

SNAPSHOTS OF MARTHA

Colleague for many years

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The Beginning – 1969

I had heard a lot about Martha long before I actually met her. I was a part time new faculty member in the Program in Child Development and Child Care then located administratively in the School of Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh. Her name floated about and I learned that she had a doctorate from Duquesne University and taught research courses in the Master's degree curriculum.

I finally did see her, face to face, in 1969 and I have a snapshot memory of it. This took place in the office area allocated to the department on the 6th floor of Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic. I walked through the door one day and a woman with a long light brown pony tail and wearing a skirt and short sleeved sweater was standing by the secretaries' desks with her back to me. That was Martha. I didn't meet her just then although later on of course I did. That began years of our friendly collegueship.

One of our first connections was working on the National Institute of Mental Health grant for our new Baccalaureate Program in Child Development and Child Care. I worked on the narrative and Martha worked on the evaluation component. We got the Grant for the Baccalaureate program 'Baccalaureate' as Martha later spelled it in some document – I don't ever remember her misspelling anything so I got a kick out of it. Who doesn't misspell something? Martha was so smart I never would have though she'd make a spelling mistake.

I hadn't known much about Martha and Dick (Richard Kristufek) who I'd hear her mention now and then until she began to announce wedding plans.. When the event occurred she invited me and my family to it and we went. I have a photo of my son Mark in his red blazer and my daughter Elizabeth in the long dress I had made her (I sewed in those days). I remember Martha in a long white satin dress.

When there was an 'official' dinner Martha and Dick would sometimes sit with Ned and me. One time we had to go out to feed our expiring parking meters. Ned was uptight about the prospect of a ticket. I wasn't. I'd rather stay and chat, while risking a ticket. Martha laughed. Dick was the same way as Ned. Maybe it's a male and female thing.



Martha-Isms

Martha had a unique selection of words with which to express herself.

At faculty meetings we would apportion out the less-desirable administrative tasks.

“Each of us should do one ‘horrible’ a year’ pronounced Martha. And so we did and the label ‘horrible’ lived on for years as a “Martha-Ism” and guideline for sharing those crucial but onerous daily tasks.

When there was a student having difficulty that could be resolved with a bit of maturity Martha would say, “Yes, s/he’s a bit floppy’. This was a perfect expression and I adopted it too.

After a long hard day, Martha would exclaim, “Well, life lurches on” as indeed it does.

She put up a neat saying in her office, “Failure on your part to plan does not constitute an emergency on mine”.

Presents Back and Forth

Martha and I exchanged presents now and then mostly in an asynchronous way.

Mine to Martha.

I noticed that Martha doodled during meetings. These doodles, in red and black, were complex geometric patterns. I loved them and when she threw her decorated notes in the trash I retrieved them, amassing quite a collection. At some point, at a landmark event for her (perhaps when she resigned the Program Directorship) we prepared presents for her. I made a collage out of the doodles and had it framed against a red and black background. I believe she liked it since she put it on her wall. I have a photograph of her holding it.

The Program Directorship, like any academic administrative position, was full of challenges. So when Martha assumed it, Shirley Atkins and I decided to get her a special present. On the premise that “it’s a jungle out there” we selected a bookbag made of a colorful jungle print with animals frolicking in tropical trees. We presented this to her at an inaugural party. Each subsequent Director was presented this bag.

Martha to Me

Before I became Program Director myself, I had been heard to say, "I love administration more than a pig in mud!" So Martha arranged a present: a beautiful glass box with "Pitt" embossed on it. Inside on a bed of authentic dirt from the lawn of Pitt's famous Cathedral of Learning. A very creative present, I loved it and still have it.

For some years, as an inveterate collector, I acquired owls in all kinds of media- statues, embroideries and the like. I don't remember the occasion, but Martha gave me a little pewter owl. I long since disposed of the owl collection, but made sure to keep the one from Martha.

Martha and Working Together

We worked together to design and implement the NIMH funded Conference-Research Sequence in Child Care Education (1980-1983). We brought people from all over the world to deal with the training and education of child and youth workers, and produced curriculum guidelines that were used for years. At the end, with the final report into the Feds, we sighed and almost simultaneously exclaimed, "Never again! A few months later I saw the phrase "Never again" in print in a newspaper. I cut it out and taped it up on Martha's file cabinet. She didn't notice it right away but I knew what she did when her laugh reverberated across the hall.

Martha and I talked about the students who complained about their grades. "Oh, this is the first time I didn't receive an 'A' ".they said. We laughed. We'd gone to college years before grade inflation. She had been in a demanding chemistry major (she was a chemist before she went into psychology) and I was in an experimentally oriented psychology department at a rigorous college. We'd say we'd post our C-ridden transcripts of which we were proud, for the world to see, but I don't think we ever did.

