



Friends of the Wade

The Marion E. Wade Center Wheaton College

Remembrance: Martha Harris Kilby

Friends of the Wade Center will be saddened to learn of the recent death of Mrs. Martha Kilby on September 2, 2004 at age 102. Married for more than fifty years to Wade Center founder, Clyde S. Kilby, Martha was well-known to many *Friends of the Wade*. A true Southern belle who possessed great charm and grace, Martha, nonetheless, was an independent and freethinking spirit. Marilee Melvin, Wheaton College Alumni Director, remembers Martha declaring, in her strong Mississippi drawl, that she refused to repeat the phrase—"and obey"—in her wedding vows unless Clyde included the same promise in his. Martha may have been a petite woman, standing only 4 feet 8 inches tall, but she had a true grandness of spirit that belied her small stature.

A gracious hostess with the gift of genuine hospitality, Martha was equally comfortable entertaining friends such as Newbery Prize winning author Madeleine L'Engle as she was hosting undergraduates. One former student, poet Luci Shaw, remembers wonderful evenings spent with the Kilbys during her college days, sharing conversation and homemade apple turnovers. Another student, Tom Howard, now a Professor at St. John's Seminary College, recalls that when the English majors would arrive for their weekly gathering, Martha would be



Martha Harris Kilby
1902-2004

standing at the top of the stairs with a huge smile, as though there was "nothing that could thrill her more than to see you." After an evening of discussing books and listening to Mozart, Martha would serve her homemade pastries, and, during the winter, hot ginger ale. Tom thought that those evenings in the Kilby home were "the closest thing to heaven on earth."

Some of our *Friends* may be aware that the Wade Center Reading Room is named in honor of both Clyde and Martha: a joint designation which is representative of the collaborative nature of their marriage and life together. There

is no doubt that Martha encouraged and supported Clyde in all aspects of his life—professional and personal—and indeed, matched him stride for stride in all that he did. Clyde's creative energy often led him off in various whimsical directions, and it was Martha's practical common sense and good humor which kept him grounded. Her energetic and feisty spirit also brought much laughter to their home. They had great fun teasing each other, and she called Clyde "Funny" (instead of "Honey").

Although the Kilbys had no children of their own, they both delighted in children. Over the years, Martha reached out to scores of college students who were

The proper question to be asked about any creed is not, "Is it pleasant?" but, "Is it true?"

—Dorothy L. Sayers



Wheaton College
For Christ and His Kingdom

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

After ten years as Director, I am still surprised at the extent of the international interest generated by the Wade authors and the resultant opportunities given the Wade Center to touch lives far beyond its borders. This past May I was asked to teach at the Kazak-American Free University in Ust-Kamenogorsk, in Eastern Kazakhstan. The University was established in 1994 to train future Kazak leaders in business and government. During my stay I taught eleven classes: five on J.R.R. Tolkien; three concerning East-West issues using Alexander Solzhenitsyn's 1978 Harvard address, "A World Split Apart"; and three on modern western thinking in which I used C.S. Lewis's *The Abolition of Man*. Janat Nurbayeva, who manages the Visiting Faculty Program, had this to say about our visit (her comments concern myself and two other Wheaton College faculty, Bruce Howard and Eun Ahn): "As a Wheaton graduate, I cannot underestimate the work that has been done for the kingdom by these faithful servants. They were able to engage the students in dialogue that stretched [them] beyond what they were used to. Our school is not religious, nor is there religious freedom necessarily. So every time there is a professor who has values and principles that he/she lives by and not only teaches but shares his or her life with the class, it makes a difference. It does not go unnoticed."

WITH ALL GOOD WISHES,



Did You Know?

- After graduating from Mississippi State College for Women, Martha taught mathematics for three years at John Brown University in Arkansas.
- Martha met Clyde Kilby, a colleague at John Brown, when he came to her "rescue" after she took a tumble during a spirited game of tennis.
- Martha and Clyde were married in the house in which she grew up. The Kilbys returned to that home after retirement, and Martha lived there until her mid-90s. **W**



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

away from home for the first time, and many considered the Kilbys to be their honorary parents. Mary Bechtel, one of their former neighbors,



Clyde and Martha Kilby on their 50th Wedding Anniversary

remembers that her young children loved to spend time with them, and could always count on getting a piece of Blackjack gum when they visited next door.

Martha was a generous person who believed that one should not be "possessed by possessions." Elizabeth Proffitt, one of Martha's dear friends

in Columbus, Mississippi, said that Martha had no interest in expensive clothing, but loved "old coats, old shoes, and old friends." Many of her friends were recipients of her generosity, whether it was Martha's gift of a figurine from her large Royal Doulton collection (brought back from Clyde's travels to England) or a cutting from her magnificent garden.

Nothing better expresses Martha's joyful approach to life than her favorite verse: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 118:24). Marilee Melvin, who remained in close contact with Martha until her death, recalls that as Martha got older, she looked forward to "going home." During one of their many conversations over a cup of tea, Martha said, "my ticket is punched, and I'm just waiting for the Conductor to call my name." **W**

Martha's Table

Martha's Table is a hospitality fund created by *Friends of the Wade* to honor the memory of Martha Harris Kilby (1902–2004), the loving wife and life-partner of Clyde Kilby, founder of the Marion E. Wade Center. Martha shared Clyde's dream of creating a collection of the writings and related materials of seven British authors, and together they welcomed many guests to dine at their table in the gray frame house on north Washington Street in Wheaton.



