

## Oliver Earl Benson

From his matriculation in 1929 until his retirement in 1980, Oliver Benson's name was associated with political science at the University of Oklahoma. He was among a select number of university faculty to attain national stature.

George Lynn Cross Research Professor Emeritus Oliver Earl Benson died January 26, 1999, at the age of 87. Professor Benson taught in the department of political science at the University of Oklahoma from 1936 to 1980, specializing in international relations and methodology. He earned both bachelor's and master's degrees from Oklahoma and earned the doctorate from the Graduate Institute of International Studies at the University of Geneva in 1936. He directed the Bureau of Government Research from 1962 to 1969 and was chair of the Oklahoma department 1946–51 and 1959–62. In 1967, he was named George Lynn Cross Research Professor, the first to be so named in the department.

Oliver Benson was active in the American Political Science Association and the Southwestern Social Science Association, serving the latter as president in 1970–71. In 1995, Professor Benson was named Oklahoma Political Scientist of the Year by the Oklahoma Political Science Association, which he had helped to found. He was a member of American Association of University Professors and served as secretary of that organization. He also was a member of American Society of International Law and American Academy of Political and Social Sciences. He was editor of *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* for six years.

Professor Benson served in the United States Navy during World War II and served as a translator during the Japanese surrender. During the 1950s, the late George Lynn Cross, president of the university at the time, asked Benson to testify on behalf of the department before the state legislature when the legislature was investigating the university, and specifically the department, for sub-

versive Communist activities. Benson's testimony as to why the department was teaching Marxism persuaded the legislature to end the investigation.

Oliver Benson was a visiting professor at Northwestern University, University of Texas, and University of Minnesota. At Northwestern in 1954–55, he pioneered the use of mathematics in political science research. The author of twelve books and over eighty articles, he served his university, his community, and his profession with distinction. He wrote in many areas, from international diplomacy to quantitative methods, and was one of the first political scientists to use computers to assist empirical research. As early as 1952, he presented a paper titled "Computer Simulation as a Research Policy." His 1969 text, *Political Science Laboratory*, is considered a classic in the field of research methods. The importance of his work was widely recognized throughout the profession.

Commenting on Benson's legacy, Samuel A. Kirkpatrick, former president of the University of Texas, San Antonio and a long-time Oklahoma faculty member, said, "Oliver Benson was in the leadership vanguard of a paradigm shift in his discipline of political science—a position that only a very few can lay claim to in any academic field. It was characterized by both new theories and new methodologies of inquiry and analysis that he shaped profoundly. Its impact was enduring for both teaching and research."

A respected teacher, Oliver Benson also wanted to recognize and assist the gifted students who came after him. Before his death, he established both an undergraduate paper award in his name and a scholarship to honor his late wife, June Benson, who served as Norman, Oklahoma's first and only woman mayor in 1957 and 1959. Together, they were pillars of the university community for over four decades.

Regents' Professor Emeritus Walter F. Scheffer, a former col-

league, reflecting on Oliver Benson's personal qualities, remembered, "I have never known an occasion when Oliver showed less than tolerance, understanding, and great patience with each and every student who sought his help and guidance. . . . He was always trustworthy, cooperative and respectful of peers and students. His advice and counsel was consistently sought, even long after retirement, in departmental affairs and programs, as well as from individuals in, their professional pursuits. . . . He enriched his department and the university community for all the years that he served it."

Oliver Benson is survived by his children, Dr. John Michael Benson of Bar Harbor, Maine, and Megan Kathleen Benson of Norman, Oklahoma; his six grandchildren, Kati Scheid and Laura Garber, Jeffrey Benson and David Benson, and Sara Doolittle and Marta Doolittle; and eight great-grandchildren.

Ronald M. Peters Jr.  
*The University of Oklahoma*

## Alfred G. Meyer

Alfred G. Meyer, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Michigan, died at the age of 78 on April 22, 1998. Al had been on the Michigan faculty for 24 years, before retiring in June 1990. Even after his retirement, Al continued to teach seminars for first-year students and courses in the Residential College at the university. Prior to joining the department at Michigan, Al had served on the faculties at the University of Washington and Michigan State.

Al was born in Germany on February 5, 1920. He left Germany in 1939, on a boat headed for the United States. The ship was turned back and he wound up in Amsterdam, where his brother still lives, but escaped to the United States in 1940. After arriving in the States, he enlisted in the army and served from 1941–45. He was awarded the Bronze Star.

Always eager to play the role of the maverick, the one who proudly

went against the mainstream, Al enjoyed informing others of his unusual status for an American academic: He never graduated from college. He received his A.M. in Slavic languages and literature and his Ph.D. in political science at Harvard. Behind the official degrees, though, remained the striking breadth of knowledge of European history and culture. It gave his teaching a depth few could parallel.

