



Martha Pickman Baltzell

June 5, 1924 - September 28, 2022

Martha Pickman Baltzell

1924 – 2022

Martha Pickman Baltzell, 98, of Haverford, PA died September 28 after a brief illness with family and friends by her side. A devout Catholic who was born into a Boston Brahmin family, she devoted many years of her life to service at the Southwest Community Enrichment Center in Philadelphia.

A good friend to all who knew her, Martha was much beloved by friends and family from Philadelphia to Boston, including her six grandchildren. She was a gracious host, a good listener and frequently made people laugh with her funny quips.

She once exclaimed in a discussion about the existence of God and heaven: “I just can’t wait to get there to find out what’s going on.”

Martha was an inspiration to her grandchildren. “I don’t know where to start when describing my grandma and what she meant to me,” said her granddaughter Daisy Biddle Gould. “She taught us to love music and arts, make and savor good food, prioritize travel and education; she also demonstrated true faith, how to give back to communities, and finally, how to age with grace.”

The fifth of six children, Martha was born in 1924 to Edward M. Pickman and Hester (Chanler) Pickman at their home in Billerica, MA.

The Pickman home was filled with laughter and lively banter, punctuated by theological disputes between her agnostic father, who wrote a book tracing “The Mind of Latin Christendom,” and her Catholic mother. The English philosopher Alfred North Whitehead and other writers and poets were among the visitors in a household that valued letters and learned conversation.

From her Uncle Theodore Chanler, a notable composer of his time, she first learned to play the piano, developing a lifelong love of the musical arts. She later studied classical piano under the French musician Nadia Boulanger. Martha could play Chopin and Mozart with exquisite touch right up until her final days.

Martha attended the Shady Hill School in Cambridge, MA, later attending a private Catholic high school. Her college education was delayed first by World War II, during which she served as a nurse’s aide in Boston, and later by her marriage to David Scull Biddle of Philadelphia.

Throughout her years as a young adult, a higher calling tugged at Martha’s conscience. She often wondered if she should give up her comfortable ways for a simple life of piety and service to the poor and disadvantaged.

Her faith led her and a small group of Catholic friends in the late 1960s to form a monthly meeting group called the “Marthas and Marys”. They went on religious retreats, joined peace protests, studied Pope John the XXIII’s liberal Vatican II encyclicals, and invited Catholic leaders to speak, among them the activist Dorothy Day.

The formation and work of the Marthas and Marys was inspired by a young

Philadelphia priest, Father John McNamee of St. Malachy Parish. He in turn introduced them to Sister Anne Boniface, founder in 1969 of the Southwest Community Enrichment Center in the Kingsessing section of Philadelphia.

When Martha's first marriage ended in 1970, she found more time to explore her deeply held religious beliefs and to volunteer her time in service to the poor.

In 1971, Martha began part-time volunteer work with the Southwest Community Enrichment Center, later volunteering fulltime to work with the center's seniors. She also enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania to study anthropology, receiving her degree a few years later.

In 1975, Martha married Dr. William "Pete" Baltzell, a prominent ear, nose and throat doctor and teacher at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital. Together they enjoyed entertaining friends and family at their gracious home in Chestnut Hill. The seemingly endless stream of guests nicknamed it the Rex Avenue Hotel.

With the support of her second husband, Martha reconciled her privileged upbringing with her work in the inner city in her autobiography "Bridging Diversity: Confessions of a Yankee Catholic," published by Sheed and Ward in 1997.

Predeceased by her two husbands, David S. Biddle and William H. Baltzell IV, she lived the last 16 years of her life at the Quadrangle senior community on Darby Road in Haverford, PA.

Martha is survived by her children David (Sally Hutcheson) Biddle, Christopher (Meg Winchell) Biddle and Margot (William) Milcetic;

stepchildren Hewson (Sheila) Baltzell and Virginia Baltzell; six grandchildren Paul (Amy) Milcetic, Matthew (Jennie) Milcetic, Dwight (Martina) Biddle, Amy (Tim Moliterno) Biddle, Daisy Biddle (Andrew) Gould, and Gordon Biddle; step-grandchildren Gordon Baltzell and Peter Baltzell; five great grandchildren Leo and Luca Milcetic (Paul/Amy), Grayson Milcetic (Matthew/Jennie), and Arlo and Logan Biddle (Dwight/Martina), and many nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be held at 11:30 a.m. Saturday, November 5, at Our Mother of Good Counsel Church, 31 Pennswood Drive, in Bryn Mawr, PA.

