

Lanny David Bell
(April 30, 1941–August 26, 2019)



Lanny David Bell was born in Fort Dodge, Iowa the eldest of two children to Gerald Eugene and Marjorie Ann (Carlson) Bell. As a student in public high school he was captivated by a class in Latin that sparked a life-long interest in ancient languages. Egyptian hieroglyphs particularly fascinated him and after graduating high school in 1959, he enrolled in the University of Chicago to study under John A. Wilson. He continued his graduate education at the University of Pennsylvania studying under David O'Connor and visiting professor Jaroslav Černý. While working in the University Museum, he met fellow student Martha Hope Rhoads and they married on September 22, 1968. Martha had received a Bachelor of Arts in Ancient History at Barnard College in New York City in 1963 and would receive a Ph.D. in the Department of Classical Archaeology at the University of Pennsylvania in 1991 specializing in the Bronze Age Aegean.

While at Pennsylvania, Lanny taught classes and worked in the museum as a curatorial assistant. In 1967, he joined the University Expedition to Abydos, and also instituted a field project to return to the site of Dra Abu el-Naga in Western Thebes that had been first excavated by Clarence Fisher for the University of Pennsylvania in 1921–1923. Between 1966 and 1967, he excavated and conserved a number of tombs of Ramesside officials including those of Nebwenenef (TT157) and Bekenkhons (TT35).

His dissertation for the University of Pennsylvania, supervised by David O'Connor, James Muhly, and George Hughes, was entitled “Interpreters and Egyptianized Nubians in Ancient Egyptian Foreign Policy: Aspects of the History of Egypt and Nubia.” Impressed with his abilities, Hughes recommended Lanny for the position of director of the University of Chicago’s Epigraphic Survey in Luxor headquartered at “Chicago House.” During his tenure in Luxor from 1977 to 1989, Lanny and Martha raised the profile of the facility, welcoming and supporting scholars visiting and working in Luxor, becoming renowned for their hospitality and kindness. Martha supervised the running of the house and the library along with the assistance of May Trad of the American Research Center in Egypt’s Cairo Office, instituting a major campaign to conserve the library’s oldest and most fragile volumes.

Lanny also hosted Egyptian Egyptologist Labib Habachi as resident scholar at Chicago House where Dr. Habachi spent many of the last years of his life. Working with Carlotta Maher, Lanny actively fundraised to establish endowments for the Epigraphic Survey and he supervised the beginning stages of two major publications on the reliefs and inscriptions of Luxor Temple. He also authored a number of important articles including studies on Theban temples, the cult of the deified Tutankhamun, divine kingship, the royal *ka*, and aspects of epigraphy.

In 1989 Lanny returned to Chicago as associate professor of Egyptology teaching courses in ancient Egyptian literature, the literature and politics of the Middle Kingdom, wisdom literature, Old Egyptian, Late Egyptian, and Coptic. He also supervised a number of Ph.D. dissertations and was a popular member of the faculty known for his warmth and generosity. Sadly, Martha was killed in a car accident on November 12, 1991 soon after finishing her dissertation on Bronze Age Aegean pottery found in Egypt.

Lanny took early retirement from Chicago in 1996 and as an independent scholar moved to Old Saybrook, Connecticut and was then appointed a lecturer in Egyptology at Brown University also teaching at the Rhode Island School of Design and Columbia University. He was sought after as a speaker, particularly by the Archaeological Institute of America, and as a tour leader he brought numerous groups to Egypt. His vast knowledge as well as his kindness and sense of humor charmed the tourists, transforming them into informed advocates for Egypt. His large, rambling house by the sea gave him space to raise the dogs he loved and to accumulate a vast number of books that he bequeathed along with his papers to Harvard University. He also became an active member of the New York chapter of the American Research Center in Egypt often attending their lectures.

Lanny received a number of awards during his long career including a National Merit Scholarship (1959–1963), a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship (1963–1964), and in 1988 he was elected a corresponding member of the German Archaeological Institute in Berlin. Lanny passed away on August 26, 2019 after a long struggle with Alzheimer's disease. A memorial volume, entitled *From the Fields of Offerings* had originally been prepared as a Festschrift in Lanny's honor, the knowledge of which gave him great pleasure in his final months. He will be remembered both for his scholarship and as an exceptionally generous and warm-hearted individual who was beloved by so many throughout the field of Egyptology.

Peter Lacovara
Albany, New York