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William Shea Dies

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The Institute of ARCHAEOLOGY Siegfried H. Horn Museum



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INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY
HORN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MUSEUM
NEWSLETTER

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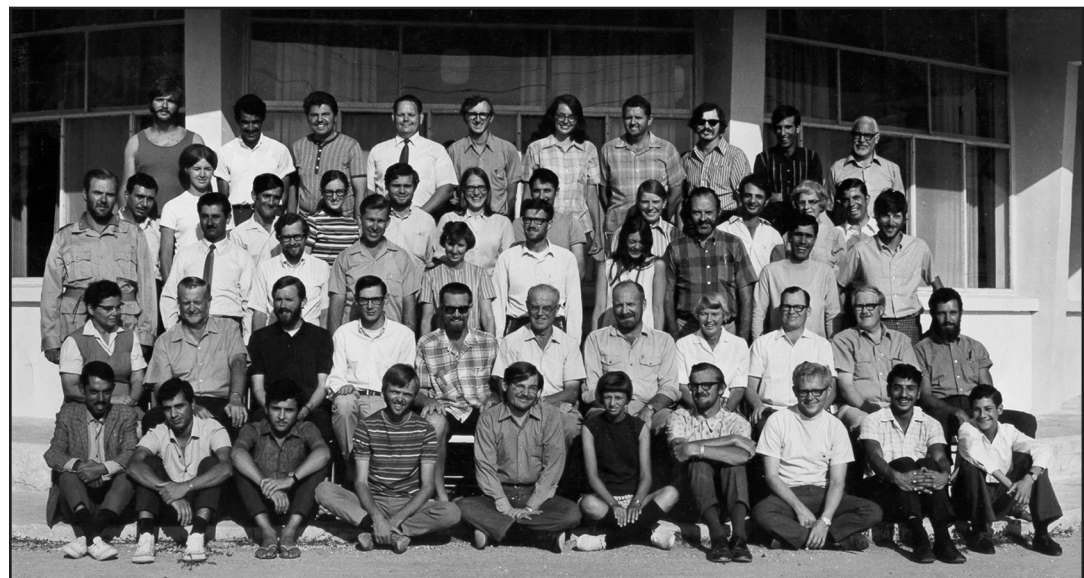
William Shea Dies

William H. Shea, physician, professor, lecturer on Archeology and the Bible, former interim director of the Institute of Archaeology, and former associate director of the Biblical Research Institute, died February 15, 2020 in Manassas, Virginia of septic shock. He was 87 years old.

William Henry Shea was born to Henry Morris Shea and Nettie Josephine Lende on December 30, 1932, in Upland California. He was named for Ft. William Henry Harrison, where his parents met. His boyhood days were spent in Laguna Beach, California, where his front door opened towards the Pacific Coast Highway, and the back door to the beach. To his regret, his family moved to Ontario, California, where he attended Chaffey High School. Across the street from his new home, there lived two Adventist young people with whom he walked to school every day. They invited him to an evangelistic meeting at the Adventist Church on Daniel 2. He started attending church services, became involved with the young people's activities, and was baptized.

Bill went to La Sierra College from 1950 to 1954, where Drs. Edward Heppenstall and Tom Blincoe had a great influence upon his interests, and also where he met Karen Olsen. They became engaged at the end of her senior year and married at the end of her freshman year of medical school, in 1956. While in college, Bill was undecided between the ministry and medicine, finally deciding, in his junior year, on medicine with the goal of becoming a medical missionary. He graduated with degrees in Biology and Religion. Typical of his sense of humor, Bill orchestrated his own mock impeachment while Boys Club President. Bill and Karen both went to Loma Linda Medical College (later University), and graduated with medical degrees in 1958 and 1959, respectively. After a year of internship, at the White Memorial Hospital, followed by a year of surgical residency at Santa Fe Hospital in Los Angeles for Bill, and an internship for Karen, they drove to

(Cont'd on p. 2)



Andrews University Heshbon Expedition 1971 Season (William Shea, back roll, fourth from right).

Nicaragua in an International Harvester Travelall, with Josephine and Theodore, their two young children, where they served three years (1960-1963) as missionary doctors at a small twenty-five-bed hospital in La Trinidad, Nicaragua. They returned to Los Angeles in 1963, and Rebecca joined the family. It was during this time that Bill sat in on a class on Biblical Archeology, taught by Siegfried Horn to a group of pastors, and his interest in the archeology of the Bible was born.

The next year the family moved to the Caribbean island of Trinidad to serve at the Adventist Hospital in Port of Spain. For the next two years (1964-1966), Bill worked at the hospital, but because Caribbean Union College was short teachers in the religion department, he volunteered to teach Old Testament classes. His particular interest was biblical history and the light that archaeology can shine upon it. During this two-year teaching stint at Caribbean Union College, Bill decided that if he was to continue, he would need to become better qualified in the field by furthering his education, and with a recommendation by Siegfried Horn, he applied and was accepted to Harvard Graduate School. He spent the next three years at Harvard, where G. Ernest Wright, a leading Old Testament scholar and biblical archaeologist, was his main professor. While there, he studied Archeology, Egyptology, Hebrew Bible and Semitic languages. He also participated in the archaeological excavation of Tel Gezer for two seasons. It was also at Harvard, that he met Larry Geraty, who would later become a professor of archaeology, at Andrews University.

While his long-term goal was to finish his degree and teach, the need in Trinidad, “where medical care was not so readily available,” drew the family back there for two more years (1970-1972). During this time, he published a series of four articles on the possible identity of Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel, in *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, and spent the summer of 1971, working as a square supervisor in Area C of the

Andrews University Heshbon Expedition, in Jordan.

