



Merri M. Brantley

March 4, 2018

Quietly on the evening of March 4, without any pomp or fuss, just as Merri would have preferred, she peacefully left this earth and crossed over into the beautiful clouds of heaven to be with our Father. Merri M. Brantley, age 58, was the loving daughter of retired Air Force Col. Gene and Lucia Brantley and loyal sister to Beverley (Jimmy) and Sandra (Stephen). She was a loving and doting aunt to three beautiful nieces, Cara Leigh Creighton, Kimberly Creighton, Stephanie Creighton, and two handsome nephews, Clint Goethe and Logan Goethe.

She was born on 11/3/59 in Okinawa, Japan, where her father was stationed, and spent her youth growing up in Belgium before coming stateside. Japan may have been her place of birth but Georgia was her home. A journalism graduate from Brenau University, she began her career as a writer for several publications in Georgia before moving to Atlanta in the early 80s to work on a political campaign. Bitten by the political bug, she went on to work for then state House Minority Leader Johnny Isakson, now Georgia's Senior U.S. Senator. Merri then crossed the ropes to start a new career by lobbying on behalf of the Georgia Association of Educators and as the director of internal communications for the association. Her introduction to public education led to her position as the director of policy for the state superintendent of schools, where she also served as the superintendent's liaison to the state House. As the republican tidal wave swept over the state capitol, she was tapped as the Senate Press Director - leading the media operations for the 56 members of the upper chamber. Still passionate about education, she most recently was employed by Georgia Gwinnett College as the Executive Director of Governmental Affairs, where she was a tireless advocate for the state's youngest unit of higher education on the local, state and national levels. During her tenure, she worked closely with friends on both sides of the aisle to secure not only bond money to help her institution grow physically, but also to bring notable speakers to commencement ceremonies and to the classroom in order to broaden the horizons of the youth that had selected GGC as their alma mater.

When she wasn't working, Merri loved to care for her parents and spoil her nieces and nephews, as well as the children of her friends. She also used her incredible writing and

editing skills to work on her own novel and a political short story, as well as cooking and hosting dinner parties for friends. She recently moved to Grayson, GA and was looking forward to working in her new yard growing her favorite flowers, hydrangeas. She was a voracious reader, lover of the color pink and could recite in her sleep the script for *Gone with the Wind* and all the episodes of *Designing Women*.

While her given middle name was Marlene, over the years her friends substituted it with "Grace," first dubbed by her many friends within the communications staffs of the various state affiliates of the National Education Association. At the state capitol, she was known as Merri Grace, Queen of the third floor and keeper of the Gold Dome Etiquette Guide. The press corps called her "Sweet B". Others simply called her friend. Rest assured, Merri Grace was loved by more people than she allowed herself to believe.

A memorial service will be held for friends and family at Georgia Gwinnett College in the student center on Thursday, March 8 at 9 a.m. Visitation for friends and family will be held at H.M. Patterson & Son-Oglethorpe Hill Chapel, 4550 Peachtree Road NE, Atlanta, GA from 2 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m. A private funeral burial ceremony will take place in Albany, GA on Saturday, March 10 for her immediate family.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Georgia Gwinnett College Foundation for the Merri M. Brantley Scholarship Fund by contacting Barbar Lund, Executive Director of Advancement Services, at 678.407.5265 or BLund@ggc.edu.

"And that is the night the lights went out in Georgia" - Julia Sugarbaker (*Designing Women*)

Cemetery

Crown Hill Cemetery

1907 Dawson Rd

Albany, GA, 31707