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Friends, family, teachers, students, neighbours, and all who loved Patricia Elaine Carter—our Pat—thank you for being here today.

We gather in Victoria to remember a life that began in Halifax on November 16, 1949, and that came to rest here on October 5, 2025. Seventy-five years is a full measure of time, and yet for those of us who loved her, it never feels like enough.

I stand here as Pat’s daughter—Laura—grateful, humbled, and still a little astonished that I had a mother who managed to be both my mentor and my moral compass without ever raising her voice. She was not grand in gesture. She was steady, thoughtful, and precise. She taught me—taught so many of us—that the quiet way can be the strongest way.

Pat grew up in Halifax, where the salt air and library stacks seemed to set her course early. She studied English literature at Dalhousie, where she learned that the right words, chosen carefully, can move whole rooms and steady wavering hearts. Not long after, she crossed the country to Vancouver to teach high school English—a vocation that became her life’s work for three decades.

Thirty years is time enough to see generations of students walk into a classroom with fidgeting hands and mixed feelings about poetry, and leave with a sense that language can hold them in difficult times. Pat was a teacher, then a department head. She directed school theatre productions with the same meticulous rehearsal notes she brought to her lesson plans. She organized literacy nights that pulled families into schools long after the final bell. She coached debate teams and taught young people to think as clearly as they spoke, and to listen with the same attention they demanded for themselves.

What did her students see? A woman who came prepared—truly prepared. If a

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class started at 9:05, Pat was ready at 8:50. If a play opened Friday, she had a repair kit for costumes on Wednesday and an extra thermos of tea for the stage crew on Thursday. She believed preparation was a form of respect—for the work, for the people, for the moment.

Pat carried that respect into every part of her life. After she retired to Victoria, she didn’t retire from purpose. She joined community arts groups, rolled up the sleeves of her rain jacket for shoreline cleanups, and learned again to delight in simple materials—paper, pigment, tidal light—through her watercolours. If you knew Pat, you knew she was a steward: of words, of places, of people. She made sure what she loved would be well cared for.

Along Dallas Road, she found a rhythm. She walked with binoculars tucked in her bag, quietly noting the flight path of a gull, the surprise of a winter wren. The ocean met her there with its own steady lesson: that constancy is not the same as sameness, and that every day contains both the familiar and the new. On visits back to Vancouver, she kept another rhythm—long walks along the Stanley Park Seawall, unhurried, taking in the curve of the path and the conversations that seem to unfold best when your feet are moving.

At home, her humour arrived on soft feet. She was never the loudest laugh in the room, but her smile could set a different tone, and her well-timed aside could lift a whole table. She wasn’t a collector of objects, but she was a collector of moments and of people’s small victories. She tucked encouragements into the pages of borrowed books—slips of paper in her tidy hand, a small constellation of care for the person who would find them next week or next year. If you ever opened a novel and a note fluttered out—“Chapter 7 is worth the wait,” “Save this paragraph for a rainy day,” “Proud of you”—you knew it was Pat’s way of staying with you while you read.

She believed deeply in education as a public good—the idea that a well-lit classroom could be a launching pad for a just society. She believed that integrity lives not just in big decisions but in the thousand small choices of an ordinary day: the paper you recycle, the story you listen to all the way through, the

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apology you make without prompting. She believed in inclusivity, not as a slogan but as a practice—who gets to speak, who is invited in, who gets credited for their work. And she believed in respecting nature, not only by admiring sunsets, but by picking up plastic on the shore when no one was watching.

A full life holds joy and loss, and Pat knew both. She was predeceased by her husband, Michael, whom she loved with the same steady devotion she brought to everything. She is survived by her son, Stephen, and by me, and by her grandchildren, Evan and Nora, who could coax her into almost any game as long as there were snacks and a dictionary nearby. She is also survived by her cherished sister, Mary, whose presence brightened every room and whose counsel was one of the gifts my mother counted more often than she said.

