

## The Daily Grand and Sundry

By Gerald Maxey

« Finally, My Final Thoughts on CNN's LATINO IN AMERICA, Soledad O'Brien and Juan Hernandez  
Proof Positive That China Is Becoming Americanized »

### **Francesca Martino: NASA Latina Intern Astronaut Wanted To Go To Mars**

**This young lady wanted to get to Mars, but Death Intervened.**

**"DEATH be not proud.....**

***Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men"***

***John Dunne***

**My friend Amber Gell, who wants to go to Mars, gave the eulogy ,for all the women of the world who want to go to Mars.**

**Francesca was very proud of her Mexican heritage, but her death is a great loss to our common future.**

**We will get to Mars, intact in spirit, if not in numbers.**

FROM THE ORLANDO SENTINEL

By Martha Phifer

When Francesca Martino was in first grade, she picked out a book titled *I Want to be an Astronaut* at her school's book fair.

"She read that book until it got dog-eared and raggedy," said her father, Richard Martino of Largo. Then she misplaced it.

This year while her parents were remodeling their house, her mother, Cecilia, found the book. She wrapped it and gave it to her daughter as a present for her 23rd birthday.

It was a very special gift for Francesca, who was on her way to becoming an astronaut.

Martino died in Orlando on Monday from injuries after her motorcycle collided with a car that drove into her path, Florida Highway Patrol troopers said.

She was 23.

Born in Clearwater, Martino lived as though she could do anything, her father said.

"She had no limits, especially gender limits. Nothing about female versus male stereotypes made a difference to her."

As a little girl, she took ballet lessons, played soccer, and ran track and field. She later ran on track and field teams in middle school, high school and college.

Always surrounded by academia, Martino would open a calculus book as a young child and try to understand and figure out the math problems on her own.

"We instilled positive thinking and encouraged her to do anything she wanted to do," Richard Martino said.

In high school, she excelled in mathematics and physics, and did very well on standardized tests. In her junior year, her parents received a letter from the National Security Agency inquiring about Francesca's interest in taking a series of tests on number theory. After doing well on all the exams, she was flown to Washington, D.C., for an interview with the NSA.

***"She wanted to be an astronaut," Martino said.***

In 2004, after graduating from St. Petersburg Catholic High School, Martino enrolled in Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, where she was majoring in aerospace engineering.

She also was studying to earn minors in mathematics, human factors (also known as ergonomics) and psychology.

At the time of her death, she had earned 80 more credits than the requirement for graduation and was an intern at [NASA Kennedy Space Center](#), working with the solid-fuel rocket booster design and engineering department.

*Her next mission in life was to make it to Mars.*

Described by family as outgoing and full of life and vigor, Martino was a high-energy talker, who gestured with her hands, partly because of her Italian and Mexican heritage, her father said.

“We enjoyed her conversations, which always had a positive spin to them.”

And when it came time to switch from street tires to racing tires on her blue Kawasaki 650 motorcycle, which she raced on an enclosed track, she did it herself. She also changed the oil and brakes on her car.

“She always wanted to do anything,” her father said.

Martino also is survived by a sister, Alejandra Martino of Largo.



Francesca Martino (Courtesy of Martino family / October 23, 2009)

Tags: [AMBER GELL](#), [Death Be Not Proud](#), [Francesca Martino](#), [Latina Intern Astronaut](#), [MARS](#), [NASA](#), [NASA Kennedy Space Center](#)

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