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Friends, family, colleagues, and all who loved Patricia Anne Williams—our Pat—thank you for being here today.

We meet to honour a life that began in London on 17 October 1948, a life rooted in Islington and carried, with purpose and grace, through classrooms, staffrooms, choir stalls and footpaths across the South Downs.
We meet as those who learned from her, were encouraged by her, and were steadied by her—often with nothing more than a sentence perfectly chosen and a smile marked by red lipstick.

I speak as her daughter, and as one of her pupils in the broadest sense.
Mum taught me how to read the world as carefully as a poem, and how to live with both courage and good manners.
It was a respectful, loving relationship; she was my teacher in life as well as my mother.
That was her gift to many of us—education as a lifelong grace, and courtesy as its daily expression.

Pat was the first in her family to attend university, a fact she wore without vanity but with a quiet sense of responsibility.
She read English at Durham, finding in its libraries and lecture halls the companions she kept for life—Austen and Shakespeare, of course, but also the faith that words, well chosen, can widen a person’s world.
She returned to London to teach, and generations of pupils met her there, a young woman with a precise lesson plan and a mischievous glint that warned: you will work hard, and you will enjoy it.

In time she became headteacher of St. Martin’s.
It suited her.
She believed schools should hum with conversation, not just compliance.

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Under her watch, the debating society found a proper home, the school library became a sanctuary, and the arts were not an adjunct but a beating heart.
She was principled, eloquent, and impeccably organised.
But she was also generous with praise—never lavish, always exact—and generous with time, especially for the student who needed five more minutes at the end of the day.

She was married to my father, Michael, with whom she shared a partnership of loyalty and laughter.
Losing him was the great sorrow of her middle years, and yet she bore widowhood with the same quiet discipline she brought to everything else—putting one careful foot in front of the other, and offering comfort to others even as she rebuilt her own days.
She was mother to Emily and to me, Claire, and grandmother to Thomas, Elodie, and Grace.
She was the aunt who remembered exam timetables better than parents did, and who somehow knew every niece’s favourite biscuit.

When she retired to Sussex, she did not so much stop as change gear.
She joined a choir, went rambling on the South Downs with a map that never once blew away under her command, volunteered for causes that advanced literacy and opportunity, and filled her calendar with gallery visits and theatre nights that were always on time and sensibly layered against English weather.
If you ever saw a pencil line through a concert programme, you were likely sitting beside her as she matched names to voices, quietly delighted to learn.

We are told not to be sentimental in grief, and so I will be precise.
What we will miss most is her wise counsel—the way she could return a knotty problem to its simple thread.
We will miss that red-lipsticked smile at the kitchen door, the one that announced tea as both refreshment and event.
And we will miss the handwritten notes that appeared in our bags before big days: “Remember who you are.” “Breathe.” “You have prepared—now enjoy.”
These were not grand gestures.

They were daily acts of care, as neat and sure as her signature.

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My favourite memories are set, as she liked them, in good light and warm company.
Winter evenings when she read Jane Austen aloud—voices modulated, irony sharpened just enough—while cocoa cooled in our hands and the house felt held together by sentences.
And summer trips to Stratford-upon-Avon, packed sandwiches and a train that she insisted would be caught if we left now, not in five minutes.
In the stalls before curtain-up, she would glance at us, eyebrows raised, as if to say: pay attention.
There will be something here for you to keep.

Her values were not complicated.
Integrity meant doing what you said you would do, even when no one thanked you.
Punctuality was a form of respect.
Public service was not a slogan but a habit—meetings attended, letters written, budgets read in full.
Courtesy to all, because you never know the day someone else is having.
And education as a lifelong gift—received gratefully, given freely, and never, ever hoarded.

She adored language, but she did not worship it.
She knew that words must do work.
That is why she fought for school libraries and debating societies; why she argued—calmly, relentlessly—that the arts were not “nice to have” but necessary to a thoughtful life.
Former pupils have told us, these past days, that she opened doors they had not known to knock on.
One wrote: “She didn’t change my marks; she changed my expectations.”
That sounds exactly like her.

Pat had a mischievous wit that spared no pomposity, her own included.

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If a speech ran long, her watch would acquire a certain gravity in her hand.
If a plan grew overcomplicated, she would say, “Shall we simply do the next right thing?” and we would.
She could be properly exacting.
Lesson plans straight.
Shoes polished.
Birthdays remembered on the day.
But that exactness made room for others to feel safe and seen.
It was the structure in which generosity could flourish.

She died aged 75 after a brief illness.
Brief is the right word; it was swift and serious, and there was little time to prepare.
And yet, even in those last days, her concern was for us.
Lists were updated, calls made, a final note found in a book she knew I would open: “Make space for joy.”
The hand was a touch less steady; the thought was utterly her.

Today is a memorial, and so it must hold both absence and gratitude.
We mourn a mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, colleague, and friend.
We also celebrate a life thoroughly lived in the service of learning and love.
If you listen carefully, you might hear her voice in what we do next.

In her honour, we will share short readings a little later—words that shaped her and, in turn, shaped us.
If you have brought a passage, thank you; if you have not, your presence is itself a kind of reading, a testament to what she wrote in all of us.

If you wish to give in Pat’s memory, donations to The National Literacy Trust would have pleased her enormously.
She believed every child should have the keys that books provide and the confidence that speaking gives.

How shall we carry her forward?

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We can be punctual in a world that treats time casually.
We can insist on integrity when convenience tempts us otherwise.
We can choose public service, in small and steady ways, when attention is elsewhere.
We can keep libraries loud with curiosity and debate courteous even when strong.
We can read aloud to a child on a winter evening, cocoa in hand, and listen to the cadence of their questions.

And we can make room for beauty.
Walk a hill on the Downs and name the clouds.
Sing the alto line as if it matters, because to the chord, it does.
Turn off your phone as the lights dim in a theatre, sit up straight, and pay attention.
There will be something there for you to keep.

To her grandchildren—Thomas, Elodie, and Grace—your Grandma Pat was endlessly proud of you.
She believed in your potential not as a vague hope but as a near-certainty fed by curiosity and kindness.
If you ever find a small envelope tucked into a bag or a pocket, assume she had a hand in it.
And to our wider family—our many nieces and nephews—she carried your triumphs and troubles in that careful diary of hers, but more importantly in her prayers and practical help.

To those from St. Martin’s and from the schools where she taught and led, thank you for coming.
She believed in you as colleagues and friends, and she would have loved this gathering of voices.
Keep the conversation going.
Make space for the pupil who thinks no one has time for them.
Pat always had time.
Let that be an inheritance you spend freely.

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Mum, if I could place one more note in your handbag—tucked between a theatre ticket and a crossword—it would say simply: thank you.

For the cocoa and the curtain calls.

For the measured words and the brave ones.

For the maps well folded and the paths well chosen.

For showing us that a generous heart can be perfectly organised and that a mischievous wit can be perfectly kind.

We let you go with love.

We keep what you taught us with gratitude.

And, as you would insist, we will now do the next right thing.

For anyone who would like a copy of these words, or to share a memory for the family archive, you may write to cto@kuchventures.com.

Thank you for honouring Pat today—by your presence, your readings, and your commitment to the values she lived.

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