



Robert D. Bent

December 22, 1928 - January 2, 2011

Robert D. Bent, Professor Emeritus of Physics at Indiana University-Bloomington, was born December 22, 1928, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to Henry E. Bent and Florence [Demo] Bent. When he was 8 years of age, he moved with his family to Columbia, Missouri, where he attended the University Lab School through high school. He received the AB in Physics in 1950 from Oberlin College, and the Ph.D. in physics from Rice University in 1954. After three post-doctoral years at Columbia University, he came to Indiana University-Bloomington to join the Physics Department to teach and do research in nuclear physics. Soon he joined a new research venture, helping develop the Indiana University Cyclotron Facility, where much of his physics research took place. He was a Fellow of the American Physical Society, Sigma Xi, and was a Guggenheim Fellow in 1962-63, working in Oxford, England. After many years of teaching he became interested in the area of energy use, sustainability, and the environment, and developed courses in that area. After 38 years, he retired from the Physics Department and the Cyclotron, but continued to teach an environmental physics course. During this time, he also taught a course in energy/environment at the Collins Living and Learning Center at Indiana University. Working in the IU Institute for Advanced Study, he facilitated a faculty seminar on energy, the environment, and sustainability, which resulted in the publication of *ENERGY, SCIENCE, POLICY, AND THE PURSUIT OF SUSTAINABILITY* (Island Press). His publications in the field of physics include more than 60 articles in physics

journals. He was appointed to the Sustainability Commission of the City of Bloomington when it was first created, and continued his interest in that area all the rest of his life.

Life in Bloomington afforded many opportunities for participation in two of his passions – music and tennis. A cellist from childhood, he enjoyed playing in string quartets, small ensembles, and orchestras. He played in both the first and the fortieth concert seasons of the Bloomington Symphony Orchestra, and kept up his playing until a few months before his death. He had an uncommonly sophisticated taste in music, enjoyed listening as well as playing, and always had an astute and interesting opinion on what he heard. His beloved cello teacher, Elizabeth Mulchy, who is 103 years old, survives him. Another lifelong activity was the game of tennis. He played on his high school and Oberlin College Varsity teams. Largely self-taught, he learned the game playing with his brother, a cousin, and neighborhood friends. He and his many friends enjoyed tournaments and social tennis in Bloomington for decades, and many deep and lasting friendships were formed on the courts. During his early college years, his family and a few close family friends built a beautiful log cabin in the north woods of Minnesota. Using no power tools, they did everything in the traditional Scandinavian log-building style, resulting in a vacation home that has been used by the family for more than 60 years. This beautiful place was a place of joy and renewal for him and all his family. This adventure is recorded in THE CABIN BOOK, which he created from letters, pictures, family memoirs, and with the help of his brother and other family members.

For several years, Bob was a Trustee of the International Waldenstrom's Macroglobulinemia Foundation, and was a member of its Research Committee. The Foundation is devoted to education and research into the causes and treatment of that disease, and, for Bob, it was a source of encouragement, enlightenment, and friendship from staff, trustees, and members

Bob is survived by his wife of 54 years, Mary (Keating) Bent, daughter Lisa

Scott and her husband Perry Scott of Indianapolis; sons Jason and Alan, and their wives Erica Duke and Amanda, of Anchorage and Fairbanks Alaska. Six grandchildren brought joy and pleasure to his life: Aaron Scott, Brian Scott, Jack Henry Bent, Lucca Duke, Alice Bent and Aster Bent. He is also survived by brother Henry A. Bent and his wife, Anne; by a niece, Elizabeth Bent Weberg and husband Rolf, by many other nieces and nephews, cousins and relatives-in-law, and by many friends and colleagues.

A Memorial Service will be held later this spring at the Unitarian Universalist church, of which Bob was a member.

Allen Funeral Home 4155 South Old Highway 37 is handling the arrangements and online condolences may be sent to the family at www.allenfuneralhome.org.

Tribute Wall

JO

“ I, too, wish to add my belated condolences to Bob Bent's family. I worked with Bob and Prof Dillig as a post-doc during the early 1980s. In all my time at the IUCF, Bob was a joy to work with, always lending a helping hand when needed both to myself and others.

Joe Conte - March 22, 2013 at 08:19 AM

RI

“ My belated condolences on Dr. Bent's passing. I was well acquainted with him during my forty years of service as Electronics Supervisor at Swain. As I am an history buff, of the Great American Migration to the West in mid nineteenth century, I wonder if Dr. Bent was descended from the brothers, William and Charles Bent who established the major trading post, Bent's Fort, in Colorado which served travelers, trappers, and Indians from 1833 to 1849?
Sincerely,
Dick Blenz

Richard Blenz - March 22, 2013 at 08:19 AM

TI

“ I wanted to express my condolences on Bob Bent's passing. He was a long-time colleague in the physics department and Cyclotron. I also played tennis with him on occasion. Not only was Bob a fine physicist but he was also a great guy. I only hope that I will be able to play tennis for as long as Bob enjoyed the game. I also noted that he was deeply connected with his family, and saw how music was a shared experience for all of his family. Bob was also deeply committed to environmental matters and was a leader in efforts to bring physicists to the table in local energy and sustainability issues. We will miss him greatly.

Tim Londergan - March 22, 2013 at 08:19 AM

SU

“ I knew Dr. Bent as a quiet and gentle person. I enjoyed seeing him whenever he visited the office, as he always had a kind word to offer, was polite and soft spoken, and made it a point to stop for a moment and visit. His calm presence and good humor will be greatly missed by all.

Susan Brown - March 22, 2013 at 08:19 AM

RK

“ I will greatly miss Bob's gentle presence in the Dept. of Physics at Indiana University at colloquia and other events. Although we overlapped by just a couple of years until he retired (although continued to teach!), I was well aware of his substantial contributions to the Department, and he was always a delight to talk to. My sincere condolences.
- Rick

Rick Van Kooten - March 22, 2013 at 08:19 AM

JE

“ I worked for a few years with Bob on the education committee of the Commission on Sustainability. He was a pleasure to work with. A sweet man with a great intellect. I will miss him and his contributions to the betterment of our community.

Jeanne Leimkuhler - March 22, 2013 at 08:19 AM

BS

“ Mary,
So sorry to hear the news about Bob. The tennis community loved and respected him and he will be missed. Love and prayers to you and your family.

Bob and Ruth Schimmelpfennig

Bob and Ruth Schimmelpfennig - March 22, 2013 at 08:19 AM