

**David Martin, Jr.****M-897**

David "D.G." Martin, Jr., 85 of Chapel Hill, North Carolina passed away at his home on December 9th, 2025. David was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army upon graduation from Davidson College. He volunteered for Special Forces duty and was awarded his qualification in 1964. In 1966, David was honorably discharged from active duty and enrolled in the Yale Law School. After completing his law degree, David moved to Charlotte, North Carolina where he practiced law for 20 years with the firm of Kennedy, Covington, Lobbell, and Hickman. He later served as the Vice President of Public Affairs for the University of North Carolina System. David is survived by his wife (Harriet), son (Martin), and daughter (May). A funeral service was held at the University Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill, North Carolina on January 3rd, 2026.

David "D.G." Martin Jr.

December 9, 2025 (Age 85)

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Special Forces

SFA Mem# M-897

David Grier Martin, Jr., known to all as D.G., died December 9, 2025 at his home in Chapel Hill with his wife by his side. He was 85. Though born in Atlanta on May 24, 1940 and a childhood resident of Bristol, TN, he grew up from age ten in Davidson, NC, and was a fervent North Carolinian, graduating from North Mecklenburg High School in 1958 and four years later with honors from Davidson College, where his father served as president from 1958 to 1968. As D.G. would be first to tell, he played basketball for the Davidson Wildcats under Coach Lefty Driesell and captained Lefty's first-ever winning college basketball team. To this day the Wildcat basketball team annually presents the "D.G. Martin Hustle Award" to the player who best epitomizes D.G.'s tenacious style of play.

D.G. was a proud Davidson alumnus, a devout Presbyterian, a Green Beret with the Army's Special Forces, a lawyer, an author, a newspaper columnist, a radio and television personality, and a public servant. Nothing on his resume, though, captured the power of his smile, which attracted friends of all ages and circumstances. He made friends everywhere he went, from the roadside restaurants he wrote a book about, to Sutton's Drugstore on Chapel Hill's Franklin Street where he was a regular, to libraries, bookstores, and civic clubs across the state. D.G. was a lifelong learner with an insatiable curiosity and a teacher too, always happy to share what he knew.

He met his wife, Harriet Wall of Conway, S.C., on a blind date in 1963 while in the Army. They were married in 1966 after his first year at Yale Law School. After he completed his law degree, they moved to Charlotte, where D.G. practiced law for 20 years with the firm of Kennedy, Covington, Lobbell, and Hickman.

In Charlotte, D.G. and his family were members of Seigle Avenue Presbyterian Church, a small, inner-city church where he served as an Elder and Sunday school teacher. He served as moderator of the Mecklenburg Presbytery and the Presbyterian Synod of the Mid-Atlantic.

D.G., a steadfast Democrat, famously ran for the U.S. House of Representatives in 1984 and 1986 in a staunchly Republican district based in Charlotte. On his first attempt in 1984, he lost by a mere 327 votes (0.2%). Another attempt in 1986 was also unsuccessful. Despite losing these elections, he won the lasting gift of meaningful friendships across the state.

In 1988, D.G. was recruited to the University of North Carolina System as Secretary and later moved to the position of Vice President for Public Affairs. There, he built relationships across both sides of the aisle. His knowledge of the state and the university system, his intellect, his integrity, and his genuine relationships made him an ideal representative for the university system at the legislature. He gained the respect and admiration of all he encountered, no matter their views on political issues.

After retiring from the University in 1997, D.G. ran for the Democratic nomination for the U.S. Senate, strengthening his already deep ties with people throughout the state. Though not elected, he embodied a form of principled, thoughtful leadership that was both heartening and inspiring.

D.G. served six-month appointments as interim vice chancellor at both UNC–Pembroke and North Carolina Central University. He later led the North Carolina Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the Trust for Public Land's North Carolina office, and the Triangle Land Conservancy, and also served for two years as President of the William R. Kenan Funds.

Simultaneously, over the last 30 years, he hosted close to 450 episodes of North Carolina BookWatch on UNC-TV, wrote a weekly newspaper column called One on One that ran in many papers across the state, recorded a WCHL radio interview program called Who's Talking, and wrote two editions of the UNC Press book, *Roadside Eateries*, about places in North Carolina with good food and low prices run by likeable Tar Heels. For his service to the state, he became the 53rd recipient of the annual North Caroliniana Society Award.

D.G. was an exceptionally devoted grandfather. He reveled in his grandchildren and delighted in everything they did, from birth to toddlerhood, into teen years and early adulthood. A fiercely proud, gentle grandparent, he was first in line for babysitting, diaper changing and preschool pickup and in the front row for ballgames and school plays. He made piles of pancakes, played endless games of all types, and cheered and coached them in their academic, social, and athletic endeavors.

In addition to a massive hoard of books, foreign language dictionaries, maps, atlases, and National Geographic magazines, he loved, collected, and rode bikes of all kinds. His bookshelf overflowed with spiral notebooks full of notes about people he met, places he visited, and sermons, lectures, or meetings he attended. He was often spotted jogging the roads of Chapel Hill or riding his bike around campus, greeting and chatting with all he encountered.

He is survived by his wife of more than 59 years, Harriet Wall Martin, his children Grier Martin (Louise) of Raleigh and May Bryan (Cotton) of Chapel Hill, beloved grandchildren Sara Martin and Maggie, Jake, and David Bryan. His sister Embry Howell (Joe), and multitudes of dear nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends also survive him. He was preceded in death by his mother, Louise McMichael Martin, his father, David Grier Martin, Sr., and his brother, Jack McMichael Martin.

The family extends their deep gratitude to D.G.'s friends and caregivers, David Gitata and Cecil Macaully, for the heartfelt care and unwavering devotion they have shown in the past few months.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to University Presbyterian Church (209 E. Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27514), or to Triangle Land Conservancy (PO Box 1848, Durham, NC 27702).

A memorial service will be held at University Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill on Saturday, January 3, 2026 at 11 a.m. The service will be live-streamed and recorded. <https://upcch.org/live>.