



Mary Elizabeth Gutermuth

August 27, 1938 - May 30, 2016

Dr. Mary Elizabeth Gutermuth was the only child of Ervin Henry and Christine (Minges) Gutermuth. She was born in Columbia, Missouri, on August 27, 1938, in the final years of the Great Depression. Like so many of her generation, she was marked by that experience with a strong work ethic and an inclination to make do and use what you had. She attended Saint Elizabeth Academy in Saint Louis, graduated in 1960 from Saint Louis University with a BS in French, and earned her MA, also in French, from the University of Missouri in 1961. After studying at the Sorbonne in Paris, she obtained a Certificat de Langue Française in 1962. She received her Ph.D. in 1965 at the University of Missouri, with a dissertation on Feminism in the novels of Louis Aragon. Her specialty was French and Spanish Renaissance literature.

She taught at Loyola of Chicago from 1965 to 1967, then moved to Huntsville, Texas, where she lived in “the avenues” for the rest of her life, teaching at Sam Houston State University from 1967 to 2012. Mary came to Sam Houston as an Associate Professor of Foreign Languages, teaching French and occasionally Spanish. In due course, she was promoted to Professor and retired as Professor Emeritus. For two different periods, she served as coordinator of the department. As is expected of professors, she was active in scholarship, publishing articles and for 20 years serving on the governing editorial committee of the French XX Bibliography.

Mary lived a long and active life, holding office in a multitude of organizations at the national, state, university, and community level. (She served, for example, as a faculty senator for 30 years.) After retirement, Mary continued to be active in church work, book club, and AAUW. She frequently had friends in for a glass of French wine and Texas country cooking (no al dente on her table). She loved to travel across the Americas and to Europe and Africa (particularly the French-speaking areas). She always claimed it was to maintain her French, but we all knew it was for love of travel and the cultures.

Mary’s widowed mother came with her to Huntsville. After her death, Mary created a family of friends who will mourn her greatly. The son of one of her friends, himself a college teacher, writes: “She attended our church, Saint Thomas, and I have known her since before I could speak coherently. To my sisters and me, she was Aunt Mary. She was family. She could be hard to deal with, because in order to get where she was, she had to

become a relentless battering ram that could stubborn its way through the ocean of discrimination women of her generation had to deal with. But she was very generous to us.... Farewell, Mary. You loved us, and we loved you. Sometimes we all fought, because even the best families fight. But all my other relatives were too far away to be part of our lives in the way you were. God bless you, and I hope to see you in a few decades in Heaven.”

Unfortunately, from Christmas 2014, Mary’s health was in heavy decline due to ongoing problems with diabetes and kidney failure. She passed away on Memorial Day, May 30, 2016. We wish she’d lasted a little longer, But death is always too soon.

Mary is survived by her friends in Huntsville and throughout the nation and her cousins in Missouri: Tom and Mary Boschert, Don and Rose Branson, Robert and Eileen Engemann, Thomas and Carroll Schneider, and Patti Schneider Sweeney.

There will be a celebration of her life on Friday evening, June 3, beginning at 6, with a Rosary at 7 at the Sam Houston Memorial Funeral Home, 1700 Normal Park. The funeral will be at St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church, 1328 16th Street, on Saturday morning, June 4 at 11 with food and fellowship afterwards. In lieu of flowers, friends may feel free to donate to their favorite charity or to the scholarship fund at Sam Houston State. She will be buried in Resurrection Cemetery in St. Louis with her parents.

