

Caroline Locke Wegelin
20 October 1916 – 10 September 2005



Memorial Gathering
7 January 2006
12:00 noon
Eugene Friends Meeting

12:00 noon in the meeting room

Public sharing of memories
by anyone who would like to speak
(an audio recording will be made)

Later in the social area

Food and drink.

**The photograph on the front was taken 19 August 2005 at Koosah Falls near the
MacKenzie pass.**

Biographical Sketch composed in 1993

Caroline Locke Wegelin has been a dancer since the age of four and a half. Her professional career, in modern dance, began when she crossed the continent at twenty to study at Bennington School of the Dance and in New York. She toured with the Hanya Holm Dance Group; she founded a touring company with Elizabeth Waters; she taught dance at North Carolina College for Negroes, Goucher College, Smith College, and in many other venues, and for a year served as Acting Director of Dance in Theatre at Smith; she married and raised a family. After her children were grown she helped found a cooperative dance troupe, and developed a program of rhythm and movement for residents of nursing homes.

Caroline was born to Augustus and Helen (nee Lincoln) Locke in Brookline, Massachusetts on the 20th of October 1916, the first of three children. When she was eight months old the family moved to San Francisco. Augustus was a mining geologist and there were more opportunities in the west. Nineteen years later, Caroline would duplicate this move in the opposite direction.

Augustus was self-employed, and spent large stretches of time in the field, away from his family, sometimes out of the country. Such was the case when fire swept through Berkeley. Caroline was in first grade. A University of California student saw her walking home from school and said, "Little girl, you'd better hurry home, because the hills are burning." Her mother gathered the three children into the family car and drove south, away from the flames. The smell of smoke was oppressive and the sky was dark. As they drove off, the house next door began to burn. Helen had packed Augustus's notes, but everything else was burned in the fire--clothing, furniture, even the family dog, forgotten inside the house. A photograph is extant of the three children in borrowed clothes.

In the house that the family rented after this, Helen found the children playing with fire. They built play houses by pushing rattan chairs together in the living room and covering them with cushions and blankets. Inside they built a miniature bonfire out of scraps of wood the size of toothpicks, and ignited it.

Helen had longed to be a dancer. She took her eldest child at the age of four and a half to a class of rhythmic dance taught by a student of Isadora Duncan. Later, at a commercial studio, Caroline studied ballet. As a high school student she won a dance competition for a term of study in San Francisco with Veronika Pataky, a former member of Mary Wigman's group.

In 1937 she went to Bennington, a college where, for six weeks during the summer, several of the leaders of modern dance engaged in an intense effort of choreography. Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, and Hanya Holm were at Bennington with their companies. Students such as Caroline Locke had the opportunity to study with one of these, and the chance of being included in the ensemble group that performed the teacher's work.

There was unvoiced competition among the master teachers to see whose choreography was best, and the work that a company presented at the end of the summer often was the backbone of their season to come. The most prominent dance of the 1937 season was

Trend, choreographed by Hanya Holm, which was based on Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*, and took up an entire evening. Caroline, along with many others, had a minor part in Trend. There were two stages, upper and lower. Along the back part of the upper stage, while Holm's company danced in front, a line of students stood shoulder to shoulder with their backs to the audience and moved slowly towards stage left, representing a wall. Caroline was part of this wall.

Caroline's parents thought that she was on the East Coast only for the summer, but at the end, instead of going home, she went to New York, and began studying and working with Holm.

Holm had a more solid theoretical background than any of the other leaders of modern dance in America. She was the conduit for an intellectual tradition that had originated in Germany, including the system of dance notation invented by Rudolf von Laban. When Hitler came to power, Wigman chose to stay, although the government forced her to dismiss some of her more talented dancers because they were Jewish, and put a ballet master in charge of her school. Wigman's work had been a revolution against ballet and the artificiality it represented. When this happened, Holm, who had been in charge of the American branch of the Wigman school, broke with Wigman and established the Hanya Holm School of Dance. Caroline had been exposed to Wigman's way of moving through Veronika Pataky. She chose to work with Holm because of this connection.

Caroline lived in a YWCA in the Village, sharing a room with Bertha Quinn, a clerical worker from Saratoga Springs. The Y was a co-operative. For six dollars and fifty cents apiece per week, plus some work, they got room and board. Caroline first took classes with Holm; later she danced in her group and went on several tours with her, giving dance demonstrations and performing dances in college gymnasiums and theatres.

Caroline took a stage name. On her first day in Hanya's class in New York, Hanya said, "Your name's Caroline. But we already have a Caroline. What shall we call her?" Someone suggested "Linda." Caroline felt herself "very much an inferior member of the class," and didn't feel she could object. The name stuck.

