

**Devin Braun's Eulogy Remarks** Once while I was driving on I-66 during one of my many trips from the D.C. area to this neck of the woods, I got a call on my cell phone. It was Mom. "Hi Mom -- what's up?" I said. "Devin, I wanted to let you know that you need to be extra careful on the roads today. DO NOT answer the phone if it rings -- distracted driving accidents are way up this year, and it is important that you be safe." I think this interaction captures much of Mom's spirit -- caring for others, anxious about things outside of her control, and perhaps possessing a fleeting sense of irony. I want to thank J.D. for his touching words about Mom's life. I think my role at this point is just to fill in a few spaces with things that you may not all know about her. Because some things we all know about her -- she could light up any room; she had that type of energy. She loved the mountains and this church -- she called it home. But what are some things we might not all know about her? Well, first, she enrolled in and nearly completed a Master's program in Psychology while working a full time job as a boarding school Dean of Students in her mid-50s. In so doing, she followed in the footsteps of her mother, who attained higher education (including a doctorate) during her later years. She led a marching string band (including a banjo \*section\*) during halftime performances at the Oak Hill Academy basketball games. She missed NBA superstar Carmelo Anthony, and alum of Oak Hill, by a few years -- one wonders what he would have made at the sight of these performances. She led a marching string band (including a banjo \*section\*) during halftime performances at the Oak Hill Academy basketball games. She missed NBA superstar Carmelo Anthony, and alum of Oak Hill, by a few years -- one wonders what he would have made at the sight of these performances. She produced and performed a one-woman show at house concerts throughout the region. She would dress up in period piece, sing ballads that told the story of Appalachia from centuries gone by, and play instruments that included the guitar, hammered dulcimer, lap dulcimer, autoharp, banjo, fiddle, bass, and a peculiar item called the "Banjammer" (Look it up at your own risk). She was also an expert mid-iron player on the golf course. Well, let's qualify that. She was an avid supporter of me and J.D. when we were kids trying to learn golf, and she wanted to participate in that. She I think appropriately identified the 8-iron as the easiest club to hit, and she made it her own, using it exclusively for every shot she encountered. While watching golf, she never missed an opportunity to point out that, while Tiger might have had 220 to the front of the green and 230 to the pin, she'd "hit [her] 8-iron." She was also an ecology enthusiast and naturalist at heart, and in that spirit I think she would want us to learn something from both the highs and lows of her life to help ourselves live better lives and thus improve the species. In that spirit, we can learn the value of her kindness to others. We can also learn the importance of confronting the things that keep us from living our happiest lives. She struggled at times in later life to live her happiest life, and I think she'd want better for us. So, whether it's something trite or severe, let's all agree to take something in our personal lives acting as a barrier to happiness and address it -- with ourselves, our partners, our loved ones, whomever -- as a way of honoring her.

I want to thank everyone for coming here -- it's not an easy part of the world for folks to get to, and many of you have come great distances to be here. I especially want to thank her sister Margaret Pridgen and her good friend Jeannette Winn, who were two of the last people to speak with Mom. They indicated that in their conversations she was forward-looking and had things she was looking forward to. This was of great comfort to me and J.D. in the days after her passing, so thank you for sharing that and for being there for her. It makes sense that she was forward-looking because she was a joyful soul. She loved music as we all know, as well as creative writing. She also loved college football and rooting for exciting plays, no matter the team. Fun fact: In 2018, Texas A&M played LSU in a game that set the record for most lead changes; it also set the record for most changes of allegiance from a TV viewer. You see, she liked to root for winners; incidentally, this trait did not pass down to the next generation. Lastly, she loved really getting to know her favorite TV shows. Some folks, they watch their favorite TV show once, maybe twice, then reflect on it and move on to something else. Not Mom. She believed that we get to know and love our favorite TV shows more deeply and intimately each time we watch and experience them. This helps to explain the dozens of times she watched \*every\* episode of The West Wing as well as musicals like the 2010 25th Anniversary production at the London O2 Stage of Les Miserables. So let it be with Mom. As we depart today, let us continue to reflect on her life so that each successive time we experience her, we get to know and love her more deeply. Thank you all for coming.

