

Janis L. Simonds

Jan Stockman Simonds passed away on April 14, 2013 following a long battle with breast cancer. She was a dancer, choreographer, teacher, university administrator and, most importantly, a wife, mother and grandmother. Jan was born November 17, 1936 in Janesville, Wisconsin. Her family moved to Madison, Wisconsin where Jan went to high school and graduated in dance from the University of Wisconsin. After graduation Jan and four of her dance friends moved to New York City to further their dance studies. Jan took classes from some of the foremost modern dance pioneers - Doris Humphrey, Jose Limon, Betty Jones, Lucas Hoving, Daniel Nagrin and Merce Cunningham. In 1959 Jan was chosen as Pauline Koner's teaching assistant at the American Dance Festival. She performed at ADF as a soloist in Miss Koner's company as well as with the Jose Limon and Ruth Currier Companies. Jan performed as a member of the Jose Limon Dance Company on tour in South and Central America and Mexico and on an East Coast tour and in New York City.

She taught dance at Barnard College, Columbia University until 1961 when she left New York to take a dance teaching position at the University of Illinois - Champaign-Urbana. In 1968 the U. of Ill. Administration asked Jan to take over the task of organizing and leading the newly established Department of Dance in the College of Fine and Applied Arts. Jan was Head of the Dance Department until 1971 when her husband, Charles (Chuck) Simonds, finished his PhD and the couple moved to Houston, Texas.

In Houston Jan was the first teaching consultant at the newly established Houston High School for the Performing and Visual Arts. She taught and choreographed there for seven years. Jan was commissioned to choreograph a dance related to space for the Houston Ballet Company. "Moonscape" was performed in Jones Hall as well as on tour with the Houston Ballet and was set on the Chicago Ballet Company.

In 1977 Jan became the Director of Dance at the University of Houston Clear Lake. She held that position for 15 years choreographing and guiding dance students who performed around Houston in elementary schools, the International Festival, and the Jewish Community Center. University budget cuts in 1992 eliminated the Theater and Dance Programs and Jan, a full-Professor, turned to teaching elementary education students how to teach creative movement to children. Her last

nine years at the university were as the Chair of Humanities and Fine Arts. She thoroughly enjoyed this administrative position working with the faculty and administration of the university. She retired in 2007 after 30 years of teaching at UHCL.

With her husband Chuck leading the way the couple enjoyed traveling especially to somewhat remote locations to experience ancient cultures. Jan's children, Jennifer and Scott, were a source of great joy and enriched her life immeasurably. Jennifer is also a dancer/performer/choreographer and Scott is the Head volleyball coach at Clear Creek High School. Scott is married to Shannon Labrecque Simonds and has two children, Cooper and Bailey. Jan is also survived by her brother and sister-in-law Robert and Iona Stockman and two nephews, John and Jim Stockman.

Jan will be missed by her friends at the University of Houston Clear Lake, Seabrook Sailing club, the Houston dance community and the Clear Lake Methodist Church.

Memorial gifts may be made to the Clear Lake United Methodist Church chapter of Knit-a-Square, a knit for charity group that provides blankets for orphans in South Africa. Checks may be made payable to CLUMC with Knit-a-Square written in the memo line and mailed to Clear Lake United Methodist Church, 16335 El Camino Real, Houston, TX 77062.

A memorial service will be held at Clear Lake United Methodist Church, 16335 El Camino, at 3:00 PM Thursday, April 18, 2013. A reception at the church will immediately follow the service.