



Dr. Martha Kirkland West

June 19, 1937 - August 26, 2021

Dr. Martha Janet Kirkland West, 84, of Salisbury, NC passed away Thursday, August 26, 2021 at The Lutheran Home at Trinity Oaks.

Martha was born June 19, 1937 in Salisbury, to the late Gordon Ashby Kirkland and Alene Savage Kirkland. She was a graduate of Catawba College and earned her master's (M.ED) and doctorate (Ph.D) degrees from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her professional life was spent in education. She taught at Huntersville Elementary School in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (1959-1965), served as Professor of Education at Catawba College (1965-1981) and as Director of Elementary Education in the Rowan County Schools (1981-1989) and the Rowan-Salisbury School System (1989-1999). After she retired, she was elected to the Rowan-Salisbury School Board of Education (2001-2005), serving as vice-chair the last two years.

Much of Martha's life was centered around Catawba College. She grew up on the campus where her father was football coach. She graduated from Catawba where she received the Whitener Medal, Catawba's highest student award. She taught at Catawba for 16 years. She was appointed to the college's Board of Trustees in 1993. When Catawba celebrated its sesquicentennial in 2001, she served as editor and one of the authors of the college's history, "A College of Our Own". She received an honorary degree from the college during that year. She also received the Distinguished Alumnus Award.

In 2011 she received Catawba's highest award for service to the college and community, the Adrian Shuford, Jr. Award for Distinguished Service. Another honor from Catawba was students who received scholarships in teacher education being named the West Scholars. When Martha retired from the local school system, her colleagues contributed funds to endow the Martha West Scholarship which is awarded each year to an outstanding student in teacher education.

Martha was very active in this community. She was a member of John Calvin Presbyterian Church where she served as an elder, choir member, women's circle member and study leader, and a volunteer for Meals on Wheels and Rowan Helping Ministries. She also serviced on several Presbyterian committees and was elected to the denomination's General Assembly. For many years she served on The Salvation Army's Board of Advisors. She served several terms on the Boards of The Center for Faith and the Arts,

Rowan Museum, Piedmont Players, St. Thomas Players, and the Salisbury-Rowan Symphony. She was a tutor with Communities and Schools.

She was invited to membership in the Delta Kappa Gamma Society, an international society for women in education. She served two terms as local president and one term as state vice-president. She served on the local Smart Start Rowan Board and as chairman of the Pre-K Committee. In 2016 she was awarded the Shirley P. Ritchie Champion for Children Award.

Martha had many interests. She traveled to over 40 countries and to 46 states. She served as tour leader on many of these trips, including a number to New York City. She loved to read and at one time belonged to three book clubs. Bridge was another favorite hobby. She loved to sing and through the years sang with several groups. She especially loved football and went to Catawba games all of her life. For eighteen years, she was a season ticket holder with the Carolina Panthers. She has been a member of the Catawba Chiefs Club from its beginning and served as president in one of its early years.

In addition to her parents she was preceded in death by her husband, Dr. James King West in 1984.

Martha is survived by her brother, Gordon Kirkland (Sandra); nieces: Robin Kirkland, Brenda McCullers (Ray), Anita Hicks (Jerry), and Carolyn Blevins (Craig), nephews: David Kirkland (Jerissa), Vincent West (Pam); great-nephew, Owen Kirkland and many cousins. A Committal Service will be conducted 1 PM Thursday (Sept. 2) at City Memorial Park Cemetery followed by a Memorial Service at 2 PM at John Calvin Presbyterian Church with Rev. Kate Morrison, officiating.

The service will be videoed and downloaded to the John Calvin Presbyterian Church website.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Martha Kirkland Scholarship or the Gordon and Alene

Kirkland Scholarship at Catawba College, 2300 West Innes Street, Salisbury, NC 28144 or John Calvin Presbyterian Church, 1620 Brenner Avenue, Salisbury, NC 28144.

Summersett Funeral Home is serving the West/Kirkland family. Online condolences may be made at www.summersettfuneralhome.com.

