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cto@kuchventures.com

Good morning, everyone.

Thank you for being here to honour my mum, Helen Margaret Barker.

To most of you she was Helen, but to me she was simply Mum — my anchor and my gentle guide.

Mum was born on 17 March 1958, and though 66 years can feel far too short when you love someone, she filled them with kindness, graft, and a quiet, unwavering joy.

She grew up in Leeds, the eldest of her siblings to roll up her sleeves and get stuck in, and later made her way to York to study nursing — a calling that shaped the whole of her life.

She spent over 35 years at the district hospital, rising to senior nurse on the surgical ward, and if you ever wondered where patience and practicality go when they leave the textbook, they went to Mum.

That steady presence you prayed would walk through the door at 3am on a difficult shift — that was her.

She married Dad — Peter — 41 years ago, and together they built a home that always had the kettle on and a place for everyone at the table.

She was mother to two daughters, and a very proud grandmother to three grandchildren who adored her.

To our neighbours, she was the person you called when something went wrong; to the community, the woman with the first-aid bag who somehow arrived before anyone else; to every charity bake sale within striking distance, the reason the trestle tables bowed a little in the middle.

Mum was warm without fuss, steady without show, and quietly funny in that way

that landed just when you needed it most.

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She had a way of making other people feel capable — a nod, a squeeze of the hand, a “Go on, love, you’ve got this,” that sent you back out into the world a little taller.

Endlessly patient, relentlessly practical, and somehow always with a tin of sultanas to hand.

I keep coming back to a small picture in my mind: late-night tea at the kitchen table before exams.

The house quiet, the hallway light pooling across the floor.

She would listen more than she spoke.

Not one grand speech, no magic solution, just that calm presence, the spoon circling the cup, a question here, a smile there.

By the end of the cup it all felt possible again.

That was Mum’s gift — not to make problems disappear, but to make people feel braver than they knew.

She lived by simple principles that sounded like soft words but looked like strong actions:

Kindness, because it changes the weather of a room.

Service to others, because that is how we belong to each other.

Honesty, because it keeps us close.

Doing small things well, because small things, done with love, turn out not to be small at all.

If you spent any time at our house, you’ll remember her baking — the smell of fresh scones drifting down the hallway — and her roses, which she tended like old friends.

You might have found her knitting tiny cardigans for new babies, counting stitches under her breath, or out on Sunday walks along the Ouse with Dad, pointing out a heron with that little lift in her voice that meant she’d seen something beautiful.

There was nothing showy about how she loved people, but there was great tenderness in it, and great consistency.

At work, Mum made hard days gentler for patients and colleagues alike.

I've lost count of the times someone stopped me to say, "Your mum looked after me," or "Your mum sat with my dad when we couldn't be there."

She never told those stories herself; she simply put on her uniform, went in, and did the next right thing.

And when she came home, she was ours again — apron on, phone tucked under her ear, checking on a neighbour, checking on us, everyone fed and somehow seen.

There are so many things we'll miss.

Her reassuring voice on the phone — that first "Hello, love," that steadied the day.

The way every guest felt at home within minutes of arriving.

The scones, yes — though I suspect even if we follow her recipe to the letter, they won't taste quite the same, because the secret ingredient was her.

I'm particularly grateful to her for teaching me that you can be brave and gentle at the same time.

That you can tell the truth kindly.

That competence and compassion are meant to travel together.

And for loving us without conditions — no performance required, just come as you are and have a cup of tea.

Dad, thank you for loving her so faithfully for 41 years.

To her grandchildren: she carried your names like little stars in her pocket.

To our wider family and neighbours and friends: you were her beloved circle, and you helped her live her values every day.

Today hurts.

It should.

But Mum wouldn't want us to be stranded in the hurt.

She would want us to walk on, carrying what she gave us — to check in on each other, to keep a spare cardigan for a new baby, to notice the roses, to do the

small things well, to put the kettle on when someone is struggling.

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So here is how we celebrate her life:

When you pass the hospital, think of the years she stood up on tired feet so someone else could rest.

When you smell warm scones, remember the welcome that came with them.

When the river is quiet on a Sunday, take a walk, look for the heron, and say her name.

Mum, you were our anchor and our gentle guide.

We will try to live in a way that would make you nod that little nod of yours — the one that meant “Well done, love.”

Thank you for every late-night tea, every steadying word, every act of care that nobody saw.

We carry your kindness forward.

We carry your love with us, always.

Goodbye for now, Mum.

We'll keep the kettle on.

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