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Good afternoon, everyone.

Thank you for being here to celebrate the life of my grandmother, our beloved Dorothy Mae Bennett—Grandma Dot.

She was born on May 14, 1935, raised under wide Kansas skies, and she passed peacefully at 89, leaving us a lifetime of warmth to gather around today. And if she could peek in on us now, I know she'd be beaming—partly at the crowd, but mostly at the stories and the laughter she knew we'd share when we got together.

I'm her grandson—her partner-in-crime for Saturday pancakes and flea market adventures. That was our weekly mischief: we'd flip pancakes at dawn, declare the ugliest one a "keeper," and then hit the stalls to see what treasures the world had accidentally priced at a dollar. She believed that bargains and breakfast both taste better when you bring a friend.

In her twenties, she left Kansas for Seattle with a suitcase, some courage she called "plain stubbornness," and recipes that smelled like home. She opened a small bakery, thinking it might help make ends meet. Instead, it became a neighborhood staple for three decades—a place where birthdays began, apologies were mended, and a good cinnamon roll could change a bad day. She used to say that flour and water were never just flour and water—"they're an invitation." Food brings people together, she believed, and then she proved it, morning after morning, tray after tray.

There was so much life in the circle around her. Married to Harold—our Grandpa Harold—for 50 years. Mother of one son and two daughters. Grandmother to six. Great-grandmother to one bright star who already carries her spark. And her kitchen—doors open, kettle on—was where all those generations got braided

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If you spent five minutes with Grandma Dot, you probably caught all four of her superpowers: cheerful, fearless, generous, and delightfully stubborn when it mattered. She had a way of turning the ordinary into a small celebration, and a way of standing her ground that made you think, “She’s right,” even before you knew what the argument was. She gave from the center of herself—time, kindness, an extra cookie for the road—and when it mattered, she was immovable in the best possible way.

She loved things that let people shine. Community theater—she never met a stage light she didn’t think someone else deserved to stand under. Watercolor painting—her windowsill sunflowers glowed even on the drizzliest Seattle days. Gardening tomatoes—she’d lean over the vines and coax them like old friends. And card games with neighbors—where she won more often than chance should allow, and somehow made you feel like the champion anyway.

As a business owner, she didn’t just bake; she built. She mentored young entrepreneurs who wandered into the shop with questions and coffee jitters. She taught them how to temper chocolate and courage, how to price a loaf and value a life, how to sweep floors with pride because “your name is on this place whether it’s on the sign or not.” Many of those folks kept in touch. Some still keep napkins she scribbled notes on. More than a few will say they’re standing on a foundation she mixed with patience and sugar.

One of my favorite memories is the 5 a.m. cinnamon roll lesson. We were both in aprons two sizes too big, the radio humming something old and happy. We kneaded the dough until our arms ached, then we danced in the kitchen while it rose—just a little shuffle in our socks on the flour-dusted floor. She showed me how to roll the dough gently, how to tuck the ends like a letter to someone you love, how to lift the tray like you’re carrying a secret. When the oven door opened, the whole room breathed out. I learned a recipe that morning, yes—but mostly I learned how joy is made on purpose.

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Her spirituality was quiet and steady—no spotlight, just a candle lit each morning, a page where she'd write three things she was thankful for. Gratitude and service: that was her faith. She measured the day by who got fed, who got listened to, who left feeling lighter than when they arrived. And she'd add one more: what did I leave better than I found it?

"Choose joy, even in small doses," she'd say. And she lived it. Joy in a single ripe tomato, joy in the applause after a high-school play, joy in a perfect flea-market teacup with a chip she swore gave it character. And always, "Leave the place better than you found it." She'd straighten the chairs at the community center, slip a note of encouragement under a neighbor's door, and wipe the counter one more time—not because it needed it, but because someone after you would be glad you did.

What did people love most about her? The laughter that filled a room—big, contagious, the kind that made even the shy smile. The open-door kitchen—where nobody had to knock and everybody had a seat. And that uncanny way she had of making you feel like family, even if you were just dropping by for change for the parking meter.

Grandpa Harold, your 50 years with her showed all of us what devotion looks like at breakfast and at bedtime. To her son and daughters—you carry her brave. To us grandkids, all six of us—you carry her generous. And to her great-grandchild—you carry her light, which, trust me, is the best inheritance in the world.

She was fearless in the ways that matter. She moved states. She built a bakery. She tried a role in community theater that scared her and did it anyway. She mentored people younger than her, because she remembered how it felt to be new. And she was delightfully stubborn when the cause was good—stubborn about fairness, about giving people a second chance, about using real butter, and about never sending someone away hungry.

This is a Celebration of Life, and I promise you, there is so much to celebrate. It

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lives in the watercolor tins still stained azure. It lives in the garden beds waiting for spring tomatoes. It lives in the recipe cards smudged with vanilla and fingerprints. It lives in the stack of playing cards, soft-edged from a hundred friendly rivalries. It lives in the apron hook by the back door, which somehow still smells like cinnamon and courage.

If you're looking for a way to honor her, you don't have to go far:
- Light a candle in the morning and name three things you're thankful for.
- Bake something and share it with someone who needs a lift.
- Mentor a beginner. Teach what you know. Stand close while they try.
- Laugh big and early. Let it ring.
- And when you leave a room, leave it a little kinder than you found it.

To the neighbors, friends, and young business owners she cheered on—thank you for loving her back. To our family—thank you for holding each other up. Grief doesn't cancel joy; it sits beside it. And in a life like hers, joy has the louder voice.

Grandma Dot, you moved from Kansas fields to Seattle rain and planted a harvest we'll be gathering for the rest of our days. You taught us that a bakery can be a beacon, a kitchen can be a church, and a cinnamon roll can be a love letter. You showed us that generosity is a habit, that stubbornness can be holy when it protects what's good, and that joy—chosen daily, even in small doses—adds up to a life that glows.

We're going to miss that laugh that filled a room. We're going to miss the way your front door never needed knocking. We're going to miss being called "honey" in a tone that fixed any bad day. But we carry you forward, each of us—a little flour on our hands, a little song in our step while the dough rises.

Thank you for choosing joy. Thank you for choosing us. We'll keep choosing joy too, one small dose at a time.

And we promise, wherever we go next, we'll leave the place better than we

found it.

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We love you, Grandma Dot. Always.

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