



Nadine T. Martel, of Fitchburg

November 8, 1931 - December 4, 2024

Fitchburg - Born Nadine Todd Cookman to Nadine Todd (Frazier) Cookman and Robert R. Cookman, Jr., in Fitchburg, MA, in 1931, Toddy grew up in Fitchburg and loved the town she would call home for most of her life. She attended Community School on View Street, now a memory for only a few locals, before going off to Abbot Academy in Andover, MA. Upon graduation from Abbot in 1948, she went on to Wellesley College where she studied Literature and stoked her lifelong passion for reading. She also studied a bit of forestry and that led to another of her passions; plants, from the small ones that she grew in her home and in her greenhouse, to the shrubs and landscaping around her house, to the woods beyond. She spent many happy hours gardening, pruning, planting and planning.

Shortly before her graduation from Wellesley, she was introduced to her first husband by a mutual friend. After graduation they were married and moved to Philadelphia where they lived for a short time before returning to the area to settle in Lunenburg and start a family. After a brief stint as a kindergarten teacher, the family came along and she devoted herself to raising her children and quickly began her lifelong commitment to her community.

As a child, she spent summers in Fairlee, VT, where her father owned an inn and where her mother somehow managed to master the art of cooking on a wood stove. She often remarked about how impressed she was with her

mother's skill at this task, but it was not one she stived to acquire. Having enjoyed Vermont, she attended a summer camp in Roxbury, VT, for a few years where she pursued her love of horseback riding. She had been introduced to the sport by her family at home where she had her own horse and would frequently ride off to meet up with a friend and spend the day riding to New Hampshire and back. Her family spent a share of each winter in Quebec, where she became an avid and accomplished skier, and became quite proficient in speaking French.

When she went away to school, her parents traded the horses for Great Danes, which they raised. At one point, after an unusually successful breeding season, and counting all the puppies, they had 40 of the big dogs. The constant presence of animals in her life, and the love and care she showered on them, continued throughout her life. She was never without pets and rescued countless animals, including many cats that were cruelly abandoned on her land, and including especially, her beloved cat Max, who now at 17, is still ruling the roost, though missing her terribly. She sometimes joked that she was becoming a crazy cat lady.

When her parents retired and moved to Bermuda, Toddy and her husband bought the family home where she had grown up and moved into what has been affectionately known as "580." Growing up at 580 she listened to her father and mother discuss business through good times and bad. Her father owned and ran Webber Lumber Company, and she was intrigued and educated by the discussions. She developed an understanding of business that served her well in all her future community endeavors.

Toddy was always deeply committed to her community. She served on numerous boards throughout her life. Children's Aid and Family Service benefited for many years from her guidance and leadership. She became involved with Fitchburg State University, serving as an officer on the Board of

the Fitchburg State College Foundation during a pivotal time of its growth. She received a commendation for her service in 2009, and shortly thereafter created the Nadine C. Martel Nature Preserve adjacent to the campus on 3.2 acres of land she donated. More recently she joined the board of the 658 Main Street Foundation, whose mission is to preserve the Fay Club, one of Fitchburg's most historic buildings.

She had an extraordinary relationship with the Fitchburg Art Museum. She first became acquainted with the Museum as a child while her mother was on the Board of Trustees. She took art classes there on Saturday mornings and so began a live long love affair with all things art. She studied Art History while at Wellesley and returned to painting classes as an adult. Following in her mother's footsteps, she soon found herself on the Board. Her Board service began more than 60 years ago. She chaired the Collection Committee for much of that time and served twice as President. During one of her terms she led the Museum's 1980s capital campaign which resulted in the construction of the Simonds Building. A gallery in the Discover Ancient Egypt exhibition is named in her honor. She was honored at a Gala in 2015 where she re-emphasized her commitment to the care and preservation of the permanent collection. This endeavor was very near and dear to her heart, not because it was glamorous, but because it was critical. She was never one to go in for the flashy, showy glitz, she always sought to take care of the foundations, the things no one saw but which were essential. She was content to work in the background and was always slightly embarrassed when her contributions were recognized.

After a somewhat tumultuous time in her life, she saw a long time friend and neighbor in a different light and began a new chapter when she married Gerry Martel. They did some travelling and undertook many adventures. She became a partner in a champion Arabian stallion named Esquire, and they

travelled to many of his shows. They even worked to become certified and served a short term as appraisers of antiques. There was never a dull moment with Gerry and, as members of the Rolls Royce Owners Club, they attended countless meets all over the country, occasionally arriving on a tow truck. Toddy took these little mishaps comfortably in stride and would laugh about them when she later recounted the stories.

