



Barbara Simmons

June 21, 2009

Barbara Simmons, known to her students as Miss Perry and to her friends and family as Barbie, died June 21. Her mother Virginia Simmons in Benton, her siblings, Gary and David Simmons of Hot Springs, Mike Simmons of Benton Jeanne Miller of Little Rock, and her partner Debbie Ledford of Hot Springs survive her.

Barbie taught and influenced more than 30,000 students as the Bryant High School librarian for 28 years. Upon retirement she directed Bryant 's Saline County Library for five years. She left a legacy of innovation, personal guidance, and leadership for any job she undertook. She was a volunteer at the Hot Springs' Garvan Woodland Gardens where her colorful commentary entertained visitors on an occasionally exciting golf cart ride through the gardens.. Her driving was conditioned by her commute to the gardens on her own jet ski.

Always understated about her own accomplishments, throughout her life she very quietly provided prom dresses, books, travel money, and other numerous gifts for students who needed her help. Throughout her life, she was greeted warmly by former students whom she met in her daily activities and by those who kept in contact with her after their graduation.

She was charismatic without being domineering, direct without being offensive, and proud without being arrogant. She maintained her dignity to the very end of her battle with cancer, never whining, never complaining and greeting each day with a smile and a plan to get on with life. Her spirit was a

gift to her friends, family, and students. She more than lived up to her enduring wish to be remembered as “having played well with others.”

Consistent to the very end, rather than a funeral service, she requested a private ceremony with friends and loved ones at a future date yet to be announced. For those who wish to commemorate her, contributions should be made to St. Matthews Episcopal Church in Benton. Her friends and family thank all those who have loved and helped Barbie on her journey.