



Alice Miller McCarthy

January 13, 1938 - September 3, 2026

Alice Miller McCarthy treasured courage, compassion, curiosity, and humor above all else. She lived her life through those values, striving always to show kindness, to understand others, and to get things right. She would likely agree that “a little criticism” had its place among her guiding principles — not out of harsh judgement, but because her deep caring, fierce integrity, and commitment to justice demanded honesty and because one should never be denied the joy of being corrected or the opportunity for self-improvement.

Alice was born on January 13, 1938, in New Orleans, Louisiana, to Alice McCarthy Miller and Dr. Morrell Waldo Miller. She died on September 3, 2026, at Houston Hospice after a short but mighty battle with metastatic lung cancer, less than six months after completing her 18th Buffalo Bayou Canoe Regatta as half of team “Octopussy” with her sister, Susan.

She grew up in New Orleans, where she delighted in the independence of riding the streetcar across the city, sailing on Lake Pontchartrain, riding horses, doting on many beloved dogs, and spending cherished summers at both Camp Monterey in Tennessee and at her grandpa’s home in Abbottstown, Pennsylvania. It was while traveling on those streetcars, however, that she first confronted the devastating reality of segregation and her own privilege — an experience that sparked her lifelong commitment to social justice.

Alice attended the Isidore Newman School in New Orleans and All Saints Episcopal School in Vicksburg, Mississippi. As a child, she acted in radio plays and commercials with her sister and won a public art contest designing an advertisement for a local beer company. She earned an A.A. from Stephens College and a B.A. in English from Newcomb College, where she co-founded the championship sailing club and graduated with high academic honors. After college, she married and with her husband, Charlie, moved to the U.S. Naval Base in Subic Bay, Philippines for two years, teaching ESL and traveling widely to satisfy her boundless curiosity and love of learning.

Alice moved to Texas in 1961 with her young family and settled in Houston to raise her three children. In the 1960s and 70s, when doors were closed to women seeking meaningful work, Alice refused to shrink. She poured herself into desegregating Houston Independent School District, nurturing the city's growing arts community, crafting legendary Halloween costumes, building furniture, volunteering at domestic violence and elder service organizations, and immersing herself in the burgeoning feminist movement. She returned to school twice for graduate degrees – first at U of H for Future Studies and then to University of Maryland for Public Design. Between earning those two degrees she founded one of Houston's first woman owned contracting companies, A.M. McCarthy Co. In every home she renovated or built, she left a trace of her vision with the beauty and care that shaped her life, through every project, every experience, and every cherished relationship.

Alice adored Houston with its people, culture, diversity, its humid heat, the many communities of which she was part, and its endless possibility. She lit up rooms with her smile, her gracious southern hospitality - and her witty t-shirts. She “accosted” strangers to ask whether they were registered to vote, and if they were not, she lectured them about exercising rights and civic responsibility. She dreamed of living long enough to see Texas turn blue —

not for politics alone, but for the promise of a more just world.

She fought for women, LGBTQIA+ folks, and racial justice with the stamina of someone who believed change was not just possible, it was necessary. She belonged to Hyde Park Civic Association, the overall Montrose community, the Houston Women's Group, PFLAG, Tikkun, Bull Terrier Club of America, and the YMCA, where she found a second family. In her later years, she stood at the front of protests with her fellow elders, leaning on canes, holding signs, refusing to surrender her belief in democracy, dignity, and freedom.

Alice loved nature, humanity, and dogs — especially dogs — and she found beauty in small, ordinary things. She welcomed people into her home with Southern hospitality and a grace that made them feel valued. She grew throughout her life, reading insatiably, always willing to examine herself, to repair harm, and to evolve.

Alice is survived by her children: Kirsten Tuohy (Seamus Tuohy); Shannon McCarthy (Mary Jo Kane); and Kevin McCarthy (Beverly Bontrager.)

She is also survived by her sister Susan Hill, brother in law Rodney Hill, her grandchildren: Miller Tuohy, Finn McCarthy, Angus McCarthy (Mary Claire), Tempest Kane McCarthy, Avery Smith (Tyler), and Elise Peters; her nephew Bunker Hill and niece Brooke Hill-Lohle.