Cemetery Details

City Memorial Park

1316 West Innes St
Salisbury, NC 28144

Previous Events

Graveside Service

SEP 2. 1:00 PM (ET)

City Memorial Park
1316 West Innes St
Salisbury, NC 28144

Memorial Service

SEP 2. 2:00 PM (ET)

John Calvin Presbyterian Church
1620 Brenner Ave.
Salisbury, NC 28144

Tribute Wall

MB

“ I was saddened to hear today of Dr Martha West's passing. I was an education major under Dr West from 1971-1975, and truly enjoyed her classes, her excellent teaching, and her ability to let you know that she cared about her individual students. She had great humor and patience and passion about teaching. A light has gone out in the world, but I know the light shines in heaven now. Thank you, Dr. West, for everything I learned from you. Rest In Peace, my friend and mentor. Deepest sympathy to her family members.

Mary Leslie Brandon - September 08, 2021 at 03:54 PM

SE

“ What can I say about Dr. Martha West that hasn't already been said? She was my professor, my mentor, and my friend. I graduated from Catawba in 1973. She was always so encouraging and knowledgeable, especially in the area of children's literature. I began teaching in the Rowan-Salisbury school system after graduating and had the privilege of having Martha as my supervisor. I was so blessed by her guidance. I was so touched when she came to both my dad's and mom's funerals. She really cared about her students and teachers. There will never be another Dr. Martha West! The world was a better place because she was in it. She also loved the Lord and we talked about our love for Him. He is welcoming Martha with "Well done My good and faithful servant." Susan Everhart

Susan Everhart - September 02, 2021 at 11:03 AM

“ I’m so sorry for your loss. I’m going to miss Martha too. My thoughts and prayers are with you in your time of grief.

Broadly speaking, I knew Martha Kirkland West in two phases at Catawba College. First, I knew her from a distance as an undergraduate student as a teacher, and as a fan of the Catawba Football team. I recall her sitting with Mrs. Mary Omwake Dearborn, wife of late president Donald Dearborn and Louise Tucker, the assistant register. They were Catawba’s three amigas. Along with students, faculty and friends of Catawba, we all watched Superman on Saturdays (aka Ike Hill) become the football maestro of Kirkland field. We cheered his amazing runs with the football tucked under his arm and his spectacular kickoff returns for touchdowns. By the time that I graduated, I was aware of Martha’s distinguished lineage at Catawba, where her father was the legendary football coach. Dr. James King West, her late husband, taught me.

My second phase with Martha occurred when I was appointed a member of the Catawba College Board of Trustees, in 1994, one year after her. She warmly welcomed me to the BOT. Over the course of our serving on the Academic Quality Committee, we became colleagues and friends. In her comments and deliberations, she always put the greater good of her beloved alma mater first “down in the verdant Southland.” She was a kind and gentle lady in an age when that term has become an epithet for a bygone age. With an effortless grace, she practiced Jesus’ second commandment “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” More often than not, when I visited her at the Lutheran Home at Trinity Oaks, she would lift my spirits before I could lift hers. May you rest in peace sweet princess and rise in glory!

*Dolan Hubbard, Ph.D. ('71)
Professor and Chairperson Retired
Department of English and Language Arts
Morgan State University
dolan.hubbard@verizon.net*

Dolan Hubbard - August 31, 2021 at 09:45 PM

SK

“ Our deepest condolences to the Kirkland and West families. Martha was a singular force of nature that we all loved and adored. My parents were both young scholars and immigrants from South Korea in the 1950's and 1960's. They would have been really lost if not for the friendship, generosity and genuine hospitality that they received from Martha and others in Salisbury, Raleigh and Chapel Hill. Her deep intellectual curiosity and insight were awe-inspiring; our whole family was tied to her for nearly 5 decades and we all felt we could talk to her about anything - education, politics, books, anything! My siblings and I, now in our 50's, have known Martha our entire lives and she has attended our graduations, weddings and celebrations as a family member for all those years. We will deeply miss her charm, wit, insights and laughter, and even miss a mild scolding from her too. We didn't get to visit in person often, but they were always memorable. Her absence leaves a deep hole in our hearts.

