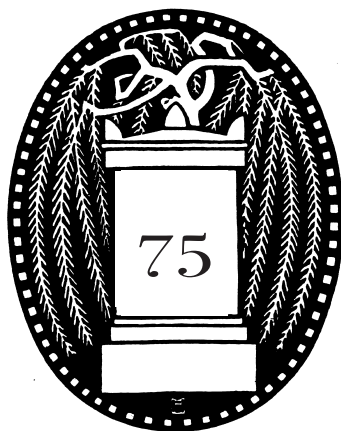


# JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY & HISTORY OF EDUCATION



2025

---

The Journal of the Society of Philosophy & History of Education

## In Memoriam



Joe Green, Martha May Tevis, & Lloyd Williams in 1977 at the SWPES meeting.

## Dr. Martha May Tevis

1940–2024<sup>1</sup>

Where is Martha? Martha never misses a SoPHE conference, so a glance around the meeting room or walk through the lobby without meeting Martha jostles the equilibrium, unbalancing one even more when hearing one's voice involuntarily escape, echo across the lobby: Where is Martha?

Professor Martha May Tevis has contributed to the Society of Philosophy and History of Education (SoPHE) from its earliest days when it was a regional branch of the Philosophy of Education Society (PES), the Southwest Society of Philosophy and Education.

[S]he was a valued and respected member of the organization...<sup>2</sup> [in] a time when the field had yet to realize the important contributions...women faculty could make to educational philosophy, but one could not deny the qualifications...Martha was bringing to the study.<sup>3</sup> [Equally important, she got] things done and...[got] people involved, even when they...[might] be...hesitant.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Martha Tevis served as the Southwest Society of Philosophy and Education's president, helped guide its transition to the international society, SoPHE, has consistently served as the SoPHE conference site chair when the membership meets in San Antonio, TX (she loved The Menger!), contributed articles to its journal, *Journal of Philosophy and History of Education* (JoPHE), and served annually on its editorial board.

Martha has contributed to the growth of the organization by encouraging people to join and to become active members of the association. Her warmth and graciousness...[make] even the newest members immediately feel welcome[d] and a part of the group. ... She gives freely of her time and energy in a thousand ways, not just to SoPHE, but also to its individual members.<sup>5</sup>

Martha knew you. She looked at you and into you with those enormous eyes, taking in your every word and gesture, answering back, still holding your eyes in hers. After a single encounter, you were hers. She did not forget.

Martha remembered more than people in her current circle; she remembered and honored those who had guided her and others on their paths and passed on those mentors' legacies of generosity throughout her career. One remembrance and act of generosity directly influencing the SoPHE membership is a named, endowed, annual lecture: The William Drake Lecture. Martha studied under William Drake, Philosophy and Cultural Foundations of Education, when working on her doctorate at The University of Texas at Austin, the time she first began presenting at Southwest Society of Philosophy and Education. Martha personally funded this named, endowed lecture not only to perpetuate Professor Drake's legacy but to support current scholars as they made their way through ever-more-tumultuous academic waters. It was Martha, too, who ensured the Foundations of Education Society (FES) remained intact—"Don't forget to pay your dues!"—directly connecting FES to The Drake Lecture, and, indeed, to SoPHE.<sup>6</sup>

Martha has style and grace beyond compare. ... Her skill, thoughtful planning, and attention to even the smallest details have resulted in outstanding opportunities for the sharing of scholarly and informative papers as well as opportunities for social interaction.<sup>7</sup>

Only one other education organization enjoyed Martha's presence and contributions from its beginnings until Martha's death: the International Society for Educational Biography (ISEB), a society she helped found after meeting L. Glen Smith and Joan Smith and contributing work on George I. Sánchez, Boethius, Cassiodorus, and Aquinas to their book, *Lives in Education: A Narrative of People and Ideas* (1991).<sup>8</sup> Having met Martha through the Southwest Society of Philosophy and Education and knowing how she worked with Glen and Joan on *Lives in Education*, Glen asked