Cemetery Details

Resurrection Cemetery

St. Louis, MO

Previous Events

Visitation

JUN 3. 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Sam Houston Memorial Funeral Home - Huntsville
1700 Normal Park Dr.
Huntsville, TX 77340
(936) 291-7300
belinda@shmfh.com

Rosary

JUN 3. 7:00 PM (CT)

Sam Houston Memorial Funeral Home - Huntsville
1700 Normal Park Dr.
Huntsville, TX 77340
(936) 291-7300
belinda@shmfh.com

Service

JUN 4. 11:00 AM (CT)

St. Thomas Catholic Church
1603 Ave. N
Huntsville, TX 77340

Tribute Wall



“ *Mary Elizabeth Gutermuth*

November 15, 2022 at 08:33 PM



“ *I was so blessed to have Dr. G for one of my professors at SHSU and as a friend after graduation. I asked after her when I could not get her by phone or mail but no one mentioned she had passed. I know now she has gone on and wanted to say I, as the others, loved her, her smile, her wit, her being for us. I am saddened but grateful that this obituary has been kept for those of us who, because of our own circumstances and health and living states away, needed to find it at last. My best wishes to all of her loved ones! Merci, mon professeur tres cheri !*

Carol Fauster - February 25, 2020 at 07:56 PM



“ *A lovely lady and my favorite professor at SHSU. She is dearly missed.*

Denise - December 08, 2017 at 01:08 PM



“ *We shall miss Mary here on earth, but she left us with great memories-- memories of her sweet spirit, her intellect, her counsel, her wit, her laugh, and her great red lipstick.*

We shall miss Mary.

A DKG Sister,

Dr. Beverly J. Irby

Beverly Irby - June 10, 2016 at 06:56 AM

“ Sweet Mary! I was so caught up in work and my life, as it were, I missed the news of your passing till I heard from Maureen. Danny noticed the news about the same time. So sad we missed your memorial service. So many times you have been in our thoughts. I treasure the times we enjoyed. I can still see you sitting in your carefully chosen bright outfit, complete with earrings and often a colorful hat--just to the right about 6 rows down at St. Thomas. Many a Sunday, I sent my kids to travel the isle to sit with you. They loved the times I said: "shhh--go sit with Mary!" You were like a bright orchid in a sea of often hurried souls. The kids flew to you like bees! I often sat in wonder at your joy in being in that place, well most every place. I could hear you belting out the newest song from my seat near the back :)

Halloween was made special with the traditional first visit to your home. Unlike the traditional doors with nice comments and treats, you invited the children in (usually a station wagon full of the usual suspects--Webers, McGuires, mine, sometimes Bobruks, Samuels...a squirmy group in costume.) You would sit with a display of home made treats, ask about each child and offer some tale of an adventure you had just come from. They learned graciousness and the art of conversation and happily left for the trip around the town. I remember one hurried time when the kids were bigger and had taken so much last minute effort with costumes, now in junior high and older, I set out thinking that we did not have time for the Mary trip. We barely had time for any trick-or-treating. As I drove to the adventure, I was surprised to hear from one of the kids: "Wait! We have not been to Mary Gutermuth"s" ! The joy you gave me that night, realizing that you instilled the gift of connecting the crazy night with hospitality and that the kids "got it". Thank you so much!

Mary, I loved our little visits at your home. The big picture window. Family treasures and trinkets all over the house. Your laugh! Your wisdom.

It's hard to believe that you are gone. I feel you are with others I have loved and who have made the journey. I imagine you all knowing so much more and sending love to those of us who miss you so.

May choirs of angels welcome you, dear Mary. I can hear your voice joining in the chorus. Like Maureen, I think I will learn some French words and play my cd's - you know the ones we listened to with Martha (though I think some may still need to be cassettes!). I can't do the lipstick, you know that, but I will do my best to be more gracious, take a little more time to notice the wonder, and smile when I remember you. Forgive the tears, I just can't help that part.

MS

“ Well, oh my dear! Darling Mary, you are gone far too soon! There were so many more adventures to have! I am just now in from a work trip and just hearing the news of your passing, I've just sat down and had myself a good long cry!! I never had that lunch I was planning to have with you. But oh so many memories we shared through the years!

