

WILLIAM CLOYD REYNOLDS

(1945 -2004)

Obituary submitted by Elsie Ivancich Dunin

William (called Bill by his friends and colleagues) was mostly known through the world as the Editor of the ICTM's Study Group of Ethnochoreology Dance Research Newsletter. Although I knew Bill in earlier years as a "folk dancer" from California, my working relationship with him began at the ICTM 1987 conference in Berlin, when he proposed the idea for a Study Group Newsletter, and I offered to compile dance research listings of the membership to be included in the Newsletter. Little did we realize that first the Newsletter and later the Dance Research for the members of the Study Group would become foundational international publications in the growing field of ethnochoreology.

Bill's dance involvement did not start until he was a young adult. He was an undergraduate student 1963-1969 during the turbulent "flower years" at the University of California at Berkeley (UCB), one of the centers of student strikes for social equality and curricular changes toward those goals. But it was also at Berkeley that Bill discovered dancing, particularly recreational "folk dancing" (one of the faculty being Sunni Bloland). During the 1960s non-partner circular form dances were the rage in the California "Bay" area where he lived, studied and later worked as a High School teacher, taught folk dancing to a student and community group in Berkeley, and became an administrator of the Berkeley Folk Dance Festival. Although his Bachelor of Arts degree was in experimental psychology, and additional studies were in philosophy, engineering and music, his passion for dancing led him to Europe to seek out additional instruction. He became a student in character, ethnic and historical dance at the Folkwang Hochschule in Essen-Werden BRD (1972-1974), earning a Certificate in Dance. While in the school, he translated a piece, "Foundations for the analysis of the structure and form of folk dance: a syllabus," for the Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council, volume 6. Here he began his contact with the International Folk Music Council (the former name of the ICTM). He also became a tutorial student under Albrecht Knust, at that time a leading authority on the Knust-Labanotation system. This was a major turning point in his life. With a knowledge of both German and English, and a hunger to master the notation system, Bill was the ideal person to be employed by Knust to edit the English language text of the Dictionary of the Kinetography Laban published in 1979. The later titles of his presentations and published articles attest to Bill's continuing quest to understand dancing through notation and structural analysis.

For three years, and continuing with his notation interest, Bill worked for a Radcliffe Trust research project at the Birmingham Polytechnic University, a project concerned with human movement notation, and developing criteria for

evaluating notation systems. This interest engaged him further with collaboration in various activities of the Language of Dance Centre in London, bringing his Knust editorial knowledge to more advanced study of Labanotation with Ann Hutchinson.

Staying in touch with his dancing interests, Bill became employed with Folkraft-Europe, then directed by Ricky Holden and centered in Belgium. The company published folk dance records and books, and Bill was engaged in teaching recreational folk dance to community groups, schools, and teacher training workshops. At one of these seminars held in Hungary 1978, he met a young dancer from Denmark, Lilian Larsen, also with dancing and teaching experiences. By 1980 Bill married Lilian, taking a major life's step to live in southern Denmark, and from there continued to expand his knowledge of dances and recorded music for these dances through field research with special interests in Hungary, and later in Denmark. During the 1980s he continued his research on human movement analysis, and used the research project at Birmingham Polytechnic to develop a doctoral dissertation at Trondheim University in Norway (unfortunately not completed).

From 1988, he became the founding editor of the Newsletter for research on traditional dance, and as editor, a member of the Board of the reconstituted Study Group on Ethnochoreology in the ICTM. Although controversial in his opinions that did not often coincide with the approaches by fellow ethnochoreologists, he nevertheless continued in this editorial role until his serious illness brought an early end to his life.

Among his activities in the mid-1990s Bill served as an external editor for the International Encyclopedia of Dance for all papers on European traditional dance, and authored the Encyclopedia's article: "European traditional dance." His other dance research presentations and published works are all listed in the Dance research published or publicly presented by members of the Study Group on Ethnochoreology, volumes 1989, 1991, 1995 and 1999.

Thank you Bill for giving the spark in 1987 with both the Newsletter and the "biblio" project. They are lasting contributions to the field of dance in general and more specifically to ethnochoreology.

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Like life itself

all beautiful things

must die

or could this be

just another autumn?

People die

nature comes back year after year

by William C. Reynolds (1945-2004)