Martha to help organize an association whose scholarly focus would be educational biography. Not only did Martha assist, she consistently served as officer, working as ISEB's first secretary/treasurer, then president, then secretary/treasurer for most years thereafter, further contributing in whatever capacity her fellows asked of her. Mary Lou Aylor recalled

Dr. Tevis could hold her own with seasoned professors while offering encouragement and support to colleagues who were new to academia. In fact, Martha Tevis exhibited considerable kindness when she showed me the ropes as I sought to publish my first scholarly essay in *Vitae Scholasticae*.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, Martha's "persistent dedication to ISEB...has steered...[the Society] through some rough waters to its present place as a respected international society for the study of biography."<sup>10</sup>

Although Martha may have contributed to SoPHE and ISEB for longer than she was able to continue her work in other professional societies and associations, they are certainly not the only organizations to which Martha dedicated her time, energy, and intelligence. She was member and Fellow of the Philosophy of Education Society (PES), served as secretary/treasurer for the Society of Professors of Education (SPE), secretary/treasurer for the American Educational Studies Association (AES), and member of the John Dewey Society (JDS). She edited the American Educational Studies Association's journal, *Educational Studies*,<sup>11</sup> edited the International Society for Educational Biography's journal, *Vitae Scholasticae*, and served on the editorial boards of *Educational Studies*, *Journal of Philosophy and History of Education*, and *Vitae Scholasticae*.

A Texan through and through, Martha May graduated from Wichita Falls Senior High, earned her B.A. in Latin with an English minor from Texas Christian University, her M.A. in Education with a Latin specialization from Our Lady of the Lake College, San Antonio, and her Ph.D. in the History and Philosophy of Education from The University of Texas at Austin where she studied with George I. Sánchez and William Drake. Groomed for academe at a time when Greek, Latin, and European languages were prerequisites for conducting scholarly research, this Latin scholar began her higher-education career as a new assistant professor in 1967, at Pan American College, Edinburg, TX, a school with 3,500 students, 100 faculty, and 6 buildings. This small college on the Texas–Mexico border became Pan American University in 1971, entered The University of Texas system in 1989 as The University of Texas–Pan American, and, in its fourth life, with 34,343 students enrolled, became The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in 2015. Even during the first 3–4 years of her career in southwest Texas, Martha was a driving force for adjusting the traditional college environment to support the school's predominantly Mexican-American students:

We didn't have many students living around here. Almost everybody was a Commuter.... So, the way you keep people involved was to give them a time during the day [an Activity Period]...so they could be active. The only thing[s] that could be scheduled [during the Activity Period] were student organizations.<sup>12</sup>

Martha served in ways that positioned her to incite positive changes that would make big differences across the university. While her administrative roles included Department Chair of Curriculum and Secondary Instruction, Grant Director, Graduate Coordinator, and Secondary Education Coordinator (graduate and undergraduate), Dr. Tevis also worked with pre-service and in-service teachers, served on the University of Texas Press' editorial Advisory Board, served as Vice-Chair of the University Alumni Association, as Parliamentarian in the school's first Faculty Senate, member of the school's first Honors Counsel, member of the school's first Equal Opportunities Committee, member of the University Admissions Committee, Counselor for the international honor society in education, *Kappa Delta Pi*, Graduate Advisor for the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Curriculum, and as many doctoral students' Dissertation Chair, Co-Chair, Advisor, or Committee Member. Indeed, "For the past 50 years...[her] work with graduate students has been outstanding."<sup>13</sup>

In part, Professor Tevis spread her gospel of freedom, legal and political equality, equal education opportunities, and justice beyond the university through her scholarship, often educating her readers on the historical bases for the injustices various individuals and populations face. Examples of her scholarship include her work on President Lyndon B. Johnson and education, for which "Lady-Bird" Johnson personally wrote her a thank-you letter, on such pioneers for legal and political equality as John Dewey, Julius Rosenwald, George Sánchez, and Kamil Jbeily, on initiating tuition pay for local teachers to earn masters' degrees and improve their understanding and teaching of Mexican-American students, and on court cases and on-going legal battles for equal legal rights for Mexican-Americans, among others. Recognizing her as a key senior researcher in her field, The University of Texas at Austin named her a difficult-to-earn Ellis Fellow,<sup>14</sup> and William Flores, Scholarly Communications Librarian, University Library, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, has collected Professor Tevis' more than 50 years' scholarship, including her *JoPHE* articles, into a designated section housed at University Library.<sup>15</sup> Especially memorable, Martha appeared as one expert in "A Class Apart: We Serve Whites Only, No Spanish or Mexicans" within the Public Broadcasting Service's series, *American Experience, The U.S. Latino Experience Collection*, airing February 23, 2009.<sup>16</sup>

