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Family, friends, and all who loved him—thank you for being here to honor my father, Thomas Andrew Bennett. Most of you knew him simply as Tom.

He was born in Boston on November 21, 1962, and he left us at 61—too soon for us, though full of a life he filled with purpose. He was a first-generation college graduate, a point of pride he wore quietly, and for three decades he served as a high school history teacher, the kind who could make Rome feel like it might send a senator walking through the door, and who could turn a Tuesday lecture into an invitation to care about the world. He coached the debate team with the same steady hand—teaching students to listen as carefully as they argued—and he was a passionate advocate for public education, believing deeply that every child deserved a fair shot.

He is survived by the people he loved most: his wife, Caroline; his daughters, my sister Olivia and me, Mia; his brother, Patrick; and his sister, Elaine. We are each a chapter of his story, and today we carry his voice forward.

What defined my dad were qualities you could depend on—integrity that didn’t bend at the first strong wind, curiosity that sent him down the rabbit hole of every book’s footnotes, fairness that guided his grading and his guidance, and a dry sense of humor that arrived like a well-placed footnote at the end of a sentence. If you ever borrowed a book from him, you know his mind lived in the margins—neat pencil notes, careful underlines, questions that nudged you to think again. Those notes were his way of staying in conversation with ideas, and with us.

Some of my clearest memories are ordinary, and that’s why they shine. Saturday mornings in our kitchen, Sinatra on the record player, the scent of batter and butter warming the air. He’d flip blueberry pancakes with a mock-serious flourish, and between flips he’d quiz me on state capitals. I

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learned that the correct answer to “Montpelier?” is “Please pass the syrup,” and also that learning could feel like warmth you carried the rest of the day. Music, pancakes, and memory—he made a ritual out of them, and in doing so he made a home.

He found meaning in quiet reflection and in service. Faith, for him, was not a banner waved but a light held steady—a holiday service with the family, a thoughtful act done without announcement, the long fidelity of showing up for students year after year. He loved jazz records and crossword puzzles, could disappear for hours in a local museum, and delighted in weekend cycling, where he said the mind finally matched the rhythm of the road. He lived as if curiosity were a form of gratitude.

To his students and colleagues who are here today: you were his second family. He believed history was not a list of dates, but a living conversation about who we are and who we want to be. If you ever walked out of his classroom feeling taller than when you walked in, that was his gift—to leave people better than he found them. He said that often, and he meant it.

To our family, he was our compass. He listened before he advised, and when he spoke, it was measured, thoughtful, and kind. I will miss the way he’d rest a hand on the edge of a book, look up, and offer exactly the one sentence I needed. I will miss the pages of his mind made visible in those penciled margins, and the gentle laugh that followed when I caught one of his dry jokes and he pretended he hadn’t planted it.

Today we grieve, but we also give thanks. We give thanks for a husband who loved Caroline with steadfast tenderness, for a father who fostered in Olivia and me the courage to ask better questions, for a brother who stood shoulder to shoulder with Patrick and Elaine, and for a teacher who dignified the work of learning, day after faithful day.

If you want to honor Tom, do something small and exacting, the way he did: put a careful note in the margin. Ask the next question. Play a jazz record while you

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cook breakfast. Take a young person seriously. And when you part from someone—student, colleague, neighbor—leave them better than you found them.

Dad, the music is still playing. The pancakes are still warm in our memory. The capitals are still there, waiting to be recited. Your integrity, your curiosity, your fairness, and that quiet humor—these are our inheritance. We will carry them forward, together.

Thank you for loving us so well. Thank you for your life. And may we, in our living, do justice to yours.

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