



## Martha Lou Castillo

June 25, 1919 - December 18, 2017

Martha Louise Gorton Castillo, age 98, passed away on December 18, 2017 at her home in Huntsville, Texas.

Martha Lou was born in Utica, New York, on June 25, 1919 to Charles Ruddell Gorton of New York and Caroline Oates Gorton of Greenville, Kentucky. She learned her love of travel early as her father and mother brought Martha Lou and her two sisters, Carolyn and Ruth, south to their winter home in Miami, Florida every October and returned to their lovely home at Frog Park in Utica every summer.

In Miami she attended Miss Harris's School for Girls, where she credits the outdoor classrooms for her excellent health and long life. It also gave her a well-rounded education in art, music, poetry and literature. She was a founding member of The Spinsters and a life-long member of the Junior League of Miami. Encouraged by her athletic father, the three sisters camped, hiked, canoed and sailed. While her sisters played tennis, Martha Lou competed in swimming and tried out for the 1936 Olympic Swimming Team. She continued to swim for the rest of her life, winning numerous gold medals in the Senior Olympics until she was 95.

The family continued to travel at a time when paved roads did not yet exist across the United States. In 1926, her father took the family across the United

States to California in an Oldsmobile Roadster. Without roadside motels, the family camped out in a large canvas World War I tent, enjoying the adventures of cooking over campfires. On occasion, the car had to be hauled out of low water crossings by mules, and they had to carry their own gas cans. Los Angeles, California was just beginning its growth when they arrived. She remembered it as a town of sweet-smelling orange groves where little attention was given to the beginnings of a new movie-making industry in nearby Hollywood.

Martha Lou particularly remembered a six-month trip to Europe during 1928. Her father bought a car in Germany and the family toured the continent, taking the three sisters to visit the Louvre in Paris and the ruins of the Colosseum in Rome as well as crossing to Egypt. All her life, Martha Lou enjoyed sharing her story of having her fortune told inside a pyramid by a Fakir as they sat cross-legged in the sand in the stone sarcophagus of one of the pharaohs.

Martha Lou attended Ward-Belmont College in Nashville, Tennessee, at the time a private girls' finishing school that "provided cultural, intellectual and social learning and the empowerment of 'lives of purpose'." It made her a life-long intellectual, curious about everything, and provided her with a teaching degree.

Upon her father's death just prior to World War II, she returned to Miami to live with her mother where the two women went to work for Pan American Airlines. Martha Lou enjoyed dating many of the Navy men who frequented Miami during the war years, even getting a ride in a PT Boat.

In 1945, her sister Carolyn received an art scholarship from Syracuse University to travel to Mexico City and attend the San Carlos Art Institute. Martha Lou joined her sister and the two girls were introduced to José and Arturo Castillo, two California-educated young men who were considered

proper escorts. The men squired the girls around Mexico taking them to visit the pyramids, to see the night-time red glow of the erupting volcano Paricutin, and the many nightclubs and restaurants in the 500-year-old city.

José 'Pepe' Castillo followed Martha Lou back to Miami where the couple were married in December of 1945. They moved back to Mexico City where they became an active part of the American Community. She joined the Junior League and the couple attended the Union Church. Their four children, Ana Carolina, José, Sara and Charles were born there, growing up at the family home in Coyoacan. She began a teaching career at the American School Foundation in Mexico City, teaching fifth grade, and starting a correspondence course for a Master's Degree from Michigan State University.

In 1963, at the death of her husband, José, Martha Lou returned to Miami with her four children. While putting them through school, she completed her Master's Degree and began work on a doctorate in Education from the University of Miami. After completing her D.Ed. degree at the age of fifty, she returned to teaching.

In 1978, she met Al Ruther. She spent the next forty years with him following the tennis circuit. Just as her father had, they traveled north in the summer to New York, Rhode Island or Virginia, and spent winters in Orlando or Miami, Florida. They always stayed in university towns where they enjoyed all the intellectual and artistic opportunities. While Al played tennis, she always found a place to swim, putting in her twenty-one laps every day until she was 97. The couple finally married when she was 92 in Huntsville, Texas although they continued to travel. While in Huntsville, she was a member of the Thoreau Woods Unitarian Universalist Church.

Martha Lou never met a stranger and made friends up and down the East

Coast. She continued her intellectual explorations, studying and reading widely throughout her life.

She is survived by her husband Al Ruther, her daughter Caroline Crimm and husband Jack, her son Joe Castillo and wife Cindy, her daughter Sara Thompson and husband Dean, and her son Charles Castillo and wife Josey, Grandchildren José and wife Shannon, Maria, Moses and wife Meredith, Charles and wife Natasha, Stephen and wife Rebekah, along with nine great grandchildren.

There will be a private family service at the First United Methodist Church in Huntsville.

If desired, memorials may be made to the Wynne Home (1428 11th St, Huntsville, TX 77340) where she loved to play the piano; or to her beloved Huntsville Public Library (1219 13th Street, Huntsville, TX 77340) or the Thoreau Woods Unitarian Universalist Church (144 East Mosely Lane, Huntsville, TX 77340).

# Tribute Wall



“ *Martha Lou Castillo*

November 15, 2022 at 08:33 PM



“ *Sorry for your loss.*



**Mellicent Sikes Wiley** - December 23, 2017 at 10:54 AM



“ *Johnnie Jo Dickenson lit a candle in memory of Martha Lou Castillo*



**Johnnie Jo Dickenson** - December 21, 2017 at 02:53 PM