



James Kirby Martin

May 26, 1943 - December 31, 2024

Dr. James Kirby Martin entered into eternal rest on December 31, 2024. No obituary could possibly do justice to Jim's remarkable life, his accomplishments, and his legacy. He deserves a biography.

Jim was born on May 26, 1943, in Akron, Ohio to Dorothy Garrett Martin and Paul Elmo Martin. Shortly before Jim was born, the Army sent his father to Europe where he served in General George S. Patton's Third Army. In a defining moment, one of Jim's earliest memories of life came at the age of three when his father returned home and they met for the first time.

Jim grew up in Bath Township, Ohio, and attended Revere High School. He attended Hiram College, where he earned membership in Phi Beta Kappa and graduated summa cum laude. He earned his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in United States History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

During Jim's freshman year in college, his brother, Fred, introduced him to a sophomore named Karen Wierwille. From this one moment, a lifelong partnership of love and respect blossomed. Karen and Jim were married on August 7, 1965, in New Knoxville, Ohio.

Jim taught at Rutgers University for eleven years. He moved through the ranks from Assistant Professor to Professor. He also served briefly as Vice

President for Academic Affairs. In 1980, Jim moved with his family to Texas, where he taught for more than thirty years at the University of Houston. He finished his teaching career at UH as the Hugh Roy and Lilli Cranz Cullen University Professor of History.

In 2013-2014, Jim held the James Rees Senior Research Fellowship at the Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington, located at Mount Vernon, Virginia. During the spring semester of 2016, he taught at The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina, serving as the Mark W. Clark Distinguished Visiting Professor of History. During the 2017-2018 academic year, he served as the Charles Boal Ewing Visiting Professor of Military History at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.

Jim was a prolific and award-winning writer. He authored, co-authored, and edited twelve books and countless scholarly articles. His works include *Benedict Arnold, Revolutionary Hero: An American Warrior Reconsidered*; *Forgotten Allies: The Oneida Indians and the American Revolution*; *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic, 1763-1789*; *Ordinary Courage: The Revolutionary War Adventures of Joseph Plumb Martin*; *Insurrection: The American Revolution and Its Meaning*; *Drinking in America: A History, 1620-1980*; *Men in Rebellion: Higher Governmental Leaders and the Coming of the American Revolution*; *Citizen Soldier: The Revolutionary War Journal of Joseph Bloomfield*; and *Surviving Dresden*. He greatly enjoyed the collaboration with and camaraderie of his professional colleagues, including Mark Lender, David Preston, Joseph Glatthaar, Robert Burris, David Oshinsky, and so many others.

Jim loved speaking engagements and talking about history. Audiences loved him in return. He could hold attendees in rapt attention as he made history come alive. He treasured the many opportunities to present to a variety of institutions and at conferences, including the Army War College, the Naval

War College, West Point, Marist College, Hiram College, Mount Vernon Ladies Association, the Society of the Cincinnati, Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution, and at annual conference gatherings such as those held by America's History, LLC, in Williamsburg, Virginia, and Fort Plain Museum in upstate New York, among many others. In addition to presenting at Sons of the American Revolution meetings, he was deeply proud to be a member of that organization.

Jim was even busier in "retirement." He served on the Fort Ticonderoga Association Board of Trustees and the Fort Plain Museum Board of Trustees. He was also active as a historian consultant to the Oneida Indian Nation of New York. He was frequently interviewed for programming on the History Channel and Fox Nation. He co-wrote the feature-length film Benedict Arnold: Hero Betrayed (and made his acting debut as Moses Hazen). He served as Executive Producer for the film documentary 231 Days, which chronicles the 1978 abduction of Christian missionary Herb Gregg. He leaves behind an untold number of works in progress and unfinished film, television, and written projects.

Owing to his years at the University of Houston, Jim bled Cougar Red and greatly enjoyed UH athletics. He and his colleague, John Hart, were fixtures in the stands at football and basketball games. Jim served as an academic liaison to the athletic department during the 1990s. Fittingly, his last outing before falling ill was to sit courtside with his wife, daughter, and grandson at a UH men's basketball game.

Jim was an avid golfer. He enjoyed annual golfing trips to Hilton Head with professional colleagues. He played in (and won) several church tournaments. He was also a fairly capable bowler, and the family spent many Christmas nights at a nearby bowling alley. Jim loved going to the movies, though he

was definitely not a fan of lengthy previews. Jim had a soft spot in his heart for dogs and was known as the Dog Whisperer. He treasured his faithful companions over the years, including Pretzel, Weazer, and Lucy.

