

Frederick James Matkin

Frederick James Matkin was born in Raton, New Mexico on December 21, 1943. He died of a heart attack on Friday, May 13, 1988 in West Bend, Wisconsin while conducting a stewardship program for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. From 1969 through 1986, Fred served as a member of the political science faculty at Texas A&I University in Kingsville. Fred came to Texas A&I needing only to complete his dissertation to earn his Ph.D. This was accomplished in 1975. Fred completed his undergraduate education at Oklahoma City University in 1965. His masters (1967) and doctoral degrees, both in political science, were received from the University of Connecticut. Fred was an associate professor and departmental chairman when, in 1986, he took early retirement from Texas A&I in order to accept a call to serve as a program director for the American Lutheran Church Resident Stewardship Service. This was in fulfillment of a long considered career movement in a direction that would allow him to be of more direct service to the church.

Although at the time of his death Fred was no longer pursuing a full-time academic career, he continued to maintain an active involvement in political science. As part of his early retirement program, Fred continued to maintain an office at the university. His work with the Lutheran Church involved Fred's becoming a temporary resident (for ten days to two weeks) in a particular congregation to assist them with planning, goal-setting, and training leaders and members. The nature of this work enabled Fred to draw on and to apply much of the knowledge acquired through over two decades of political science study and research. Between assignments Fred could frequently be found in his office at the university working on a federal constitutional simulation which he had begun before his decision to take early retirement.

Fred was one of the most intelligent, energetic, and creative colleagues that it has been my privilege to know. His unexpected death, at the early age of 44, was a tragic loss for political science as well

as for his family and church. The period from 1983-85 was one of the most productive in Fred's career as a political scientist. During this period, in addition to serving as chairman of the political science department, Fred finished *The Complete Guide for Texas Government Today* (Dorsey Press, 1986).

Fred's *Complete Guide* was conceived by the publisher simply as a study guide to accompany the fourth edition of Pettus and Bland's *Texas Government Today*, one of the leading textbooks on Texas politics. The guide that Fred produced so exceeded the expectations of the publishers that they opted to call it a "complete guide" rather than simply a "study guide." This 400-page volume contains numerous exercises which Fred termed "learning activities." Nearly all of these were originally conceived by Fred and had been successfully utilized in his own classes and those of colleagues. *The Complete Guide* was an impressive achievement and resulted in Dorsey expressing an interest in Fred's constitutional simulation project.

Fred was an able scholar, well grounded in the fundamentals of both qualitative and quantitative political research, and well read both in and beyond his particular fields of specialization. Fred's doctoral dissertation, "Partisan Preferences in Italy, 1952-72: Patterns of Continuity and Change" was a major achievement. The study represents the culmination of a massive collection and analysis of survey data on Italian electoral practices and voter preferences. It is unfortunate that Fred's findings were never published. His study was innovative and included important insights into the development of Italian electoral preferences and behavior. As a skilled researcher and analyst, had Fred chosen to channel his efforts in that direction, I am confident that he could have been extremely successful as a researcher and writer. He had great energy and could accomplish staggering amounts of work during period of peak productivity.

Fred seemed to thrive on chaos—tight deadlines and juggling several tasks at once. He was at his best in situations that others might have given up as hopeless. But Fred was a natural problem-solver who saw creative options where others

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might have seen only irresolvable difficulties. At such times, Fred's creative energy would take over and he could turn out a prodigious amount of work.

Fred had so many commitments, however—teaching, political involvement, church and family, and a multitude of other things—that he was never committed singlemindedly to professional research and publication. Most of the research and writing that Fred did was devoted to ends other than his professional development as a political scientist. The first piece he ever published dealt with the practical implications of anti-poverty policy. From that point on, Fred's drive to put his knowledge and skills as a political scientist to work for socially useful ends always seemed ultimately to prevail over his commitment to do more professionally rewarding basic research.

Fred often put the needs of others before his own. Although the area of political science that most interested Fred was comparative politics, especially Italian politics, when the department was short of a specialist in public administration, Fred took it upon himself to develop expertise in that area. During the past few years, Fred became more and more involved in church and community activities and in developing teaching skills and materials for his classes.

Fred's community involvement finally led him to run for and serve on the school board in Bishop, Texas from 1982-85. He was vice president of the board during his second term from 1984 to 1985. His church-related activities are too numerous to mention them all. Fred served as president of his congregation (1978-83), Sunday School superintendent, and in various other positions in the local congregation. For several months, he filled in as a part-time minister for a Lutheran Church in a nearby community. He also held offices in the Coastal Bend Conference of the American Lutheran Church and attended several national conventions, sometimes serving on convention committees. Fred also put his research talents to work conducting demographic studies for the Coastal Bend Conference.

