

## BEN BATSON

1942–1996

Dr. Benjamin Batson died unexpectedly of heart disease in Singapore on 7 January 1996 at the age of 53. A specialist in twentieth-century Thai political and intellectual history, he had spent almost his entire working life teaching in his beloved Southeast Asia.

Ben Batson began his academic career by taking a degree in mathematics at Harvard in 1963 where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He returned briefly to his native Tennessee to work at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. He then taught mathematics at Chulalongkorn University (1964–66), where he first became interested in Thai studies. Following completion of an M.A. with Walter Vella at the University of Hawaii in 1968, he returned to Thailand to teach mathematics, this time at Chiangmai University. His talents were amply recognized by funding institutions, and he received grants from the East-West Center, NDFL Act (Title IV), the Ford Foundation, and the Social Science Research Council.

In 1969 he entered the Southeast Asia Program at Cornell University, where his dissertation on the end of Thailand's absolute monarchy was supervised by David Wyatt. There he also attracted the attention of the eminent historian of American foreign policy, Walter Lafeber, for whom he worked as a teaching assistant. Picking from among neglected files in the National Archives in Bangkok, Batson discovered a remarkable collection of papers in which democracy in Thailand was debated between the seventh Bangkok king and his ministers and confidants. A selection of these he translated and published as *Siam's Political Future: Documents from the End of the Absolute Monarchy* (Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1974). During a research fellowship at the Australian National University in the late 1970s, he revised his dissertation for publication (*The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam*, Oxford University Press, 1984) and wrote a piece on the neglected literary figure and political activist, Kulap Saipradit. He also began work on Japanese-Thai relations with Shimizu Hajime which bore fruit as "Siam and Japan" in *Southeast Asia under Japanese Occupation* (edited by A. W. McCoy, Yale University, Southeast Asian Studies, 1980) and *The Tragedy of Wanit: A Japanese Account of Wartime Thai Politics* (1990).

Batson saw no reason to jump through career hoops and seemed to defer forever what passes for a "normal job." But finally, in 1982, he accepted a teaching appointment at the National University of Singapore, where he remained until his death and where he was known as a learned, conscientious, generous, and caring teacher. He was distinctly uncomfortable before large audiences, whether they be undergraduate classes or conference sessions, yet he was meticulous in everything related to the welfare of his students, many of whom became close friends. He maintained a house on the western bank of the Chao Phya River in Bangkok and was as much at home there as anywhere.

Batson's last published piece (*Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, March 1996) concerned Phra Sarasas, an enigmatic figure who positioned himself as power-broker between the Japanese and Thai governments during the pre-World War II years. It was typical of Batson's work that he spent some time excavating the evidence and that he once again brought to life a historical personage who was prominent but difficult to fathom. Batson had an astonishing knowledge of Thai elite history and family networks, which informed his scholarship and yet exceeded it. Though he

always wrote with precision as well as elegance and verve, it was in conversation that one sensed how much he really knew.

A. J. S. REID  
 CRAIG J. REYNOLDS  
*The Australian National University*

### GORDON B. TURNER

Gordon B. Turner, 81, died May 13, 1996. Born in New York City, he settled in Princeton in 1946 where he resumed his undergraduate studies after a twelve-year hiatus spent in banking, brokerage, and the military—serving as an infantry captain on active duty in the Pacific during World War II. A member of Princeton University's Class of 1937, he received his B.A. degree in 1948 and his Ph.D. in 1950 and taught in the History Department until 1959, specializing in civil-military relations. He occupied the Ernest J. King Chair of Maritime History at the Naval War College during 1957–58, edited a *History of Military Affairs Since the Eighteenth Century*, coedited and authored *National Security in the Nuclear Age*, and authored "The ACLS Committee on Studies of Chinese Civilization: A Review," *ACLS Newsletter*, 1971.

Dr. Turner joined the American Council of Learned Societies in 1959, serving as Executive Associate and Vice President, with primary responsibility for the Council's international studies programs (including in Asian Studies) until his retirement in 1980. He served on the Board of Trustees of the Center for Applied Linguistics and the Board of Directors of the International Research and Exchanges Board, which he was responsible for establishing. He also served on the Secretary of the Navy's Advisory Committee on Naval History and on the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO.

Surviving are his wife, Jean Stewart Turner, his daughters, Michael Ann Walstad and Barbara Gazey Turner, his granddaughters Kimberly Elin and Catherine Avery Walstad, all of Princeton, N.J.; and his sister, Barbara F. Turner of Columbus, Ohio.

Arrangements are private. Contributions, including those of personal time, may be made to organizations that support death with dignity, such as the Hemlock Society U.S.A., P.O. Box 101810, Denver, Colo. 80250-1810; Americans for Death with Dignity, P.O. Box 11001, Glendale, Calif. 91226; Medical Center at Princeton Hospice, 253 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, N.J. 08540.

JEAN S. TURNER and FAMILY  
*Princeton, N.J.*

### A. RONALD WALTON

1943–1996

A. Ronald Walton, professor of Chinese language and linguistics and expert in language pedagogy, policy, and planning, died of acute coronary thrombosis September 5, while visiting his mother in Austin, Texas. He was only 53. Dr. Walton had been a member of the University of Maryland faculty since 1983; he was also the Deputy Director of the National Foreign Language Center in Washington, D.C.