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Family and friends,

thank you for being here to honor my mother, Patricia Anne Reynolds—Pat to nearly everyone who loved her.

We come together in grief, yes, but also in profound gratitude for a life lived with intellect, grace, fairness, and a playful spark that always arrived at just the right moment. My mother was born on January 22, 1949, and she passed peacefully on May 28, 2025, at the age of 76. Her years were full—of purpose, of courage, of quiet delight—and today we hold both the ache of her absence and the blessing of her presence in our lives.

Pat grew up in Boston, a city whose brisk winds and book-lined libraries suited her. She was the first in her family to graduate from college, a milestone she carried not as a trophy but as a responsibility. She believed education was a door we hold open for others. It was no surprise she became a high school English teacher and remained one for 35 years. In those classrooms she did far more than assign chapters and collect essays. She championed the power of literature to widen the heart. She organized annual poetry slams where the shyest students found their voice. She mentored debate teams and taught them to argue with reason, listen with respect, and lose with dignity. Her students—many of whom stayed in touch for decades—often said she taught them how to read the world, not just the page.

She was married to my father, Michael, for 38 years, a partnership that modeled steadiness and humor and the kind of loyalty that bends but does not break. After my father passed, my mother found her way through grief by tending to the small, good things—writing notes in her careful hand, baking brown bread that tasted like comfort, walking by the water until the sky remembered how to be blue again. In retirement she moved to a coastal town, led a local book club

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that somehow managed to be both rigorous and joyful, and made new friends with her signature combination of curiosity and kindness. She loved to read everything—classics and contemporary fiction—often in the same week, as if in conversation across centuries. She did weekend crosswords in pen, but with the humility to laugh and cross out when she needed to. And she was most herself on the coastal hikes where the wind lifted her hair and the horizon stretched, as she would say, “like a long thought.”

As a mother to Emily, James, and Victoria, she was our counsel, our compass, and our safe harbor. To her four grandchildren, she was a marvel—part librarian, part baker, part co-conspirator in adventures that somehow ended with both life lessons and extra dessert. She listened without rushing, she advised without scolding, and she made room for who each of us was becoming.

As her daughter, I knew a mother who expected much from me because she saw much in me. Our bond was always respectful and loving, and as I became a parent myself, a new door opened. We became friends. We traded books and recipes, worries and jokes. I learned the sound of her patience from the other side—how she would pause before responding, how she would soften the hard truths so they could be carried. She taught me that kindness is a deliberate choice, not a mood, and that it’s possible to be both exacting and gentle. When I called unsure and overwhelmed, she would often quote Tennyson: “To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.” Then, sensing I needed one more step, she’d add, “and then have some tea.” That was my mother—literature and real life in one breath.

One of my favorite memories is our summer road trip along the New England coast. We set out with more books than luggage and no itinerary beyond lighthouses and pie. One afternoon we stood on a windy pier, reading poems aloud to the gulls and the sea. The wind got bolder; the pages took flight; and we chased Yeats down the planks, laughing so hard people stared. We rescued what we could and improvised the rest from memory. Later, sun-tired and salty, we decided that the lost lines belonged to the ocean now, and that perhaps the ocean would read them to someone who needed them. That day felt like living

inside a poem—messy, bracing, and complete.

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My mother possessed a quiet spirituality. She found her grounding not through grand pronouncements, but in quiet reflection, on nature walks where the trees seemed to stand witness, and in occasional Episcopal services, where the liturgy's steadiness felt like an anchor. Faith, for her, was a way of seeing—attentive, grateful, and oriented toward mercy. She did not measure faith by what was said, but by what was done. She wrote notes—those beautiful, looping letters—to students having a rough week, to neighbors recovering from surgery, to friends who needed reminding that they mattered. She believed the holy was in the ordinary, and that we honor it by showing up.

To say she was fair is to say she let all points of view step to the lectern. To say she was graceful is to say she knew when to step back and let others shine. And to say she had a playful sense of humor is to recall the raised eyebrow, the well-timed quip, the moment she broke tension with a grin that said, "We are going to get through this." She understood that levity is not the opposite of seriousness, but often its companion—that a laugh can make space for courage.

