

Mom's Eulogy

When I think of Marilyn two words come to mind immediately, love and faith. Throughout her life she always had a connection to her faith, it was what centered her and gave her peace and comfort. Her faith provided a safe space for her to allow herself to feel things, things that maybe she was struggling with or pushing away. Her faith challenged her, frustrated her, and sometimes she would need to take a break from her relationship with God when she was feeling angry, confused, or let down, but she would always return, it is what grounded her. One of the ways she expressed her love was talking about how important her faith was to her and hoping, praying, that she could pass on that peace to her loved ones, especially her children and grandchildren. She carried so much love in her heart, she felt things deeply. Sometimes the broken pieces made it difficult for her to be out in the world, but her love never wavered. If she loved you, you were always with her.

She was born in Everett on February 24, 1947 (Marilyn Rita Maxwell) and grew up in Stoneham. She had 5 siblings and from a young age she took on the role of caretaker. She would fill that role all her life. She was born during a time when children didn't have the privilege of being children for very long. Her family didn't have much, they lost their mother at a young age, and as a teenager Marilyn worked to help provide for her family. She would take her younger sisters on many outings. Her sister Joanne recounted many times when Marilyn would take them on little adventures, leaf peeping in NH, shopping, bowling, the movies, drive-ins, or just for a Sunday ride and ice-cream. She even took aunt Jo to the World's Fair in 1966. She worked at a Woolworths luncheonette as a waitress throughout high school. She loved to dance & had many friends. The family is still in touch with some of the kids from the neighborhood after all these years.

When she was around 18 years' old, she met her future husband Bill at work. They worked at EC&G in Burlington, a national defense contractor. They had two sons, Dan & Matt. Marilyn recounted the story often about how both times she told Bill she was pregnant he was so happy he picked her up and spun her around. They lived in Billerica with their two dogs Taedor and Kristi. So many happy memories were made there.

Marilyn had a life full of beauty but it was not without struggle or hardship. She was a fighter and so very strong. She was smart and funny and extremely resourceful. No matter the challenge she persevered and would so often put everyone else before her own needs and healing. She became a single mother and worked tirelessly to provide for her boys. Once again, she turned to her faith for strength and spent a lot of time at the Scituate Congregational Church where she sang in the choir. Times were hard but the love she had for her boys got

her through. It was through the church that she met and fell in love with the music director, Allen Thomas. She always loved the music the most, it was when the church was filled with beautiful music that she felt closest to God and the most at peace. They were married and had two more beautiful children, David, and Kathryn. Dan and Matt loved their new roles as big brothers, they adored having little ones in the house, there were many happy times spent together, precious moments filled with laughter.

After she had Kathryn, Marilyn faced yet another challenge, she was diagnosed with colon cancer. She geared up for another fight and thankfully the doctors were able to successfully treat her. She spent many years struggling with pain and the traumas of her life weighed heavily on her. She dug deep and found her strength while she raised her children. They are her legacy. Her love for them was unparalleled. All four of her kids are amazing humans. They are kind, loving,

generous, and hardworking. All four inherited her tremendous work ethic. They made her proud every day. She was also blessed with four grandchildren and she was so in love with them. Whenever she would talk to us on the phone or send us a message, she would always send her love to her 4+4+4, that's how she would word it. She loved her children's significant others with her whole heart as well and always included us in her thoughts and prayers.

Something I always took notice of when I was growing up was that her home was always open. So many of her children's friends called her mom. She always made sure everyone felt welcome. She was a great listener; she would sit with you as long as you needed. She had so much empathy and had a way of making you feel heard. I think that one of her favorite things was talking to strangers. If someone was hurting or needed help, she was really good at being there for them. A stranger would not know her own pain so she could be fully invested in

their needs without worrying that they would know her own struggles. She made friends everywhere she went. Her house in New Bedford was no different. She was so happy there and created beautiful bonds with the residents and staff. They truly loved her.