She saw and survived much in her 93 years; natural phenomena which nearly claimed her beloved 580, a major hurricane, a devastating fire, ice storms, microbursts; and many personal tragedies and losses. She endured these challenges with characteristic grace and resilience, emerging ever stronger and more resolute. She also had her share of personal triumphs, large and small. She took each of these in stride with gratitude and humility.

Toddy loved her family above all and was an incredibly wonderful and devoted mother. She exposed her children to everything she thought might enrich their lives; art, music, skiing; supported them in every endeavor; put up with them through the sometimes difficult teenage years; always there for them. She gave generously to many causes dear to heart; local preservation and development, animal protection and rescue. She loved her community, her home, and gardens and woods. She remained active, forever curious, forever learning, reading everything, offering insights and perspectives, guidance and leadership, throughout her entire life.

Toddy passed away on December 4 after a traumatic fall two days earlier. She was predeceased by her first husband, Raymond A. Price, and by her second husband, Gerard R. Martel. She is survived by her daughter Nadine Todd Price and her partner Doug Tucker of Fitchburg and Pittsfield VT; her son Raymond A. Price, Jr., and his wife Margie; her granddaughter Ana Bradley; her great granddaughter Isabella Bradley, all of Nashua, NH, her stepdaughter Priscilla Martel and her partner Charles VanOver of Chester CT; her stepson

Christopher Martel and his wife Lisa of Coventry, CT; several nieces and nephews; and her close friends who will all miss her dearly. She was 93.

Funeral arrangements are being handled by Isabelle & Anderson Funeral Home of Fitchburg. A funeral service will be held in Christ Episcopal Church 569 Main St., Fitchburg, on January 16, 2025, at 11am. Toddy will be interred in her family plot in Forest Hill Cemetery, 115 Mt. Elam Rd., Fitchburg, MA, on May 9, 2025 at 11:00am. In lieu flowers, please consider donations to the Fitchburg Art Museum or the 658 Main Street Foundation.

Cemetery Details

Forest Hill Cemetery

Mt. Elam Rd.
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Previous Events

Funeral Service

JAN 16. 11:00 AM (ET)

Christ Church
569 Main St.
Fitchburg, MA

Burial

MAY 9. 11:00 AM (ET)

Forest Hill Cemetery
Mt. Elam Rd.
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Tribute Wall

RF

“ I, and all of the Rice Family, send sincere condolences to your family at this difficult time in losing your brilliant mother. She was very close to my uncle, Laurie K. Irvine-my mother's brother, as well as my parents, Mona and Parker Rice. I have heard wonderful stories ~ they had a sparkling time together! What an incredible woman, spirit, energizer -- filled with smarts and so much fun. Love to you all. Rebecca Rice and Tom Flanagan

Rebecca Rice Flanagan - January 15, 2025 at 06:55 PM

SN

“ What an extraordinary woman, Toddy was always fun to talk to, and she was often enlightening, as well. I feel grateful that I had a chance to know her and appreciate all the energy, heart and fun that she brought to Fitchburg. To all her family, you are in my heart. I cannot imagine the loss that you are feeling, but I am glad that she was such a boon companion to all of us for so many years. -- Susan Navarre

Susan Navarre - January 13, 2025 at 10:48 AM

JC

“ My dad, Dr. Mark Saulnier was the best friend of Gerry Martel and Nadine. It breaks my heart that we have lost you. Much love from our family. We will always hold you in our heart. Much love to your children and stay strong and be so proud of your parents, guys. Much love from Joan Saulnier Cayer.

Joan Cayer - December 16, 2024 at 08:48 PM

LY

“ *Nadine & Family, You are being held close at heart since hearing of your Mom's passing! I attended the 99th Annual meeting at FAM having heard this news as there is no where else I wanted to be than with our FAMily. I will forever hold all the incredible memories of knowing and serving along side your Mom for many many years at The Fitchburg Art Museum. She was an absolute treasure and stand up person that I learned much from as one of my chosen mentors in life. Bo and I send our deepest sympathy and love!*

Lyn - December 10, 2024 at 05:59 PM

RB

“ *Toddy was a good friend and a barrel of laughs, a real humdinger. Rest in peace my friend. You will be missed. Rick Boscardin*

rick boscardin - December 10, 2024 at 05:43 AM

DC

“ *Toddy will be missed. She was a great friend to Fitchburg and always someone we loved to see. Dan and Cindy Flynn*

Dan & CindyFlynn - December 09, 2024 at 08:40 PM

BM

“ *Bill McSheehy purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Nadine T. Martel, of Fitchburg.*



Bill McSheehy - December 08, 2024 at 10:32 AM

BM

“ Bill McSheehy planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Nadine T. Martel.

Bill McSheehy - December 08, 2024 at 10:32 AM