

— *Recollection by Bill Davis, continued*

John also provided typescripts of many of Swami Pavitrananda's talks, and over time became the Swami's personal assistant, or *sevak*.

Later, under Swami Tathagatananda, John began to assist the Secretary of the Society. When she retired he was appointed Secretary and a Board member, a post he held for decades until he moved to Atlanta in the fall of 2013.

He took his meals on the Society's third floor — Bill Conrad joined him for dinner in about 1963 and I joined their little supper group on Tuesday nights in 1973.

Starting in 1961 a celebration of Swami Vivekananda on the 4th of July would be held at the country home of two members. John wrote music, rehearsed the chorus and instrumentalists and conducted for the event every year until he moved to Atlanta. For many years he collaborated with Eric Johns who would write a libretto. After Eric's death, John and I collaborated for about eight years.

John's older sister married a wealthy man. When their marriage ended she received a large settlement, which she shared with John. This enabled him to give up his work of ballet class accompanist, and freed up his time. John was then able to turn his mind to ways to spread Vedanta.

He decided to do this both through music and the written word. He had composed many wonderful full-length pieces of music with Vedantic themes — mainly vocal music with orchestration — 14 of these were recorded and issued through Vedantic Arts Recordings. He also wrote 10 purely instrumental works, with a modern feel, and six music videos with spiritual themes have been produced. All three categories are available on his web site (johnschlenckmusic.com).

He also published *American Vedantist*, a quarterly journal of essays, poetry, book reviews and fiction of interest to the spiritually oriented Western reader. There have now been nearly 70 issues; the last four were published online (americanvedantist.org).

John also visited India twice for extended stays; these visits influenced both his music and spiritual life. His second visit was for three months, beginning the end of 1981. I forget when he first visited. An account of his second visit, titled *A Pilgrim's Diary*, can be found on his website.

John had a cardiac arrhythmia, for which he had a pacemaker. Doctors reported that he died of a sudden massive brain hemorrhage.

Both of John's older sisters died before him. He is survived by a nephew and niece.



In Memoriam

John Schlenck



March 9, 1936 – January 27, 2015



Saturday, February 14, 2015 • 11:00 a.m.
Vedanta Center of Atlanta • Tucker, GA

John Schlenck, a recollection

By Bill Davis

John was born on March 9, 1936. He grew up in Indianapolis where as a child he showed precocious ability on the piano. When his parents suggested piano lessons he told them he already knew how to play. He said to me, “Fortunately, they insisted.” He became quite adept and as a high school student he won a statewide competition in Indiana.

He attended the Eastman School of Music, majoring in composition, and was awarded a certificate in performance. He performed his own piano concerto with the Rochester Symphony Orchestra. However, he found this to be an empty experience and felt then that the life of a composer was not for him. He moved to New York City where he supported himself by playing, ad lib, piano accompaniments for Martha Graham and Alvin Ailey dance classes, among others.

Growing up he attended a Unitarian church with his family. Not long after he arrived in Manhattan he learned from a neighbor that there would be a talk on science by a prominent scientist at the Vedanta Society. He was pleased that a religious institution would be open minded enough to have a talk on science.

He met Swami Pavitrananda, felt very attracted, and began to attend his classes. Within a year he felt such a strong commitment that he asked if he could move in to be of help to the society. Permission was granted and he lived there on the top floor in a room he named the Sarada Kutir from about 1959 to 2013 — almost 54 years. He told me that he wanted to live the life of a monk but didn’t join the Ramakrishna Order because he wanted his independence.

He helped out in many ways. First music: He soon brought music to the services with a baroque selection prior to the beginning of the service, and then gradually he introduced songs, most of which he composed himself. There is a whole songbook now of his compositions.

John also assisted with the practical affairs of the society, finally becoming a general manager for Swami Pavitrananda. He produced the monthly bulletin, kept the mailing list up to date, and organized mailings with help from others. He arranged repairs, ordered supplies, and purchased and stored books for the book table. He kept the library and tended the garden and the indoor plants.

— *Recollection continues on outside back cover*

A CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF JOHN MAXWELL SCHLENCK

...

PRELUDE

Selections from John’s work,
“Hymn to Holy Mother”

...

Reading of the *Office of the Dead*

...

SONG

“I Have Surrendered My Soul”
John’s song, sung by Katherine Durant

...

EULOGY

William Conrad

...

REMEMBRANCES AND FOND MEMORIES BY OTHERS