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Eulogy for Harriet

August 6, 2025

Thank you, Shelley, for leading this service. You have been a good friend to me and to Harriet, who loved and trusted you.

Thank you, Danielle, for making all the arrangements for today. You have been a great daughter through all of this.

Thank all of you here today for attending this celebration of Harriet's life.

Special thanks to those who sent emails and texts to Harriet while she was dying. She drew strength from your good wishes and said repeatedly that it was like being at her own funeral and hearing all the words of love and admiration that are typically spoken in eulogies. She loved it. Thank you.

From the moment that she was diagnosed with metastatic, pancreatic cancer, Harriet said repeatedly, "I am 81 years old. I have had a long and happy life and I am ready for death."

And she meant it. She felt strongly that her life had been more successful than she ever would have believed. Successful in work and especially successful in love.

She loved her family in Montreal. She loved Danielle. She loved Leo and Ruby. She loved her son-in law, Paul. And she cared deeply for many friends and colleagues and for the kids she served.

She also loved me and our marriage. She said even as she was dying that I was the best husband—that she had had so far. She was always amazed that we had been married as long as we had. "We'll be married 49 years in October she would say to me—if you're lucky."

She often commented that in the beginning she thought our marriage would last at most the length of our first lease.

Why did it last longer? We were often asked and I always said the same thing—great sex.

She was kind enough not to disagree, but she would always add that we were joined by our shared values, by our commitment to our marriage, by our love

for Danielle and her children, by taking pleasure in art and music and travel and our friends and more.

It's not surprising, I suppose, that we had shared values. We met in social work school. Both of us had made the decision to devote our lives to helping troubled people—disturbed adolescents for her, people with mental illness for me. I think she was impressed on our first date when we walked on the West Side of Manhattan and I knew the homeless people out on the street by name. I was certainly impressed over the years with the depth of her caring for the girls she served—one of whom will speak later.

We also shared political values. We believed that society has a responsibility to its troubled people, and we believed in a democratic process in which we both participated as social advocates. In recent years we shared the belief that America has been put in jeopardy by Donald Trump and his followers. We worried—I still worry—about what the future has in store for our children, our grandchildren, and our nation.

We also shared a view about death. Neither of us wanted our lives to be prolonged just for the sake of living longer. Both of us wanted our remains to be used to help people. So, she donated her body to science.

These values were an important part of what made our marriage work.

But what was most important was our affection for each other, our shared commitment to our marriage, and Harriet's ability to care for me even when I was morose.

Even at the end she cared deeply about family and friends. She comforted those who cried in her arms as they came to say their good-byes. "I will be with you in spirit" she said as she held them.

She faced death with remarkable candor and courage. She accepted its inevitability. She would have liked more time with the people she loved. But she did not "burn and rave at close of day," as Dylan Thomas cruelly urged his dying father to do. She was at peace. A model for us all.

As I was writing this, I got up to show it to Harriet to get her approval.

I want her to be alive. For me it is not enough that she had a long, happy life. It should have been longer. She should have lived to be a widow, as we had planned.

But for her it was enough. Dying fully aware of her impending death but still loving was the ultimate achievement in her life, and we should celebrate it.

Thank you again for being here today.