Above all other things, Jim was a devoted Christian. He loved his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, with all his heart, mind, and soul. He enjoyed the time spent at church and the companionship of his fellow worshipers. This devotion to Christ was reflected at home with his family. His wife and children were an immense source of pride to him. He loved having three daughters, and he loved being known as Pappy to his grandchildren.

Jim preceded in death by his parents, Dorothy Garrett Martin and Paul Elmo Martin. He is survived and celebrated by his loving wife, Karen Wierwille Martin; his brother, Frederick W. Martin, of Aurora, Ohio; daughter Darcy Martin Gagnon and her husband, Joe Gagnon, of Houston; his daughter Sarah-Marie Martin and her husband, Nick Brophy, of Sea Girt, New Jersey; his daughter Joelle Martin Hussey, and her husband, Lloyd Hussey, of Thousand Oaks, California; grandchildren Camille Gagnon, Joseph Gagnon, Jr., Eyerusalem Brophy, Martin Brophy, James Brophy, Skylar Brophy, Quinn Brophy, Faith Hussey, Gabrielle Hussey, and Eden Hussey; and countless colleagues, former students, friends, neighbors, and loved ones.

A memorial service celebrating Jim's life will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, January 18, 2025, at Tallowood Baptist Church at 555 Tallowood, Houston, Texas 77024. A reception at the church will immediately follow the service. Attendees are encouraged to wear red, representing heart health and Jim's enthusiasm for UH athletics.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in Jim's memory to the American Battlefield Trust (www.battlefields.org) which seeks to preserve hallowed ground for posterity or to Gracewood (www.gracewood.org) which

provides home, hope and healing to single mothers.

To live Stream Mr. Martins services please follow this link (<http://tallowood.org/watch>)

The Martin family wish to thank everyone whose outpouring of love and support have provided comfort during this time. Though we grieve, we also rejoice. Jim fought the good fight. He finished the race. He kept the faith.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JAN 18. 11:00 AM (CT)

Tallowood Baptist Church
555 Tallowood Road
Houston, TX 77024

Reception to Follow Service

JAN 18. 12:00 PM (CT)

Tallowood Baptist Church
555 Tallowood Road
Houston, TX 77024

Tribute Wall



“ *Dettling Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of James Kirby Martin*



Dettling Funeral Home - January 15, 2025 at 05:51 PM



“ *Dettling Funeral Home created a Webcast in memory of James Kirby Martin*



Dettling Funeral Home - January 11, 2025 at 11:50 AM

KB

“ I will never forget the invaluable contributions and life lessons you have given me thus far, and will continue to learn through your writings, words, and works — for the rest of my life. I’ll be sure your legacy passes on from generation to generation, teaching my own kids one day of the importance of seeking truths in history and in the present. No matter how high the mountain may become, rediscovering history as it truly was and telling it as it is, for ourselves & for our posterity — is what it truly does mean to be an American.

Humbly yours,

Karen Ben-Moyal aka “the human dynamo” ✍️ (as you used to warn my future employers about in your rec. letters apparently). 🙄



Prayers for your family and all who loved you for the incredible person you were. 🙏 Looking forward to meeting you in another life.



Karen Ben-Moyal - January 22, 2025 at 12:01 AM

KB

“ I am just heart broken and devastated after hearing the shocking news of Dr. Martin’s sudden passing. James Kirby Martin was not only a brilliant man, he was a genuine patriot with a caring soul— brave as a lion— strong like a bull. And I was fortunate enough to have had him as my mentor and professor during my up and coming college days. Jim was the only faculty member or professor I had that had the bravery to become our University of Houston Young Americans for Freedom faculty sponsor when I was just starting out as president and trying to grow our “controversially accredited,” and passionate political movement for freedom during a growing radical political atmosphere on college campuses from 2016-2018, (for obviously reasons)...Only one independent minded, non cowardly, pure patriot responded without any excuse not to be able to do it... Dr. Martin was enthused about it. Not only was he unafraid to represent the freedom fighting organization we became, he has been an inspiration to me throughout my college years, and I’ve looked to him for guidance and courage ever since. I don’t know where I would be if it wasn’t for this kind, brave, and brilliant soul if I hadn’t met him in my first American revolution class at UH, and if he hadn’t said yes immediately to representing us as our faculty member to be able to exist as the diverse, groundbreaking, freedom fighting, dominating organization we ended up becoming in those years that allowed me to prosper and soar and find my way in life. I am praying for you and your family, Karen during this difficult time. May Dr. James Kirby Martin’s memory forever be a blessing. I will never forget the opportunities he allowed our organization to go out and achieve... Nor the wisdom he bestowed upon me, among so many others, I’m sure, during his deeply impactful, exhilarating, fulfilling, and extraordinarily meaningful life. Thank you so much, Doctor, Author, Actor, Teacher, Historian, Mentor, and most importantly, My Dear Friend, James Kirby Martin, for everything.

