



*In Memoriam*

*April 12, 2005*

# Memorial Service Program



Geraldine Lynn Hickman  
January 8, 1953 to April 9, 2005

Survived by:

Husband, Joe Hickman  
Son, JR Hickman  
Daughter, Alexis Hickman  
Parents, Richard & Shirley Sprout  
Sister, Kathlene Williams

Entrance Music  
Pat Brown

Opening/Eulogy  
Allan Bredy

Message from a Colleague  
Natalie Grimbergen

Message from a Friend  
Kate Thome

Solo, "I'll Be Seeing You"  
Pat Brown

Message from S.A.S  
Bob Gross

Closing Remarks and Thank you  
Joe Hickman

*After Geri died, I asked some middle school students what they liked most about Mrs. Hickman. Robert Braun didn't hesitate and said, "Mrs. Hickman was kind, she was kind to every one of her students." And Lauren Atwater said, "I never used to eat breakfast, oh maybe a Coke before I came to school. Mrs. Hickman would always have something nutritious for me during homebase or even cook me breakfast." I couldn't believe she would cook a student breakfast! She was a very caring teacher that all the kids liked.*

*Jo Ann Clemens  
Teacher*

Kate Thome - Teacher

Before I begin I would like to thank Joe, Alexis and J.R. for letting me share some of my memories and reflections of Gerri.

What a fine role model Gerri is for all of us. She had inner courage which sustained her throughout her illness. Today I would like to share some of examples of her courage I witnessed over the years.

It has been a privilege to know Gerri during the past six years at SAS. She was friendly and welcoming as I rejoined the faculty. As members of the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade team, "Sigma", we shared many of the same students. Our friendship grew through mutual friends, Lynn Grosdidier and Lynda Settlemoir, who have since moved away. That is the nature of our transient, expat world.

My first opportunity to gain insight into the true character of this remarkable woman, involved an issue very central to her professional life-food. She was concerned about the variety and quality of the meals served by the hotel on our annual school trip to Malacca. Much to my surprise, I found out that she endeavored to get the hotel kitchen staff in Malacca, to make more healthy food for our students! Can you imagine that this quiet, polite and reserved woman had the gumption to take on the hotel chef, by submitting sample menus and recipes? It was their loss, and ours, I can assure you, that her good ideas weren't followed!

Her attempt at changing something she thought could be done better was very helpful in unexpected ways. When the new crop of teachers involved in planning the trip the following year started "in" on the issue of food, she calmly stated that

she had tried. Her actions, thorough and precise, helped people to accept the reality of that time.

She showed a similar resolute determination a few months later when confronted with her cancer diagnosis. Strength, determination, precision and persistence in spite of the odds were key elements in her character. Remarkably she was seldom absent and if it wasn't for the hair loss, it was easy to forget that she was fighting a disease. She looked elegant in her hats and to the last day at school, maintained an immaculate appearance

She did not want to talk much about the treatments or side effects and adamantly did not want special consideration. She agonized over taking the lift to her third floor classroom. While she needed to conserve her energy and this was a simple way to do so, she did not want people to think poorly of her.

Gerri was a keeper of the hearth, both at school and at home. Her former classroom was on the third floor and for three years it served as our team meeting room. We would invade her space each Tuesday morning, moving tables and chairs around to accommodate our team of 20. We would freely use her phone, her pencils and overhead projector. Invariably the meetings would spillover into homebase or class time, and she never got frazzled from it! We would also gather there for lunches-it was a quick walk to the cafeteria and then we would settle down for some fun chat time.

I believe she gained a tremendous amount of her strength through the support from her family. Joe was so attentive and helped her the entire way, cheering her on and taking on larger and larger roles in her care, even with nursing, and the distribution of medicines. In the "Great Middle School Move" of 2004, Joe even personally installed several of her refrigerators.

Her son, J.R. was a source of great pride. She was very excited about your upcoming graduation which you have worked especially hard to achieve in spite of your heavy work load at your job. She appreciated your strong work ethic. You carried the Disney connection she and your dad shared into the next generation! As I've gotten to know you during this experience, I recognize your Mother's strength in you.

Alexis, you gave your mom a different kind of glow. While your graduation party was the highlight of this summer for her, she gained so much inspiration from you. In your senior year you wrote about your Mother's diagnosis and early treatment for breast cancer for the school newspaper. Your article gave a glimpse of a long-term illness and its effect on the family. You helped to raise important issues for all of us as expatriates. We are very protected here from long term illnesses and from aging.

