

**Memorial Service for LuCinda Gail Johnson**  
**December 6, 2008**  
**Moderator: James Johnson**

Thank you for being here today to honor & cherish the memories of Lucinda Gail Johnson, and to celebrate her life.

She is the love of my life. There can never be another Cyndi. If you knew her, you loved her.

She was my wife, my lover, my best friend, and my supporter. If it were not for her I would not be where I am today. We saved each other. She completed me.

She meant the world to many others as well, as evidenced by the large group here today and the dozens of cards, calls and e-mails I've received this week. There's no doubt that Cyndi touched and blessed the lives of thousands of people over the course of her lifetime.

Cyndi was an old soul. [There were many nods from the attendees.]

She was eclectic: she sought out & appreciated the best of the best: food, music, people. But I don't think she realized that she was eclectic for others: when they needed someone to talk to, advice, a shoulder to cry on, or just a little help, she was the one of choice to go to.

She was a survivor of loss & adversity. She lost her previous husband to cancer. She married him knowing that he was terminal. Her stepson was taken away from her after he died. She lost both her parents to cancer. She also had many health challenges, and was in pain every day. I, myself, was recently diagnosed with cancer. [gasp] Sorry, didn't mean to scare you, it was a small thing on my neck, and I've had it taken care of, and the latest test says that I am clear, so I'm fine. But when I first got the news, and I said the "C" word on the phone while she was at work, there was a long silence. I learned later that she had covered up the phone to keep me from hearing her break out in tears.

She was important to her co-workers as well as her many friends and family members. She always had an attitude of "how can I help?" She gave generously of her time to anyone in need, even if they didn't ask for help. She gave patient and caring love and support to anyone in need, even if they didn't ask.

She was a keen listener, reading between the lines and giving advice to folks, intuitively – even if it wasn't something they wanted to hear. The empathy always came through to them, though.

Many of you have told me how wide-reaching and natural her compassionate, loving connection to others was... but I already knew. I lived with her for many years, and saw it every day, at the grocery store or the bank, etc. Her advice was so effective that I personally witnessed it changing lives, always for the better. She was particularly skilled at helping with grief, perhaps because she had certainly known her share.

On a happier note...she was best friends and confidant to my daughter Felicia. She had a mature sense of playfulness. [I gesture to the toys laid out on tables.] She loved to sit on the couch and blow bubbles for the cats to play with. These items on the tables here were her toys; I called them knick-knacks.

She was known far and wide for her amazing hugs. This is a direct quote from her good friend and scholar, Patrick Haney:

**“I’ve never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never had a hug so complete as a Cyndi Hug. No bump and grind, no sexual innuendo, no poor, poor pitiful me, no declarations of unending love, no self-conscious pats on the back to uncomfortably assure that ‘we’re just friends.’ No! We’re talking soul hugs here. And if you’ve never had the blessing of a Cyndi hug, it would only have been a matter of time. But if you have hugged Cyndi, then you know. And you’ve been blessed.”**

Then there was the cooking. What can I say, she was dazzling. Everybody knew that’s what she needed to do with her life, and told her so on many, many occasions. In particular, her cakes and desserts were not just good, they were stellar. She very rarely would ever ask for money.

She loved to make people happy – plain and simple, whether through problem solving at work, giving careful and compassionate counseling and hugs to people at large, or through her catering endeavors, baking tasty goodies for folks for “profit.” Making money was so much *less* important to Cyndi than simply making people smile as they tasted her creations.

Especially there was a particular triple-chocolate cake she made that came to be known as “That Damn Cake”. It took about 5 hours to make. Most people when they tasted it did what we called the “Happy Dance”. [I perform the Happy Dance: I close my eyes and pretend I was tasting something, I say “Mmmmmm,” and rock slowly back and forth with shoulders and head.]

I would like to pay tribute to Cyndi in the form of a slide show I’ve put together. As you’ll see, they are some pictures of her growing up, of some of her best and happiest moments, and some of her culinary creations. Hit it, Al.

[Slide show runs w/music, I make comments as it runs, and the attendees make comments as well. There are many pictures that generate spontaneous laughter. I point out That Damn Cake among other things.]

Tina, I have a “sussie” for you. [Tina breaks out in teary laughter.] I first learned the word sussie when she and I had gone over to her mother’s house, and her mother told her she had a sussie for her. Cyndi smiled and got excited and wanted to know what it was. “Sussie” means a surprise. Usually it meant that her mother had just come back from the dollar store. [laughter]

The sussie today is that I’ve asked my good and dear friend Ron to grace us with a song today. This is a song he wrote many years ago, and it was one of her favorites. Cyndi had the song played at her Dad’s memorial. The song is called “Heaven.”

[Ron performs a soulful rendition singing and playing his acoustic guitar. He tells me later he couldn’t look at my face.]

OK, if there is anybody here that would like to make a comment about Cyndi, please do.

[There are 15 or so people that make great comments, some funny, some very sad, some both. One person mentioned that Cyndi liked “skinny white boys”, another commented that she had told them “James doesn’t like leftovers.” When they were all done and I took the podium again, I said first that yes, Cyndi had liked skinny white boys that play guitar, but that I had no problem with leftovers. I said there were many occasions when I had looked in the refrigerator saying, “Honey, where’s that roast from the other night? Can we have that for dinner?” Her reaction would be something like, “I was going to make chicken fried steak for dinner, would that be alright?” Perhaps this had something to do with the full plastic grocery bags she had with her when she left for work every morning. [laughter]]

Cyndi was a wonderful woman – an “old soul,” wise beyond her years - who brought comfort and joy and laughter to so many of us, through her gifts of compassion, intuition and generosity. She gravitated toward people who were in distress and helped them (without ever being asked to by anybody) to make real and positive changes in their lives, by either simply listening to them, or by giving astute advice.

To quote some of your letters, she was:

- kind
- thoughtful
- gentle
- sweet
- a rare treasure
- a beautiful person
- my best friend
- she touched my soul

[I turn and look at the big picture of Cyndi that is the centerpiece.] You certainly touched my soul. Thank you.

This concludes the memorial. There is a reception at the Flournoy residence. There is a map and directions on the back of the program, and everyone is invited. Thanks again for coming.