



Martha Lillian White PhD

January 7, 1949 - June 28, 2023

Martha Lillian White, PhD, (“Mart” to family and friends), died in Pawleys Island, SC on June 28, 2023, at the age of 74.

She died at home in the comforting presence of her spouse Eileen “Beans” Kelly. Martha was born on a cold day, January 7, 1949, in Atlanta GA, the second of five children of devoted parents Dr. John Anthony (Tony) and Lillian A. White. She grew up in Easley, SC and thrived in the smalltown community where she was active in church and school leadership roles. She attended Easley High School where she developed what became a life-long passion for participating in and following sports of all types. She wrote the “On the Ball with Mart” column for the school paper and played basketball with great zeal. Martha earned a BA from Columbia College in 1971 where she continued as a student body leader and loved playing intramural sports. Her first professional work was as a special education teacher in Orlando, FL where she lived with college friends. And oh, how she loved her Columbia College friends, including a special few who vacation together annually at Edisto Beach to celebrate their long friendships. Early family trips instilled a love of traveling which she combined with work as a Department of Defense contract teacher in Okinawa and Schweinfurt, Germany. She continues regular contact with many of her friends from that time. Seeking a new professional path, Martha earned an MA and a PhD in Counseling Psychology from the University of Georgia (UGA). During her years in Athens, she thrived in her work with students and colleagues in the University Counseling Center. While at UGA,

mild-mannered Martha became an avid and sometimes boisterous fan of the “Bulldogs”. Her fair-mindedness allowed her to remain a fan of Clemson and University of South Carolina (as long as they weren’t playing the Bulldogs!). In recent years, Mart became a loud and ‘wowed’ fan of the USC Lady Gamecock Basketball team. Mart’s introduction to golf was a painful one when a sibling’s overzealous putter swing ended the game with her father stitching up Martha’s cut. However, her deep love of golf was kindled with the UGA Women’s Golf team, coached by Beans Kelly. Many of those UGA golfers have maintained close connections with the couple and were devastated to hear of Martha’s unexpected death. One of those former golfers commented that she had never met a person like Mart who, when she walked in a room, everyone there felt such a sense of comfort just from her gentle presence and warm, reassuring smile. Mart’s spirit was as big as that wonderful smile and as bright as her shining blue eyes. She will be deeply missed by family, friends, colleagues, and clients. From her early years in Easley, educational settings, professional career, church life, and social interactions, it seemed as if Mart knew thousands of people who considered her their dear friend and confidant. This is not surprising considering Martha’s compassion, wisdom, and acceptance of others. Her decades of experience as a counseling psychologist earned her a reputation as an excellent therapist, and as a kind and patient listener for her siblings and friends who found her calm demeanor always comforting and helpful. Without self-interest Martha was committed to serving others. Her siblings have always believed, and others agree that Martha seemed to be born with a pure spirit that without ego, pervaded her life and relationships. She had a rich spiritual life that began at First United Methodist Church in Easley. In 1962, the Tony & Lillian White family was named “Methodist Family of the Year” that was documented in a photographic essay in Together, the national church magazine. Martha later found a welcoming spiritual community in the Athens Unitarian Universalist Church where she became an active lay leader. She and Beans more recently found community in the Unitarian Church in Charleston, SC, and were willing to

