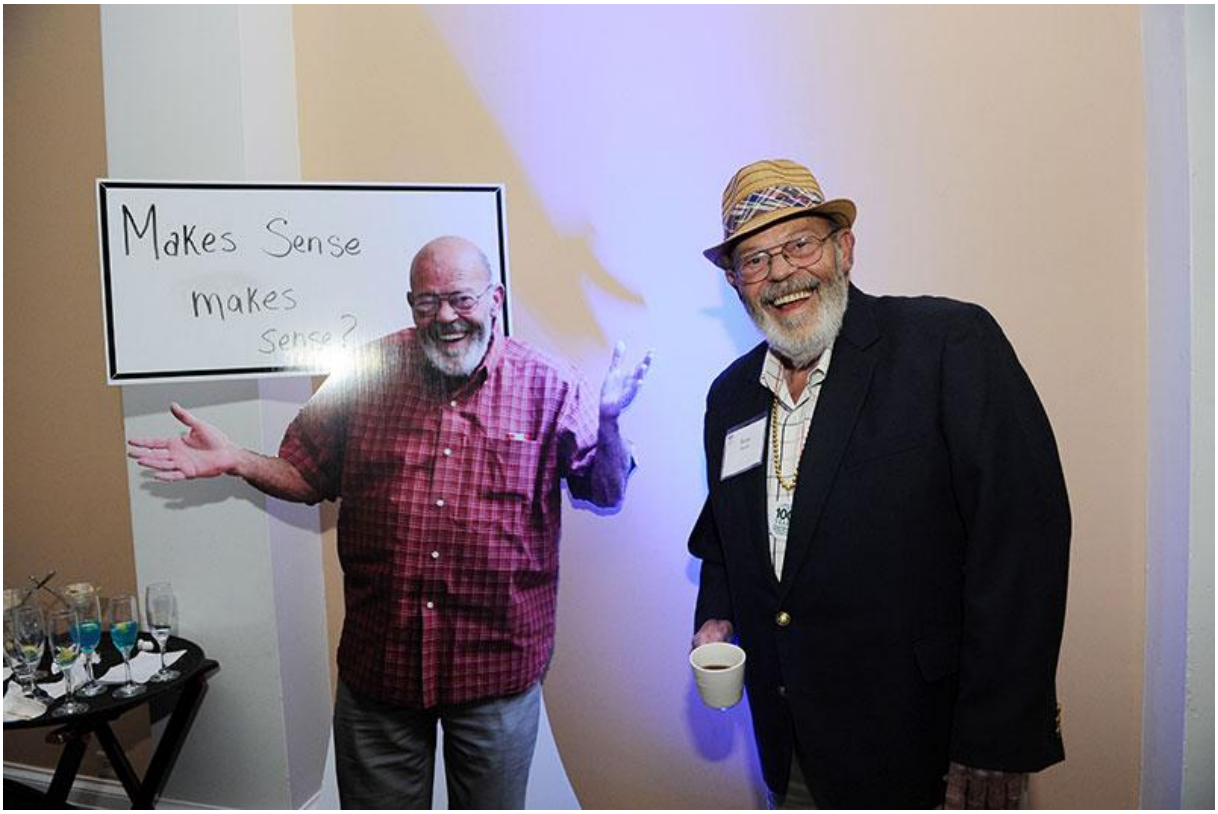
Remembering Beau Parent

July 20, 2024



Beau Parent poses with a cardboard cutout of himself at the Freeman School Centennial Celebration, which took place at the Pavilion of the Two Sisters in City Park in May 2014. July 20 marked the 10th anniversary of the death of the legendary instructor, who taught accounting at the Freeman School for more than 35 years.

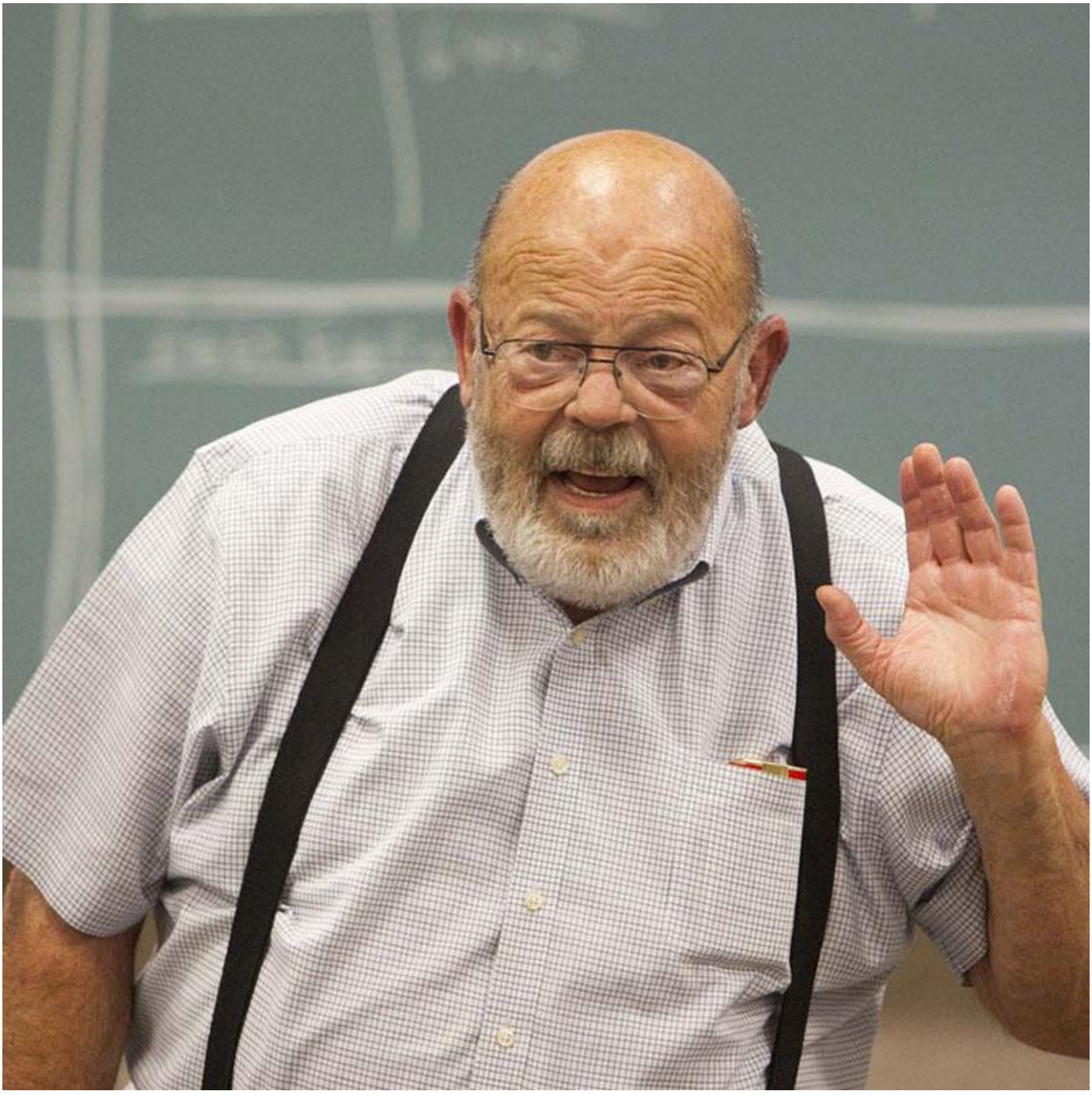
“It’s always on my brain in the month of July,” says Christine Smith, “but this year in particular.”

