

William “Bill” Klink

William (Bill) Klink, Professor Emeritus, passed away on May 18, 2026. Bill was born on September 29, 1937, in Chicago, Illinois. He attended the University of Michigan on a scholarship for golf caddies, from Evans Scholars. He met his wife Judith while at the University of Michigan and received a B.A. in Physics in 1959. Bill earned his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University in 1964. After graduation, he received a Fulbright scholarship at the University of Heidelberg. In the following year, Bill was hired as an Assistant Professor at the University of Iowa and became a Full Professor in 1976, where he remained until his retirement in 2009.

Bill was one of the department’s most beloved teachers. His lectures and seminars were logically organized, original, and well-prepared. His research on the role of symmetry in physics found its way into the classroom. Bill’s mathematical methods course is a great example of his originality and connection with his research program, where his treatment of special functions was developed using group representation theory.

Bill interacted with faculty from many departments. He started a long collaboration on group representation theory with Professor T. Ton That of the Iowa department of Mathematics. This led to the creation of an active weekly joint seminar involving faculty, students and research staff from both departments as well as international participants by zoom. Bill continued to participate in that seminar well past his retirement. He was also given a courtesy faculty appointment in the Mathematics department. Bill had a long collaboration with David Klemm in the department of religion that resulted in a co-taught course in the intersection of science and religion as well as a number of joint papers.

During one of Bill’s sabbaticals at the University of Graz, he motivated the group at Graz to develop relativistic constituent quark models based on Dirac’s point form representation of relativistic quantum. This representation appealed to Bill because the Lorentz symmetry remained kinematic in the point form. Bill continued that collaboration with Wolfgang Schweiger, where they studied cluster properties in point form quantum mechanics and point-form representations of local field theory.

Bill also started a collaboration with Sujeev Wickramasekara, who was a faculty member at Grinnell college, and regularly attended the department’s mathematical physics seminars. Bill and Sujeev wrote some wonderful papers on quantum mechanics in non-inertial reference frames. That collaboration resulted in a book, “Relativity, Symmetry and the Structure of the Quantum Theory.” Bill followed this with a second volume “Relativity, Symmetry, and the Structure of Quantum Theory, Volume 2” with Wolfgang.

Bill was a rare renaissance man. He had a broad range of interests including science, chamber music, philosophy, religion and sports. He was passionate about his effort to make his house a model of energy efficiency. He was an accomplished tennis player. He played touch football and basketball with the department's students. He could be seen riding his bike to work well into his seventies. He was a model faculty member who had a positive impact on everyone that he interacted with.