



Martha E. McFarland Baxes

September 19, 1940 - October 9, 2024

Martha Elaine McFarland Baxes was born to David Faddis McFarland and Eva Flinders McFarland on Sept 19th, 1940, in San Francisco Ca. Martha spent her childhood and early adulthood in San Francisco and always loved that city. Her childhood was spent in the shadows of Nob Hill in a beautiful large apt that today one would have to be a millionaire to live in. That was not the case with the McFarland Family. Gentile poverty was their middle name. Martha often spoke about getting her books together hopping on a cable car and riding to the top of the hill to “The Fairmont” hotel to do her homework on a Sunday afternoon. She would “hold court” in the lobby at a long trestle table book and paperwork all over. Soon her friends heard about this and 4 or 5 young ladies were joining her.

In the mid-fifties a baby sister (Michele) came into the picture and the family moved out to the Avenue’s. Eleventh Avenue was now home. A large old “Queen Anne” home with little heat, but a lot of charm. Martha had a large room at the back of the house which she loved. She attended George Washington high school and excelled. Martha loved school. After graduating she attended San Francisco State and that is really where her life began. She found “the theater” the passion of her life. Martha often said she attended “state” at a perfect time, as so many of the faculty were actors, directors and folks involved in theatre. Many of her classmates went on to highly successful careers in theater, TV, and film. It is through San Francisco state that Martha

met Martin Benson and David Emmes and followed them to Orange County to help start the very successful South Coast Repertory theater. She spent the next 40 years of her life working at south coast and a few other venues, as an actress and casting director. Martha also worked in the MFA program at UC Irvine.

She retired from the theater in 2006 and moved back “up north” to Santa Rosa ca. where her sister and family lived, and she loved it. Martha’s glass was always half full, so when her eyes started to fail, she rallied and found the Earl Baum center for the blind. She learned much from them about living with failing sight and live she did. Never complaining and always positive. In 2021 Martha moved to Fort Collins Colorado. Her sister Michele had moved there and with her failing sight she knew she needed to be near family. She moved to Rigden Farm Senior living and really loved it. Made many friends there and we will always be grateful to them for the love and care Rigden showed to Martha. One year ago, she developed Glioblastoma in her cerebellum. After many hospital stays, surgery and drugs she knew her time had run out. But as always was positive, loving and funny. If she gave and taught us anything it was how die with courage, dignity and strength. She was a marvel.

Martha is survived by her sister Michele McFarland, sister-in-law Diane Holt and brother from another mother Howard Shangraw. Memorial donations may be sent to the Earl Baum center in Santa Rosa ca. or any medical institution doing Glioblastoma research.

Marth, we will miss and love you forever, but 84 years is a pretty good run.
Brava!!

Tribute Wall

JL

“ Dearest Martha. I had a feeling tonight and searched for your name online. And found you had passed six months ago. What a brutal shock. I feel so sorry even all these years later when we began that I wasn't all for you that I could have been. Many nights I awoke with remorseful memories of how I could have done better by you. I will cherish your memory as I grieve for your loss, for Shelley's and all your family's loss of you. I feel our lives began with each other. I bless you for the good love and open heart you shared with me all those years ago. Love forever.

James C Lawrence - April 03, 2025 at 12:14 AM

MH

“ Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I just called Martha to condole about Martin Benson, left a voicemail at said number, then called Sandy Banks to likewise condole, she told me Martha had gone to the Great Green Room! Martha was magnificent. She became great friends with my Mom, wife and kids, we would look forward to her annual visit to Ashland, as a 'talent scout' for SCR. And she was instrumental in my getting a gig at the Shakespeare Fest, lo these 34 years past, which allowed me to raise my kids from birth through university in one spot, without hopping from regional to regional theatre, which is the norm. I have been blessed, and it was Martha who opened that door. The last performance of hers that I got to see was 'Mrs. Fezziwig', and she was picking scenery out of her teeth on that annual basis. She loved the Theatre, loved actors, and the lesson here is: Stay in touch with your old friends!!! I hadn't called in a year, don't do social media, now who's going to get that voicemail? Love and memories to all! Slainte, mj hume

Mchael J. Hume - December 05, 2024 at 01:28 PM

SL

“ Martha was an amazing friend and mentor to me. I never had the opportunity to see her perform unfortunately. I first met her in about 2012 when she was teaching a scene study class at 6th Street Playhouse in Santa Rosa. We became friends and she would frequently help me with audition monologues. We had wonderful lunches and dinners and saw a lot of shows together. She was a very important person to me in helping me believe in my talent as an actor. I missed her enormously when she moved to Colorado and will miss her more now. She was brilliant, funny and incredibly insightful about all things theatrical and literary. My heart is with Michelle and Diane 🥹🥹🥹

Sheila Lichirie - October 13, 2024 at 07:55 PM

JP

“ Martha was Pope Joan in *Top Girls* with me at South Coast Rep and Westwood Playhouse. It was an extraordinary experience with a fabulous group of women. If anyone could be the first female Pope, I truly believe it would be Martha. Rest well, sweet friend.

Jenifer Parker - October 13, 2024 at 03:55 PM

PT

David Emmes and I have been reminiscing about all of the wonderful roles that Martha played. He particularly values the experience of working with her and all of you on *Top Girls*. Martha was one of the first people I met at SCR. She was always kind to me and became a good friend. Her laugh was infectious and her knowledge of baseball was legendary. We will never forget her. Rest in peace, dear Martha.
Paula Tomei

Paula Tomei - October 14, 2024 at 11:33 PM

PT

I should have said her knowledge of all sports was legendary. ❤️

Paula Tomei - October 15, 2024 at 06:31 PM

BR

“ *Martha was one of the most beautiful souls I've ever known...I still see that joy on her face every time I faced her onstage. May she be at rest and loved forever!* ❤️❤️❤️

Bryan Rasmussen - October 12, 2024 at 12:20 PM

GB

“ *So many souls were blessed, at SCR by Martha's generous, creative touch. We are so grateful to have been among them... What a pleasure it was to know her and act with her...Love, Gary and Marnie Crossen Bell*

Gary Bell - October 11, 2024 at 04:28 PM

SP

“ *Martha was the rock that got me through one of the worst times in my life. I was in full flight from who I was, terrified that I was an utter failure at the work that meant absolutely everything to me (and into which I had poured everything I was sublimating in my personal life), and making myself and everyone around me miserable. She deserved far more and far better at my hands for all she gave me during that time (and after). She was a luminous soul, both onstage and off. I was unworthy of her friendship, but she gave it regardless. Safe journey, Mawdy O'Fowlin.*



Steven Patterson - October 11, 2024 at 03:54 PM

RF

“ *Rigden Farm lit a candle in memory of Martha E. McFarland Baxes*



Rigden Farm - October 11, 2024 at 12:18 PM

SR

“ *Spectrum R. purchased a sympathy card for the family of Martha E. McFarland Baxes.*



Spectrum R. - October 11, 2024 at 12:17 PM



“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*



Bohlender Funeral Chapel - October 11, 2024 at 10:00 AM