With love,

Jin Young Choi, Sharon, Caroline and Eric Kim
(NYC, NY and Los Angeles, CA)

Sharon Kim-Gibbons - August 30, 2021 at 05:16 PM

CL

I heard Martha speak so highly of your family. She loved visiting when in NYC. -Clay Clayton

Clay - August 31, 2021 at 05:55 PM

RC

“ Ron and Barb Christman purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Dr. Martha Kirkland West.



Ron and Barb Christman - August 29, 2021 at 08:22 PM

BW

“ I'm so sorry to hear of Martha's passing! My prayers are with y'all! I have many wonderful memories growing up with Martha and Gordon! Martha made a difference in many people's lives. I had the pleasure of working with Martha with the Rowan-Salisbury School System.

Bob Wood - August 29, 2021 at 07:06 PM

BM

“ Deep sympathy to Gordon and family with the loss of another “Miss Catawba “❤️
We all have great memories of a special childhood with parents and kids all sharing Catawba love.
Thank you to Martha for all she was as an educator, friend and inspiration to so many. She will be missed by many.
Betsy Dearborn Miller

Betsy D Miller - August 28, 2021 at 01:36 PM

DM

“ My condolences to the family. It was my privilege to work with Dr. West from 1989-1994. I served as the first superintendent of the newly merged Rowan-Salisbury Schools and Martha was the Director of Reading and Language Arts (I believe that was the correct title.) Her knowledge of teaching reading was unsurpassed in the district and her kind and gentle manner was respected and loved by all. She worked tirelessly and was a strong voice for students and teachers alike. I was so pleased when she was elected to the Rowan-Salisbury School Board after her retirement. She kept the focus on education and was a champion for children.

Don Martin - August 28, 2021 at 01:11 PM

CL

“ I was so lucky to have Martha as a second cousin twice removed. We knew of each other all our lives but it wasn't until after King died and I had graduated from college that we got to be friends. She was spending time at my Grandparents' cottage in Kitty Hawk mourning her husband and I visited for a week or two before starting my job search. We shared a love of that cottage, my Grandmother (who had grown up with her Mom), and travel.

After I moved to NC in the late 80s, we got even closer. Whenever she came to Raleigh she would stay with me and even got to sleep in her parents bed which she had given to me when I bought my first house.

I remember how happy she was when she was setting off on one of her many civil war battleground visits or for that matter any trip! I remember how proud she was of David and his family and how pleased she was to be able to have them close in Salisbury.

After I retired in 2018, and we were back in NC we got to spend time with her... usually involving lunch at College BBQ. In fact that is what we will plan to do on Thursday before her service.

That's Martha as a teenager at Kitty Hawk (circa 1950) with lots of other relatives mostly from my Grandfather's side (not her side of our family). One of the other pictures is of the two of us when we attended another distant cousin's wedding in the early 90s. And the final picture is just after she had moved from her house during our first visit to her new place.



Clay - August 28, 2021 at 12:00 PM

KH

“ My deepest sympathy to you Gordon and your family. I am so grateful for the wonderful times growing up together on the Catawba campus, and I treasure my memories of times spent with Martha over the years. I will miss her.
Katharine Heckscher

Katharine Dearborn Heckscher - August 28, 2021 at 11:57 AM

KH

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Katharine Dearborn Heckscher - August 28, 2021 at 11:42 AM

TS

“ What can you say about a person who changed the course of your life? She was a mentor, a friend for over 40 years and sometimes a second Mom. Love you Martha with all my heart and soul. Rest In Peace and you will be forever in my memories.

Timothy W. Smith - August 28, 2021 at 10:37 AM

TS

“ Timothy W. Smith sent a virtual gift in memory of Dr. Martha Kirkland West



Timothy W. Smith - August 28, 2021 at 09:57 AM