

## Christopher Bird, 68, a Best-Selling Author

By Eric Pace

May 6, 1996

2 MIN READ

See the article in its original context from May 6, 1996, Section D, Page 9 [Buy Reprints](#)

[VIEW ON TIMESMACHINE](#)

TimesMachine is an exclusive benefit for home delivery and digital subscribers.

### **About the Archive**

*This is a digitized version of an article from The Times's print archive, before the start of online publication in 1996. To preserve these articles as they originally appeared, The Times does not alter, edit or update them.*

*Occasionally the digitization process introduces transcription errors or other problems; we are continuing to work to improve these archived versions.*

Christopher Bird, a writer whose books "The Secret Life of Plants" and "The Divining Hand: The 500-Year-Old Mystery of Dowsing" drew good-natured skepticism and some praise from critics, died on Thursday in a Blairsville, Ga., hospital. He was 68 and lived in Blairsville.

The cause was a stroke he suffered at home, said his wife, Shabari-Lynda.

Mr. Bird, whose family said he served with the Central Intelligence Agency in the 1950's, was best known for "The Secret Life of Plants: A Fascinating Account of the Physical, Emotional and Spiritual Relations Between Plants and Men" (1973), which he wrote in collaboration with Peter Tompkins.

In the book, the authors said, among many other things, that experiments had shown that plants instantly registered the reactions of people they cared about who were thousands of miles away. "The Secret Life of Plants" became a best seller and was translated into many foreign languages.

Elsa First, a psychoanalyst, wrote in reviewing that work that the two authors had "concocted a popular-science pastiche of New Occult hopes and brought them out into the marketplace, glibly tailored to bid for middle-class respectability."

"Amateur psychic research has always looked at least slightly dotty," she added, "Tompkins and Bird are sublimely oblivious of this fact, and as a result have turned out the funniest unintentionally funny book of the year."

Another reviewer, Doris Grumbach, wrote of Mr. Bird's 1979 book about dowsing -- locating water by the movements of a forked stick or similar implement -- that his "encyclopedic work will interest many, amuse some and convince others that dowsing works, for whatever reason."

Mr. Bird was born in Boston, graduated in 1951 from Harvard College and later did graduate work in Eastern European studies and Polynesian anthropology.

He also served in the Army in Vietnam and worked as a journalist and for the Rand Corporation in addition to writing several books and hundreds of articles.

His first marriage ended in divorce, and his second wife died. He married his third wife, Shabari-Lynda Boland, in 1991.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by four daughters, Kristina Bird, of Truro, Mass.; Lehua Julie Bird-Farraiz, of La Sabana, Venezuela; Doina Bird-Rosique of Barcelona, Spain, and Zvia Bird of Atlanta; three stepsons, Tim Bunge of Silver Spring, Md., and Gabriel and Jeremiah Cymerman of Blairsville; a stepdaughter, Hope Cymerman of Blairsville; four grandchildren, and two brothers, David, of Cambridge, Mass., and Charles Sumner Bird 3d, of Aiken, S.C.

A version of this article appears in print on , Section D, Page 9 of the National edition with the headline: Christopher Bird, 68, a Best-Selling Author