

Peggy Lawler

June 24, 1929 — November 21, 1996

Peggy Lawler was born and raised in New Orleans, the daughter of Mark R. and Katharine Lawler. She studied dance as a girl while attending the Country Day School. After receiving a B.A. degree in English in 1950 from Texas Women's University, she went on to a career in dance, teaching at the Putney School in Vermont for the next two years. From 1947-54, she spent her summers studying and teaching dance at the Perry-Mansfield School of the Theater in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. There she met Harriette Ann Gray, with whose dance company she toured the United States from 1951-55. After teaching in her own studio in Redondo Beach, California for two years, she taught dance at San José State University from 1958-64, where she became an Assistant Professor after earning her M.A. degree in Dance in 1961.

Peggy Lawler was the head of the Dance Program at Cornell University from 1965 to her retirement in 1988 as Professor Emeritus. During that time, she succeeded in turning dance from an extracurricular activity into a recognized field of study, moving dance into the Department of Theatre Arts, and creating the dance major. Her vision inspired many students to pursue a life of dance, and to live all aspects of their life with commitment and spirit. She was a founding member, choreographer, dancer, and teacher with the Ithaca Dancemakers from 1972-82. After her retirement, she taught dance at Deep Springs College for two semesters.

In 1981, she made a barnstorming tour of the United States with her "Solo Cycle" of dances, often performing in small towns for people who would otherwise not have seen dance. Her choreography was characterized by musicality, elegant craftsmanship, subtlety, and humor. Some of her larger works include two productions of Stravinsky's, *Renard*, performed with live orchestra and vocalists and choreography of Karel Husa's, *Trojan Women*, for a cast of eighteen women and children with the composer conducting.

A lover of music, for many years she hosted weekly gatherings of friends for singing. Most recently she sang with the Ithaca Community Chorus and Chamber Singers. She shared many wonderful evenings of recorder playing with a small group and took pleasure in playing piano. In recent years, she dedicated herself to writing, producing short autobiographical pieces, and a journal of her 1981 dance tour.

She was an avid traveler, frequently taking off on cross country trips to the Western mountain ranges, where she renewed her spirit with wilderness hikes. She also liked to spend time at the cabin she and a few friends hand-built in the coastal Maine town of her father's origin. She traveled in Europe, South Asia, Mexico, Canada, and Great

Britain, always with great curiosity and an extraordinary talent for engaging with the people and life of any place she visited. Her generosity, love of nature, and artistry were gifts to the entire Ithaca community.

She is survived by her mother, Katharine Lawler; her brother, Robert Lawler and wife Penny, of Port Angeles, Washington, and their children, Betsy, Jenny, and Kenneth; as well as many devoted friends.

Don Fredericksen, Lamar Herrin, Joyce Morgenroth