

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF
Lilli Ruth Rollins

August 13, 1942 – March 8, 2021

Friday, April 9, 2021
at 2pm PST



Lilli Ruth Rollins

Mrs. Lilli "Ruth" McDole Rollins died after an unexpected and brief illness on March 8, 2021 in Davis, California at the age of 78. Lilli is survived by her son, Ryan Rollins (spouse, LaToya) of Fairfield, CA, and daughter, Melody Rollins Downes, of Westport, CT as well as her grandchildren Jasmine, Johanna, Mykhaela, Ryan Jr, Lucas, Camille and three great-grandchildren. She is preceded in death by her mother, Clara Benjamin (née), father, Rev. Benjamin McDole, and son-in-law, Quintano Downes.

An only child, Lilli was born on August 13th in the Johnsonville community of Evergreen, Alabama. But she was not lonely. Lilli grew up with many cousins - the children of her 11 aunts and uncles - including cousins Roy Bradley, Meatherlene A&M University with a



That was only the
a student and a teacher.
stint in Brooklyn, New York

just until the winter weather set in, Lilli career as a teacher in Ft. Walton Beach, couple of years later, Lilli was teaching in Pensacola, FL when she met a handsome airman, Melvin Rollins, who would soon become her husband for almost 20 years. A little more than a year after their 1967 wedding – which took place in the home of her dear Shirley Otey Gooding Butler – Melvin started a family, welcoming their first Delano, on July 12, 1968. These early Pensacola were very joyful for the family, and Lilli managed to work full-Special Education teaching credential was soon expecting another baby.



Likely, Elizabeth and Eula Benjamin, Emily Stokes, and more. Lilli graduated from Florida major in Sociology in 1964.

beginning of her educational journey, both as After a brief that lasted started her FL. Only a



time, take care of her baby boy, and earn a from the University of West Florida. And Lilli



Before the new baby arrived, in Novato, CA. Lilli stayed behind for a few months until she delivered their second child, Melody Shaye, at Sacred Heart Hospital in Pensacola, FL, on May 19, 1972. Lilli's mother, Clara, was by her side during the delivery. Within a couple of months, Lilli, Clara and the two kids were off to California. In the meantime, Melvin had been placed on active duty in Alaska. It would be baby Melody, who he incorrectly predicted would be a Melvin were forced to handwrite letters to each other One of Melvin's letters -- which indicated that he for the female name of the new baby -- arrived too late. agreed that if the baby was a boy, they would name it younger brother, Leonard, who died in Vietnam. As you some time to warm up to the new man in her life, perhaps disappointment in her name and gender!

Melvin was sent to Hamilton Air Force Base almost a year before he met boy. Without the internet, Lilli & during their physical separation. preferred "Melanie" to "Melody" The couple had previously after Melvin's recently deceased might expect, baby Melody took sensing his initial



In California, Lilli met lifelong friends on the Air Force Base, including Mamie Bates, Esse Roberts, Pat Byrd, and Alvarita Paul. The family moved off the base after a short period into their home in the beautiful Ignacio neighborhood of Novato, CA, where Ryan and Melody completed their



primary education. Lilli would become an early/founding member of both the Black Women of Marin and the Concerned Parents of Novato, where she met other families focused on raising well-rounded children. And Lilli remained active in the community - including in leadership roles at her children's schools and in their activities, such as Boy Scouts and sports - from that time up until her

death. She was a founder and co-chairperson of the Novato Alcohol & Drug Abuse



Prevention Council, chair of the Marin County Human Rights Education Advisory Committee, member of the Marin County Self-Esteem Task Force, member of the board of New Perspectives, and, most recently, a member of an FDA Independent Review Board for over 10 years.

Not one to rest on her laurels, Lilli earned her Master's Degree in Educational Administration from Sonoma State University in 1990. She transitioned from being a much-loved Special teacher to various Assistant Principal roles at San Rafael HS (San Rafael, CA), Armijo HS (Fairfield, CA), and San Jesse Bethel High School in Vallejo, CA. In her final and most challenging role, Lilli was the Principal at after it had been taken over by the state for failing its students and huge administration did it with fierce ever-present parents and determination, strong leadership, and grace. She was loved by students, teachers alike. Lilli retired from school in June 2008.



