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Marilyn Malone Gordon

Aug. 1, 1938 - Feb. 10, 2017

Marilyn Malone Gordon died Friday, February 10, 2017. She was born August 1, 1938 in Louisville, Kentucky, a daughter of the late Dr. Frank Hampton Malone and Blanche Marie Beach Malone.

She graduated in 1958 from Mars Hill University with an AA degree in Music and Education and in 1960 from Queens University with a BA degree in Secondary Education and Music. She earned a MA degree in English from Appalachian State University and received her Superintendents' Certification from A&T University.

Marilyn is survived by her husband, Richard Edmund Gordon of 34 years; sister Myra Sue Malone Hoyle and her husband, Jerry of Shelby, NC; nephew, Dr. John R. Hoyle and wife, Gretchen (MD); great nephew, Wyatt Hoyle and great niece, Caroline Hoyle both of Winston-Salem, NC; niece, Elizabeth Lynn Gibson, and great-nieces, Chloe and Ella all of Knoxville, Tennessee. She is also survived by adult step-children, Suzanne Wells Best of Raleigh, NC, and her daughter, Ashley Wells Evans and husband, Courtney of Apex, NC; Dr. Nancy Joyce Gordon (PhD) of Charlotte, NC; Charles Gordon, II of West Virginia; and Richard Arrick Gordon of Marion, NC.

Marilyn was a member of the Shubert Music Club, Alpha Delta Kappa, AAUW, and the Morganton Woman's Club. In 1968 she was the Teacher of the Year at Morganton

High School. In 1978 she was named one of the Outstanding Young Women in America. She served four years as the Public Relation's Chairman of the Burke County United Way, was board member of the Life Enrichment Center, and a board member of the Flynn Home. She was appointed by Governor Jim Holshouser to serve on the North Carolina Education Board for the Schools for the Deaf, and was appointed to

serve on the Mid-Atlantic Consortium for Community Schools. Marilyn founded the first Community Schools Program in North Carolina, and was a registered interpreter of the deaf. She was instrumental in getting state universities and community colleges to accept deaf students and provide the necessary support system for them in the classrooms and on campus. Marilyn was the first director, organizational and administrative set-up of Options, Inc. Vice President of United Way. She served as Associate Director of Development for the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, VA for two years. She also worked for the Office of Development as a grant writer at Appalachian State University.

Marilyn was an outstanding organist and served either as full-time or interim organist in Grace Episcopal Church, First Baptist Church, First Presbyterian Church, First Methodist Church, Calvary Baptist Church, and North Morganton Baptist Church. She was organist for a number of the Christmas Combined Choirs Concerts. She was one of the founders and the first Executive Director of Option's, Inc.

Marilyn taught English, Creative Writing, and Humanities for eight years in Burke County Schools, and four years at North Carolina School for the Deaf. She was a professional grant writer and the director of Public Relations and grant writer at NCSD for six years. She was Assistant Superintendent of Yadkin County Schools for five years where she was responsible for public relations and grant writing.

In 1988, she became the Director of Public Relations of Burke County Public Schools until she retired in 2002. She was a member of First Presbyterian Church.

Marilyn wanted to personally thank Dr. Haggstrom, Oncologist, The Levine Cancer Institute, Rutherford College, NC campus and his staff; the Burke Hospice & Palliative Care, Valdese, NC; and the excellent and supportive medical staff and associates of Grace Ridge Retirement Center, for all of their collective thoughtfulness and personal attention.

A memorial service to celebrate Marilyn's life will be held at 11:00 a.m., Saturday, February 18, 2017 at First Presbyterian Church of Morganton, NC. There will be an ASL interpreter for the service. Interim Pastor Rev. Dr. Wanda Neely and Associate Pastor Adam C. Bowling will be officiating. The family will receive friends in the Fellowship Hall following the service.

Memorial contributions may be sent to Grace Ridge Retirement Center, attention: The Educational Foundation Fund, 500 Lenoir Street, Morganton, NC 28655.

"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee." Job 42:5 (KJV)

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall



Marilyn (Mrs. Williams as we knew her) was the finest, most professional teacher I ever had, college included. We were blessed to have known her.

—Charles Butler



Marilyn Malone Gordon was my English teacher when I was a student at Morganton High School in the late 1960s. She also was an organist at Grace Episcopal Church. Mrs. Williams (Red…as some of us affectionately called her) also taught me creative writing. In my head, I can still hear her walking the aisles our classroom while she faced forward! She said she had to look forward to keep her balance! At the time, I thought it was a bit peculiar, but now… in 2025, I totally understand exactly what she meant! As I get older, I realize how lucky I was to live in such a beautiful small town and to still remain friends with so many kind, smart, caring, and loving people from my past!

—Cynthia Darwins Crist