We will miss her wise counsel, certainly—the way she could distill a muddle into a manageable path. We will miss her beautifully handwritten notes, which made mail feel like a ceremony. We will miss the steadiness she brought to every family gathering, a steadiness that didn't flatten excitement but framed it with safety. Holidays will feel different without her particular choreography: the favorite dishes, the reading aloud, the way she made sure each person's story was heard before dessert.

She taught us to be precise with language but generous with people. She showed us that listening is not waiting for one's turn, but a form of hospitality. She insisted that debate is healthiest when we argue ideas, not identities. She delighted in students who disagreed with her—but did so thoughtfully—and she saw potential not as a prediction, but as a promise we make to each other.

To her colleagues and former students who are here today, thank you for loving

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her. She adored you. You gave her life’s work meaning. If you organized a poetry slam, she was in the front row, applauding the first brave voice to the mic. If you stumbled in a tournament, she was the coach who walked you through the loss and then walked you back to the practice room. She believed that a young person who learns to articulate their thoughts is a young person who starts to trust their worth. Many of you have told us that her classroom was where you first felt seen. That is the legacy of a teacher.

To our family, especially to Emily, James, and Victoria, and to our children—her grandchildren—let us remember what she most wanted for us: to be curious, to be kind, and to be brave in small ways, every day. Let us bake her brown bread and let the house fill with that warm, molasses scent. Let us read aloud, even when no one has assigned the chapter. Let us take walks by the water and practice saying thank you—to the sky, to each other—until gratitude becomes our native language. And when choices are hard, let us remember her compass: fairness over favoritism, thought over impulse, kindness as a deliberate choice.

My mother loved that line—“To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.” She didn’t mean striving as a frantic race, but as a steady devotion to what matters. Seek the truth even when it is complicated. Find what is good and strengthen it. Do not yield to cynicism; it is a poor substitute for wisdom. These were her teachings, not in lectures, but in how she lived.

We also honor her great love for my father, Michael. Their marriage was a conversation that spanned decades—full of banter and arguments that ended in laughter, shared books on nightstands, the dance of two people who knew when to lead and when to follow. Even after she was widowed, she spoke of him not with sorrow alone but with gratitude for what they built together. That gratitude became her way forward.

I have been asked in these last days what I learned from her as a parent. I learned that wonder is not a childish thing—it is a discipline. I learned that saying “I’m sorry” to your child does not lessen you; it teaches them how to repair. I learned that love is not measured by how much we worry, but by how

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much we show up. And I learned that friendship can grow inside a family when we make room for each other to change.

In the final months, her reflections grew quieter, more distilled. She spoke not of accomplishments but of people. She would list names—family, friends, former students—and say, “I hope they know how proud I am of them.” She wanted us to carry forward not her résumé, but her reverence for the everyday. She asked that we take care of one another, especially in the small, unglamorous ways that keep a family whole.

So we will mourn her. We will cry at odd hours, be ambushed by memories in the cereal aisle, and reach for the phone before remembering. Grief will do its stern work. But we will also laugh, because she taught us to. We will tell the story of the windy pier and the fugitive poems. We will tell how she corrected our grammar and then hugged us anyway. We will tell how she turned a book club into a beloved gathering where people felt braver about their own lives after discussing someone else’s.

And we will celebrate her—because her life was a gift to all of us, and the best way to honor a gift is to use it. We will strive. We will seek. We will find. And when life asks for perseverance, we will not yield to pettiness or despair. We will choose kindness, deliberately, again and again.

Pat, Mom, Grandma—thank you for the ways you shaped us. Thank you for the steadiness you brought to our table, for the counsel that steadied our hearts, for the notes that turned paper into presence, for the grace that never made a show of itself, for the wit that arrived like sunlight when we needed it most. Thank you for every lesson tucked into every story, for every book you placed in our hands, for every walk that taught us how to pay attention.

May the path ahead be lined with the poems you loved, the sea breeze you cherished, and the peace you practiced. We will carry your words in ours, your courage in our choices, your gentleness in our days.

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And when the wind lifts, we will listen. We will imagine the ocean reading the lines we lost on that pier—to someone, somewhere, who needs them still.

We love you. We will miss you. We will keep your light.

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