In our family, some of our richest memories are quiet ones. Rainy winter evenings, the kind that make Vancouver and Victoria feel related by weather, with my mother reading Anne of Green Gables aloud, voices soft and particular, a cup of tea cooling at her elbow. She never rushed those chapters. She let us linger over sentences as if they were landmarks. If we interrupted with questions—What does that word mean? Why did Anne do that?—she welcomed the detour, then found a path back to the page. I think those nights were her best teaching: patience, curiosity, the understanding that stories are how we make sense of ourselves.

And then there were ferry day trips to Salt Spring Island, where time stretched. We learned the choreography of terminals and decks, the art of scanning for orcas as the shoreline slid by, the gratitude for a gudgeon of sun pushing through clouds. My mother always packed too many sandwiches and just enough advice. By the time we returned, hair wind-tangled, she had asked the questions that mattered without making them feel like a test.

If you taught with Pat, or acted in a school play under her direction, you will remember the way she prepared the ground so everyone could succeed. If you joined her book club, you will remember the way she guided discussion so that even the quietest voice found its opening. If you walked the shore with her, you

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will remember her measured pace, her attentive eye, and that little intake of breath when a heron lifted from the rocks. If you were family, you will remember that her love was something you could set your watch by—dependable, unfussy, always present.

What will we miss? Her handwritten notes tucked into books. Her measured advice—the kind that did not begin with “You should,” but with “Have you considered…?” Her reassuring laugh, a small compass needle that seemed to swing us all toward north. We will miss the way she was impeccably prepared for the practical things—forms filled out, buses caught, lines learned—and equally prepared for the emotional weather of the day. She could sit beside you in silence without making it feel like a verdict. She could name the hard truth and still leave you with your dignity.

Today, as we honour her, we also look forward in ways she would have appreciated. A memorial scholarship is being established at her former high school—an investment in the kind of young person she championed: curious, principled, and kind. And after this service, at the reception, we will gather among a display of her watercolours. I hope you will linger with them. Look at the edges where her brush lifted, the way she captured a shoreline with restraint and clarity. She painted as she lived—not to dazzle, but to witness.

It is tempting, at a memorial, to make promises that are too large to keep. My mother had no patience for grand claims. She trusted the small vow, kept daily. So I will make only these, in her spirit.

We will keep reading aloud on rainy evenings.

We will go for long walks and let conversation find its own pace.

We will attend the school play even when the seats are hard and the lighting flickers.

We will write each other notes on real paper.

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We will pick up what does not belong on the shore and leave the rest untouched.

We will remember that education is a public good and act accordingly—by listening well, asking better questions, and making room at the table.

Grief has its tides. Some days the shoreline is wide, and we can stand and take it all in. Some days it runs right up to our feet. My mother taught us not to argue with the sea. Let it come. Let it go. Keep your footing. Hold on to the person beside you.

To Stephen, to Evan and Nora, to Mary, to the students who became colleagues and the colleagues who became friends—thank you for being part of the community that sustained my mother, and that she in turn sustained. Thank you for the casseroles and the phone calls, for the last-minute rides and the quiet messages slipped under doors. Thank you for showing up today.

Patricia Elaine Carter. Pat.

Born in Halifax, where the love of words first took root.

Shaped by Dalhousie, where she learned how to read the world closely.

Seasoned in Vancouver, where for thirty years she gave her craft and her care to a generation of students.

At home in Victoria, where she kept faith with the shore and the sky, the birdbook and the paintbrush, the book club calendar and the cleanup schedule.

A thoughtful, principled woman with a quietly mischievous sense of humour and an almost ceremonial preparedness.

A mother whose example is a set of lights we can steer by.

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A grandmother whose lap was a safe harbour and whose laugh still echoes.

A sister whose loyalty never wavered.

A teacher who never stopped teaching, even after the bell.

We release her with gratitude.

We carry her forward in the choices we make when no one is watching.

And we honour her, not by trying to fill the space she leaves, but by tending to what she loved: good words, honest work, open doors, and a shoreline clean enough for a child to walk.

Thank you for loving her, as she loved you. Thank you for being here.

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