge their home on Rogerson Drive which, as George put it, was "bursting at the seams" after the arrival of the twins last summer.

The Library profession can ill afford to lose such an able young man, with so bright and promising a future. His memory will be cherished by the University, the Library and the community, as well as by all with whom he came in contact in his varied and active career.

—EDNA LANE (Mrs. B. B.)
U. N. C. Library
Secretary to the Library
Chapel Hill

The untimely passing of George Bentley was a great loss to the University of North Carolina Library and to the whole Chapel Hill community. His service was relatively brief but, like everything he did, was conscientiously done. He was still a young man full of energy, ideas, and enthusiasm for his work. His life, already marked by achievement in library work and historical research, held great promise of further accomplishment. He had done some valuable research in the early history of printing in the Upper South and was planning to do much more. As a student in my seminar, several years ago, he presented one chapter of his projected larger study of the history of printing in Tennessee. His report, which reflected a great amount of research, was well organized, carefully written, and presented in an interesting and delightful manner. The last time I talked to him, we discussed at considerable length his plans for the continuation of his graduate work and the completion of his thesis, and I shall never forget the interest, zeal, and infectious enthusiasm he displayed at the very thought of going on and finishing this research.

None of the many who knew George Bentley will probably ever forget his capacity for friendship and companionship, his interest in library work—both at the University and throughout the state and South, his zeal for research, his ready enthusiasm for new ideas, his unselfish willingness to spend and be spent in the many needs which appealed to his generous nature.

—HUGH T. LEFLER

Professor of History, U. N. C.

One bright winter morning a couple of years ago, Harlan Brown, the State College librarian and then president of NCLA, called me into his office. "Dick," he said, "I've got three people for that Handbook committee. They're hard workers." He told me the names. One of them was George Bentley, whom at that time I didn't know. . . . But as the months passed, I got to know George very well indeed. "I'm a Tennessean," he said in that characteristic way of his; "I don't know a thing about North Carolina writers." But Harlan was right. George was a hard worker, and soon he knew as much as any of us would ever know. In our committee meetings—three English teachers and three librarians—grandiose concepts often reached unbelievable magnitude. With his quiet wisdom and practicality, it was George who brought us back to the living earth. . . . I remember later, when the pleasure of collecting and writing was over, George drudged through hot September vacation days and nights, reading the galley proof, checking interminable facts and dates and titles. There was no public honor to be gained from such exertion but, in its way, the effort satisfied the thing which was George's integrity and it was good. . . . I remember that cold March morning in Asheville, when I stopped at the Pack Library, and Rosemary Ogden said, "Have you heard about George Bentley?" Then she told me what had happened the night before. It seemed so unfair. Here I was in Asheville to talk at a North Carolina Education Association luncheon about *the book*, our book, but mainly George's. Perhaps it was unfair, but it was right, too. For *North Carolina Authors*—there it was up and down the state of North Carolina, in libraries, on teachers' desks, at bedside bookcases—was a tribute to George Bentley, it was his day.

—RICHARD G. WALSER

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So lightly press the feet of some
That finite sand is not disturbed
But lies complacent in the sun.

Not so the tissue of the mind—
The ever-changing gauze of thought—
For in it colorful and free,
Reflections from the heart are caught.

The sand is busy with the tide
And shifts and treasures little.
But colors—constant and serene—
Forever lie in spectral glow
And from them many shades and hues
With glory quite celestial grow.

When Peter Doyle, Walt Whitman's best friend and closest companion during his Washington days, was asked if he knew that Walt was a great poet, he slowly shook his head and answered negatively. Their companionship was based in the mutual need of exchanging ideas, riding the tram cars, Sunday jaunts, and eating watermelon: Walt had satisfying friendships with many and at his death those who knew him and loved him best began to put together the many charming facets of the man who had been overshadowed by the poet.

So, in reverse, it may be true of George Bentley. Once questioned concerning his art in getting along with people he laughed and said emphatically: "I treat people like they want to be treated! They're all different and they're all important."

People were his pleasure. He had time for everyone and each association bore the hallmark of George's sincerity, his deep interest, his keen sympathy, and his gentle understanding. With no show, except the pure enjoyment displayed in his aliveness, he talked, worked, argued, appraised, played, whistled, sought, prayed, and thought into the very fabric of the lives he touched, himself: generous, forgiving and constant.

While we needed yet a little longer his physical strength and his flashing smile, we are not bereft for brighter than ever is the realization that the good deeds and the good words of the truly great are never lost. And George Bentley went about doing good.

—JANE B. WILSON

What George Bentley meant to the library group of which he was such a natural and accepted part is more than difficult to say. His heart was warm and understanding. He put the happiness of others before his own. His humor was instantly disarming and added to the delight of contact with him. His fairness and loyalty provided a foundation upon which enduring friendship rested solidly. Now that he is gone, he will be recalled in happy memories.

—LOUIS R. WILSON
Chapel Hill, N. C.

Although George Bentley would probably laughingly deny it, he had many of the qualities associated with knighthood, a high sense of humor and chivalry. His loyalty to his family and his friends, his church and his profession, was manifested not only by thoughts and words, but by actions as diversified as planting his backyard with wild-flowers and compiling a bibliography of early imprints of his native Tennessee.

George worked at all tasks with enthusiasm. His own ideas and those originated by others were carried on with equal ardor. He always bore his share, or more, of the work of committees and boards of which he was a member. He was an energetic idealist.

Perhaps above all friendliness was George Bentley's outstanding characteristic. He loved people, and was sympathetic with their problems and joyous with their triumphs. He was a friend to many of us and we will miss him but we will not forget him.

—ELAINE VON OESSEN, *Assistant Editor*

After a month of trying to get used to the idea, it is still impossible for me to think of George Bentley as other than vibrantly alive. All his friends and colleagues will share with me, I feel, this stubborn rejection of a so-called "fact," which is, after all an intuitive assertion of faith.

Such an event stuns momentarily, as though George had thrown out unexpectedly the off-hand, wry-smile remark, "By the way, did you know I've drawn an indefinite tour of duty near Arcturus? No kidding, this is It!" The wry smile, we would have known, signified courage to go and heartache to leave and a tender embarrassment that some of us might not approve the change of plans.

Crushing astonishment and a sense of irreparable loss have overcome disbelief, and—once for all—eternal life of the spirit becomes not only credible but axiomatic. Urgent indeed must be this Duty near Arcturus, more Real than any reality we know on earth. That George Bentley should be summoned to perform it, assures its being done to the entire satisfaction of that Providence which dispenses most vital tasks to those most vibrantly alive.

—EARL H. HARTSELL, *Professor*
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University of North Carolina