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Good morning, everyone.

Thank you for coming together at St. Paul’s on Bloor to honour my mum, Helen Margaret Fraser—our Nana Helen.
Born on May 3rd, 1956, and gone from us at 67, she leaves behind a life so full of care that even today the word “nurse” feels too small for her.

I stand here as her daughter, her loving kid, and her closest confidant.
We spoke every day.
Sometimes it was ten minutes about nothing much—weather, what was on sale at Metro, how the roses were faring against the squirrels.
Sometimes it was an hour when I needed her calm, that steady tone that turned a knot into a thread you could slowly untangle.
I still catch myself reaching for the phone in the mornings.
If you knew her, you know that feeling.

Mum grew up in Halifax, sea salt in her hair and wind in her laugh.
In her twenties she packed her courage, a few sweaters, and a stubborn belief that there was good work to do, and she moved to Toronto.
She graduated as a registered nurse and found her calling in paediatrics, where she served nearly forty years.
Those years weren’t just a career.
They were tiny hands wrapped around her finger, nervous parents breathing easier because she translated fear into steps they could take, and younger nurses who learned to steady their hearts by watching hers.

If you ask her colleagues, they’ll tell you she was a mentor in the simplest ways—an extra set of hands at 3 a.m., a note left on a locker after a hard shift, a reminder to drink some water before the next admission rolled in.
If you ask the families, they’ll tell you she was the calm in the room when the

machines grew loud. Create your own personalized speech at eulogyai.ca
She didn’t promise what she couldn’t keep.
She promised to stay, to listen, and to do the next right thing with care.
That was her way.

She built her life with my dad, Robert—forty-two years of teamwork, quiet jokes across the dinner table, and long drives where they argued lovingly about whose playlist was worse.
They raised us—Emily and Daniel—with lists on the fridge, lunches that somehow always included a note or a napkin smiley face, and a thousand reminders to treat people gently because you never know the day they’re having.
In recent years, she became Nana to three grandkids, and if you met her on a Saturday, she probably had a half-finished scarf in her bag for whichever baby had just arrived in someone’s circle.
If there was a new life to welcome, Nana Helen’s knitting needles clicked into action.
Soft wool, neat edges, every stitch counted.

Mum believed in showing up.
Volunteering at community clinics.
Coordinating winter coat drives where she knew each family by name and by size—“two mediums, one with a hood, and mittens that won’t fall apart in the first snow.”
She didn’t talk about “charity.”
She talked about neighbours.
She talked about how warm feels.

At home, she had her own small kingdom: a rose garden she tended like a living diary.
She knew which one bloomed first after a harsh winter, which needed a stern word and more shade.
On weekend mornings she’d put on Maritime folk music and hum along, and in the evening she’d cheer—earnestly, eternally—for the Maple Leafs, one hand

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over her eyes during overtime and the other fishing out shortbread she'd tucked away "just in case."
At Christmas, her shortbread measured the season better than any calendar.
Aunties, uncles, neighbours—everyone knew that tin and that buttery, careful sweetness.
I once asked for the recipe, and she said, "It's not a recipe, love, it's a mood—be patient and don't overmix."
That was also her approach to people.

My favourite memory?
Peggy's Cove in the summer.
Fish and chips, gulls too bold for their own good, and my mum telling stories about running along the rocks as a kid, pockets full of sea glass, a scraped knee ignored because the tide was turning pink and that was more important.
She'd pass me the best crispy bit of batter and say, "Look out past the lighthouse—see how the water keeps its own counsel?"
Then she'd laugh, that warm, wry laugh of hers that made wisdom sound like an inside joke.
Those days felt like a map: begin with the ocean, walk carefully on the stones, share your lunch, go home sun-tired and kind.

If you're searching for the thread that runs through every part of her life, it's this: kindness first, honesty always, show up, and do small things with great care.
No grand speeches.
No fuss.
Just presence.
A kettle on, a chair pulled out for you, a question asked that landed softly but somehow got you to the truth you were dodging.

What will we miss?
Her morning phone calls—"Just checking in, love."
Her shortbread at Christmas, the tin that seemed bottomless until suddenly it wasn't.

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Her calm, practical advice—never dramatic, never dismissive.
Her laugh when life tried to take itself too seriously.
And the way she could lower her voice, tilt her head, and offer three sentences that made the impossible feel manageable.

She taught us that care is not a sentiment, it’s a practice.
It’s returning the cart at the grocery store.
It’s remembering the name of the receptionist.
It’s knitting one more row even when you’re tired because the baby’s coming early.
It’s telling the truth kindly.
It’s calling back.

To Dad—Robert—you and Mum showed us what partnership looks like on quiet Tuesdays, not just on special days.
To Daniel and me, she was our compass even when we didn’t know we were lost.
To her grandchildren, she was warm hands, soft wool, and the promise that you are loved right now, just as you are.

We gather today, grieving, yes, but also deeply grateful.
Her life was not measured in years alone, though she gave us sixty-seven of them.
It was measured in how many people breathed easier because she had walked into the room.

In lieu of flowers, our family asks that donations be made to the Heart & Stroke Foundation, an organization that reflects the care she gave and the hope she held.
It feels right to honour her that way.

Mum, you are in our mornings and our gardens.
You are in the careful way we fold a blanket over a sleeping child.
You are in the patience we offer a stranger.

You are in every small thing we now do with great care.

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Thank you, Nana Helen, for the roses, the recipes, the steady hands, the humour, and the love that arrived on time, every day.
We'll keep calling each other in the mornings.
We'll cheer for the Leafs with a little more faith than reason.
We'll take the kids to Peggy's Cove and share our chips with the gulls, even though you told us not to.

And when we don't know what to do next, we'll do what you taught us.
We'll show up.
We'll be kind.
And we'll do the next right thing, carefully.

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