I think that your courage, Alexis, inspired her to do a remarkable thing the last day of school, June 2001. Gerri had been going through her first round of treatment for several months by then and had lost her hair. She was a private person yet, in front

of the entire Middle School students, faculty and about 100 parents in the gymnasium, she publicly thanked everyone for their support during her illness. I was so proud of her and to this day, that is a fine and powerful memory of a beautiful, courageous lady.

The surprise and shock we all shared when her condition became so serious last Monday is a testimony to her strength and determination to keep living her life fully and on her terms, to the last possible moment. I treasure her friendship, her example and her inspiration.

In closing I would like to read a short selection from the book, *The Prophet*, which Zeeb McNicol provided. It helps me to find the courage I need now.

I'll be seeing you;  
In all the old, familiar places;  
That this heart of mine embraces;  
All day through.

In that small cafe;  
The park across the way;  
The children's carousel;  
The chestnut tree;  
The wishing well.

I'll be seeing you;  
In every lovely, summer's day;  
And everything that's bright and gay;  
I'll always think of you that way;  
I'll find you in the morning sun;  
And when the night is new;  
I'll be looking at the moon;  
But I'll be seeing you.

Pat Brown

Dear Mrs. Grimbergen,

Lenny took Mrs. Hickman's class 2 years ago. He loved and remember her so well. Yes! your excellent speech was exactly what my memory of her. Guess what?! Lenny still has her recipe folder and often wanted to give opinions in cooking and wanted to do something he learned from her class. She was such a caring and nice person, above all, so brave. I am going to do what Mr. Hickman suggested; go say & do things NOW, to your friends, share it with your loved ones.... less harsh words and more compliments..... after all, life is too short.

Take care,  
Phoebe Ross  
Student

First is a time that I co-taught a lesson with her. This was probably around 1999. I taught middle school math, and she was teaching cooking. We collaborated on a lesson where kids used their math skills to adjust a recipe - then we used the recipe to cook something in her class. I remember it as a really great lesson - some of my best teaching - but for Geri, I think it was just an average lesson. She was that good of a teacher.

Another memory is Geri's demeanor in meetings. We seemed to be perpetually planning our annual trip to Malacca - part of our schools' "Classroom Without Walls". These meetings were often charged with emotion and frustration. Those with a more fiery personality (such as myself) would often be dominating the proceedings, spouting off this or that thought as it came to us. It seemed like we would be going around and around in circles on an issue until Geri, after giving the matter some thought, would quietly make some suggestion which would often as not settle the matter. She was always the quiet one, but when she did have something to say it carried a lot of weight. I think we all really learned to respect what Geri had to say, because she tended to only speak when she had really thought something through.

Joe Lingle  
Teacher

### **Geraldine Lynn Hickman**

On behalf of the Hickman Family and the Singapore American School Community, I would like to welcome you here today. We are here to remember, to pay respects, and honor Gerri Hickman.

Born Geraldine Lynn Sprout on January 8, 1953 in Torrance, CA

Met Joe Hickman in 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade  
Knew she wanted to be a teacher in elementary school

HS Graduated from Torrance HS in 1971  
Was active in the Future Teachers of America still intending to become a teacher.  
Began dating Joe Hickman and went to the prom with him.

University Graduate Cum Laude with a BA in Home Economics from CSU, at Long Beach in 1975  
Joe Hickman was also attending CSU.

Earned a MA in Home Economics from CSU, at Long Beach.

Married Joe Hickman on January 10, 1976

Children JR Hickman was born on January 11, 1980...graduated from SAS in 1998.  
He is currently working for the Disney Corp. in CA.

Alexis Hickman was born on April 6, 1983...graduated from SAS in 2001. She was the Sr Class President.

Has recently graduated from UC Santa Barbara.

Living The Hickmans have lived in Asia for much of the last 20 years with stints in KL, Manila, Hong Kong, & Singapore. They did return to the US in the early 90s to allow their kids to experience Life in the states but ended up in an Asian neighborhood renting from a Korean with neighbors from all over Asia. They moved to Singapore in 1996

Teaching She taught in CA, Hong Kong, Nevada, and Singapore  
At SAS for 8 ½ years in the MS

Absolutely committed to teaching and continued teaching even against her Doctor's advice. She taught right through 3 surgeries, 3 rounds of radiation, and more than 30 rounds of chemo therapy.

