

**Martha Paul Elliott**  
**May 24, 1932 – August 10, 2016**

Martha Paul was born May 24, 1932 in Sellersville, Pennsylvania. Her parents were Samuel Hockman Paul and Florence Paul.

She grew up in Sellersville, Pennsylvania and graduated from Roxborough High School, class of 1949, in Philadelphia. During her years in Pennsylvania, she had an opportunity to hear the famous Philadelphia Orchestra and took formal piano training with Dr. Bernard Mansert at the Germantown Conservatory of Music in Philadelphia. She was an accompanist for choral and instrumental groups during high school. She was also a Filing Clerk at the Atlantic Richfield Corp in Philadelphia from 1952 to 1954.

Sometime after 1954, one of Martha's brothers who was in military service at the time, urged Martha, her sister Ruth, and their mother Florence, to move to Orange County. They moved to Garden Grove and soon became affiliated with Calvary Church in downtown Santa Ana. Martha was a substitute church organist there. As things progressed, Edwin Elliott became the new choir director and started various children's music groups. After a three-week courtship, Edwin and Martha married on August 24, 1957.

Martha studied organ with Dr. Ronald M. Huntington at Chapman College in Orange, California and with Charles Shaffer who was the organist at First Presbyterian Church, Hollywood.

She was the organist at Calvary Church of Santa Ana from June 1958 through October 1962. Prior to that, she was the accompanist for the Youth, Junior, and Primary choirs at the church for 18 months.

As a substitute organist, she played at First Baptist Church in Santa Ana for Gerald Van Deventer, Organist-Director; at the First Presbyterian Church in Anaheim for Susan Talevich, organist and Sheldon Disrud, Director of Music. She also substituted at the Garden Grove Community Church, and the First Methodist Church of Orange.

She was accompanist for the Children's Festival of the Choral Conductor's Guild of Orange County in May 1963 at the Garden Grove Community Church.

Martha and Edwin welcomed a daughter, Leanna Lynne Elliott, on May 26, 1960, and a son, Christian Paul Elliott, on May 27, 1964.

While her husband Edwin taught at Southern California College, Martha continued to play organ for churches, and taught piano and organ. During the 1960's and 70's, Martha and Ed were involved with the Kathryn Kuhlmann Ministries. Ed sang in the choir, and Martha played the piano. The services were held at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles and the mass choir was accompanied by Martha on the white Kimball concert grand piano on one side of the stage, and Thomas Murray on the black concert grand piano on the other side.

Martha and Ed had the gift of hospitality and gave great parties in the 1960's and 70's. They would always invite students from Southern California College to come over for a Christmas Tree Trimming party. And if a student were not going home for the holidays, Ed and Martha would be sure to invite them over for Thanksgiving or other holidays.

Life dealt Martha a difficult blow in 1970. She had a brain tumor behind her left eye. The tumor was successfully removed; however, 6 weeks later, she suffered a massive stroke, which paralyzed the left side of her body. Initially faced with a doctor's careless words "she'll never walk again without a body cast," she quickly shot back "I am going to recover completely!"

She overcome tremendous obstacles and worked very hard in order to walk again. She was not going to be kept down or in a wheel chair. While she did not fully recover the use of her left hand, she persevered and pressed on, teaching piano lessons, being a mother to Leanna and Christian, and wife to Edwin. She maintained a private music-teaching studio from 1959 up until 2013 or so. She also served as an adjunct professor at Southern California College, teaching piano and organ.

She loved teaching beginners how to play the piano. That was a particular passion of hers.

Later she graduated cum laude in 1987 with a B.A. in English from Southern California College. Martha studied voice with David Leestma while at SCC. Martha had many talents, however singing was not one of her stronger gifts. She thoroughly enjoyed a song that had as its text something about will my singing keep me out of heaven! There was much laughter in those lessons! At the Crystal Cathedral, she was a member of The Cathedral Chorale, the 70-voice Sunday evening choir. This was during the years when they had 15-minute organ preludes prior to all services, and sometimes Edwin would add his trumpet to those evening preludes.

Ed and Martha were supporters of the arts, especially the Community Concerts Association. They also had involvement with the Orange County chapters of the American Guild of Organists, Music Teachers Association, and Choral Conductors Guild.

One of her interests was horseback riding. She masterminded a benefit for the Orange County Riding Center for Handicapped Children and Adults. She sold out the theatre and had a successful raffle.

Years later, she returned to the saddle again at the Shea Center for Therapeutic Riding. She said her weekly riding lessons there were absolutely the best therapy and did her so much good. Even her husband Edwin was a big believer because he could tell how many benefits Martha obtained.

Martha was also interested in listening to music, reading, and gardening.

She loved jazz music, Dave Brubeck in particular. She wrote to Dave Brubeck and told him all about her stroke. He wrote her back, in 1972, and sent her a recording of his oratorio "The Light in The Wilderness." He wrote to Martha "As you hear it, when you come to the section 'Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled' know that it was written for my brother Howard, upon the death of his only son and third child, from a brain tumor, at the age of 16. When you hear it, think of it as a message from me to you in words that I could never find. The Bible is always the greatest text ever!" That was to be the first of several letters and meetings with Dave Brubeck, a friendship which meant a great deal to Martha.

