

One Half Million Influenced By University Prof. Bengston

By Carol Ann Schlessler
Dr. Nels A. Bengston has taught over 450,000 students in his career. This is 440,000 more than the average professor.

At 82, that is only part of the record of this retired University professor, who has also been called dean, chairman, professor, author, and most recently, president.

Since the average professor teaches only 10,000 students, how could Nels Bengston have taught nearly half a million?

Last Friday evening at the Nebraska Academy of Science banquet in Lincoln the reason was symbolized in a special leather-bound book presented to Dr. Bengston because he had succeeded in doing something few professors have done. He had written a textbook that sold 150,000 copies.

Fifth Printing

The fact that textbooks are usually used three times before being retired accounts for the large number of students Dr. Bengston has reached. The book, "Fundamentals of Economic Geography," first published 25 years ago, will go into its fifth printing in 1963, according to Prentice-Hall book publishers.

Dr. Bengston also served as geography editor for Prentice-Hall.

He has written several articles on economic geography, geology and soils. He recently submitted an article to "Professional Geographer" which was requested by the editor, a woman who was once his student.

Dr. Bengston always sought to improve the quality and quantity of the geography taught at the University. "Geography grew to a several man department under his direction and became recognized as an important graduate field," said Dr. Leslie Hewes, who succeeded Dr. Bengston as chairman of the geography department.

Briefing Sessions

Dr. Hewes explained that in order to share his experience with new instructors in the beginning geography courses, Dr. Bengston held briefing sessions from time to time.

He was concerned with bettering the instruction," Dr. Hewes said.

These briefing sessions were complimented by weekly seminars for staff and graduate students which were begun by Dr. Bengston, who still attends often. He would also invite the staff and students to social gatherings at

his home. "My door was always open and it still is," he says.

The accent in Nels August Bengston's life has always been on youth and activity. He remarked, "To remain young, you have to retain your interest in youth; if you don't, you'll be an old man." He has been practicing what he preaches.

Lunch Line

He enjoys "going through the lunch line with the students at the Student Union" prior to the meetings of the University Emeriti, a group of University professors who retain their titles after retirement. Dr. Bengston was instrumental in organizing this group and was elected its first president.

He states the three-fold objective of the Emeriti as: "To call attention to the inadequate provision made for aging professors, to provide communication between the University administration and the Emeriti, and to provide social contacts for the members."

Dr. Bengston has retired several times from several jobs. In 1948 he retired from his position, which he had held since 1929, as professor of geography and chairman of the geography department at the University. At retirement, he was given the title of Professor of Geography and Dean of Junior Division, Emeritus.

However, he did not retire from his job as Dean of the Junior Division until two years later. In helping to organize Junior Division, he wanted to aid students in developing "a systematic study method which would allow them to carry lines of thinking to a point where they give satisfaction to the individual."

Living on Beans

"If there's something you want to do, you shouldn't mind living on beans to do it," many of his students quote Dr. Bengston as saying. Dr. Bengston knew what he wanted to do and he chose to take a smaller salary to do it.

After receiving an offer of double his teaching salary from an oil company to become a geologist, Dr. Bengston spoke to Dean of the Graduate College Herman G. James about changing jobs and recalls being told by James that "someday there will be a small stone somewhere in Nebraska with BENGSTON on it." And under his name would be one word, either geologist or geographer and Bengston had to choose which one.

He chose the field he had first learned to love when as a young man with just a high school education, he taught country school in Fillmore county, Nebraska.

Bengston, who drove a horse-drawn cart to school, had been sent to high school because he wasn't much help on the farm during the hard

times around 1895. "My wrists were too small for me to be good at corn husking," he said. "Of course, the girls all went for the fellows who were fast corn huskers and I always got stuck with the girl with the wart on her nose," he continued.

Laundry Wagon

Following his three-year high school course at Sicksley and two years of teaching, he did preparatory work at Peru State Teachers College, then a normal school, because he needed another year's high school work to enter the University. "My father helped me and I drove a laundry delivery wagon to earn extra money," he said.

His studies at Peru complete, he worked there as a chemistry laboratory assistant and instructor. Later President Clark of Peru asked him to take over the teaching of geography.

Teaching has not monopolized Bengston's talents. He served on the War Trade Board during World War I as a research expert on food stuffs and later as an Acting Commercial Attache in Norway.

