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Martha McElveen Ezzard

1938 - 2023



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Martha Ezzard Obituary

Ezzard, Martha McElveen
11/08/1938 - 10/29/2023

After an adventurous 84 years, Martha Ezzard, journalist, former Colorado State Senator, attorney, and former winery owner passed away on Sunday, October 29 at home in Tiger, Georgia. Born to George Davant McElveen and Gladys Lewis McElveen in Atlanta, Martha was taught by her parents to voice her opinion in difficult situations and that silence meant consent.

With this as a guiding principle, Martha earned her BA in journalism at the University of Georgia. It was there that she met the love of her life, John Arrendale Ezzard. They were married in 1960, and Martha went on to earn her MA in Journalism at the University of Missouri. They relocated to Denver in 1968, where they raised their children, Shelly, Lisa, and John Jr.

In 1971, Martha made a bold career move, becoming press aide to Republican Governor John Love and to his successor John Vanderhoof. After getting a taste of politics, Martha ran for and won a seat in the Colorado House of Representatives. In 1981 she was elected to the Colorado State Senate, where she worked hard on legislative issues related to water conservation, hazardous waste control, and sunshine laws about government transparency.

While serving in the Senate, she attended law school, earned her JD and passed the bar, all while raising three children. Martha was a force to be reckoned with—a maverick, an independent go-getter, a fighter for justice, and a woman determined to leave the world a better place. In 1986, she ran for U.S. Senate and lost in the Republican primary.

Finding herself more aligned with centrist democratic philosophies, she resigned her State Senate seat and changed parties. In 1988, she won the Democratic nomination for Colorado's 6th Congressional and lost in the general election to the Republican incumbent.

In 1993, Martha returned to her love of journalism, moved back to Georgia, and joined the Editorial Board of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. She received wide acclaim for her 2001 series "When Justice is a Crime" on the need for indigent defense reform in Georgia, earning a Green Eye Shade Award. She also earned the 25th Annual Pioneer Black Journalist Award from the Atlanta Association of Black Journalists and the Wilderness Society's Aldo Leopold Award for her environmental writing.

Martha's husband John was also drawn back to the South by his 5th generation family farm in Tiger, Georgia. Martha became a journalist during the week and a winery and vineyard owner during the weekends, helping John create Tiger Mountain Vineyards (TMV). She helped put Georgia wines on the map, winning over 250 awards, including the Jefferson Cup for the best wine in all categories. Martha went on to write a book published by Mercer University Press called *The Second Bud*, narrating the story of how she and John created a new second life and profession in their 60s by saving a family farm and starting a winery. She won Best Author of Georgia for this book.

Martha Ezzard will be remembered as a strong-willed woman ahead of her time, committed to the environment and the communities in which she lived and served.

Beck Funeral Home, in Clayton, Georgia, is in charge of the arrangements. If there are any questions, please call 706-782-9599. An online Memorial Register Book is available at www.beckfuneralhome.com.

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