Starting in 1983, Fred began systematically to address the problem of how more

effectively to reach students, especially those in required introductory political science classes which contain a good number of reluctant political science scholars. He attended numerous weekend workshops and began to reorganize his courses and to revise his teaching methods in order to incorporate some of the more promising approaches suggested in those workshops. As a consequence, Fred moved from mostly lecture courses to courses that involved students much more actively in the learning process through a series of creative and well-conceived "learning activities."

As skilled a political science teacher and researcher as he was, Fred's path ultimately led in a different direction. Fred was deeply religious and his growing commitment to serve the church in a more direct way had become increasingly a matter of deep personal concern. Fred's first choice would have been to combine a research interest in religion and politics with a teaching post in a Lutheran institution, but this path never opened up for him. He eventually began to apply for church-affiliated administrative and staff positions. When offered a position as program director with The American (later the Evangelical) Lutheran Church Resident Stewardship Service, a position which would enable him to bring his skills as a teacher and researcher to bear in the service of his church, Fred felt compelled to accept the call.

In many ways this position was ideal for Fred. It involved travel and he loved to visit new places and make new friends. His work took him all over the nation including Alaska. Fred sent a steady stream of post cards to friends extolling the virtues of each new place that he visited. He liked the people, the challenge, the new experiences, and the ability to continue teaching and doing research. As much as he liked the work itself and enjoyed the travel, there was a difficulty with the new position. The separation from family that the position entailed caused great distress to Fred and to his wife, Pixie, and to their two daughters, Michelle and Melanie. Fred hoped that, after a couple of years of such service, he would have an opportunity to continue church-related work in a different

position that would be more compatible with a stable family life. Had Fred's life not been cut short I am confident that this wish would have materialized.

I remember Fred as a close friend and as a man of principle who was deeply committed to a set of clearly-defined values and beliefs. I also remember him as a man of uncommon compassion and of tolerance and understanding for those who might listen to a different drummer. Fred was a conservative, I am usually considered a liberal. Fred was an active Republican, I am a lifelong Democrat. None of this ever interfered with our friendship, though it did make our relationship more interesting and lively than it otherwise might have been.

Fred was immensely proud of his family and of their accomplishments. He always proudly displayed many family pictures and mementos in his office at the university. Pixie taught at a nearby Lutheran school and Fred was sure that she had a natural talent for handling young children that no one could top. Although his own commitments were heavy, because his teaching schedule was more flexible than hers, Fred often assumed responsibility for getting Michelle and Melanie off to school, responding to their calls of distress in the event of illness or other emergencies, and did some of the household chores. I never knew Fred to treat any of these duties as a burden. Rather, he always accepted them as opportunities which it was his special privilege to perform.

Fred will be missed by all who knew him, but he would not have us linger long mourning him. Fred's counsel would be to get on with life. Our only obligation, for those of us whose lives he touched, is to remember Fred's example and to do what we can to make the world a better place.

J. D. Phaup
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William C. Velasquez

William "Willie" Velasquez passed away quietly at 12:57 a.m., June 15, 1988. Willie

had been diagnosed as terminally suffering from kidney cancer which spread rapidly to his lymph nodes and other vital organs. Many who knew Willie were shocked and saddened by the swiftness of his passing.

Although not technically a political scientist, Willie was an astute student of our discipline—he graduated with advanced degrees in community organizing courtesy of his stints in the late 1960s with the United Farm Workers Union and during the early 1970s with El Partido de La Raza Unida. Mr. Velasquez was not merely a keen political observer but one of the most versatile, intellectual and persistent practitioners of political science that the Civil Rights Movement has witnessed. He founded the Southwest Voter Education Project in 1974 and by July of 1988 he would have completed organizing his 1,000 non-partisan voter registration campaign throughout the Southwestern United States. In 1984 he founded the Southwest Voter Research Institute to conduct survey and policy research of, and for, the Hispanic community.

Many compared Willie's importance to the voting and civil rights of Hispanics to that of Martin Luther King's importance to the black community. Equally as important Willie was a friend and advisor to many, including those who aspired to the Presidency and to working class people wishing to participate more fully in the electoral process. Of foremost and singular importance, however, Willie was a devoted husband and father; he had planned to write a book on the socio-political evolution of Latinos in the Southwest which he hoped would pay for his children's Harvard education.

Those of us who were close to Willie and shared his concerns for social justice have been deeply bereaved by his sudden departure. However, his vision of obtaining full political equality for Hispanics will not be lost or forgotten by those he left behind. If he had made a last wish, we feel that Willie would have wanted that we continue the work he had started.

We will miss his ascerbic humor—when told of his cancer he told everyone how relieved he was in that he thought he was merely "burned out"—his almost spiritual