



# Ruth Beryl Martin

AUG 29, 1939 - MAY 26, 2025



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# Ruth Beryl Martin

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## A n Extraordinary Life: R. Beryl Martin

Ruth Beryl Martin passed away on Monday, May 26, 2025. She is survived by her husband, Norman Ryan, her two daughters, Heather Torain and Andreia Torain, her one remaining sister Carolyn (Cardin), as well as her two grandchildren, Jazz and Amber Torain-Fass, nieces, nephews, grand-nieces, and grand-nephews.

Beryl was born in 1939 in Blooming Glen, Pennsylvania, to Helen (Leatherman) and Wayne Martin, the oldest of four children (including Mary Ann (Kinney) and Floyd) in a dutiful, musical Mennonite family. Early on, she assumed care of her younger siblings, forming in her an enduring sense of nurturing and responsibility for others in the world around her. She had a wide-open and passionate heart, expressed vibrantly through her music.

She played the piano and sang throughout her life, singing barbershop quartet (sextet) with her entire family and becoming the first of her family to attend college, earning her BA in music at Goshen College. Continuing to sing and perform throughout these years, she eventually moved to Philadelphia and began teaching music for the School District of Philadelphia. During this time, she joined Singing City and performed throughout the mid-Atlantic states and New England, often sharing stages with the Philadelphia Orchestra and New York Philharmonic.

In Singing City she met W. Glenn Torain, whom she married in 1970. Though from vastly different backgrounds, they found common ground in music and social justice, dreaming of fighting inequality personally through their interracial marriage and family. Heather was born the same year they married, and Andreia was born in 1972. The family lived in Powelton Village and attended the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia. Here, Beryl met lifelong friends and established herself as a leader in her professional, neighborhood, and church communities, completing her MA in Music at Temple University, leading choral groups and school musicals,



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raising children, and singing in the choir and periodically playing the piano at First Unitarian services throughout this time.

In 1987, Beryl's long-standing back problems came to a head, leading the way to divorce, retirement, a subsequent long-term partner (Elliot Fruman), and a short time in a little house on Stillman Street. In 1991 she finally found her "sanctuary" on Collins Pond in Southern Delaware, where she lived the last 34 years of her life, providing space for many celebrations and gatherings throughout her years there. During this time, she became involved with the Mountain Laurel Autoharp Gathering and the Wooden Canoe Heritage Association Assembly, making many trips through Pennsylvania and New York State to gather, play music, and enjoy nature throughout these years. She also enjoyed making trips to visit her daughter Heather in San Francisco and then Portland, Oregon, to be with her grandchildren.

In Delaware, Beryl was a founding member of the Unitarian Universalists of Southern Delaware, providing weekly piano music and establishing herself as a beloved church community member.

She married Norman Ryan on May 5, 2012, intending to live out her last years with her loving partner and friend. She would say that they "wore a groove" between Georgetown, Delaware, and Edenton, North Carolina, from four years of traveling back and forth before Norman moved to Delaware to live in her house on the pond.

She kept her lifelong passions of reading, crocheting, adventuring, playing piano and autoharp, and her love of nature and the sea alive until the end, sharing her vibrant and beautiful soul with everyone she encountered. She will be lovingly remembered and missed by all who knew her. May her spirit continue to gift her goodness to the world from the other side.

Please sign the tribute wall at this site.



## Tribute Wall

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**Rachel Smith** posted:

Ruth or Beryl as many elementary and high school classmates called her throughout the years, was always a fun, loving and supportive friend. I remember enjoying many singing activities with her from grade 1 -12. A few of us were still keeping in touch up until she passed. Her smile and cheerful self is Absolutely Missed !!

July 30 at 3:55 PM



**Heather Rion Starr** posted:

We will be remembering and celebrating Beryl's incredible life on Saturday August 9 at 2pm at the Unitarian Universalists of Southern Delaware, 30486 Lewes Georgetown Hwy in Lewes. Please join us!

June 24 at 8:12 AM



**Linda Killion** posted:

Beryl was such a beautiful soul. We shared many good times together at the UU church and Possum Point Players. She was an awesome piano teacher for our daughter Bridget. She will always be remembered fondly by The Killion family.

June 18 at 12:42 PM



# Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Ruth by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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