

Ada White Long bounded into this world on May, 20, 1945, in St. Louis, Missouri, and left it behind on February 4, 2024, on St. George Island, Florida. In the intervening years, she transformed the lives of hundreds of university students, collaborated with dozens of colleagues in pursuit of the preservation of liberal education, fought for civil rights and equity in universities and beyond, and loved with her whole heart.

Ada was a scholar, a teacher, a writer, an advocate of misfits, a minder of cats. She leaves behind countless students, friends, and family who treasured her wit, her inexhaustible supply of literary references, her stunning generosity, her unconventional wisdom, and her signature cackle that cracked open the room and let in all the joy.

Ada was raised in St. Louis with her sister, Lydia, and her brother, Claxton. After earning a BA from Stanford University, and an MA and PhD in English from SUNY-Albany, she taught at the University of Cincinnati before moving to the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) in 1977. In 1982, she became the founding director of UAB's Honors Program, an interdisciplinary undergraduate program that was the first of its kind in the nation. She invited students of all kinds and from all places to gather in the sanctuary of the honors house for an education whose value came as much from the diversity of characters as from the content of the discourse. She shepherded students through torment and transformation when they landed, one after another, in the comforting cave of her doorless, smoke-filled office, in need of direction, wisdom, an extension on a re-write, or just a place to rest. Ada had a rare ability to take deep interest in someone's story and then look straight past that story to perceive the individual anew so that the brightest version of a person could take shape.

Ada's students portrayed the depth of her impact with this collection of comments: "Ada, you established a "safe space" before these words had any meaning or society gave much thought... For many broken and lost souls, that church was a respite. A welcoming retreat. A home... This universe is less without you. But, I know if there is a realm beyond here, you are opening the minds of that world in new grand ways... She made everything she touched a little smarter, a little funnier, and a little earthier... Ada was a fabulous teacher, an amazing storyteller, a startlingly sophisticated cook, and a natural magnet to all kinds of people who could appreciate her brilliance and enthusiasms... We will miss you. You made a hell of a dent in our universe."

Over her 40-year career, Ada published four books and many articles that made influential contributions to the fields of poetry, the arts, women's literature, and honors education. She also held many leadership roles, but was especially proud of her work with Bread and Roses, a shelter for women and children, where she served on the Board of Directors and sent dozens of student volunteers to support the shelter's programs. Ada also founded the UAB Faculty Lecture Series, which brings academic lectures to individuals incarcerated at the Donaldson Maximum Security Correctional Facility.

Ada's deepest professional commitment was to college honors programs nationwide. She served as president of both the Southern Regional Honors Council and the National Collegiate Honors

Council (NCHC) and contributed to the foundational documents that now define successful university honors programs. Along with her partner Dail Mullins, Ada served as coeditor of NCHC's two professional journals, the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* (JNCHC) and *Honors In Practice* (HIP). She received the NCHC Founders Award in 2017.

When Ada retired to St. George Island in 2004, she turned her activist eye toward climate change awareness, founding the St. George Island Trash Patrol, organizing the annual Franklin County Coastal Cleanup and many other community and political events. But perhaps most importantly, she and Dail built a new sanctuary, a place where friends and family could take refuge in rich conversation, debate, literature, music, and tender connection over food and drink that nourished souls.

Ada is preceded in death by her beloved partner, Dail Mullins. The pair met as colleagues in the honors program and then become partners in 1990, spending nearly every moment together until Dail's death in 2016. Ada is survived by her sister, Lydia Long, her stepson, Christopher Mullins, her stepdaughter Ashley Mullins, her grandchildren, Cleo and Fox, six nieces and nephews, and 10 great-nieces and great-nephews, all of whom adored and loved her fiercely.

Ada lived and loved by a simple apothegm she offered in a speech some years ago: A goal in life is "to be human in our work, and to work at being human."

Contributions in Ada's honor may be made to the Ada Long Creative Writing Workshop Endowed Support Fund at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Gifts can be made online at <https://go.uab.edu/adalong> or mailed to UAB Gift Records, AB 1230, 1720 2nd Avenue South Birmingham, AL 35294-0112.