



Catherine Martha Williams

March 28, 1947 - June 6, 2022

Catherine Williams

Dr. Catherine (Cathy, Kate) Williams of Austin, Texas, passed away on Monday, June 6, 2022, from complications of an undiagnosed brain aneurysm. A fifth-generation Texan born in El Paso in 1947, Catherine and her family relocated to Waco, where she spent much of her childhood, graduating from Richfield High School. Her life, however, was shaped deeply by summers with her family in Alaska, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and others, as well as years spent in Guatemala and Costa Rica—experiences which kindled her passion for travel and love for cultures of the world, especially in Latin America.

Catherine attended Baylor University, where she met her lifetime love, James (Jim) Veninga, later completing a Ph.D. at Rice University in Houston. In partnership with Jim in their shared commitment to public humanities, she gave vision to the newly created Texas Committee for the Humanities (TCH, now Humanities Texas) founded in 1973, serving as Associate Director. Among her roles at the TCH, she developed the Texas Humanities Resource Center and also served for thirteen years as editor, author, and designer for the Texas Journal of Ideas, History, and Culture. An eloquent writer, Catherine published multiple articles, including “Spirit of Place in Southwestern Literature” (National Endowment for the Humanities) and “Building Community in Texas in Preparing for Texas in the 21st century” (Texas Committee for the

Humanities), and a diversity of articles for the Texas Humanist and the Texas Journal.

Catherine embodied a commitment to bringing the humanities to bear on issues of social justice, gender equality, and cross-cultural understanding, and a love of helping others to connect cultural, social, and literary concerns to their unique personal journeys. Teaching courses in British, American and World Literature, European Intellectual History, Women's Studies, and Creative Writing at diverse institutions such as George Mason University, the University of Texas at Austin, the former University of Wisconsin Colleges System, and Lincoln Hills Correctional Facility in Wisconsin, she inspired students for decades. Catherine and Jim relocated in 1997 from Texas to Wisconsin, spending much of their time at their home in Hayward on the beautiful Tiger Cat Lake. They returned to central Texas in 2010, where they built a home in Bastrop and relished the Texas loblolly pines and the expansive sky.

Catherine will be remembered for her innate ability to connect deeply with people of all backgrounds and stages in life, making long-lasting, genuine friendships with people next door and around the world. Perhaps her most enduring quality was her utter joy for life and her passion for adventure and travel, both globally and in her own backyard. Her great love was her grandson, Elliott James, to whom she bequeathed her love of music, art, adventure, the natural world (especially the moon and stars), and the sanctity of play. Catherine's greatest and last wish was for others to claim joy in their own lives, or in her words, to "live the dance."

Catherine is survived by her daughter, Jennifer (Jenny) Veninga, Jenny's partner Jack Musselman, and their son, her treasured grandchild, Elliott James Veninga, and her beloved sister Lisa Hayes and Lisa's partner, Patrick Pribilo. Other survivors include her brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Robert

and Karen Veninga, and her sister-in-law and brother-in-law, Joyce and Jerry Anderson. Family members also include Camella Rivers and O.G. Torrence; brother-in-law Pete Meador; her sister-in-law, Sandra Williams; her nieces and nephews—Brent Veninga, Brian Anderson, Christine Kiss, Karen Meador Brown, and Suzanne Stoner—and her great-nieces and nephews—Randy Goff, Chris and A. J. Veninga; Lauren and Ellie Anderson; Duncan Brown; and Allison, Ashley, and Aubrey Stoner. Surviving cousins also include Bobby, David, Philip, John and Chuck Segrest; Rob, David, Jimmy, and Billy Purdue; Judy Brown; Doug Arrington; and Nema LeCuyer.

Catherine is preceded in death by her beloved husband, James Frank Veninga, with whom she shared 44 years of marriage, her sister, Margaret Ruth Williams Meador, her brother, Hendley Varner Williams III, and her parents, Ruth Rivers Williams and Hendley Varner Williams, Jr.

A Celebration of Life will be held in Austin at 2 p.m. on Saturday, July 23, at United Christian Church of Austin (3500 West Parmer Lane, 78727). A reception will be held after the service at Catherine's home. Please contact her daughter, Jenny Veninga, at jenniferveninga@mac.com, with questions or for additional information.

If desired, contributions may be made to one of these organizations in lieu of flowers:

United Christian Church of Austin (Jenny, Jack, and Elliott's home church), funding "Nanna's Bench" in her honor in a new playground at UCC. To donate, please click on the link below or mail a check to United Christian Church of Austin (3500 West Parmer Lane, Austin, TX, 78727), with the memo line, "for

Nanna's Bench." <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-Z5ZJ/campaign/C-12MHF>

Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service, housed at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (formerly UW-Marathon County), contributing to the Veninga Lecture Series on Religion and Society. To donate, please on the link below and select "Veninga Lecture on Religion and Society." <https://wipps.nationbuilder.com/donation>

Amnesty International USA, an organization to which she contributed regularly. Donations in her honor and memory by following this link: <https://donate.amnestyusa.org/page/96774/donate/1>

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUL **23**. 2:00 PM (CT)

United Christian Church Of Austin
3500 West Parmer Lane
Austin, TX 78727

Tribute Wall



“ *Catherine Martha Williams*

October 05, 2023 at 10:58 AM



“ *Catherine Martha Williams*

October 04, 2023 at 06:25 PM



“ *Catherine Martha Williams*

September 26, 2023 at 10:57 PM