

Wendell Clark Bennett: 1905-1953

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A MAN died in the sea at Martha's Vineyard on Sept. 6, 1953. He was not an ordinary man, for the heart that failed him as he swam toward shore was, as we say in common words, a big heart. In all his 48 years, people loved him more than it is usual for a man to be loved. The children laughed at his funny stories and old Indians, brown as the Andean sand, were warmed by the gentle kindness they found in his eyes.

Wendell Clark Bennett, director of graduate studies and chairman of the Department of Anthropology at Yale University, first saw his native country in Marion, Ind., on Aug. 17, 1905. His fellow townspeople did not guess that before his career had hardly started he would be made a Caballero of the Orden del Condor de los Andes by the Bolivian Government. Even the sophisticated villagers of Oak Park in Illinois where he spent much of his youth could not foresee his unusual life. They accepted his education at the University of Chicago as right and proper and probably were not even surprised to find so successful a student obtaining his Ph.D. degree there in 1930.

The unusual thing appeared with the pattern of intensive field work which, except for an early year in

Hawaii and another in Mexico, was concentrated in the great mountain area of South America. He did this work while on the staff of the American Museum from 1931 to 1938 and at Yale since 1940. During the intervening 2 years, he taught as associate professor of anthropology at the University of Wisconsin. Hardly a score of months ever passed without his conducting field research, but if this pointed to an extraordinary devotion to his subject, that achievement fades in the light of his having issued his research results with unequaled regularity and completeness. His complete bibliography includes about 100 titles. In a short life, few men have published so much and so well. It was in recognition of this that as almost the last of his many honors he served as president of the American Anthropological Association.

In 1935, he married a beautiful girl, Hope Ranslow, and she and two daughters survive the tragedy of a summer Sunday afternoon. For them, as for many others, there is the safe memory of his goodness, his helpfulness to student and friend and stranger. His intimates will never forget his songs of the Andes sung as no ordinary man sings.

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