Although one might think Martha had a plateful with her university teaching, scholarship, and service and an overflowing plate when she added her work in professional organizations, "Miss Martha" took still another plate to fill, working to further her larger community's well-being. She worked

as member of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, on Canterbury School's Steering Committee Board, Edinburg, TX, the Trinity Episcopal School Board, and as Vestry member at Trinity Episcopal Church. Always striving toward achieving justice and equity and to support underserved individuals, Martha helped found the Texas Council of Community Mental Health and Mental Retardation Centers (MHMR), Inc., coordinated all Texas Board of Trustees' training sessions for in-coming board members of MHMR community centers from the first training conference in 1980 until 1993, and edited *The Curriculor*, a publication of the Texas Council of Community MHMR Centers, 1977–2001. Also a member and officer of the Tropical Texas Community Center for Mental Health and Mental Retardation, 1969–1992, Martha became Board Member Emerita when she stepped down after 23 years' service.

Although generous, perceptive, smart people, hard workers, good teachers, and activists like Martha often pass through life without recognition, I am pleased to say, not only did Martha's university and its students recognize her, awarding her the Outstanding Faculty Award for Research, Outstanding Faculty Award for Teaching, Outstanding Faculty Award for Service, and the Alumni Association's Distinguished Professor Award and honor her by endowing a graduate scholarship in her name, the Martha May Tevis Endowed Scholarship,<sup>17</sup> but upon her May 31, 2017 retirement, the Texas State Senate, 85<sup>th</sup> Legislature, presented her with a personal copy of SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 786, signed, certified, and adopted May 15, 2017.

*WHEREAS*, The Senate of the State of Texas is pleased to recognize Dr. Martha May Tevis, who is retiring on May 31, 2017, after 50 years of exceptional service with The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley...

...

...be it

*RESOLVED*, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 85<sup>th</sup> Legislature, hereby commend Dr. Martha May Tevis on her commitment to excellence in education and extend to her best wishes for continued success in all her endeavors; and, be it further *RESOLVED*, That a copy of this Resolution be prepared for her as an expression of high regard from the Texas Senate.<sup>18</sup>

Few will know or identify all the ways Martha helped enact change in southern Texas, for students and families along the Texas–Mexico border. Few will recognize how her pioneering work as educator, scholar, and community member has paved the way for the many students, scholars, and everyday people who have come after she had cleared the way. Many will recall that even when her polio returned and she became less mobile each year, Martha May did not complain, speak with bitterness or resentment,

did not lose her spunk, did not lose her passion and energy to drive positive change toward greater freedom, justice, and legal and political equality for all—her life's work. She did not stop working for others in the here-and-now or for those yet to come. Although most will never know the extent of Martha's work over her lifetime, many of us realize first how Martha enriched us individually, we with whom she interacted one-on-one, and then know how much she enhanced SoPHE, its membership writ large, boosted, it seems, everyone and every venture she touched. Martha died September 24, 2024. Her memorial service transpired November 16, 2024, at Trinity Episcopal Church, Pharr, Texas.



So, where is Martha? Martha is in us and our actions, for Dr. Martha May Tevis continues circulating as a powerful force through her legacy, through her voice sounding in our heads, spurring us to press forward toward realizing freedom, legal and political equality, equal opportunities for education, and justice for all people, beginning in our own neck of the woods. Thinking back on her life and the many changes she witnessed and to which she contributed, Martha noted, “A lot of people don’t like change. I liked change because it was always exciting.”<sup>19</sup> I find it difficult to absorb that this current change means I will not be seeing mover-and-shaker change-maker, Martha May Tevis, will not see her again, taking me in with those big eyes. We miss you dear Martha; I miss you. We remember you, your work, and your spirit, will keep remembering. Having internalized your teachings, we embrace and pass on your passion and spirit, will drive and enact positive change, teach others to teach and act for freedom, legal and political equality, equal education opportunities, and justice, to behave kindly and generously to our earthly companions. We will make a difference.