The family is especially grateful for the loving care given to Martha in the last four years of her life by Fran Tyler, Yaritza Feliciano, and the employees of Harmony Home Care.

In lieu of flowers, you may send a donation to St. Malachy Catholic School, Independence Mission Schools, P.O. Box 37012, Philadelphia, PA 19122.

Previous Events

The family will receive guests

NOV 5. 11:00 AM - 11:30 AM (ET)

Our Mother of Good Counsel
31 Pennswood Road
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010
(510) 525-0147

Funeral Service

NOV 5. 11:30 AM (ET)

Our Mother of Good Counsel
31 Pennswood Road
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010
(510) 525-0147

Tribute Wall

RO

“ From our first meeting 20 years ago at Chautauqua playing flute and piano duets to weekly trios with our violinist friend Joan Rosenberg at the Quadrangle, Martha and I had shared not only the pleasure of music making but a sweet friendship. She was an endearing person and so appreciative of our relationship. I was so very impressed when I heard she had studied under Nadia Boulanger. As a singer in Singing City, I had known about Nadia because our choir director Elaine Brown had studied with her as well.

The image of Martha opening the door for me is etched in my mind; her smile was infectious and we laughed a lot. Even when her short time memory started to fade, she continued to play beautifully. I will miss her very much.

rosalyn ominsky - November 04, 2022 at 12:30 PM

ED

“ I first met Martha while she was working at a drug abuse center in Philadelphia and later at the Southwest Community Enrichment Center. She was a wonderful woman and dear friend. She is greatly missed. I send my condolences to her family. Rev. Edward Dillon, Saint Mary's Church, Canandaigua, New York

Edward Dillon - November 01, 2022 at 05:24 PM

MM

“ Martha was a unique soul. We shared many a laugh and shed many a tear working alongside Sister Anne Boniface at the Southwest Community Enrichment Center in Philadelphia. Martha was an inspiration to us all. Condolences to Martha's family. Monica McFadden

Monica McFadden - November 01, 2022 at 05:16 PM

AF

“ and the Piasecki Family purchased the Ocean Breeze Spray for the family of Martha Pickman Baltzell.



and the Piasecki Family - October 23, 2022 at 09:12 AM

JB

“ i had the fortunate pleasure to be with Martha for years side by side on the altar at Our Mother of Consolation church in chestnut hill. We were lectors doing the readings for the sunday mass. I used to get so excited when i walked into the church and saw her sitting in her seat on the altar knowing that she would be my partner for the mass. Her unbelievable presence, the way she spoke, and just how she carried herself was quite impressive to me always telling me to have a good day after mass. She was a big part of me having the faith that i possess. And for that i will always be so grateful to her.
jack bucci

jack bucci - October 16, 2022 at 08:03 PM

JS

“ I attended high school with Martha’s son David and his home in Newtown Square became a home away from home in my last year of high school. When David and I attended the same college in Ohio, Martha drove the two of us there. I remember her visits with evenings out to the Cleveland symphony and dinners—she was a supportive influence in my life. When I returned to Philadelphia for graduate school she welcomed me into her new household in Chestnut Hill during social evenings. I will always remember her graciousness and loving friendship. After graduate school I ended up in Massachusetts where I met Martha’s mother “Grandma Pick” and other family members during my years in Concord and Cambridge. Thank you to a family which has given me special memories over the years. -John Schalow, currently in Mount Vernon, Virginia.

John Schalow - October 14, 2022 at 07:28 AM

RO

“ I met Martha at Chautauqua 13 years ago playing duets, she on the piano and I on the flute. She played so beautifully and I felt so lucky to learn that she lived about 10 minutes from my home in Merion. We played weekly in her lovely apartment at Quadrangle for years until the pandemic, adding our friends Joan Rosenberg, a violinist. Nice I was so beautiful claire and she was so much fun because she had a great sense of humor. We just loved to get together. I missed her a lot the last few years and I will miss her g

rosalyn ominsky - October 10, 2022 at 08:52 PM

RO

The sentence above “nice high was so beautiful” should have been “Martha was a beautiful pianist💎💎.

rosalyn ominsky - October 10, 2022 at 09:01 PM

JR

*i met martha in the hall waiting for the elevator and found out she was a pianist so we made a date and i found out that she was a wonderful person and a great pianist and we started to play duets and trios also with ros a flautist. i enjoyed being at her 90th birthday and just visiting also, many memories and i will miss her. i also got to know her marvelous family and know they will also remember her fondly
sincerely joan rosenberg*

joan rosenberg - November 04, 2022 at 10:48 AM