Miriam (Mimi) Kagan was a member of Holm's company when Caroline came to Bennington. Mimi and Caroline got along well. Hanya saw this, and composed a duet for them to perform as part of a larger dance. "We were quite different in temperament," Mimi says. Also, Caroline was taller and more slender than Mimi. A relative of Caroline's who saw them dance together said they "looked like a plucked chicken and a dairy maid." Nevertheless, Mimi says, when they danced together, "we really were going on the same breath."

When the company was on tour, the two used to take walks into the black or hispanic section of town, depending on what region they were in, while the other members of the company rested in their hotel rooms. They would go into taverns and try to get a glass of milk. "Linda and I always wanted to explore. ... Sometimes (we went) to a black church, sometimes just to a little cafe. One of the things that really was a lesson to me: We both were sitting in this little cafe in a black neighborhood in a small southern town, and there was a jukebox. We put some money into it and a little kid, little black kid, seven or eight, started dancing, and was dancing for us. Neither of us talked to the other about that incident. But when we got home we each made a solo dance based on that. Now I was

much more political than Linda. I was not a communist, but I was pretty close. I had this generalized concept of the black as the oppressed people, and I was sorry for them and felt that it was unfair. Linda just saw things the way they were. I did a dance in which this poor little black kid was miserable. Her dance, I looked at it and I thought, 'Oh my god.' She really caught what the kid was doing. She called it 'Too Mean to Cry.' It was not oppressed. He was sassing us. I imposed my own political agenda on this kid and she saw it exactly as it was."

After about three years, Caroline left Hanya's group with Elizabeth Waters so that they could concentrate on their own choreography. They moved to Chapel Hill, North Carolina because they could not afford to live and rent rehearsal space in New York. They rented a small building from a veteran's organization which used it only for meetings once in a while. The room had windows all round and, more important, a wood floor. They rehearsed in this space and gave classes in it, Caroline to children, Elizabeth to adults.

They worked on dance solos. They also formed a company with two male dancers, and developed group pieces. They had to keep replacing the men because they kept getting drafted; nevertheless many of the men went back to dance after the war and had careers in it. Caroline and Elizabeth intended to take their program on the road, and for this reason they called themselves "Dancers en Route."

At this time very few Americans had seen dance on a stage, much less modern dance. Now we have television, beaming dance into every living room, and there are modern dance and ballet companies in many small towns. But at this time, unless you lived in a big city on the East or West Coast, or in Chicago or New Orleans, "Dance was just ladies in tutus on their toes."

One of the ways that America would learn about modern dance was through colleges and universities. Holm was an early advocate of this. When she began, no Dance departments existed; even in Physical Education departments, dance was rarely found. One of the reasons that Holm's company went on tour was to get people interested in dance as part of college education, as an art.

Dance first appeared in P.E. departments. From there it graduated into Theatre departments, and from there, sometimes, into a department of its own. Some of Holm's disciples helped to found or develop Dance departments. Helen Alkire, one of the students who danced in Trend, began the Dance program at Ohio State University and was head of the Dance Department until 1983. Elizabeth Waters developed the Dance program at the University of New Mexico.

The University of North Carolina Theatre department was interested in dance. Elizabeth helped with movement for productions, and sometimes coached actors. Caroline taught women part-time at North Carolina College for Negroes in Durham, which is now called North Carolina Central University. She was the only white instructor of undergraduates, naive about tension between the races. On one occasion she told her students they were being "niggardly" with their movements, not realizing that they would think she was using a racial slur. When she realized she had offended them she brought in a dictionary to show that the word she had used had nothing to do with the racial slur, but this didn't help.

Relations with her students improved after Caroline's sister Betty came to live with her. Betty had a dark complexion; very dark, straight hair; and high cheekbones. She looked like a Navajo. After the students saw Betty, they smiled at Caroline and said, "Now we know why you're here! We always wondered why you were here." They believed that Caroline had black blood.

Dancers en Route went on a barnstorming tour that lasted about two months. Elizabeth was the leader. The idea was "to treat middle America with contemporary dance." They had one or two fixed dates for performance, but on other occasions would simply arrive in a town and start making arrangements. "We'd put up posters and contact the press, and give a story. Usually we knew somebody there" who was enthusiastic about the arts, and could arrange a space in which the company could perform. Usually this was a college gymnasium or a community center.

They traveled by car. Elizabeth did the driving; Caroline did not know how to drive. One of the men (Alwin Nikolai) knew how, but didn't reveal this until the tour was finished. From North Carolina they drove zigzag to San Francisco, up the coast to Eugene, Oregon, and back to North Carolina. They supported themselves by box office fees when they could be obtained, and by working. Elizabeth taught workshops.