When our program was under threat, we'd all gather together to plan defensive strategy. Martha and I developed a telephone campaign. We had Frank Ainsworth call the Provost all the way from New Zealand and tell him how famous our program was worldwide. Frank did and the program was saved.

Our program moved around a bit. When we moved from the School of Health Related Professions to the School of Social Work, we had a nice table for our conference room, but it was disassembled. To get it put together we were supposed to call the Maintenance Department, waited for the job to be scheduled, and the costs would have been charged to our account. Martha said, "Come on, Karen. We can do this". Martha and I hadn't worked in the state hospital system for nothing. There you had to be prepared for anything and of course any child and youth worker has lots of practical skills. Martha and I both had tools in our desk drawers. We brought them into the conference room, closed the door (so nobody could see us and report us), and together, with our wrenches and screwdrivers, holding things together for each other, put the table together just fine.

Yes, we could be a little bit naughty. When we needed some furniture to enhance our setting's appearance and comfort we'd casually stroll around the hallways and appropriate what we needed – a bench, a chair, a small table. Martha justified this, saying “We're just re-arranging furniture for the University.”

I never had trouble putting pen to paper, so to speak, when it came to writing. It was just that the results needed some editing and pruning sometimes. This was Martha's *métier*. My wordiness met her straight-to-the-point approach. When we collaborated on a paper from our work on the Conference-Research Sequence in Child Care Education I was to write part and she was to write part – and then we'd put the two pieces together. When I got my section back, she had written at the top, “Cut in ½”. This was a source for some kidding down the years. So I put the marked paper in a glassine envelope, saved it, and have trotted it out every time there's been an occasion. I knew a good thing when I saw it, so I'd ask Martha to edit my other papers. She didn't miss a run-on sentence, an incomplete reference, or an idea expressed in three sentences if one would do the trick.

We drove together many times to the InterAssociation Conference at the Holiday Inn in Valley Forge. Martha and I were together when we encountered an exhibitor who said after learning we were professors, “You're not child care workers”. We bluntly said that we were, there were many roles in the field. We gave this man an education.

We liked to guess what the menu for the conference banquet was going to be. For the main course we could guess fish, beef or chicken. For the starch, rice or potatoes – mashed, baked or French fries. For the vegetable, broccoli, string beans, peas. A few times we hit it perfectly – e.g. chicken, mashed potatoes, broccoli. Then there was dessert. Pie, cake, or ice cream. Usually we'd guess apple pie and we were right. If we added a slice of cheese to the pie, we were golden.

Traveling to a conference was always fun. In the late 90s, Martha, Sr. Madeleine, Carol Kelly, Shirley Atkins and myself spent a day in Niagara Falls on our way to Toronto. I have photographs of us all in our blue plastic ponchos protecting us from the spray.

When I was given an award at an international conference but could not be there to receive it, Martha collected the plaque I was to be given. Without my knowing it, she arranged to have a formal ceremony at one of our faculty meetings to give it to me, along with wine and champagne to mark the occasion.

Common Interests

Martha would sometimes say, “Karen and I are very different”. Perhaps so. But we had quite a few common interests. We shared a love of pets. One time Martha brought her new little brown dog into the office. When the dog got up on her lap he went completely limp, configuring his body to hers. What a loving dog who knew who his mistress was.

We'd discuss our cats – we always had one or two of them. One of hers was an orange striped cat, Button. We'd exchange notes on vets and we both went to the same.

We liked to talk about clothes and talked about what each other wore. One warm day, amazingly, we each came to work dressed in a navy blue t-shirt and white slacks. We got a big kick out of it as we explained to others that we hadn't planned it.

Post-Retirement

Martha swore by a program of courses for mature people sponsored by the University. When I retired she gave me a catalog and tell me about the courses she was taking, usually in science and politics. She would invite some of us to join her for dinner lectures on scientific topics – I went more for the company than the lecture.

In the late summer of 2010 Martha invited me to go with her on a cruise up the Allegheny River. I had a hunch she had invited Shirley who couldn't go and then me . But it sounded like fun and I was touched even to play second fiddle. We met for supper and then enjoyed the cruise – the scenery was beautiful, reminding me again how spectacular Pittsburgh is.

When Frank Eckles came to Pittsburgh in 2012, he stayed with Martha and brought some quail for his friends and colleagues. Martha saved mine for me. On occasion when we



had 'visiting firemen' I'd hostess a collegial gathering in our large house. Martha brought my quail over and I kept it in my freezer.

Just before my retirement party, Martha and I both attended a meeting of child and youth workers. One of them had brought a box of playthings; very apparent on top of the pile was a large rubber chicken. "I've always loved rubber chickens" I boomed. The meeting started

and that was the end of it... or so I thought. At my party several days later, Martha stepped up to the podium and invited me to join her. She produced the rubber chicken which she had not only somehow obtained, but also had our colleagues sign for me. I indeed love this chicken and keep it on a shelf above this computer where I can see it daily. Thank you again, Martha.