The family would like to thank all of Alice's friends who provided support to her throughout the past six months of illness as well as Houston Hospice, in particular her amazing nurse, Minkah Frampton.

Alice leaves behind a world she worked tirelessly to improve. She was an intricate, complicated, renaissance woman ahead of her time — devoted to

people, relationships, justice, and truth. Yet she often lamented that she was “not meant for this millennium,” frustrated by toxic polarization and the isolating pull of technology. She never stopped fighting for a better future with her trademark courage, curiosity, and sense of humor.

Good night, Alice — Mom, Lita, Sharine. You are forever in all of us.

Alice was laid to rest last Friday per her wishes in a green burial at the Blazing Star Sanctuary outside Houston. The family invites you to a Celebration of Life at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston, 5200 Fannin St, on Saturday, September 19th at 11 a.m., with reception to follow in the Channing Hall.

In lieu of flowers, **please vote** and convince someone else to do the same!

Upcoming Events

Celebration of Life

SEP **19**. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston
5200 Fannin Street
Houston, TX 77004

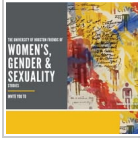
Reception

SEP **19**. 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston
5200 Fannin Street
Houston, TX 77004

In the Channing Hall.

Tribute Wall



“ *Very Very sad and Shocked, Alice helped me and our community a lot.
I use her handwriting for the piece for Divers work auction
Let me know if you need a copy of that piece of artwork in her honor.*

Yu-Ru Huang - September 15 at 09:18 PM



“ *wonderful person. I am glad I got to know her over all these years.*
MBeck

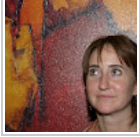
Maureen Beck - September 15 at 07:44 PM



“ *She taught me that each one of us must paddle his or her own canoe, and that's a lesson I will never forget.*

Alessandro

Alessandro Masini - September 15 at 07:03 PM



“ *It was always a treat to see Alice picking up her Regatta packet each year—seeing her smile and hearing her enthusiasm. What a fun year when she unveiled her Octopussy shirt, socks and paddle! Team Octopussies were a hit! She and her sister Susan paddled in at least 15 races.*

Alice will be missed by so many, especially within our paddling community. Your memory will forever bring a smile to me.

And voting in November will be even more important as we remember Alice always making sure we did our civic duty! The memory of your strength, witty banter and passion will live on.
Trudi



Trudi Smith - September 14 at 10:41 PM



“ *Alicia, as I addressed her, was a great friend from her days at the Rothko Chapel... and at First Church UU, and PFLAG. Alice loved my Mom, Mabelle... who had lived in New Orleans in the late 1940s-50s, and they shared many stories and memories of that city's glory years.*

Alice was simply a magnificent friend, who cared so passionately about social justice.

I moved to China just after my Mom died in 2017, but Alice and I kept in regular touch.

Another wonderful friend...

Dr. Mabelle Adams-Mayne, PhD. 1926-2017

Michael Zargarov 1962-?



Michael Zargarov - September 14 at 10:40 AM

NT

“ *Alice was a bright light every time I saw her....in the neighborhood or at the Y. I will miss her and send love to her family.*

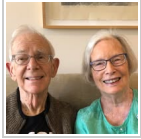
Texas is turning blue for you Alice 💙 love Nancy

Nancy Tennant - September 13 at 01:08 AM

AD

“ *Alice was the sweetest to everyone. So kind, really lovely.*

Apple Dee - September 11 at 08:52 PM



“ My earliest memory of Alice was when I was in sixth grade. She and I were in the same dance class at Miggie Felder’s. Alice definitely didn’t want to be there. She passed time by fiddling with the curtain strings, looking very uncomfortable. I hope she soon found things she enjoyed more, such as canoeing with. Her sister.

Mimi LeBourgeois - September 11 at 02:25 PM

LG

“ I had the absolute pleasure of knowing this beautiful, hilarious, and inspiring woman from our times at the Tellepsen YMCA. She was a bright spark in the room, with a completely contagious smile. She was deeply passionate about her community and always so positive and caring. I will always cherish the sweet memories we shared of our group gatherings and outings. Especially during our field trip to the Saint Arnold Brewery- She was so thrilled we received the permission to tour! She had a gift for making people laugh while inspiring them to make a difference. The Y simply won’t be the same without her vibrant energy, but her joyful spirit will always be remembered.