Clyde and Martha Kilby seated at their dining room table in Wheaton

Through-
out the years,
Martha set a
gracious and
graced table
around which
countless
conversations
flourished
about creativity

and the arts, about literature, truth and beauty, and most of all about the relationship between faith and imagination. At these varied gatherings, the Kilbys hosted students, colleagues, alumni, friends, and numerous visitors who shared their interest in the Christian faith and the arts. Many conversations begun in Dr. Kilby's office were continued during a meal around the Kilby dining room table.

The funds from *Martha's Table* will be set aside for continuing the hospitality tradition of Martha Kilby in a variety of small and larger gatherings in Wheaton and beyond—from offering tea and scones to visiting scholars, to inviting Wade Center guests for a meal in the college dining facility or off-campus, to receptions connected with lectureships and other functions.

Contributions can be made by check, cash or credit card to the Wade Center, Wheaton College, with a note attached designating the funds for *Martha's Table*. All contributions are tax-deductible.

Please join with us and many others, whose lives were touched by the Kilbys, in establishing *Martha's Table*. Through this endowed fund (with an

ultimate goal of \$50,000 by June 2005), we will be able to continue the Kilbys' enduring legacy of warm hospitality and worthwhile conversation as we support the ongoing work of the Wade Center.

STAN AND JEANNETTE BAKKE

Wheaton Class of '61 & co-chairs of Martha's Table

Volunteer Opportunities

Do you enjoy greeting visitors and making them feel welcome? Perhaps you prefer a quieter role, working with books. Or you may like to garden. These are just a few of the ways to get involved as a volunteer at the Wade Center. We currently have several dedicated individuals who help us by staffing the reception desk, welcoming visitors, and responding to questions about the museum or the Reading Room. Other volunteers offer their time helping with our library materials. During the warmer months, those with green thumbs assist us in keeping our English garden looking so lovely that both visitors and neighbors remark on its beauty. We are grateful for those who are willing to dedicate a few hours of their time to help the work of the Wade Center, and look forward to welcoming others who would like to be involved. Volunteers are crucial in helping us keep the Reading Room open on Saturday mornings, and we are especially looking for people who might be available to help with special events. If you are interested in our volunteer opportunities, please contact Shawn Mrakovich at the Wade Center. **W**



Rachel Kenney, volunteer

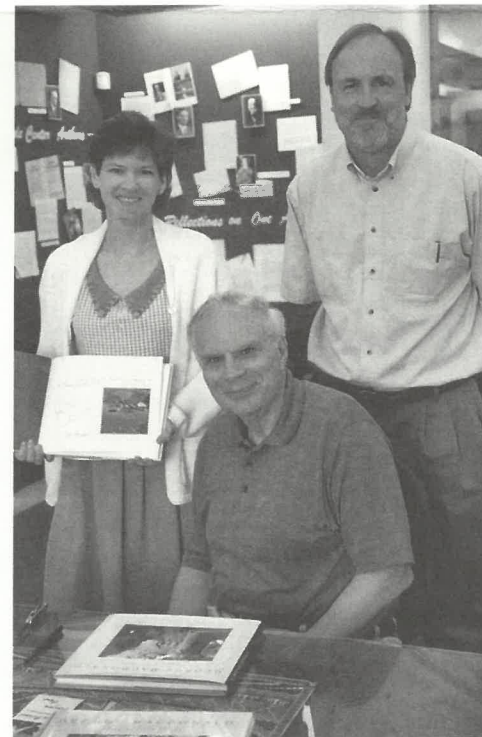
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New and Recommended Books

Seeking the Secret Place: The Spiritual Formation of C.S. Lewis by **Dr. Lyle W. Dorsett** (Brazos Press, 2004): \$12.99. Written by the former director of the Wade Center, this volume offers new insight into C.S. Lewis's spiritual development as a man of prayer and praise, including the ways in which Anglican spirituality shaped Lewis into a mature Christian who became a spiritual guide to many through his books and personal letters.

From the Library of C.S. Lewis compiled by **James S. Bell** and **Anthony P. Dawson** (Shaw, 2004): \$16.99. This volume of selections from writers who helped shape C.S. Lewis's spiritual journey is a wonderful literary resource and devotional reader.

George MacDonald: Images of His World by **Rolland Hein** and **Larry Fink** (Pasture Spring Press, 2004): \$40. In this visually stunning book, George MacDonald's life story is told through biography and extensive excerpts from his fiction, poetry, and letters. Over 130 photographs of MacDonald sites—places he lived in and wrote about—accompany the text. This volume has limited distribution, but is available at the Wade Center. **W**



Rolland Hein, Professor Emeritus of English at Wheaton College, and Larry Fink, Professor at Hardin-Simmons University, present a copy of their book to Heidi Truty, Wade Archivist.