



## George Clinton Tolleson

June 4, 1931 - May 1, 2020

George Clinton Tolleson, affectionally called Pete, was born in Greensboro, NC, on June 4, 1931 to Louis Tolleson and Mariel Tolleson- Nee Buquo. He departed this life on May 1, 2020 in Durham, NC. He was graduated from Duke University in 1954, with a degree in occupational therapy and then served in the Army for four years. After attending Starr King Seminary, he was ordained as a Unitarian Universalist minister in 1964 and took his first pulpit in the same year at the Unitarian Church in Charleston, SC, where he served for five years. He then was pastor at the UU Church of Arlington VA, the UU Congregation of Greenville SC for five years, where he was first pastor. In 1984, he moved to Asheville, where he was a pastor for one year at the UU Fellowship of Hendersonville, NC. In addition, in 1984, he worked as the manager of the print shop at Warren Wilson College. Following his retirement from church ministry, Pete continued to serve others, in pastoral counseling and performing weddings until 2011.

Pete was enormously creative, skillfully mastering wood carving and silversmithing, among other skills throughout his life. In younger years he loved to hike, and like his own father before him, he would entertain any youngsters who accompanied him - most particularly his daughter, niece and nephew endlessly with his knowledge and revelations about nature. He loved to travel, and did so extensively with his wife Mary Leta, deceased, and then with his husband. They were together for ten years, then married since October 10, 2014. Pete was an incorrigible punster, to the groans but secret delight of all who knew him. He loved all kinds of animals, having as pets throughout the years numerous cats and dogs, as well as, at various times, a tarantula and a ball python.

Pete is survived by his husband Ronnie Marable of their home in Henderson, NC, his daughter Robin Zweig of Asheville, his sister Martha Hansen, of Lake Ridge VA, his niece Raelin Hansen, Asheville, NC, his nephew Lou Hansen, Fairfax VA, and granddaughters Jeanette Tolleson and Donia Zweig.

Pete's compassion, humor, inquisitiveness and questioning nature were qualities that inspired and entertained many and so many, his family especially, feel that the world's a poorer place without him.

His husband Ronnie describes Pete as the love of his life.

# Comments

---



“ I was shocked and saddened to hear Pete's name read during the in memoriam portion of the annual Service of the Living Tradition at virtual General Assembly this summer. Pete was my very first UU minister (in truth, my very first minister of any kind). I was a young man in my early 20s who walked into the UU Fellowship in Greenville, SC, on Easter Sunday in 1982 and walked out a Unitarian Universalist. I credit Pete with that.

The last time I saw Pete was in the summer of 2016, at SUUSI, when I invited him to come help us celebrate SUUSI's return to North Carolina (WCU) after decades of SUUSI being held in Virginia. As SUUSI's historian, it was my honor to include Pete in a ceremony that involved many of our elders from the past. It was a great pleasure to meet Ron at that time as well. Ron, my heart goes out to you.

Later this month, I will be leading the in memoriam portion of our own Transitions Worship Service at virtual SUUSI. I will proudly lift up Pete's name (choked by tears, I am sure) as we honor those in the SUUSI family who have passed in the last 12 months.

If anyone has digital photos of Pete that we could include, please email me at [billgupton@cinci.rr.com](mailto:billgupton@cinci.rr.com).

Much love to all. Pete, may you rest in peace!

Rev. Bill Gupton

**Bill Gupton** - July 07, 2020 at 03:52 PM

---



“ So sad to hear of Pete's passing. He was my minister at the little Greenville UU Fellowship, years ago, where he inspired me to go into the ministry. I'm remembering Pete and his comforting visit with me in Berkeley, while I was at Starr King School for the Ministry, as my first marriage was unraveling. I'm remembering him playing his bongo drums in a recording session we had in Greenville in 1976 or so. Pete introduced me to the UU retreat, The Mountain, where I later became the summer camp minister. Lots of warm memories of how he and his wife connected with my two daughters, when we attended the Greenville Fellowship. A lot of history with Pete. When I came back to SC, Pete graciously drove down to Newberry to help properly “install” me at the Clayton Memorial UU Church in 2005. I will always remember Pete’s humor and careful listening, and the way he held others in highest regard. His influence continues, and he will be deeply missed.  
Rev. Rod

**Rod Brown** - June 03, 2020 at 03:31 PM



“ Rod, I have such fond memories of you and your time with my family. Thanks for sharing,  
Robin

**Robin J. Tolleson** - June 08, 2020 at 09:30 AM

---



“ Ron, know that my thoughts and prayers are with you!

**Raelin Hansen** - May 29, 2020 at 10:07 PM

---



“ My sweet uncle was a deeply caring man who was also talented in all kinds of artistic expression fun and funny - he made sculptures from clay, he was a wood carver, a silversmith, and a printer. He was also a fun loving man, and a very funny man. I learned so much from him over the years, and had many adventures with him and our family. We'd go on family hikes together during summer vacations, and he could identify so many different kinds of wildlife! I just loved those hikes.

I still remember a night trip with him from Hot Springs NC to Charleston SC in his Morgan, an old British two-seater sports car, notorious for having no shock absorbers. The manufacturers "compensated" for this by having air filled seats. Well, the passenger seat was deflated - had a leak in it, so Pete put cushions and blankets on the seat for me to sit on. They made it a little easier on my hind end, but the vibration made it so everything I saw was a constant blur, and I darn sure couldn't sleep on the ride down: I had been so excited about taking a trip in the Morgan, but I was never so glad in my life for a trip to end! But the stay in Charleston with him made up for that: I remember fun activities like going hunting for shark's teeth on the mudflats at the mouth of one of the rivers there - I had so much fun!

As an adult I learned to appreciate him anew - he was always good for a great conversation, and I loved to sit and talk with him! He'd lived a fascinating life, and had so much to share. He had an inquisitive mind, and he would always think about things deeply. That's something else I appreciated about him so much.

Dear Uncle Pete, I will miss you a lot!

**Raelin Hansen** - May 29, 2020 at 10:05 PM



“ The artistic "expression" wasn't meant to be followed by "fun and funny" - that was an oversight while editing.

**Raelin Hansen** - May 29, 2020 at 10:37 PM

---



“ Ronnie, know we both send our best wishes. Pete is and will continue to be missed by so many people. Larry & Nancy

**Charles L Wheeler** - May 27, 2020 at 02:57 PM



“ Larry and Nancy, so many happy memories go back over the years. Good to see your names on this memory wall to bring them back celebrating such a kind, gentle man. Robin

**Robin J. Tolleson** - June 08, 2020 at 09:33 AM

---



“ Ella Brgant lit a candle in memory of George Clinton Tolleson



**Ella Brgant** - May 13, 2020 at 07:44 PM