I will never forget the invaluable contributions and life lessons you have given me thus far, and will continue to learn through your writings, words, and works — for the rest of my life. I’ll be sure your legacy passes on from generation to generation, teaching my own

kids one day of the importance of seeking truths in history and in the present. No matter how high the mountain may become, rediscovering history as it truly was and telling it as it is, for ourselves & for our posterity — is what it truly does mean to be an American.

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Karen Ben-Moyal - January 21, 2025 at 11:59 PM



“ 101 files added to the album *LifeTributes*



Detting Funeral Home - January 15, 2025 at 05:47 PM

SK

“ *Susan Kellogg lit a candle in memory of James Kirby Martin*



Susan Kellogg - January 13, 2025 at 05:50 PM

LM

“ *Jim and I were fellow classmates at Revere High School and the two students who loved history and our teacher, Mrs. Beatrice Cote who was a personal friend of the Martin Family. I have always admired Jim, his accomplishments and dedication to teaching Americans about our history. He was a gentleman, showing kindness to everyone he met. God blessed him and now he is with his Lord. Those of us who admired this beautiful soul will always miss him.*

Linda Wilhelm Murr, Revere High School Class of 1961

Linda Wilhelm Murr - January 07, 2025 at 06:16 PM

CM

“ Oh, Karen - so sorry to hear of Jim's passing. He was my History prof at Rutgers (Douglass College) during my freshman year in 1968 and we have stayed in touch ever since! We always enjoyed his holiday cards and watching the ever-growing family. What a wonderful influence he was on me and instilled an ongoing love of History, especially American History. I really enjoyed his novel "Surviving Dresden" and loved seeing him pop us on various history shows! He and Karen came to my wedding to Steve in 1971 at Voorhees Chapple on the Douglass campus, back before it was fashionable to get married there! I'm in tears typing this now. We will make a donation, to be sure. If we were closer (we are in Oregon), we would be there for the Memorial.

Cynthia Magidson - January 07, 2025 at 03:06 PM

JD

“ When you started grad I'm Merrill Jensen's seminar I was in awe of the he 'old' guys - ken bowling. Dick kohn and Jim Martin - a stellar group and I got br iv the festschrift honoring Merrill thanks to Jim. A great guy and a real role model. Just too young to leave us

Joe Davis - January 06, 2025 at 10:15 PM

JD

Ignore the silly typos - Jim would laugh

Joe Davis - January 06, 2025 at 10:16 PM

JC

“ Jim was my advisor in graduate school at the University of Houston between 1991-1993. I felt very blessed to have him as an advisor in part because we both attended Hiram College in Ohio where we had been inspired to study history by Wilson Hoffman. More importantly, I was blessed to have Jim as an advisor because of his brilliance and his personal generosity. He was more than just a graduate advisor. He was a life long mentor. We kept in touch over the years, and he always encouraged me to keep him informed of my career developments. In turn, I never ceased to be impressed with the extent of his professional achievements. I wrote my masters thesis about a Seneca Indian chief living in the Buffalo, New York area, and Jim published a book about twelve years later about the neighboring Oneida Indians in the American Revolutionary War. I'd like to think my interests inspired his scholarship in a small way. I last spoke to Jim in August of 2024 and he seemed as vital as ever. We've lost an extraordinary person and I will always be grateful for having him as a part of my life.

Jim Clarke - January 06, 2025 at 08:20 PM

JH

“ Jennifer Griffis Hammonds lit a candle in memory of James Kirby Martin



Jennifer Griffis Hammonds - January 06, 2025 at 08:20 PM

JH

Mr. Martin as I will always remember him was the father of my childhood best friend, Sarah Marie, and always went out of his way to make me feel welcome in their home. Some of my most cherished memories growing up were times spent with the Martin family around the dinner table having discourse or sitting in the living area laughing, playing games, chatting, listening to someone in the piano or taking pre-event photos around the hearth year after year! I have long admired Mr. Martin (who never had us call him Dr as kids) for his curiosity, intellect, wisdom, wit, and faith. He and the Martin family greatly shaped me as a person and I am forever grateful for the memories and moments shared. With deep respect and a grateful heart, Griff

Jennifer Griffis Hammonds - January 06, 2025 at 08:30 PM