You were here to greet me in 1975 when I came to Sam Houston as a very young faculty wife. You took me under your wing introducing me to just about everyone! Mary, you were the first person who taught me that my life could include pursuits other than work and caring for my family. I never knew that. You gave me that gift. University Women book club and antique club were 2 of the groups I enjoyed with you. Then there were trips to The Alley Theatre sometimes with Helen Wheat and some with Kathy Gribble....and a trip to the Alley was never complete without you going sound asleep and softly snoring through part of the performance.

You worked with my husband on committees at the university and at church. You cuddled my children and assured me of their brilliance. It was never Halloween or Christmas without a visit to you for cookies and treats.

I am so sorry I didn't hear of your passing. I am longing for that lunch date that never came, and so very grateful for my time with you that evening in February when we gathered at St Thomas for Fr. Sal's 50th!!

You taught us all so much about living as "modern women" about the beauty of being strong women, the joy of being colorful, unique and fun!!! I hope I thanked you along the way, dear Mary. I hope we all did.

This afternoon I am going to put on some Revlon Red lipstick, and learn a few french words.

We love you, Mary,
Maureen and George Samuels, Bridget, Meg, Conor and Brendan

Maureen Samuels - June 05, 2016 at 08:44 AM

KG

“ I first met Mary at St. Thomas. We shared interests in antiques, reading, theater and art. For many years we went to the Alley Theater together. She invited me on several of her French trips both in the US and abroad. I am glad we got to make that last trip to Italy. She was a dear friend and I will miss her. Kathie

Kathie Gribble - June 03, 2016 at 09:48 AM

HD

“ Dr. Gutermuth was my French teacher and mentor at SHSU. I remember baking cookies at her home with a few friends for a French club event, discussing literature. She attended my wedding. She will be missed and I am thankful to have known her.

Heather (Louden) Dempsey - June 02, 2016 at 10:26 PM

TW

“ Dear sweet Mary..She always brought a smile to our faces when she would come into our office. That seemingly harsh voice that was anything but harsh. One my very favorite memories will always be the colorful outfits with the perfectly matched shoes. She will be missed. We all love you Mary... Rest in peace. Terrie Whitson

Terrie Whitson - June 02, 2016 at 09:41 PM

TS

“ Dr. Gutermuth was my English professor in 1970 during the Fall Semester at Sam Houston State University. I remember her as having a passion for teaching. She had a flare for fashion and so often wore her long, colorful, dangling earrings I really enjoyed her class and her strong, bubbly personality. I am reading that she also taught French at Sam Houston; I was not aware that she taught other subjects. I pray that the family find comfort through God's grace and love. Thelma Morrow-Spikes

Thelma Spikes - June 02, 2016 at 06:03 PM

JM

“ Many good memories as a University colleague with Mary and our service together on various committees and causes. A special memory is when Mary and I shared a most unforgettable trip to Austin. My car broke down, we went back to Huntsville to get her car, and spent the round trip with her talking and gesturing with my grip on the seatbelt and handholds. She was a great and generous person.

Jimmy Merchant - June 02, 2016 at 12:34 PM

CH

“ Mary was an active Democrat in Walker County. She was always willing to buy a ticket to all of our events in support of our headquarters and candidates. I remember working with her at our headquarters one time and hearing all about her wonderful cruise from Berlin to Prague. Her description stuck with me so well that the trip she described is now on my Bucket List!! I and the Walker County Democrats will miss you, Mary.

Connie Habern - June 02, 2016 at 11:09 AM

JW

“ Dr. Gutermuth was my French teacher when I was ~ 20 years old!! She wore mini-skirts and fishnet stocking that matched her mini-skirts (very much on trend for the time!) and long dangly earrings. Later on, she was my colleague in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and we were both members of Delta Kappa Gamma, so I was blessed to know her well and always enjoyed the opportunity to visit with her. She will be sorely missed in Huntsville and especially in the university community within Huntsville. She was always very supportive of me and my family members as we pursued our dreams and careers! Janis White

Janis White - June 02, 2016 at 10:14 AM

LC

“ So sorry to hear about Dr. Gutermuth. She was a great educator and helped me so much during my time at SHSU. I was a French major and had her almost every semester I was there. She will be greatly missed!