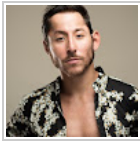
Leigha Garcia - September 10 at 08:12 PM



“ Alice was such an inspiration and will be deeply missed. Thank you for always supporting me and making time for me. Rest in peace, my dear friend. Your kindness and friendship will never be forgotten. 🙏



Luz Flores - September 10 at 06:09 PM



“ Thank you Alice for your Legacy and your Impact, so grateful for your presence in my life! Rest in Peace Sweet Alice! 🙏🙏🙏

Mike Baerga - September 10 at 05:41 PM



“ No matter if we ran into each other at the grocery store or if we spent an evening together she was always an inspiration to me.

Lisa Brooks - September 10 at 04:54 AM



“ I didn't know her, but I am grateful for Alice's life and all her contributions to all of ours.

I wish for peace for all who loved her.

Jazz Paz - September 10 at 03:11 AM



“ I loved Alice, and I still love her. When I try to think of one story that captures who she was to me, I feel that it’s her presence that was a thousand gestures of love and support which she gave me over the years—her warm smiles, her hugs, the conversations. Originally, I met Alice through the Fourth Friday Divas around September 2010. From that September forward, she became a regular at 14 Pews. I remember sitting with Alice on the opening night of our first theatrical production, *The Fever*, performed upstairs at La Colombe d’Or Hotel for an audience of only eighteen people at a time. She attended my play *Dialogues on Grace* and contributed to the conversation afterward, sharing her memories of growing up in Louisiana and the race relations she witnessed as a girl. Alice was always telling me about things happening around H-Town, even though I was a hermit - she’d encourage me to get out. She came to my 52nd birthday party and our Bechdel Film Festival. She helped me select videos for my reproductive-rights exhibition, *My Box Series*. She asked me to book the documentary *RBG*—which I did and absolutely loved—and then confessed that she owned *The RBG Workout* book and that the exercises were tough! In 2018, I received numerous threats because of my documentary play *Dialogues on Grace*. Even the *Houston Chronicle* told me they had never known a Houston artist to receive so much hate mail sent directly to the newspaper. A year later, when I was moving to Portland because of Texas politics, Alice wrote to me: “We can be unbelievably horrible, but please don’t move. I’m the kind of person who stays and fights, and I—we all—need people like you, who show the better angels of our nature. Sometimes by comparing it to the worst. We are complex creatures, every one.” That was Alice -- someone who stayed, fought, encouraged, and reminded others not to give up. So it is difficult to choose just one story about her, because our friendship through 14 Pews was like a quilt stitched together with a thousand warm smiles, a thousand expressions of kindness, and years of love and support. She is missed.





Cressandra Thibodeaux - September 09 at 11:37 PM



“ *My condolences go to all the family!!!*

My beautiful smile you're going to be missed!

I met you at the YMCA and you always had that beautiful 😊.

Thank you

I will miss seeing your beautiful smile.

R.I.P.



Felix Cisneros - September 09 at 11:13 PM

LL

“ Some favorites:

At 80, after numerous futile attempts at getting the city to stop developers from taking down beautiful old trees in her neighborhood, as the truck came to take down yet another old tree, Alice climbed it and got high up -- she was that agile -- and she refused to come down. She was photographed up there and wound up in the news.

PS the developers returned at 3am and took it down.

There was the time a young man entered her home with a gun to rob her. She made firm eye contact and told him with extreme annoyance, "Put that thing down!" using the same tone she might have to her own child. Then she said she could only give him what she has and he was welcome to it. He put the gun away, took the cash, and left. When she told me about it afterwards, I said, "Were you afraid?" and she said, "Of course not!"

I mentioned that story to her one of the times we talked about dying. I'd never known Alice to be afraid, and she wasn't afraid to die. Pissed, at first, but not afraid, then awed that this last adventure entailed something new for her -- an ultimate letting go that she found freeing. She was actually happy, and ready, which I think I'll be processing for a long time.

Goodbye, my friend. What a run you had.

Leah Lax - September 08 at 08:16 PM