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Lilli was also very active in the church. At Novato Presbyterian, she met lifelong friend and mentor, Genevieve Grundstrom, served on the Board of Trustees, and attended along with good friends, Ed and Dianne Pope and their children. Ryan and Melody



were both baptized at Novato Presbyterian. Later, at Third Baptist Church in San Francisco, where Lilli attended and served up until her death, she was a past member of the Board of Trustees, personnel manager for employment issues, and, most recently, led the Art & Culture Circle. Lilli was well-known for her frequent sojourns to New York City to visit her daughter Melody and two grandchildren, Lucas and Camille. On these trips, she would attend Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. Lilli always stood up during the welcoming of guests and sent greetings from her home church.

Because of her work in Solano County, Lilli had relocated from Marin County to Fairfield in 1995. As she had done previously, Lilli immediately became active in her new community. She was a member and past Solano Democratic Club and retirement, Lilli loved to and Las Vegas, enjoyed California-based Johanna and Ryan Jr., and with her many local friends. organizations focused on improving the lives of the disenfranchised and on social justice, such as the S.F. NAACP, National Council of Negro Women, and the Solano County Library Foundation.

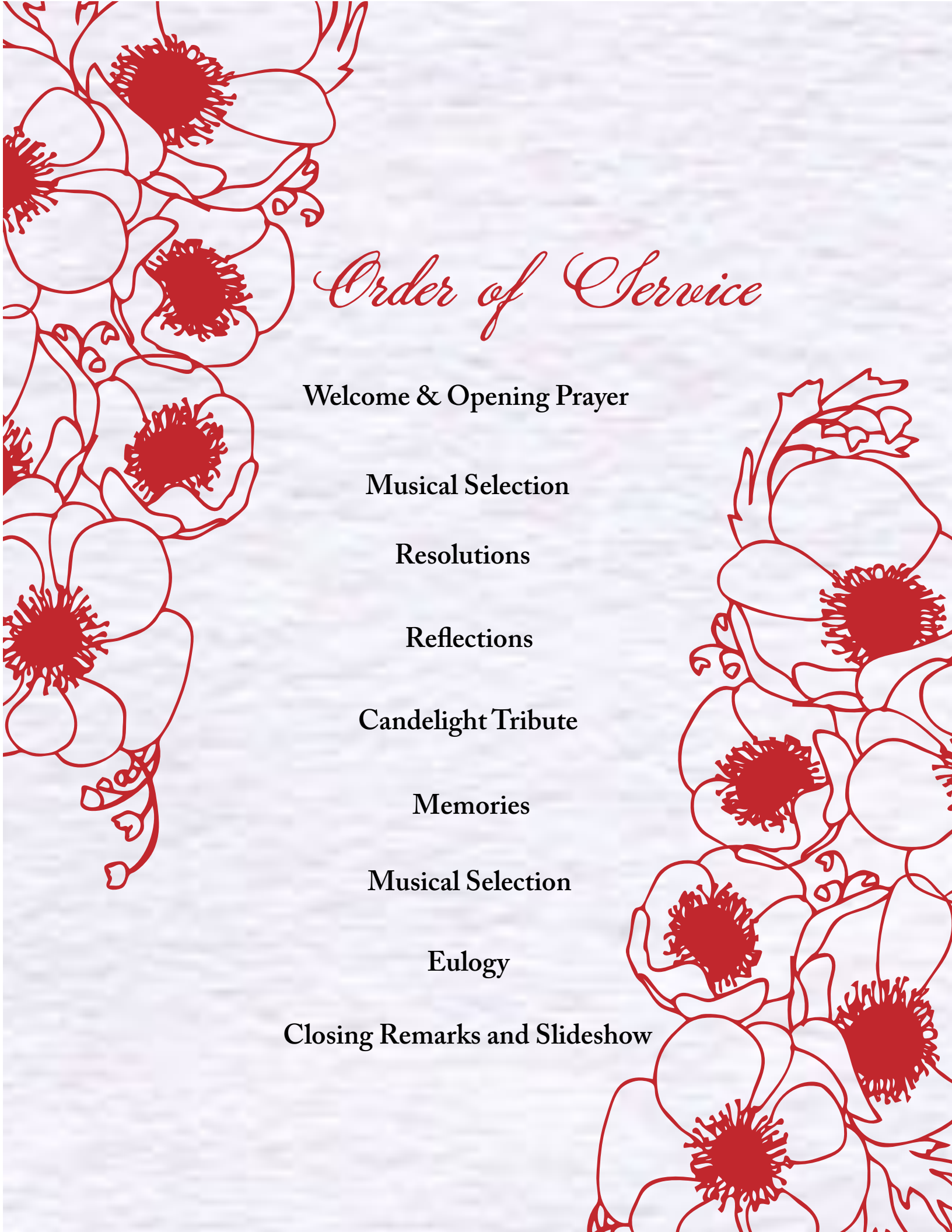


She frequently supported and attended events for



Lilli lived a full life and never shied away from the next adventure. She loved her family and her friends deeply, was a life-long learner, traveled widely, worshipped fervently, and gave generously. And she did all this while overcoming many obstacles along the way. She is already missed, but the impact she made on so many lives will last forever.





