

## Lynnell Robinson Cunningham Hankins

passed away July 6 after a valiant 3-year battle against cancer. In each phase of her 58 years, she touched all kinds of people in ways both subtle and sublime.

Although our grief is as deep as our love, so is her inspiration to us. She fought cancer in the same way she lived; with great dignity, bravery, strength and, above all, grace. She was so dedicated to teaching that, after many dreadful days in the ICU, she laboriously propped herself up to finish off the final marks for her math students at Buena High School.

In a letter that is typical of her students' esteem, one thanked her, "for affecting my life in a positive way at a time when I needed to be redirected." A fellow teacher remarked, "I mourn her passing, but I salute her life."

When her pulse finally stopped near the sunset hour, her closest family and friends were with her, and outside the window, a grandchild played in the sprinklers with the joy of life beginning. There wasn't a dry eye in the house, but after a while -- knowing Lynnell would be more worried about our grief than hers -- we remembered the unassuming, caring actions she did every day, her infectious smile and we even laughed a little.

Born in Los Angeles on Jan. 23, 1948 of William and Helena (Bailey) Robinson, the family soon moved to Somis where her dad ran a chicken ranch. She graduated from Camarillo High School ('66) with academic and social honors ("most popular") and then went on to Pitzer College and Cal Poly. After marrying David Cunningham (who continues a long-time law practice in Ventura), she continued her education at UC-Berkeley where she earned a BS in Math at Berkeley. She later attended Cal State Dominguez Hills, where she obtained a MS degree in Environmental Studies, and Cal State Northridge to gain a teaching credential -- all the while bringing up three children; RaeLee, Ryan and Nicholas.

The family settled in Ventura where she was elected president of the American Association of University Women and Kimball Arts Center, and served on the board of Montessori Learning Center.

From 1976 to 1983, she applied her math and science skills in writing environmental impact reports on Ventura County projects, but her passion for teaching became too strong to ignore. It was a perfect fit -- her students voted her "most inspirational" and her professional talents won the admiration of fellow teachers over her 16 years in education.

She spent an adventurous year teaching in Turkey where the locals embraced her as "the running woman" for her daily jogs. After her journey overseas, she returned to Buena High School and met and married John Hankins of Santa Barbara. They moved to Ojai to revel in new heights of happiness as newlyweds and grandparents.

When cancer was diagnosed, Lynnell's positive outlook, determination and habit of running every day with her beloved Dalmatian, gave her the strength to continue teaching through finals, and within days of her own passing. Her family rallied to be with her around the clock along with friends, notably Roanna Prell, who put her own life on hold for weeks to act as primary caregiver.

She is survived by her husband John; her three children, RaeLee (Hudson), Ryan and Nicholas Cunningham and Ryan's fiancée, Rebekah Hash; stepson and daughter-in-law David and Jennifer Hankins and three grandchildren, Brenna Hudson, Claire and Julia Hankins. Also surviving are three Robinson sisters, Monica Hodges, Roxana Menconi and Judy Mouritsen, and their children.

Anyone wishing to make a donation in Lynnell's honor is welcome to send contributions to the Lynnell Hankins Memorial Scholarship Fund at Buena High School, Attn: Steve Magoon, 5670 Telegraph Ave., Ventura CA 93003.

Long may you run.

