

Obituaries

ROBERT SHENTON

Robert Shenton, who served Harvard University for three decades in a variety of administrative posts with quiet efficiency and utter integrity, died unexpectedly on February 19, 2000. He was elected to membership in the American Antiquarian Society on April 15, 1992.

Shenton was born in San Francisco in 1924 and educated at the Evans School in Tucson, Arizona. He received his A.B. degree at Stanford University in 1944, majoring in mathematics. After five years as an engineer for the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company, he returned to graduate study at Stanford, earning an M.B.A. in 1951 and then proceeding to the Harvard Business School to work towards a doctorate. As his interests changed and developed, he presented his thesis, 'The Chartered Company, 1889-1898: A Financial and Political History of the British South Africa Company,' to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and received his Ph.D. in history in 1962.

He served two years as instructor in humanities at Massachusetts Institute of Technology before returning to Harvard as assistant to the registrar of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, rising to registrar in 1965. In 1970 he was appointed administrator for the Harvard Corporation's search for a president to succeed Nathan Marsh Pusey, a task he repeated twenty years later when a successor to Derek Bok was to be sought. Searches of this nature require inordinate amounts of correspondence, innumerable meetings and interviews, and endless minutes and memoranda,

most conducted under the seal of absolute confidentiality. Shenton's performance under these stringent circumstances was such that in 1971 he was appointed secretary to the Corporation, the Board of Overseers, and the University Administration, posts that he held (along with many lesser responsibilities) for twenty years. He was now at the nerve center of the University, and his task was to record policy, not to make it. He also served as a corporate memory, recalling precedents when they were appropriate to shape future action. When he retired in 1991, former dean and Corporation member Henry Rosovsky observed that Shenton had 'forgotten more about Harvard than most of us will have ever known.'

He carried out his manifold duties brilliantly, efficiently, and quietly. He remarked, 'I see myself basically as a civil servant. What we do in this office is to make it possible for those we serve to operate as effectively as possible.' The Reverend Peter Gomes, who knew him well, noted that in addition 'he achieved the singular distinction of never having been quoted or photographed in the student press. Thus, he was able to pass through a gaggle of *Crimson* reporters hungry for news of the Corporation without ever being recognized.' During the turmoil of the late sixties this was an invaluable attribute. His 'legendary administrative abilities' were recognized in 1998 by the award of the Harvard Medal, an honor that greatly pleased both him and his many friends.

During his years as secretary, Shenton had not abandoned his love of historical studies. He approached the collections of the American Antiquarian Society as early as 1989 seeking material concerning the reorganization of Harvard's governance during the mid-nineteenth century, and returned to the subject again in a letter to President Jill Kerr Conway in 1992. He was fascinated by 'the significant struggles which occurred within Harvard's governing structure from 1848-65 and which resulted in the final severance from state control. The issues were much broader than might at first be expected. They involve political issues ('cotton

vs. conscience' and the breakup of the Whigs), religious issues—Unitarianism vs. orthodoxy—class issues, and so forth.' He was trying to establish the motives and allegiances, political and religious, of the representatives grappling with the problem of disestablishment. It is our misfortune that he did not live to complete his work on this promising subject. Shortly after his retirement, Shenton was recruited by the Massachusetts Historical Society to succeed his close friend William Bentinck-Smith as recording secretary, a position he held for the rest of his life. He had also served as a trustee of the Lincoln Public Library and the Boston Baroque Orchestra.

Bob Shenton was by no means a humorless bureaucrat. In the midst of the constraints of his professional life, he enjoyed the warmth of his family and a wide circle of friends. He leaves behind his wife of forty-three years, Betsy (Elizabeth Owen, daughter of the late David Owen, Gurney Professor of History and Political Science); two sons, Mark and Timothy; and four grandchildren.

W. H. Bond

GEORGE HARRISON TWENEY

George Harrison Tweney died on May 7, 2000, at his home in Seattle following a courageous battle against a brain tumor. He was 84 years of age.

George was a multitalented man. He was born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, on September 16, 1915. As a boy growing up on the Canadian prairie, George first read Jack London's *Call of the Wild* and thus began a lifelong love of books. He attended Assumption College in Windsor, Ontario, where, as a member of the track team, he set the Eastern Canadian record for the half mile, competed in the British Empire Games of 1930 and was a member of the Canadian Olympic Team of 1932.

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