Al was an extremely popular teacher in the department, the Honors College, and the Residential College. He was the consummate teacher of political theory, fashioning himself after the Socratic gadfly, mischievously and often irreverently challenging students to consider their unquestioned lives, urging them to think broadly and break free of conventional assumptions. While his lecture classes would find him pacing and twisting his thick hair as he pondered problems with his students, it was often the conversations outside of class that he and his students savored most. One student wrote that the conversations with Al in which he encouraged her “to follow my own course in life” were “intoxicating and empowering.” Another identified Al’s genius as his ability to teach her “not just that opposites attract, but also that opposites are true.” Al received a number of awards for teaching, including the Amoco Good Teaching Award and the Sinclair Award for freshmen-sophomore counseling. For him, however, the recognition of his success in teaching came from those who lingered in his book-and print-filled office to begin or continue conversations that explored virtually all topics. The college guide, *Lisa Birnbach’s College Book*, compiled by Michigan students, lists him as the “Best Professor” at the university and adds, “He is a brilliant human being who doesn’t lord that fact over you. He respects his students as much for their individuality as for their quality work. He can make you love subjects you had convinced yourself to hate.”

Al’s scholarly work focused on Marxism and soviet politics. In these areas, Al is probably best known for his contributions on two fronts. The

first is manifest in his three books, *Marxism* (1954), *Leninism* (1957) and *Communism* (1960). *Marxism* and *Leninism*, in particular, have had far longer shelf lives than most books. Perhaps the most distinctive thing about Al’s work in all three volumes is that, while he was quick to point out the instrumental and manipulative in Lenin and among Leninists, he took the ideas of both Marx and Lenin seriously at a time when many Westerners who studied people in the Marxist tradition focused on the psychological appeals of communism. Even in *Communism*, which was explicitly targeted to undergraduates, readers obtained the sense that Marx, in particular, and others in the Marxist tradition deserved to be taken seriously by persons interested in the history of ideas if only because ideology plays a substantial role in a system in which “every communist lets Lenin do some of his thinking for him.”

The second contribution for which Al became best known is *Soviet Political System* (1965). In this book, Al portrayed the Soviet Union, especially after Stalin, as “USSR Incorporated.” This volume helped Westerners understand that the (now-former) USSR shared many characteristics with large capitalist corporations and that one could think about it usefully as a huge bureaucracy, many of whose behaviors and structures flowed from bureaucratic “logic.” Al made other important contributions as well. One of these that was particularly telling about his ability to recast debates in innovative ways was a chapter in a volume edited by Chalmers Johnson, *Change in Communist Systems*, in which he provided an entirely different interpretation of the notion of convergence than was current in 1970. While many at that juncture rejected the idea wholesale, others thought the Soviet Union was evolving in a direction that would make it more in line with Western democracies. Al bought the idea of convergence, but argued that this was not good news; rather, going back to a tradition exemplified by the work of Harold Lasswell, he argued that the United States and the Soviet Union

were converging but in ways that would yield malign results. Whatever the merits of the argument, the chapter reinforced the perception of Meyer as an iconoclast, but an iconoclast whose insights constituted a powerful challenge to conventional wisdom.

In the 1980s Al fell in love with Lily Braun. No matter that she was born in 1865 and died in 1916, four years before Al was born. Lily Braun had been a feminist socialist, a pioneer in attempting to provide a synthesis of socialist with feminist concerns who foreshadowed in her writings and activities the Marxist humanism of later writers such as Marcuse and Fromm. Al’s book, *The Feminism and Socialism of Lily Braun* (1985), served as well to affirm the importance of taking seriously the intellectual and political commitments of women. At a time when few male scholars chose to write on topics having to do with women, Al devoted himself to exploring and learning from this feminist pioneer and bringing her to the attention of contemporary scholars and activists. That he discovered her while working on an essay on Marxism and feminism in the 1970s captures his consistent determination to be one who rejected the boundaries of conventional, approved scholarship. For him, this meant that he himself was willing to study women’s issues long before other male scholars acknowledged the importance of such endeavors.

Al enriched his life with a multitude of activities that drew on a variety of his impressive talents. His love of music and his wonderful alto allowed him to sing regularly in many of the concerts of the Ann Arbor Contata Singers. He was a gifted caricaturist whose drawings of himself and others captured both virtues and vanities. He was a serious philatelist, specializing in Germany and in stamps from around the world commemorating Lenin. And then there was his house in Bar Harbor, Maine, to which he retreated in the summers and to which he invited one and all so that they might share his delight in the beauty of the place.