Over the last 15 years Marilyn faced many health problems. The weekend that Aila was born she ended up in the hospital where she contracted a staph infection, she almost died. She was very sick and by the time we got her to Mass General Hospital (thanks to Jen) she was in danger of losing her hand. While she was at MGH, they found numerous brain aneurisms. She would spend the next year having multiple brain surgeries. Once she was out of the rehabilitation program, she moved to Maine to be with her sister Joanne and take time to heal. She really loved that time and we are forever grateful to Aunt Jo and her husband Steve and her cousins for being there for her while she regained her strength.

Marilyn loved the beach. It was her happy place. She loved lighthouses, the ocean, the sun on her face. I think lighthouses were so special to her because they were built to guide sailor's home. When times were challenging, when she was sailing the rocky waters of her life, lighthouses were a reminder that she could always find her way back home. Back to her peace, her loved ones, her faith, her serenity. When Matt was driving her to her new home in New Bedford, they pulled down a street and on the island in the median there was a large monument that looked like a lighthouse. She exhaled and said, I'm home. We are so grateful to everyone who befriended her there, who took care of her, and for all the moments they let her take care of them. It really was heaven sent when she went to live there and she felt it right away. Everything seemed to fit, including the beautiful old church she could see from her bedroom window and the seaside air that filled the streets. In life sometimes things just go right. Over the past week

we have received messages from her “family” at 550 County Street, because that is what they were, family. They lived together, ate their meals together, spent time together, laughed and cried together, and now they are grieving together. They are grieving the loss of one of their own. Marilyn belonged. Her friend John said, “I’m really going to miss her, she was a mother to me, it will never be the same here again.” Her friend Paul said, “I knew if her door was open then she was ready to meet downstairs for coffee. We had the best talks over our morning coffee.” Her friend Maria said, “The meaning of the name Marilyn is star of the sea, to me it meant all that was good. It was a pleasure and an honor to have shared the time that I had with her. She was a beautiful soul, beautiful human, that will be missed dearly.”

She passed away on Sunday June 25, 2023 (Marilyn Rita Thomas). Her passing was peaceful and she was surrounded by her loved ones. We will forever be grateful to the wonderful ICU staff. They were incredibly

gentle and so sweet with her. Their compassion really made such a difficult situation a lot easier to manage.

I am a big believer in signs. I know many people would say it is just a coincidence or that you see what you want to see, and I am a believer in that too, for good and for bad, but sometimes it just hits too close to home for me to consider it coincidence. When Matt and Dan's dad passed away, I was pregnant. When we first found out we were expecting we weren't planning to find out the sex of the baby. For some reason I felt strongly that I was carrying a boy, mom believed that too, she had this uncanny way of knowing those kinds of things. As we were discussing names, we were going through combinations of our father's names if it was a boy, William Thomas, Samuel Douglas but, when we lost Bill, I told Matt that I wanted to name our son after his dad. Not a variation of his name, but his exact name, and so Will became Willard Carlton Litchfield II. We bought our house before the

kids were born, 243 Pleasant Street - 2.4.3 (We. Love. You.). After dad passed, we realized that within a mile of our house there was a Willard Street, a Carlton Street, and a Litchfield Street. To me those “coincidences” are literally too close to home to be anything else than a sign that Bill is always with us. I know that as time goes on there will continue to be signs and mom will have little ways to say “I’m here,” “I haven’t left you.” Last week my brother sent Matt a picture of his close friend who’s having a baby, a picture from her maternity photoshoot. There she was with her big pregnant belly holding a wooden sign with her son’s name engraved on it – Maxwell Thomas. I couldn’t believe it, the name mom was born with and the name she passed with. Some things in life just happen, good things and bad things, and there is no rhyme or reason for it. Then there are other things that can’t be explained, that touch our hearts, speak to our souls, and bring us comfort when we need it the most. A close friend, Amanda Dauphinee, said to me the other day, “Because of her health she wasn’t able to come to many things or be with her family as much as she wished, but

now she can.” She’s the moon and the stars, the air all around us, the sun on our face, the first Robin of spring, and the joy in our hearts. Now she can truly always be by our side. I am praying that everyone in this church feels that comfort. As we say good-bye to Marilyn may we all feel contented to know that she is finally at peace and she is where she has yearned to be for so long, in the arms of her lord.