Order of Service

Welcome & Opening Prayer

Musical Selection

Resolutions

Reflections

Candelight Tribute

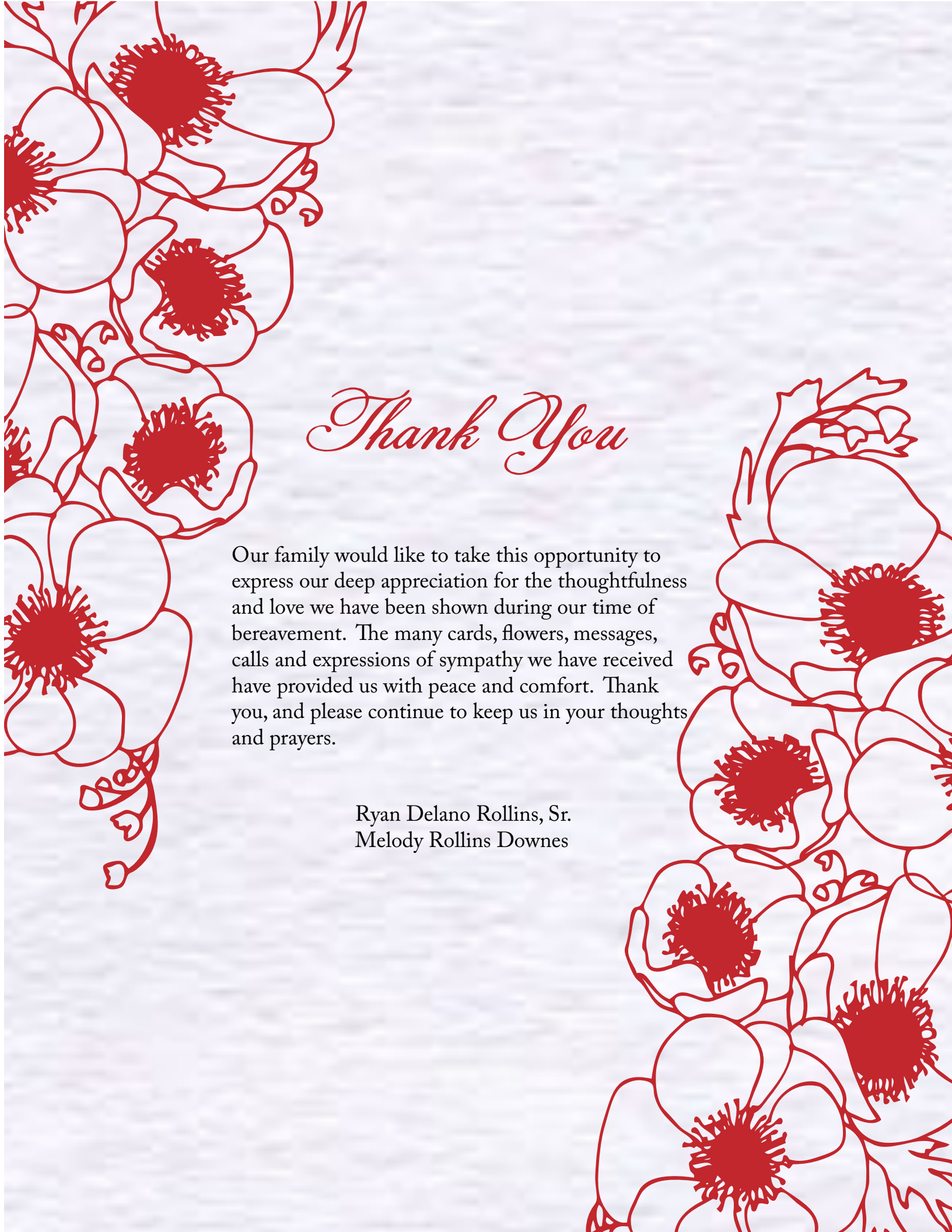
Memories

Musical Selection

Eulogy

Closing Remarks and Slideshow





Thank You

Our family would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation for the thoughtfulness and love we have been shown during our time of bereavement. The many cards, flowers, messages, calls and expressions of sympathy we have received have provided us with peace and comfort. Thank you, and please continue to keep us in your thoughts and prayers.

Ryan Delano Rollins, Sr.
Melody Rollins Downes