Al leaves his wife Eva, son Stefan and daughter Vera. He leaves us missing his impish challenges to academic and bureaucratic pomposity and the infectious laugh that marked his conversations with so many generations of students.

Arlene W. Saxonhouse  
*University of Michigan*

William Zimmerman  
*University of Michigan*

## **Abramo Fimo Kenneth Organski**

Abramo Fimo Kenneth Organski, professor of political science and senior research scientist, Center for Political Studies, passed away on March 6 in Denver, Colorado. He was 74 and lived in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The cause of death was a heart attack.

Dr. Organski's work on the impact of economic growth on international conflict led to pioneering research on the causes of major wars and on the relationship between the organization of governments and governments' ability to mobilize resources to achieve policy objectives.

Dr. Organski was born in Rome in 1923, where he attended the *Ginasio Liceo Torquato Tasso*. He came to the United States with his parents, Menasce and Anna (Feinstein) Organski, and his brother, Guido, in 1939, when his family fled the anti-Jewish laws of the Musolini regime. He settled in New York, where he became an American citizen in 1944. He served with the American armed forces from 1943 to 1945, and went on to earn a B.A. (1947), M.A. (1948), and Ph.D. (1951) from New York University. After teaching at Brooklyn College from 1952 to 1964, he joined the faculty of the University of Michigan in 1965, where he remained until his death. He became a senior research scientist in the Institute for Social Research in 1969.

He also served as a visiting professor at Columbia University, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and the University of Pennsylvania, as well as visiting professor or scholar in residence at the Agnelli Foundation in Italy and the Univer-

sities of Turin, Catania, and Florence. He was honored as a guest of the University of Bologna on the occasion of that university's 900th anniversary and was awarded the *Cavaleri dela Republica* by the government of Italy.

His books included *World Politics; Population and World Power*, coauthored with his first wife, Katherine Davis Fox; *Birth, Death and Taxes*, written with several of his students; *Stages of Political Development; The War Ledger*, written with Jacek Kugler; and *The Thirty-Six Billion Dollar Bargain*.

In 1981, Professor Organski, together with Drs. Jacek Kugler and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, founded New York-based Policon Corporation, now known as Decision Insights, Inc., to assist the United States government and private corporations in conducting complex negotiations and resolving disputes.

At the time of his death, Kenneth was chairman of the Board of Directors of Decision Insights. His intellectual accomplishments won him numerous honors at the University of Michigan, including the Distinguished Faculty Achievement Award. In 1992, he was given a lifetime achievement award by the American Political Science Association's Organized Section on Conflict Processes for his contributions to the study of international conflicts. He had previously been a Social Science Research Council Fellow and a Fulbright Fellow.

Kenneth will be remembered not only for his intellectual depth and originality, but also for his ebullience, love of language, human warmth, and gift for friendship. He was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather, and will be deeply mourned by his wife, Patricia Joan Bard; his daughter, Elizabeth Anna Organski-Horn, and her husband, Steven Horn of Whitmore Lake, Michigan; his son, Eric Fox Organski of Savannah, Georgia; his grandson, Steven Horn Jr.; his brother, Guido Organski of Litchfield, CT; and generations of devoted students.

John E. Jackson  
*University of Michigan*

## **Myron Weiner**

Myron Weiner, Ford International Professor of Political Science at MIT, the nation's leading authority on Indian political studies and a specialist in the fields of political development, political demography, migration, ethnic conflict, and child labor, died in his Vermont home on June 3, 1999, of a brain tumor, which was first diagnosed in December. He was born in New York City in 1931, graduated Phi Beta Kappa from City College of New York in 1951, and received his advanced degrees from Princeton in 1955. He taught at Princeton and Chicago before coming to MIT in 1961. He had visiting appointments at Harvard, Oxford, Hebrew University, Delhi University, and the University of Paris. He was elected a member of the American Academy of the Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society.

Myron was a master of empirical field research, and especially the art of interviewing officials and common citizens. He was genuinely excited whenever he found that a logically coherent and theoretically significant train of cause and effect relationships had been matched by substantial case evidence. He had no vested interest in any particular grand theories, but rather sought answers to clearly formulated questions. He was also an inspiring mentor to graduate students who are now the next generation of leaders in both Indian studies and political development work. He was an equally creative academic administrator, serving as head of the political science department from 1974 to 1977, and as director of the MIT Center for International Studies from 1987 to 1992.

A prolific writer, Myron authored 13 books and was the editor or co-author of 19 others. Even as his strength was giving out, he completed a final monograph. His professional knowledge was greatly appreciated by governments: He served as consultant to the Department of State, the National Security Council, the Agency for International Development, the World Bank, and since 1996 he was chairman of the advisory committee to