

F O R D H A M U N I V E R S I T Y

Bronx, N. Y. 10458

*Department of Classics*

January 24, 1984

Prof. Ronald S. Stroud  
Chairman of the Committee on Personnel  
Department of Classics  
University of California at Berkeley  
Dwinelle Hall  
Berkeley, CA 94720

Dear Prof. Stroud:

It is an honor for me to write in support of Emmett L. Bennett, Jr.'s application for the position of Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Classical Studies at the American School in Athens. Professor Bennett's scholarly achievements have their own collective voice, and Professors Fowler, Wyatt and Jacobsen will no doubt voice opinions about Emmett as a departmental and professional colleague. What I can offer is the perspective of a young scholar, who has recent and continuing association with the American School, and who also has known Prof. Bennett in many of the roles that he will be required to perform at the School. Emmett L. Bennett, Jr. was my teacher and graduate adviser from 1973-1977, my dissertation adviser from 1978-1980, and, during the past seven months, a colleague at the Institute for Research in the Humanities of the University of Wisconsin. I write soberly and critically, first, because Emmett would want it so, and, second, because I believe strongly in the programs of the ASCSA and wish them to flourish. It is my well-considered opinion that the American School of Classical Studies would benefit by his appointment as Mellon Professor of Classical Studies.

I underline the words "Classical Studies" because I think that Emmett has much to offer the School, not as a narrow specialist, but as a humanist and student of the Classics who possesses an inspirational enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity about the past. I can best illustrate my point by listing the wide variety of courses that I took from him, several being tutorials that he willingly took on: Introduction to Mycenaean Studies, Mycenaean epigraphy (tut.), Greek archaeology (tut.), seminar in the editing of Aristophanes, seminar on the development of the Greek alphabet, Greek dialects, and--yes, it's true--Cicero's letters (tut.). In all these courses, Emmett displayed those qualities that distinguish "distinguished scholars" from the rest of us: an active, fresh enthusiasm for even old, familiar subjects; the ability to listen carefully to other, even rival, interpretations; and the knack for creating an atmosphere for his students of common participation in the study of a given topic.

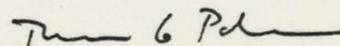
I have often said to close friends that Emmett taught me how to think. He never--not rarely, never--provided pat answers; always sought and wanted to hear other opinions; and was and still is delighted when standard views, even his own, can be modified and improved. He is exacting in his scholarship and well conveys to students the correct impression that the very essence of scholarship requires such an honest and enjoyable  $\sigma\pi\omicron\upsilon\delta\eta$ .

He is also a great practical scholar. This is a must for a Mellon professor. Do things, touch things, work with clay, feel the stones, examine the pot, step out the distance. Permit me an anecdote. In my first course with him, I was reporting on the spice tablets from Mycenae. I became involved with epigraphical details, quantities, personal names, and forgot about the very nature of the spices. I admitted during my report that I had not looked them up. Emmett's response: "Look them up? You should cook them up!" Next class I prepared an awful fennel tea, but I'll never forget its taste.

I can think of several other points in favor of Emmett's candidacy. First, he will make himself available to students and encourage them in their work. He understands that this is a crucial duty of the Mellon professor. He is not looking at the professorship as a nice way to retire and do one's own work. Second, he is in excellent physical shape, regularly biking 20-30 miles on weekends and hiking daily to and from the Institute. Third, he is a prominent scholar, well liked by the Greeks (a member of the Academy in Athens), who will surely help improve relations between the School and the Greek community. His modern Greek is better than he lets on; and he has great patience in dealing with practical problems, e.g., delays, schedule changes, that would frustrate others.

I said that I would write soberly and critically, and I have. Emmett's positive qualifications for the Mellon professorship are many, his negative qualities few. On the negative side, he himself has stressed that he is less familiar with the actual physical remains than recent Mellon professors have been. Here I would again stress that one is searching for a professor of Classical Studies, not of strict Archaeology or Topography. Otherwise, I can only point out, as I have already to Emmett, that a considerable time has elapsed since he last lived in Greece. But he is familiar with the changes that have taken place in Athens and in Greek life in general. He has sought the advice of others and has decided that he can be of service to the American School. I think he can, too. I would only add the adjective "great."

Sincerely,



Thomas G. Palaima  
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