

**Memorial Resolution**  
**DON C. BENNETT**  
(June 28, 1925 – January 25, 2008)

Born in Salt Lake City, Don Bennett pursued an undergraduate degree at the University of Utah following military services in the Pacific during World War II. He completed his undergraduate degree in 1949 and went on to study under two outstanding geographers, Preston James and George B. Cressey, in the graduate program at Syracuse University. Because of his military experience, Don developed an interest in Southeast Asia. As early as 1953, he was the recipient of a Ford Foundation grant for a study of population problems and pressures in Java, Indonesia. Using that research as the basis for his dissertation, Don received his doctorate from Syracuse in 1957. His interests in Southeast Asia and population geography formed the foundation for much of his research and teaching in the years that followed.

Prior to joining IU in 1959 and shortly thereafter, Don undertook research on tropical terrain and climate conditions in Southeast Asia (Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines) for the U.S. Army. With the assistance of the National Science Foundation, he attended sessions at Northwestern University on the quantitative methodology being introduced into the field of geography at the time. A Fulbright-Hays award resulted in Don's returning to Asia in 1963-64 to study urban problems in Central Luzon in the Philippines.

When he returned to IU in 1964, Don became an assistant dean of the Graduate School. He was also active in departmental administrative matters at this time; in the fall of 1965 he was named chair of the Department of Geography. During the following three years Don oversaw the introduction of quantitative approaches to geography at IU.

After returning to his academic role, Don's research interests expanded to include problems related to population such as literacy, education, housing, and racial and ethnic geography. In response to his changing interests and the needs of the department, he altered his teaching role over the years. He taught a wide range of courses in general human geography, urban geography, and the geography of Europe. Don cared a great deal for his students and he was always available for them. He served as an undergraduate adviser for nearly half of his thirty years at IU; during that time he was adviser to nearly half of the undergraduate majors in geography.

Many in Geography have viewed Don as perhaps the department's most outstanding teacher. Don cared very much about his teaching and he perfected his craft over the years. If there were associate instructors with teaching problems, they were sent to work with Don for a semester. Because of the quality and dedication that Don brought to teaching, he led the course for associate instructors on how to teach. He brought a passion to this course that can only result from years of teaching experience.

Don and his wife Joan raised four children in Bloomington – Janis, Eric, Robyn, and Chad. Like their parents, they have all been active in serving the community. Don always encouraged achievement and independence in his family, so it is not surprising that his wife, children, and their spouses collectively hold four doctoral degrees, three master’s degrees, and many bachelor’s degrees – all of them from IU!

Don’s academic interests also spilled over into his community service on behalf of human relations and affirmative action. He served as a member of the Bloomington Fair Housing Commission when it secured nonrestrictive clauses in real estate advertising for the city.

As a colleague, Don had many memorable attributes: an ability to see the humor in life, a breadth of interests, independence in making judgments, intellectual curiosity, and a capacity to form close personal friendships. These qualities are not easily found – but they are deeply valued, as we valued Don.

This memorial resolution is a part of the minutes of the Bloomington Faculty Council, and copies of the resolution should be sent to the following survivors: Joan Bitner Bennett, Janis Bennett Neff, Eric James Bennett, Robyn Bennett Ryan, and Matthew Chad Bennett.

William R. Black, Professor Emeritus  
Scott M. Robeson, Professor and Chair