In 1972, the family moved to Andrews University, in Berrien Springs, Michigan, where Bill taught at Andrews University Theological Seminary, while completing his PhD in Near Eastern Studies from the University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor, where he studied with George Mendenhall and David Noel Freedman, graduating in 1976, with a dissertation entitled “Famines in the Early History of Egypt and Syro-Palestine.” Teaching Old Testament and archaeology at Andrews University allowed him to focus on his special interests: biblical history; the history of the ancient Near East, especially Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, and Canaan; and the intersection of these subjects. While at Andrews, he filled many capacities including professor, Chairman of the Old Testament Department of the Seminary, Acting Director of the Institute of Archeology, between 1985 and 1986, and Book Review Editor of *Andrews University Seminary Studies* from 1979-1987. Bill enjoyed watching sports and he and his wife once celebrated an anniversary by attending a Dodgers/Cubs game at Wrigley Field.

Dr. Bill Shea taught fourteen years (1972-1986) at Andrews University. He was a consummate scholar and a gentleman. He was also an excellent teacher, who encouraged the students in his classroom to dig deep. As a creative thinker and writer, he was not afraid of changing his mind if his studies led him to different conclusions from those he held at the outset. Bill would typically come to archaeology or history classes, with nothing but a copy of *Ancient Near Eastern Texts (ANET)*, and to Bible classes, only with the *Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. For everything else, including where numerous scholarly articles were published, minute details would just flow from his memory. He published several scholarly books, and book chapters, and wrote popular and professional articles for both church and academic publications. He was the author of over one hundred articles in various scholarly journals. His

article on the Exodus for the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* became a benchmark for the defense of the fifteenth-century-BC date for the exodus from Egypt.

In the early 1980s there was an extended period of critical discussion on prophetic interpretation and the biblical book of Daniel, of which Bill was extensively involved, even writing a massive 445-page type-written document, within a four-month period. He then participated in a number of Bible Conferences and extension schools around the world. As a result, he was asked to become a member of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, which he joined in 1986.

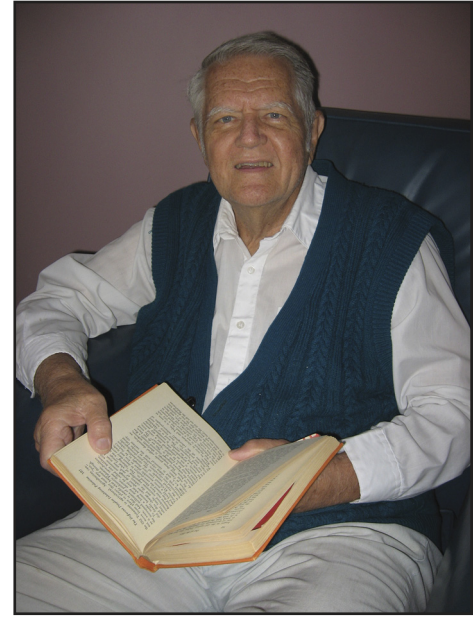
While at the Institute, Bill travelled the world, taught classes at many schools and universities, lecturing and teaching on Archaeology and the Bible, and continued research in his various interests. He participated in Bible conferences, ministers’ meetings, and camp meetings, besides answering letters and writing theological papers for the world church. While he was happy to go wherever he was needed, he occasionally remarked that he wished there were more Biblical conferences in Bora Bora or Tahiti.

On November 20, 1997, a festschrift entitled “*To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*” was presented to Bill at the annual meeting of the Near East Archaeological Society, in Mountain View, CA. The editor of the book, David Merling, then curator of the Horn Archaeological Museum, presented the volume to Bill, who was totally surprised, before approximately one hundred of his colleagues and friends. Reflecting Bill’s eclectic interests, as well as the breadth and depth of his own academic career, the book is divided into five sections: Hebrew Scriptures, the Book of Daniel, Greek Scriptures, Archaeology, and Biblical-Theological Studies. Twenty-five scholars, who were Bill’s colleagues and students, contributed to the contents of this festschrift, a fitting tribute from those he inspired with his own insights and creativity.

Bill retired in 1999 and moved to Red Bluff, in Northern California, to be near his son Ted and wife Brigitte and grandchildren Madison, Molly, and Harry. When the opportunity to help with the care of their youngest grandchild, Allison, came, Bill and Karen returned to the East Coast and purchased a home just half a block away from their daughter Rebecca and her family. They would transport Allison to and from school when her parents were at work. Bill taught in Sabbath School, special classes, and occasionally preached.

As Bill's strength failed, he liked to sit in his chair and watch TV, particularly the news and quiz programs, with Penelope, the Siamese cat, curled up on his lap. After a couple of brief hospitaliza-

tions, he was admitted early, on February 11, with a very slow heart rate. A pacemaker was inserted two days later, but he had contracted an infection. His immune system was compromised due to immunosuppressive drugs needed for his kidney transplant, a gift from his daughter Rebecca, almost ten years earlier. He succumbed on February 15, 2020. Bill is survived by his wife Karen, son Ted, two daughters, Josephine and Rebecca, four grandchildren, and one great grandchild. Persons who wish to honor his memory are invited to make donations to the Scholarship fund, at Andrews Academy, Berrien Springs, MI. (Karen Shea, Rebecca Shea Erdelyi, Gerhard Phandl and Paul J. Ray, Jr.)



William Shea.

AL-MAKTABA
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