July 20 marked the 10th anniversary of the death of Smith’s father, Beauregard J. “Beau” Parent Jr., a legendary instructor who taught accounting at the Freeman School for more than 35 years.

Parent taught financial accounting to almost every student who passed through the Freeman School’s doors during that time, and he also established the five-year BSM/MACCT program, which remains one of Freeman’s most popular offerings. In an

era of increasing automation and cookie-cutter solutions, Parent was renowned for sitting down with each student to make an individualized program plan based on his or her specific career goals.

But most of all, Parent is remembered for his teaching. He was a three-time recipient of the Beta Alpha Psi BSM Distinguished Accounting Professor Award, a two-time recipient of the BSM Wissner Award and a recipient of the James T. Murphy Teaching Excellence Award, the Freeman School Faculty Service Award and the Tulane University Senior Faculty Teaching Award.



According to Smith, a senior professor of practice at the Freeman School, Parent had a special gift for making the Byzantine rules of financial accounting understandable to anyone. Decades later, his classroom catchphrases are still etched in the memory of almost everyone who took his classes.

"*Debits on the left, credits on the right!”*

“Make sense? Make sense?”

“He understood that accounting is a separate language,” says Smith. “And how do you become proficient at a language? Consistent, persistent effort.”

Instead of teaching from a textbook, Parent created whimsical stories to introduce new topics and translate accounting principles into real-world applications.

“You hear ‘Beau’s Bodacious Baseballs’ and you’re hooked,” Smith says, recalling one of the imaginary businesses Parent created to teach T-accounts. “It drew students in and kept their attention.

“I think that was his strength,” she adds. “He was able to show students that this is something they can rely on to make tough decisions about how they’re going to allocate resources, and he made it real through that process of storytelling.”

Parent took that role very seriously. In a 2014 interview, he admitted to feeling an added sense of responsibility in teaching financial accounting.

“It was one of the few business courses undergraduates could take before they entered the business school,” Parent said. “I got lots and lots of student who were interested in business, and I always felt that my job was to get them even more interested in business.”

Judging by the number of former students who reach out to Smith to express their admiration for Beau, he did that job exceedingly well.

“I can hardly go a week without some kind of ping about him,” Smith says. “Which is wonderful for me. It feeds my soul.”

One of the people who reached out to Smith was Adam Hill (BSM ’06), a former teaching assistant for Parent.

“Beau was the most influential professor I had while at Tulane,” Hill wrote. “Your father was one of my main reasons I ended up staying in New Orleans and working for Deloitte, which is where I met the person with whom I would fall in love and start a family. To say he was an institution of Tulane University would be underselling his place in life. Beau was the unifying soul for the thousands of students that walked across the Uptown campus and through the halls of the Freeman school in search of a business education.”

Today, as a senior professor of practice and faculty director of Master of Accounting and joint BSM/MACCT programs, Smith is in the unique position of being able to build on her father's legacy, and she feels certain he'd be happy with the direction of the Freeman School under Dean Paulo Goes.

"Paulo really values the teaching faculty and understands the contribution that we make, and that's huge," Smith says. "As far as the BSM/MACCT program, we took a hit with COVID like everybody else, but I'm excited to say we're back on the upswing. We have really good enrollment projections, and I'm working like heck to keep up the relationships with employers so that our students continue having opportunities for placement and internships. So, yes, I think dad would be thrilled with where the Freeman School is today."

In 2014, a scholarship fund was created in Parent's honor to recognize his lifetime of teaching and extraordinary commitment to students. The Beau Parent Scholarship Fund benefits top undergraduate students pursuing graduate accounting studies. Visit http://giving.tulane.edu/beau *to make a gift to the fund.*