Leslie Copeland - June 01, 2016 at 03:37 PM

MB

“ Mary was such a bright and generous person. The lovely colors she chose to wear reflected a joy with her soul. It was a pleasure to know her. and she will be missed.
Martha Balusek

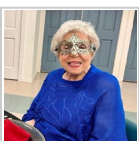
Martha Balusek - June 01, 2016 at 02:54 PM

KU

“ I am so sorry to hear of Mary's passing. She lived life to the fullest, and always brought delight and a smile when in her presence. Mary will be missed dearly by the members of the Association of University Women and by me, who enjoyed her friendship through that association. I send condolences to Mary's family, and especially to Mary's friend, Jean.

Kathleen Utecht

Kathleen Utecht - June 01, 2016 at 11:15 AM



“ Dr. Gutermuth was so kind. I remember her always smiling and happy. I am thankful that I saw her last month. A special lady will be missed.



Jeannine Jacoby - June 01, 2016 at 08:16 AM

AD

“ Mary was a very kind and gentle soul and will be missed by her many friends here in Huntsville.
Andy Dewees

Andy Dewees - June 01, 2016 at 06:32 AM

PC

“ Sharing the experience of others who have posted here, Joan and I were welcomed by Mary as soon as we arrived in Huntsville. She was a near neighbor, and she frequently entertained her neighbors in the avenues. It would be difficult to encounter a friendlier or more hospitable person than Mary. In support of a grant in the '80s I audited one of her classes to refurbish my nearly non-existent French. Always a conscientious professor, she supported the University in many other ways as well: faculty senate member, program chair, one of the first presidents of Faculty Forum (that delightful organization that enabled faculty from diverse disciplines to present their research to colleagues in a way that they could appreciate). She will be greatly missed by a very large contingent both in the University and the community at large. Paul Culp

Paul Culp - May 31, 2016 at 11:01 PM

LH

“ Mary was one of the first people I met at SHSU outside of the Library where I worked. I am a member of American Association of University Women and was an active member while I was at SHSU. Mary and I were both members of American Association of University Professors and went to the Texas State Convention together several times. She introduced me to the group. She was a great friend and companion. She knew what was going on in academia. She valued her Christian heritage and was active in her faith. We were able to share with each other and we prayed together several times. She introduced me to the book club and to Delta kappa Gamma. She knew how to keep herself active in her profession and in her community. I am thankful that she was my friend here on earth and I expect to see her one day in heaven.
LadyJane Hickey

LadyJane Hickey - May 31, 2016 at 04:41 PM



Good to hear from
You! Beth Williamson

Norma Williamson - May 31, 2016 at 07:59 PM



“ *Mary was a long-time member of American Association of University Women, a group which gives one or more scholarships to women who have completed the first year of graduate school at Sam Houston. If you would like to donate to this fund, contact Cecil Marquart in the college of Criminal Justice.*

Norma Williamson - May 31, 2016 at 03:58 PM

BW

“ *Mary was one of the first people I met when I came to Huntsville. We shared teaching foreign language at SHSU, being members of Delta Kappa Gamma, and a being members of book clubs. We also shared the love of travel, and with three friends of hers, made a trip to Michoacan, Mexico where we stayed in an ancient hotel which was on the ghost tour for Morelia, went to see a live volcano and saw the monarch butterflies in their winter retreat. The volcano and one of the butterfly parks required horseback riding up to see them. The other park required a long uphill hike. Mary did every one of these excursions with great delight! She loved life and people and is frequently mentioned as a favorite professor!*



Beth Williamson - May 31, 2016 at 03:46 PM

DW

Dr. Gutermuth was a remarkable person and I always considered her a good friend. Years ago when we lived in the Avenues she took my youngest daughter under her wing.

Dorothy Wooten - June 02, 2016 at 03:08 PM