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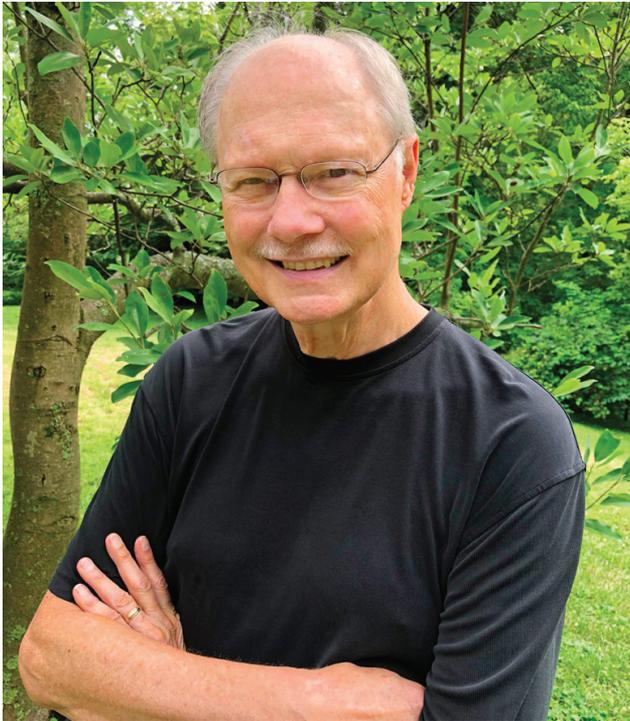
William “Bill” H. Newell

November 27, 1943 - April 27, 2019

by

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The following obituary was written by Bill's daughter, Silvia Newell, and is reprinted from <http://www.hodappfuneralhome.com/obituary/bill-newell/>

BILL NEWELL, age 75, passed away on April 27, 2019, losing his long battle with prostate cancer that ended in a rapid, downward spiral, which culminated in a stroke on Thursday. He was a much beloved husband, father, brother, and friend. He is survived by his wife Susan Hopp, sister Carole Elwell, daughter Silvia (Mark McCarthy), son Will, stepdaughter Megan Smith (Will), and four grandchildren. He attended Amherst College and University of Pennsylvania, taught at the Paracollege at St. Olaf for 4 years, then found his intellectual footing at Miami University, where he taught for 40 years. He was an intellectual pioneer, co-founding the field of interdisciplinary studies and consulting for countless institutions as they set up interdisciplinary programs. He believed in the power of critical thinking and human ingenuity to draw on the fundamentals of many disciplines to create new approaches to solving the complex problems we face today. He painstakingly corrected thousands of senior theses and lectured tirelessly to undergraduates (and his children...and his friends...and complete strangers) to pass along these ideals. His intellectual legacy is long and ripples in a series of concentric circles (see the recent *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies* dedicated to his influence: (<https://oakland.edu/Assets/Oakland/ais/files-and-documents/Issues-in-Interdisciplinary-Studies/volume-36-no.-2/Cover.pdf>). His intellectual curiosity reveled in the exchange of ideas with anyone he could engage, and his approach might be best summed up in his own words: “There is an element of troublemaker, then, in every interdisciplinarian.”

Bill’s greatest legacy, however, lies in his family, friends, and students, who will remember his infectious zest for life. He loved good company, good conversation, good food, and good wine (colleagues will remember his dedication to well-catered AIS meetings, and friends will remember his and Susan’s wine tasting evenings and his propensity to drop in unannounced for a visit). He was utterly devoted to Susan, and just the sound of her voice made him smile, even at the end. His unflagging energy for everything he pursued was only reduced to the level of mortals with the onset of prostate cancer, which he felt keenly (much like the disappointment of joining the rest of the human race with mere 20/20 vision in his 50s). His lifelong joy in learning was augmented by travel, which he pursued to experience other cultures and perspectives, and was recently reflected in his insightful book reviews (<https://www.goodreads.com/user/show/81225964-bill-newell>). He could connect with any person willing to engage, from world-renowned colleagues, to children at the grocery store, to his nurses in the ER, to strangers in a National Park, and even to customer service people on the phone.

He and Susan were fortunate to travel widely to exotic locales (including the Galapagos, Peru, China, and Costa Rica) and on wine-inspired adventures

(including two cross-country trips on a private train car and a river cruise in France with friends). They took annual trips east to visit his sister Carole, enjoying the New England coast. He was the king of wordplay and terrible jokes/puns, disliked reading fiction, and only discovered any interest in watching sports in his 40s (possibly driven by his athletic son). He loved to eat but hated to cook, relishing Susan's cooking, and encouraging her every culinary exploration. He loved classical music, and he and Susan created a program to bring local students and their families to the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

His proudest role was that of a father and grandfather. He would gladly tell total strangers about his children's accomplishments (much to their embarrassment as children). He reveled in every good grade, well-played soccer game, award, diploma, job, promotion, publication, etc. His generous joy and praise at any benchmark was the best reward for any job well done. While young, his children often resisted his efforts to introduce them to new things (a month-long car trip to every national park west of the Mississippi wore thin and gave him nightmares for years, his disappointment at their groans at being dragged to every new ethnic restaurant that opened in Cincinnati in the 1990s when they preferred plain pizza, yet another hike in the woods). Despite this, food, wine, and travel adventures became the things they loved to share as adults, and he and his son had a long-standing tradition of meeting at New Krishna for Indian food. He encouraged his daughter to travel solo around New Zealand en route from Antarctica at the tender age of 18. He was thrilled when she created her own interdisciplinary science major and eventually followed in his footsteps to become a professor. His company, encouragement, wit, and unflagging love will be sorely missed.

While he certainly had his quirks and flaws (painstaking persistence can look a lot like stubbornness, immediate cheerfulness in the morning rubs on non-morning people, his tenacious even-temperedness was frustrating to argue with, and his complete and utter lack of patience for shopping malls, standing in line, and pop music), he was a fundamentally good human, who also believed in the inherent goodness of humanity. He was much beloved, and the world is much dimmer without him.

A memorial scholarship to encourage student participation in and access to AIS has been established in Bill's memory (see <https://interdisciplinarystudies.org/>).