Virginia Worley  
Professor Emerita  
Oklahoma State University

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> I thank Dr. Linda Morice for kindly sharing her research and writing on Dr. Martha Tevis and her life's work. Please see *Vitae Scholasticae* 41, nos. 1 and 2 (2024) for Linda's "In Memoriam."
- <sup>2</sup> Mary Lou Aylor, "Martha Tevis: An Appreciation," *Journal of Philosophy and History of Education* 59, (2009).
- <sup>3</sup> Joan Smith, "Martha Tevis Dedication," *Journal of Philosophy and History of Education* 59, (2009).
- <sup>4</sup> Aylor, "Martha Tevis."
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> In the wake of Martha's passing, The Foundations of Education Society's members have renamed the society in her honor: the Martha Tevis Foundations Society.
- <sup>7</sup> Aylor, "Martha Tevis."
- <sup>8</sup> L. Glen Smith and Joan Smith, *Lives in Education: A Narrative of People and Ideas* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1991).
- <sup>9</sup> Aylor, "Martha Tevis."
- <sup>10</sup> Smith, "Martha Tevis Dedication."
- <sup>11</sup> "In Memoriam: Martha May Tevis," *Women in Academe Report*, November 11, 2024, <https://wiareport.com/2024/11/in-memoriam-martha-may-tevis/>. I have been unable to corroborate *Women in Academe's* report that Martha edited *Educational Studies*, for neither the American Educational Studies Association nor *Educational Studies* makes available a list of past editors. Multiple sources do verify her contributions as editorial board member for the journal.
- <sup>12</sup> Rolando Avila, "César Chávez's Pan American College Campus Visit and Its Aftermath," *New Studies in Rio Grande Valley History* 16 (2018): 187–188, <https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/regionalhist/16>; this quotation is from Rolando Avila's interview with Martha May Tevis, May 15, 2017, quoted in Avila's article.
- <sup>13</sup> "Honoring Our Retirees, Teaching and Learning: Dr. Martha May Tevis," *College of Education and P-16 Integration*, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, 2017, [https://www.utrgv.edu/cep/\\_files/documents/cep-reports/annual-report-cep-2016-2017.pdf](https://www.utrgv.edu/cep/_files/documents/cep-reports/annual-report-cep-2016-2017.pdf)
- <sup>14</sup> For information on Ellis Scholars and Ellis Fellows, please see: <https://ellis.eu/guidelines-for-evaluating-fellow-and-scholar-nominations>
- <sup>15</sup> William Flores, MLIS, Scholarly Communications Librarian, University Library, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, email message to JoPHE editors, November 1, 2024.



- <sup>16</sup> *American Experience, The U.S. Latino Experience Collection*, “A Class Apart: We Serve Whites Only, No Spanish or Mexicans,” directed and produced by Carlos Sandoval and Peter Miller, written by Tom Weidlinger, Public Broadcasting Service, February 23, 2009. Although one needs to have “PBS Passport” to watch the entire episode, one section with Martha appears in “Deleted Scenes from the Film,” and her name, of course, appears in the credits. This episode of *American Experience* stories the *Hernandez v. Texas Supreme Court* case. Please see: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/class/> and <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/class-deleted-scenes/>
- <sup>17</sup> To contribute to the Martha May Tevis Endowed Scholarship (graduate student scholarship) please visit: <https://securelb.imodules.com/s/1953/lg21/form.aspx?sid=1953&gid=2&pgid=482&cid=1151&dids=751&bldit=1>
- <sup>18</sup> Please see “Texas Legislature Online” (.gov) for the complete text of TEXAS RESOLUTION NO. 786, <https://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/85R/billtext/html/SR00786F.htm>
- <sup>19</sup> Martha’s comment to Linda Morice in Morice, “In Memoriam.”