

WILLIAM E. FREDEMAN
FRSC, FRSL
1928-1999

Dennis T. Lanigan

Those interested in Pre-Raphaelite studies will be saddened to learn that on 15 July 1999 the distinguished scholar W.E. Fredeman died from pancreatic cancer, just a few days prior to his seventy-first birthday. Mark Samuels Lasner has referred to Dr. Fredeman as the “Godfather of PRB Mafia.” There is certainly some validity to this comment as unquestionably the two major events that sparked the modern revival of interest in the Pre-Raphaelites was the opening of the Maas Gallery in 1961 and the publication of Professor Fredeman’s *Pre-Raphaelitism: A Bibliocritical Study* in 1965. Dick Fredeman lived a life that was as colourful as the man himself. I only wish he had written his autobiography, as I once suggested to him, since it would have made fascinating reading.

He was born in poverty at Pine Bluff, Arkansas, on 19 July 1928. After his mother died in a car accident, he was sent at a young age to live in an orphanage. At age six he was fortunately adopted by an affluent Little Rock couple. Although his new parents renamed him William Evan, in characteristic fashion he steadfastly refused to answer to anything but his original name of Dick. His adopted father was a high-ranking officer in the U.S. military, while his adopted mother was a lawyer. Lillian Fredeman, in particular, was a remarkable person in her own right who had a major influence on her son. She was an early feminist before that term was coined. She was the first woman in Arkansas and the fifth woman in the United States to obtain a pilot’s license. Her strong-willed personality must surely have met its match, however, in young Dick’s feisty and determined nature. The fact that he received part of his education from the Jesuits, even though his family was Christian Scientist, may have also shaped his precocious intellect. Dick completed high school by the age of sixteen and received his bachelor of arts from Hendrix College in Arkansas at age nineteen. He served as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy Reserve from 1945-46 at the close of World War II. Dick completed his Master’s in 1950 and a Ph D in 1956 at the University of Oklahoma, while at the same time