regularly make the commute for Sunday services. Martha & Beans became friends at UGA, and their love and devotion grew stronger every year of their four decades together. They were married in Towson, MD in 2013. They lived each day with joy and deep gratitude for their many blessings, especially their loving family and friends. Although physical limitations accompanied Martha's stroke and breast cancer in recent years, the two were committed to living life to the fullest, made possible with Beans' love and extraordinary caregiving, coupled with Martha's determination and passion for life. They inspired all who crossed their path. Their mantras showed their profound acceptance of life's challenges with "It is what it is" balanced with their optimism and grit with "Catch the joy as it flies". After leaving Athens, Martha and Beans moved to the Pawleys Island area where they had vacationed for many years. They named their North Litchfield condo "The Golfin' Dolphin" and have remained at Litchfield Retreat since 2005. They adored the ever-changing ocean, skies, and wildlife, often organizing bonfires on the beach, impromptu happy hours and cookouts for their dear neighbors and friends. Martha loved the water and had a spiritual connection to all the ways that a person interacts with water whether sitting in the shallows of the breakers, paddling with her beloved dragon boat teammates, working out in the therapy pool, or reveling in the simple pleasure of a shower. Beans coached the Dragon Boat at the Beach paddling team of cancer survivors and Mart joined the fierce competition in many Dragon Boat festivals. The collective team spirit as well as the shared hardships deepened the friendships and the close circle of support for Mart and Beans. Beans and Martha have always been very close with their families and throughout their 41 years together, have consistently given their time, love, and devotion to both families. Especially with their nieces and nephews, they have served as role models for the importance of maintaining strong values and family ties.

Martha was preceded in death by her parents and is survived by her wife Beans Kelly, sisters Ann White and Toni White (Joe Alley) of Lexington, SC;

and brothers David White (Kerry MacKenzie) of Pickens, SC and David's sons Isaac and Adrian; and John White (Bonnie Wyckoff) of Forest Grove, Oregon and their children John-Brian and Liza; Martha loved Beans' four Kelly brothers and their families: Doug (Betty Ann), and their children MacKenzie, Kayla and John; Tom (Lauren), and their children Macie and Asher; Brendan (Tracy), and their children Mac, Maggie, and Bridget; and Brian (Holly), and their children Will and Grace.

A Celebration of Life will be held at 11:00 AM Saturday, September 9, 2023 at the Unitarian Church in Charleston at: 4 Archdale St, Charleston, SC 29401. To comment or read Martha White's past entries, go to <https://www.caringbridge.org>

In lieu of flowers, donations in Martha's memory can be directed to Columbia College and/or the Unitarian Church in Charleston: For Columbia College: via the online form at: https://www.givecampus.com/campaigns/2503/donations/new?donation_type=general or send checks to: Columbia College, Advancement Office, 1301 Columbia College Drive, Columbia, SC 29203 (please note "In memory of Martha White") For the Unitarian Church at <https://www.charlestonuu.org/ways-to-give>.

Sign an online guestbook at www.goldfinchfuneralhome.com

Goldfinch Funeral Home, Beach Chapel is in charge of the arrangements.

Tribute Wall

SM

“ I love Martha, I recently discovered Martha has passed. I hope her family has found comfort in knowing how influential Marth was to everyone she met. I knew Martha at the beginning of my counseling career when we worked together in the counseling center at CCU. Words can't tell you the impact she had on me both personally and professionally. She was always so grateful for any act of kindness. I remember she used to drink TAB soda when I knew her and I made her a cake that looked like a can of TAB for her birthday one year and she could not have been more grateful, I believe she kept in in the freezer for a while because she loved it so much lol. She gave me a turtle swinging when she left CCU, it still hangs on my porch where I see it every day, I think of Martha often and am so grateful we crossed paths, she will be with me forever. With love and condolences,
Susan McLean

Susan McLean - July 25, 2024 at 09:38 PM

ST

“ I met Martha a few months ago, while she did her swimming exercises and I was the lifeguard who talked her ear off! She worked so hard in the pool, and I often made her late for Beans at pick up! I told Martha everything about my family and she took a very special interest in my son, Ben, who was a college athlete. She loved letting me share my stories, her heart as big as her beautiful smile. Each time Martha worked out she would ask about Ben and his accomplishments and remembered them!! Ben was born on June 28th. I would love to believe somehow she's got her eye on him! Martha, you were my hero, and I am glad I get to tell you that. May all your loved ones know you are at peace and stronger than ever! Hang up those water weight dumbbells!

