

Dick Williamson

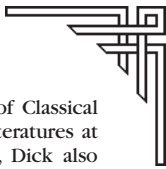


Dick Williamson, one of our most treasured colleagues, passed away in his sleep on June 20, less than two years after retiring from a highly distinguished thirty-year career as a French professor at Bates College in Lewiston,

Maine. I was stunned and deeply saddened by this news, just as, I am sure, was everyone else who knew Dick personally. To put it most succinctly, Dick was a *force de la nature*, a man with such energy, vitality, and love of life that his absence is unfathomable. It is no less difficult to grasp how Dick was able to accomplish all that he did in his career, while at the same time devoting himself to his wife Debbie and to their daughters, Vanessa and Melissa, and sons, Dustin and Chris.

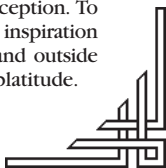


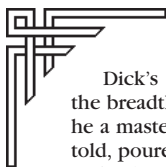
NEWS FROM NORTHEAST



Chairing the Department of Classical & Romance Languages and Literatures at Bates for over a dozen years, Dick also rose to Chair of the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (1987) and later to President of the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages (1999). He served as well, from 1998 on, as a member of the Editorial Board of the Southern Conference on Language Teaching's Dimension 2000 and was a reader for the Advanced Placement Exams in French for nearly ten years (1995-2004). He edited newsletters and chaired or spoke on innumerable panels, was a member of many local and national committees, and created and directed French or Francophone study abroad programs for Bates College all over the Western hemisphere. And I'm only hitting the high points here.

A "force of nature," yes, but Dick was also *une force qui va*; his energy, enthusiasm, and humor were boundless and contagious. I experienced that "contagion" back in 1987 when Dick was planning his year as Chair of NECTFL. At the conference that year, as we lunched together, he talked to me passionately about the volume they were planning to publish, and somewhere between the *poire* and the *fromage*, as they say, I agreed to serve as co-editor of the book, which was subsequently published as *Toward a New Integration of Language and Culture* (1988). A few years later, Dick invited me and my wife Véronique to come up to Bates to teach in a weeklong French Summer Institute he had created for high school teachers. The experience was so gratifying (and not only the Maine lobster we enjoyed at Dick and Debbie's home), that I returned to Davidson College and immediately created our own French Summer Institute, modeled on Dick's program. We will be offering the ninth edition of our Institute in July 2008, and this longevity is a tribute to the intelligence of Dick's conception. To say that Dick Williamson was an inspiration to his colleagues, both inside and outside Bates College, is not an empty platitude.

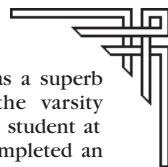
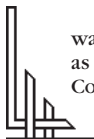




Dick's energy was matched only by the breadth of his interests. Not only was he a master teacher (Bates students, I am told, poured into his language, literature, and culture classes), he was an indefatigable contributor of papers and articles on Quebec and on study abroad, as well as on pedagogy and foreign language education in general. In addition to Quebec literature, Dick devoted many years to one of his early loves, Jules Verne, producing a book-length manuscript on his *Voyages extraordinaires*, as well as pieces on a large variety of literary works from the 17th to the 20th century, including a critical edition of Molière's 1672 play *Les Femmes savantes* in 1996.

Dick's multifaceted and highly successful career was widely recognized and honored. He received a special award for "Leadership in Foreign Language Education" from FLAME (Foreign Language Association of Maine) in 1989 and an AATF regional award as the "Outstanding Teacher of French in Maine" in 1994. He was named Chevalier dans l'ordre des Palmes académiques in 1996 and was awarded the Sister Solange Bernier Lifetime Achievement Award from FLAME in 2005.

Outside of his professional life, Dick was active in the community and served as President of the Auburn School Committee (1981-83) after many years as



a committee member. He was a superb athlete, having captained the varsity hockey team when he was a student at Yale University, where he completed an undergraduate and a Master's degree. He would later coach and star on the club hockey team at Indiana University while he was completing his doctoral studies in French and Comparative Literature in the early 70s. Dick and Debbie both nursed a passion for cycling, and they immediately headed for a two-week bike trip in France to celebrate Dick's retirement in 2006. For the past decade, they have been participating in the National Senior Games a couple of times a year and trained year-round for them. While Dick's passing is terribly saddening, there is something poetic and comforting in the thought that he left us peacefully, while en route to a cycling event that he enjoyed passionately, in the company of Debbie, his wife and soul mate, whom he loved and cared for so deeply. When I get on my bike and go for a spin down the beautiful farmlined back roads of rural North Carolina, as I'm wont to do more often now that I'm retired, I often think of Dick Williamson and feel both wistful and a little happier for having known him.

Charles Dana Professor Emeritus of French, Bates College

Alan Singerman, Richardson Professor Emeritus of French, Davidson College