She taught until February and continued to do the planning until a week before she died.

Survived by Joe Hickman, her husband and best friend  
JR Hickman, her son  
Alexis Hickman, her daughter  
Kathlene Williams, her sister  
Richard and Shirley Sprout, her parents

Legacy There are hundreds of young people who were cared for by Gerri and who are comfortable cooking. My boys as examples (recipes and occasional cooks). Some examples of student cooking here today. Role model of commitment to all of us and an incredible example of courage in difficult times.

By Allan Bredy  
Principal Middle School  
Singapore American School

She was a wonderful teacher. She cared so deeply. She was a good colleague. She was so courageous. These are all remarks many of us have heard or thoughts that crossed our minds as we struggle for understanding as to why Geri had to be taken from us now. And, on a really personal level, oh how we will miss those wonderful smells that drifted through the doorway when we walked by her classroom.

We are all teachers---our only choice is whether to be a good teacher or a poor one. Geri chose to be a good one. She saw the doughnut where others would see the hole. She was not about making others good—she made herself good and she made others happy.

So, what did this good teacher teach us?

--to be polite, is to say and do, the kindest things in the kindest ways.

--to be what we are—no pretentiousness—and to become what we are capable of becoming.

--If you have hard work to do, do it now; if you have a song to sing, sing it now; if you have a kind word to say, say it now; if you have a smile to show, show it now.

--Praise loudly, blame softly.

--To go about our work with pleasure, to greet others with a word of encouragement, to be happy in the present and confident in the future.

We liked Geri because if she did us some good, she didn't ask that the favor be returned but that we might consider passing it on. I don't know if she did many great things, but I do know she did many small things in a great way. She taught herself to be practical, up-to-date and sensible. Geri's students were her soul and service was her destiny.

Geri saw the blossoming flower in every seed, the silver lining in every cloud and a beautiful tomorrow in the darkest day. She would remind us today that somewhere in this world the sun is always shining—and she would tell us that she had her share of sunshine.

And of what shall we be proud if we can't be proud of our family and friends—and Geri took such pride in her family, Alexis, Joseph and her husband. And, she treasured her friends.

For a time we have all walked with her in the pilgrimage of life. And life for all of us has its hardships and disappointments. It is out of such stuff that human character is made.

Many of us marveled at how she always seemed to bounce back one more time. Some of us may have thought “what makes her hold on, why doesn't she just let go?” Geri held on because her strength of character wouldn't have it any other way. We need to go from this service and this hour of reflection with the inspiration of a new hope and earnest purpose. So, what Geri left undone, we must go about doing.

Bob Gross  
Superintendent  
Singapore American School

When we found out that Gerri had cancer over 4 years ago we were like so many others who felt a need to keep it quiet, not letting others know. But chemo takes its toll the on the patient and it is soon difficult to hide.

Not long after Gerri, the kids and I decided we wanted to share what was going on in our life so that others would learn what to expect and hopefully deal with it a bit better themselves. Alexis wrote an article in the school paper and I started producing regular updates on our family website.

We were then, as we are today, overwhelmed by the outpouring of support and concern, from the SAS community. Flowers, 4 course meals, help with transportation, assistance around the house and most importantly sympathetic ears or strong shoulders to cry were offered and provided to all of us. Saying thank you just does not seem like enough.

I have been very fortunate and always known how lucky I was to have Gerri in my life. She made me a better man and implanted the best of her in our children JR & Alexis. I also believe she had a positive impact on all the children she has taught over the years. She had a passion for teaching, she loved working with the children and especially in the past year, her love of teaching drove Gerri to work through the pain of cancer and chemo. There were many times I tried to talk Gerri into staying home but she would not



hear of it and said that if she stopped teaching she would be giving into cancer. Teaching and concentrating on the kids helped her keep the pain in check.

Alexis, JR and I will never forget the support we have been given by so many not only in recent days but also during the entire 4 year ordeal. We have always known how special Gerri is and it is gratifying to know so many other people feel the same way.

Finally, we want to remind everyone, particularly the women, to get regular check-ups. We have certainly learned that this is not something that just 'happens to everyone else'. Heart disease used to be the number one killer but through advancement of medicines and treatments it has slowed and now cancer is the number one killer. We need to support the various cancer societies so we can prevent others from the effects of this horrible disease.

Thank you

Joe Hickman