He also worked for oil companies in Central and South America and served as arbitrator in a British-American dispute over oil land near Lake Maracaibo, Venezuela.

Company Records

To determine the value of the land involved, he studied the records of the companies and the land itself. "I found in favor of the American American company, but they did not think the land was worth as much as I reported," he said.

The British company bought out the American company and that land is still producing today, some 30 years later. He smiled as he said that it made him proud to be right when others had thought him wrong. "But," he said with a grin, "if we are wrong, we don't talk about it."

Dr. Bengston has also served as vice president of the Association of American Geographers and as president of the National Council of Geography Teachers.

"The fundamental conditions in the world remain constant," he said, "but the economic conditions are persistently changing. We must give more adequate treatment to the resources of Africa and to the treatment of fissionable materials (used in atomic energy) and automation must be expanded," he explained. "All this must be done on a world-wide basis."

"People would enjoy life more fully if they knew more about the world they live in," he said. "The first duty of citizenship is to know your own country, your region and how it compares with other regions."

Ag Trio, Quartet Concert Features

The Ag Choristers, the women's trio and men's quartet, and a student square dance club will be featured at the Ag College Chorus's Spring Concert.

The concert will be held Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. in the auditorium of the Ag Activities Building. The program will feature many forms of American music.

The trio members are: Karen Edeal, Ann Gruett and Jackie Roberts.

The members of the quartet are: Ronald Meinke, Gary McHargue, Doug Garey and Leroy Friesen.

Music Department Plans Modern Music Symposium

The University Department of Music will present the Contemporary Music Symposium Thursday and next Tuesday in the music room of the Student Union.

Designed to show the scope of present day musical composition, the symposium will contain recent works written to be performed by traditional instruments.

Next Tuesday's show will include an explanation of electronic music, what it is and how it is produced. Dr. Raymond Haggh, assistant pro-

fessor of music, will lead the discussion.

Several rare records have been obtained for the program and one composition was written especially for the symposium.

Pi Mu Epsilon Holds Semester Contests

Pi Mu Epsilon, math honorary, will sponsor second semester math exams on Saturday at 9 a.m. in 305 Burnett. The society gives a \$10 first prize for each exam.

Spring Turns Fancy Into Diamond Rings

In the spring a young man's fancy turns to thoughts of... engagement rings. Six couples announced their engagements and two pinnings were announced Monday night.

Pinnings

Janis Akeson, senior in Teachers from Lincoln, to Tom Peck, Kappa Sigma senior in Arts and Sciences from Rushville.

Judith Marshall, Delta Gamma sophomore in Teachers from Omaha, to Grant Strong, Phi Gamma Delta sophomore in business administration from Rushville.

Engagements

Donna Krug, senior in Teachers from Central City, to Lawrence Mallory, graduate student at Stanford University from Omaha.

Sharon Krebs, sophomore in Home Economics from Neligh, to Thomas J. Stibal, Acacia alum from Schuyler.

Phyllis Holloway, Phi Sigma Tau at Doane College from Wymore, to Gene Henrichs, Sigma Phi Epsilon senior in Teachers from Wymore.

Jacque Pike, sophomore in Teachers from Omaha, to Ron Stryker, sophomore in Engineering from Rising City.

Connie Wiechert, junior in Home Economics from Lincoln to Harvey Spoere from Elizabeth, Ill.

Lana Sykes of Nelson to Gary Jordan, Ag Men sopho-

more in Agriculture from Nelson.

Commentator Tells of Trip To Red China

Colin Jackson, famed British commentator, lecturer and humorist, will speak today at 11 a.m. in the Student Union ballroom on his personal impressions during a recent trip to Red China.

Jackson's visit is sponsored by the political science department, where he served as visiting lecturer.

In the last five years, Jackson has lectured at universities in India, Canada, Japan, Indonesia, and the Middle East. He travels over 40,000 miles every year to collect up-to-date material for his lectures, broadcasts and articles.

Newspaper columns written by Jackson appear in papers in the U.S., India, Australia, Canada, South Africa and Ireland.

His other appearances in Lincoln will include a live show on KUON-TV at 9 p.m. Wednesday, which will be re-run on video tape at 7 p.m. Thursday, and a different tape, also on Channel 12, at 9 p.m., April 26 and 7 p.m., April 27.



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