Ed and Martha shared their deep love of music and the arts with their children, taking them to a wide variety of concerts and performances. They even let Leanna and Christian have fun in Disneyland, while Ed and Martha sat in Carnation Square Plaza listening to jazz greats like Buddy Rich and Stan Kenton. They loved the jazz interpretations of pianist Mark Davidson, who will be playing one of Martha's favorite songs "You Are the Sunshine of My Life" by Stevie Wonder, today in honor of Martha.

After Martha's stroke, Ed & Martha pursued intense Bible study, particularly scripture verses related to healing, perhaps to better understand the physical challenges that befell them and how to cope. The philosophy of Possibility Thinking espoused by Dr. Robert Schuller inspired Martha. Later, Ed and Martha found a wonderful support network from the Crystal Cathedral congregation, where they regularly attended Sunday School. For many years, they appreciated and supported the Music Ministry of the Cathedral when Frederick Swann and Mark Thallander led it.

At one point, Martha decided to work up several pieces written for right hand alone. She contacted Dennis Alexander, a composer of educational piano music, who wrote several pieces for her. She mastered these solo pieces beautifully, and performed them for anyone who would listen. Her performances inspired us all, and reminded us that regardless of the circumstances we face in life, we could always be blessed by beautiful music.

By the fall of 2014, it became apparent that Martha and Ed were having health issues. Leanna and Christian were able to enjoy a Thanksgiving with both parents in 2014. In December, Ed and Martha, through the gracious help of their longtime friends Bruce and Ann Craeger, were able to attend one of Christian's performances of Christmas music at the Nethercutt Collection in Sylmar on the incredible pipe organ installed there.

In 2015, after a period of hospitalization, Leanna, Christian, and Edwin agreed that the time for transitioning from home living to assisted living was in order. In March 2015, Ed and Martha moved to Hollybrook Senior Living of Orange. On April 10, after all the hard work of getting them moved and keeping them together in retirement living, Ed and Martha were moved into separate rooms due to increasing problems with Martha's dementia. They seemed quite fine with this arrangement, and for several months seemed to be thriving and adapting well to assisted living. Sadly, Edwin passed away on December 12, 2015.

Throughout these difficult life challenges, daughter Leanna Ertz was the steady hand in transitioning Martha and Edwin into assisted living, guiding the sale of the Elliott home, and coordinating the care for her parents. She deserves tremendous thanks and recognition for her courageous actions during some of life's hardest chapters. Additional support came from Edwin's sister, Barbara Wylie, and longtime friends Bruce and Ann Craeger.

Bruce and Ann brought Martha to Fullerton's Plummer Auditorium in April 2016 where she was thrilled to see and hear Christian perform on the mighty Wurlitzer pipe organ. She was delighted to be there, and very happy seeing so many old friends there.

On July 15, Martha was moved to a 'board and care' facility because she needed more care than she was able to get at Hollybrook Senior Living of Orange. She had been failing for the previous six to eight weeks, could no longer stand or walk, and unfortunately, the senile dementia was getting worse. She passed away peacefully on August 10.

Martha brought joy and humor to every conversation. She had great determination and courage, plus a great sense of humor. Longtime family friend

Mark Thallander recalls: "Martha is my hero! She encouraged me to keep on keeping on, as she did, and proved to all of us that living with one arm was possible! And from Proverbs, laughter is a good medicine! We could laugh for a long time (even during prayer for one of her famous casseroles) much to the eventual dismay of Edwin!"

Music was her life. She loved teaching piano. She was a passionate teacher and a passionate person. That passion extended to religion and politics and woe be unto anyone who crossed her. She spoke her mind about everything. She could be sharp, cruel and stubborn -- traits which dementia seemed to magnify with the passage of time.

Sadly, senile dementia proved cruel to Martha at the end of life. She didn't know why she and Edwin had moved, and really didn't know what her purpose in life was any longer because she was no longer teaching.

Her signature at the bottom of every email was this: "May you be blessed with beautiful music today" and it was signed "Marvelous Martha Elliott."

Although it was often masked by her own insecurities, Martha loved people, and in her own unique ways and at various times she would attempt to express that love. She craved the attention of others, and often turned the topic of conversation to herself, yet she was very proud of her children and grandchildren, and was the number one fan of Christian whenever he would appear in southern California, and would do her best to publicize events.

Martha believed in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of her life. She and Edwin lived by faith -- they were a couple united in faith. They were faithful prayer warriors. They believed in the promises of their Christian faith and eternal life. While we do not know it for certain, Leanna and Christian believe Martha and Edwin are making beautiful music together in Heaven.

May God bless the memory of Martha Paul Elliott, who will forever live on in the hearts and minds of those who she touched.