Caroline Locke and Elizabeth Waters

In a town in New Mexico, "we got really stuck. We thought we could do some performances there or at least some teaching. Sometimes Elizabeth did teaching to pull us through. But we couldn't. We were staying with quite a wellknown artistic bookbinder, who had an adobe house, and he let us just stay on the roof of their house part of the time." Their hostess had the job of decorating the plaza for a fiesta, and the company spent several nights doing this for her while the town was asleep. Their hostess found a place for them to perform, but while they were performing, someone stole their money along with their baggage. Fortunately, there wasn't much to steal. The time in New Mexico was not a loss, however. Elizabeth made contacts there which later served her well.

From North Carolina, Elizabeth and Caroline went on short tours of the Southern states, demonstrating modern dance as they had done in the cross- country tour. After two years in North Carolina, Elizabeth left for New Mexico, and settled there.

It was while she was teaching at NCCN that Caroline met Christof Andreas Wegelin, who eventually became her husband and the father of her two children. He was a Swiss graduate student in American literature at the University of North Carolina. He had come over in 1940 on a student visa, intending to return after a year, but stayed, pursuing graduate degrees at U.N.C. and Johns Hopkins. They met in Chapel Hill in 1941 and would marry in Washington, D.C., 29 November 1946.

After three years in Chapel Hill, Caroline moved to Baltimore, where she taught at Goucher College and at three or four very different YWCAs. Part of the mission of Goucher was to instill ladylike qualities in its students. Dance had been required at Goucher for a long time, in the interest of teaching grace and poise. This made teaching difficult, because many of the girls would have preferred to be playing volleyball. There was a group of mostly Jewish girls, however, who really liked to dance. They had a dance club, and Caroline worked with them on choreography. Goucher had a quota; only a certain percentage of the student body could be Jewish.

Caroline was not paid extra for working with the dance club, and does not remember being told when she was hired that she was expected to do this, "but I was delighted that some of the students wanted to do more than just have a little technique." The girls "had some grand ideas. There were a couple of feminists among them, and they had a chip on their shoulder because they were Jewish. They wanted to dance narrative, socially conscious dances. I tried to steer them away from that because it's very hard to put literary ideas into dance form without words." She got them to do "dances that were more abstract, dances for the rhythm or for a lyrical feeling, or dances inspired by the music. ...A couple of them were very good dancers, but that doesn't mean they could put a dance together themselves. ...I tried to make it possible for them to work on the kind of ideas that would work, that they would be capable of doing."

Every teacher at Goucher had to write a character sketch of everyone of her students each term. "I was very much against it. The emphasis was on whether they were meek and mild, whether they were clean and dressed carefully, whether they used their makeup tastefully, whether they were ladies."

The head of P.E., who hired Caroline, came from an old aristocratic family. When she interviewed Caroline for the job, she said, "I see you don't have a college education. I'm

not used to hiring ignorant people. But it sounds as if you're quite well qualified to teach." Caroline describes this woman as "a very nice person."

When she wrote the required character sketches of her students, the head of P.E. "was very surprised, and said, 'I wonder if you would write them for Joann too.' Joann was the P.E. teacher."

Caroline taught at the Central, International, and black YWCAs. At the Central Y her students were mostly married white women. She met Ruth Breed there, who introduced herself by saying, "My name is Ruth Breed, as in propagate." Caroline and Ruth were in a small group who met when and where they could get space, "worked on technique, and tried to put together dances for the fun of it." At the black Y Caroline taught very small children.

The International Y was in a Polish neighborhood, and teaching there was difficult. The girls were teenagers, many from troubled families. They were there because the director of the Y, Helen Garvin, was trying hard to get them to do something constructive. They behaved toward each other in a way that Caroline was not used to. If a girl gave another girl a slap on the back, the second girl would respond with a kick.

These girls "didn't want to follow orders" and "thought they didn't want to dance." A typical response to Caroline's directions was, "Oh yeah? I'm not going to do that," or, "So what?" Caroline divided them into groups of about five and said, "Think of something you want to dance about." Given this freedom, "they'd usually think of some domestic theme, and often it had violence in it. I don't know if it was just fun to say, 'I hate you, bang bang.' I tried to get them not to talk, to act it out and, if possible, to dance it out. ... They punched each other sometimes when they were doing a dance. One of them would be the bad mother or bad father and so they would punch her."

During one summer Caroline commuted from Baltimore to Washington, D.C. twice a week, taught a class, and worked on dances with Mary Seelye, a poet and a dancer experienced with movement to poetry. While Seelye danced, she would recite. "We were a very unusual combination physically. Mary was six feet tall and weighed about the same as I did." They performed together a couple of times.