Susan Talbot - September 05, 2023 at 04:39 PM

JT

“ I met Martha less than a year ago. We saw each other several times a week, in the pool. Martha was clearly determined to work out the physical problems left by her stroke. We enjoyed chatting there and she made it clear that she cared about me as I left for my spine surgery. I had no idea that Martha cared so much for so many people in her life until I read her obituary. I was only just beginning to understand what a very special person she was. I'm glad she had so many caring friend and family relationships in her life, she certainly deserved every one of them.



Jan Taylor - August 26, 2023 at 02:25 PM

AK

“ I met Martha as a client of her counseling practice. We immediately made a connection which deepened over our years of working together. She was an inspiration to me. She offered me understanding and empathy when I needed it. I learned much from her. I will miss her deeply.

amy kinard - August 15, 2023 at 07:33 PM

SC

“ I have known Martha and her family my entire life. Our families vacationed together at "O.D." (Ocean Drive) for many, many years! I remember such great times on vacation and so many fun times at the swimming pool at their home in Easley. Her parents, Tony was our family doctor, one my Dad's dearest friends and Lillian, such an excellent cook! I shared my first kiss with her brother, David, at the ripe old age of six which I am sure Tony taped on his video camera!! Although Mart was more my older sister's age, she was always really good to me and the entire White family were just very special people!

Sally Crane - July 24, 2023 at 02:38 PM

SH

“ I met Martha early on after moving to Easley. I remember her kind spirit and her leadership qualities. Although we were never close friends, we shared many of the same memories. Always welcoming and gentle, Martha made everyone feel special.

sherri Houston - July 11, 2023 at 08:38 PM

SP

“ Martha was my dearest friend, as young girls! I spent many hours in the White home. This is a sad day, indeed. Sending my sincerest expression of sympathy to her family.
Stella Parrish

stella parrish - July 09, 2023 at 11:27 AM

SP

“ I have known Martha since the first grade, when I instantly fell in love with her. I threw her kisses, and we held hands until Mrs. Cantrell broke us apart. I must have sensed her loving, safe, and accepting spirit. Throughout school I watched her become a leader, and I admired her brilliance, wisdom, and compassion. Later she set up myself and my friends at USC with blind dates from Columbia College.
Most recently, my spouse (Susan Roe Gillespie) and I had the pleasure of sitting down with Martha and her lovely wife, Bean, at our 50th high school reunion. I am saddened by her lose. It is comforting to know she was happy at Pawley's Island, and that she lived such a full and love- filled life. Reverand Dr. Steven Gillespie.

Steven Gillespie, PhD - July 09, 2023 at 11:08 AM

LC

I knew Martha from my high school years. She was a “born leader” and a friend to so many. My sincere sympathy to her family and friends, as her loss will always be felt! I’m grateful that she was able to reach her goals and live her beautiful life.

Linda Carman - July 17, 2023 at 06:47 AM

MA

“ *Toni, I am so very sorry to learn this sad news about your dear sister. I know your heart hurts. Her obituary is beautifully written and gives a vivid picture of what an amazing person she was. Prayers for peace for you and Martha's entire family as you mourn her passing and celebrate her life. Love to you, my Friend.*

Mary Anne Allread - July 09, 2023 at 08:15 AM

BP

“ *Rest in peace my friend.*



Becky Baker Perry - July 07, 2023 at 03:13 PM

CB

“ *Martha always phoned me to “check-in” to make sure my day went well and to let me know hers did also. I will always remember the fun times we had and laughs we shared. She was truly one of the finest people I have had the pleasure of knowing. Even in difficult times she always found a smile and some positive words. I will miss her dearly, but glad that God got another wonderful Angel.*

Cheryl Brokaw - July 06, 2023 at 12:50 PM

DM

“ *Deborah "Gaya" Milling lit a candle in memory of Martha Lillian White PhD*



Deborah "Gaya" Milling - July 05, 2023 at 11:34 AM

TW

Thank you Dr. Gaya. Mart had great respect for you as a therapist. I'm thankful she connected me to you!

Toni White - July 07, 2023 at 12:15 PM