

LuCinda Gail Johnson Memorial Notes

January 9, 2009

(In no particular order)

There was a bubble machine running at the front door to the funeral home before and during the service. It sent a string of constant bubbles into the sky, and the wind was just right.

The Chapel seated 275, and it was filled. More arrived who had to stand at the back, in the aisle, and in the foyer.

There was a 3-foot poster of Cyndi on an easel that was the centerpiece. Her guitar was propped up in front of it, in the case but with the case opened, as if it was ready to be picked up, or had just been put away. There were many flowers, however many people opted to make American Cancer Society donations in lieu of flowers.

I sequestered myself for 30 minutes prior to the start of the service. People had begun to arrive, and I was extremely nervous, and needed to compose myself. I requested a room alone and sat going over Rachel's notes she had made for me, and made a few changes and additions which I deemed appropriate. I drank water and watched the time closely so I wouldn't be late; I felt it was important to be on time and I was.

As I came out of the room and entered the Chapel, I only glanced around but was amazed at how full it was, as I had hoped. To maintain my composure, I didn't look around as I made my way to the podium but when I took the podium, I took a few seconds before I started in order to try and make out all the faces. Unfortunately, for some reason, perhaps it was just my eyes not working well or perhaps it was the lighting, I was not able to see much of who was actually there.

The memorial was arranged by me and my amazing sister Jennifer Sells. Many other people were extremely helpful, including Cyndi's best friend, Christine Fish, who expertly arranged Cyndi's toys and pictures on 2 tables which flanked the picture and the guitar.

The actual content and flow was written by my sister and most competent writer, Rachel Hill. On the evening prior, Rachel spent many hours until very late going over about a dozen comments that people had contributed. I asked her to look for the common threads among what everybody had said about Cyndi, to give me some words that were frequently used to describe her, and to provide bullet points to use during my presentation. She did an excellent job and that was very crucial to the memorial going so smoothly.

During the slide show, there were numerous pictures that caused laughter: the swirly pillow on Cyndi's head, her holding our Calico cat up and "stretching" her, and others. Many folks (some more than others) felt like contributing comments during the slide show. I included one picture of her previous husband, Lynn, and only one because it was the only one I could find that I felt was appropriate, and there were very few to choose from.

Felicia spent an entire afternoon going through about 5 or more boxes of pictures from which to make the slide show, and she selected the ones for me to choose from. I spent hours scanning the pictures to prepare, and then as Rachel worked on the memorial notes I made the slide show the night before until 4 in the morning, then I started creating the music CD compilation. I finished about 5:30am, then I got a little sleep.

I had to prompt the funeral staff to start playing the music CD after the slideshow had started. The slide show was in 2 parts; the first part would go directly into the second part. They incorrectly started the second part first, resulting in the slide show ending when only halfway done. I had to trot down the aisle to the back and consult with them to get the first part of the slideshow to begin, which caused the slide show to be shown one and a half times on account of the error. Fortunately, the music played continuously during all this so the error wasn't too annoying, although there was serious repetition in the slide show.

I had a bottle of water which was nearly empty when I started and had to request some water about halfway through as my mouth began to become parched.

The memorial was amazingly interactive and I hadn't expected there would be so much participation and laughter, but it was good.

Many people have told me it was the best memorial they had ever attended and what a good job I had done. I did it for Cyndi. I was inspired by my Dad's memorial to his sister Barbara which I attended a few years ago, which he moderated and performed with aplomb.

The memorial lasted about an hour and a half.