In the autumn of 1946, Caroline took a position in the Theatre Department of Smith College. She taught dance history, beginning technique, advanced technique, and choreography. During 1946-47 she was assistant to the head of the dance division, Edith Burnett. The next year she served as acting head while Burnett was on sabbatical. Liz Goode, a dance instructor in the Physical Education Department, became a good friend. Caroline collaborated with Burnett on productions, helping with choreography and with the training of dancers. She was the principal female dancer in Lodestar, which she had helped choreograph.

Besides the female undergraduates, with whom she very much enjoyed working, there was a group of graduate students in theatre who performed in Lodestar, including six male veterans on the G.I. Bill. The age and experience of these men was a great advantage. In addition, most of them were from New York and several were Jewish. "They were great fun to work with."

In 1948 Caroline moved to Princeton, "because we thought we'd like to have a child." There she taught at a community arts center, and once a week she commuted to Baltimore to teach dance for two days to five grades at Park School, a private elementary and high school for children from wealthy families. The job paid well. "I was amazed because they paid me \$35 every time I went there. I wasn't used to that kind of thing." Members of Hanya's group had earned nothing for rehearsals, \$35 per week when on tour.

Nevertheless, "I earned every single penny of that, because it was hard." The younger children were easier to work with than the teenage girls. These were not aggressive like those at the International Y; they would simply turn their back on her. The best part about the weekly commute was staying with her friend Ruth Breed. She stopped work at Park three months before Bettina Locke Wegelin was born on 17 August 1949. The next year she had some neighborhood children in the living room for dance lessons, with Bettina, one year old, sitting on the floor.

In 1952, Christof took a faculty position at the University of Oregon and the family moved to Eugene. Jacob Andreas Wegelin was born 14 December 1954. Caroline did not look for opportunities to dance or to teach in Eugene. "I had a feeling that I should be thinking about being a good wife and mother." She gave up her stage name. Christof knew her as Linda, all her friends on the East Coast knew her as Linda, and the neighbors in Eugene first knew her as Linda. But as part of her attempt to take on the identity of a housewife, she started calling herself Caroline again. The next-door neighbor in Eugene still has difficulty remembering to call her Caroline. She gave up dance. "I did gardening instead. It didn't do the same thing."

At the co-op nursery school Tina attended, Caroline got into a conversation with a woman by the name of Phyllis Bristow. "She said that she was teaching dancing and I asked her what kind, and she told me. She told me she'd studied in New York with Martha Graham. I got more and more interested." Caroline began to work with Phyllis, teaching dance to a group of faculty wives who were interested in "reducing."

"We became very good friends, and we made up some dances together. I don't know whether we ever performed them, but she got me interested in doing something about dance again." She started giving classes at Eugene Parks and Recreation facilities. She substituted a few times for Frances Dougherty, who was head of the Department of Dance at the University of Oregon. Caroline taught a series of summer classes for junior high school girls, "the first time I've ever been any good with girls that age. They were motivated and they were lots of fun to work with." She met another dancer, Lois Diller, and taught classes and choreographed with her.

Dougherty let Caroline take as many dance classes as she wanted at the University. This was especially interesting because Dougherty brought many visiting teachers and groups from New York, including Sophie Maslow from Martha Graham's group, Eric Hawkins, and Merce Cunningham.

Caroline also taught at the Free University, which was founded in the late sixties or early seventies by "public-spirited young people" for the benefit of a flood of impoverished and largely aimless youth who filtered up from San Francisco. She did not teach long at the Free University because the discipline of modern dance did not appeal to most of her students. But out of a core of hard-working students the Eugene Dance Troupe was

formed. "They didn't want anyone to teach them dances; they wanted to make it up themselves; and so that's what we did. We did cooperative choreography." They performed in churches and coffee houses, and at arts centers in Medford and Coos Bay. The Central Presbyterian Church provided rehearsal space.

While Eugene Dance Troupe was still in existence, Caroline began doing rhythm and movement with the residents of nursing homes, a project now in its sixteenth year. Residents sit in a circle in their wheelchairs or in ordinary chairs and she (with the help, sometimes, of an assistant) leads them in simple movements, often to music, which stretch the muscles and increase circulation. Participants--when things have gone well--are more alert at the end of the session, more aware of what is going on around them. The residents know her as a friend, because she shows up regularly every week. She began this when she saw an ad in the newspaper placed by Emerald Nursing Home. She and Lois Diller, a dancer with whom she had worked in Eugene, answered the same ad, and originally they worked together; since then she has worked on her own and with many different assistants, some of them dancers and some not. She works at Good Samaritan, Emerald, and Hillside Heights.

Old age is difficult. "I don't really exist without a functioning body." Arthritis and severe, undiagnosed back pain have put an end to all but the most cautious exercise. Nevertheless, as of this writing she continues to teach movement to the elderly, an activity that, itself, requires movement. She does it not out of altruism, but because it is her idea of fun.

Jacob Andreas Wegelin, 2 March 1993

