

Vernon Martin

Vernon Dee Martin, of St. Simons Island, Ga., peacefully passed away in the early hours of Saturday, June 12, 2021, in the company of his wife and children. He was 78 years old.

Born in Cushing, Okla., to John Vernon and Julia Anderson Martin, he grew up in Chickasha, Okla. In his early working days, he was a broomcorn johnny, a jug hustler, a gandy dancer, drove tractors and handled livestock. He went on to earn a B.S. in business economics from Oklahoma State University, and a master's in regional and city planning from the University of Oklahoma. An avid athletics fan of both institutions, he unwaveringly defaulted to cheering on his beloved Cowpokes.

Vernon and his wife, Kanda Kirkwood Martin, married in 1968, and moved to St. Simons Island in 1969, after he accepted a position with the Coastal Georgia Regional Development Commission; he retired as the executive director.

He was elected president of the National Association of Development Organizations, vice president and to the board of directors of the National Association of Regional Councils. A fully certified and charter member of the American Institute of Certified Planners, he was also a member of the International City/County Management Association for 35 years.

Locally, Vernon was a member of the Kiwanis Club, the St. Simons Rotary, the St. Simons Escorts Club and Sea Island, where he was a frequent fixture on the Beach Club lawn.

Vernon proudly served in the Georgia Army and Georgia Air National Guards, retiring after 40 years, at the rank of Colonel, USAF Reserves. He also served as an officer of the Golden Isles chapter of the Military Officers Association of America.

O! Vern, as he was affectionately known, took great delight in family. He taught his children how to drive a standard shift car, do a three-point turn, and what an oil dipstick and a spark plug was, so auto mechanics couldn't snooker them.

In retirement, he enjoyed traveling with his wife, visiting every continent with the exception of Antarctica. A motorcycle enthusiast, he rode his Harley Davidson throughout the Southeast and Southwestern states, and attended the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota on several occasions.

He was a lifelong athlete, starting with football and "wrestling" at Chickasha High, "Home of the Fighting Chicks." Later in life, he ran 20 Peachtree Road Races, and enjoyed jogging on the beach at Sea Island, often backward for the last half-mile. After his knees betrayed him, he became an avid road cyclist. He is survived by an elaborate collection of athletic gear and gadgets.

He is also survived by his wife of 53 years, Kanda, and children, Paige (children Parker, Vivian and William), of Columbus, Ga., and Kirk (wife, Malia, and children, Caroline and Woody), of Atlanta, Ga.; his sister, Judy Ostervold (husband, Lars); and brother-in-law, Bill Kirkwood, as well as many nieces, nephews, cousins and extended family throughout Oklahoma.

While he soundly deserved every speeding citation he received, he will be sorely missed and remembered with love. We offer our unending gratitude to the angels from GHC Hospice for their care and the patient dedication of the staff at Thrive. At his request, his body has been donated to the Medical College of Georgia for research; a private service will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers or food, donations may be made to GHC Hospice, 141 S. Macon St., Jesup, GA 31545; OSU Posse Club, 102 Athletics Center, Stillwater, OK 74082; or the Golden Isles Military Officers Association of America Scholarship, P.O. Box 21186, St. Simons Island, GA 31522.

Family-placed obituary

The Brunswick News, June 15, 2021