Good morning. Its truly a gift to be sharing this time with all of you today as we reflect and celebrate the life of Jean Callison, our very dear mother, cherished sibling and lifelong friend. I will confess that it's a surreal experience to be speaking to you today, but as I look out at so many friendly faces spanning so many era's of Mom's life, I know this exactly how she would want today to be. Yesterday saw the immediate family gather under beautiful weather, and it was a blessing to have all the relatives young and old, together to mark the occasion. Over the past few weeks my mind filled with many happy thoughts and memories so I thought it only fitting to share a few with you today. Mom grew up as the youngest of 3 children in Gaffney, South Carolina. More than a few studies in psychology, which was incidentally her college major, will tell you that later children are tend to be more creative, adventurous, and at times risk taking due to the experience of their parents and the desire to stand out among successful siblings. While her sister Margaret and her brother Cleve will no doubt have many a story to

share at the reception later today about their childhood, you can tell that it was a time filled with many moments of joy. Evidence of this can be found in what I can best describe as the “Callison laugh”. You see, each time we would hit the road for a major holiday and bring all the family together, as soon as everyone was back together the Callison siblings had a way of picking up right where they left off. If the comedic conditions were just right, the movie “Christmas Vacation” was always a sure bet, you could see all three siblings egg each other on in unyielding laughter. If you were particularly lucky, the distinctive laugh would evolve into something akin to an asthmatic wheeze, but to my childhood eyes it showed me the unique bond that Jean, Cleve, and Margaret shared throughout life. Some of that same laughter was seen yesterday when Georgie, Ford, and Nico played for hours outside while the adults reminisced.

**JD Braun, son Remarks** Her years in Gaffney set the foundation, but it was Mom’s time in Montana that truly defined her. Perhaps out of rebellion, or to seek adventure, the time she spent tending bar at the Old Saloon in the wilds of Montana shaped her into the adult she would become. Taking on a pioneering spirit by living in an old schoolhouse, devoid of the creature comforts we take for granted, gave her a better appreciation for what was important in life. It expanded her knowledge of music, brought her beloved dog Teddy into her life, and gifted her a belonging with nature, something she would later pass on to her sons. She made lifelong friendships during that time and one of my happiest memories as a kid was when she decided to take me with her back to Montana when I was 11 years old. As the first big trip in my life, getting to spend days on a train and driving around Yellowstone National Park and through vast swaths of Montana was an experience I would never forget. It was particularly touching when we took a short detour to visit a group home for Down’s patients that she used to volunteer at. Once inside, we were instantly greeted by 3 long term residents who hugged mom and remembered her like she had just left. The kindness and love she showed to each of them was evident, and fits a theme that carried with her as she evolved into a professional educator. Motherhood has a way of changing one’s priorities, and allow me take a brief moment to say a special thanks to all the mother’s present her today as we celebrate Mother’s Day weekend, we thank you for your gift of life and your willingness to share this weekend with us. In raising us, both Mom and Dad provided a happy and loving home and gave us the opportunities to branch out and pursue our dreams. Despite her best efforts to instill a love of music to both of her sons through many years of piano and music lessons, the most charitable way I can put it is that our respective talents might lie elsewhere. In my case, a lifelong love of aviation might not have been Mom’s first choice for me, but its one she supported at every chance. I’m reminded of a story that happened not long after my winging as a naval aviator where we were spending time with my old flight instructor and my grandfather Gar, who was the inspiration for my vocation.

On a mild autumn day in Florida, a close friend offered up his newly completed open cockpit airplane for a demo ride and my old instructor was looking for a passenger. Without a moment's hesitation, Mom jumped up so she could learn more about what flying was all about. While I knew she would be flying with one of the best pilots I knew, I started to wonder if this might not be the greatest of ideas. After a brief tutorial and donning of a flight cap, they rolled down the runway to begin what was planned to be a short 15 minute flight around the airfield. The minutes passed and as we watched the sun set we became acutely aware that the 15 minutes had turned to 45 and we hadn't heard the airplane for some time. Thoughts started to race around. Did they get lost, run out of fuel, where were they? Shortly after, we saw a small pickup truck in the distance approach us with some gusto, and as it got closer we were both relieved and puzzled to find Mom and my instructor Al sitting safely in the bed of the truck. As soon as they stopped, Al jumped out and gave a not-safe-for-church earful to the plane's owner while Mom nonchalantly walked off the truck, smiling from ear to ear. As it turned out, the brake master cylinder for the plane's wheels had been installed backwards, so the left and right brake was effectively reversed. Pilots aren't usually too happy when you go lefty when you told the aircraft to go righty. Mom, seemingly unaware of the near catastrophe she almost experienced, was exuberant about her amazing flight around this quiet hamlet of the Florida panhandle, remarking on the beautiful birds and trees along her path. She thought it entirely normal that when they landed, they took a hard turn and rolled gently into a ditch, it must have been like that for every flight right? My relief turned to a bit of embarrassment at putting my dear mother in such a situation, but her adventurous spirit held the day and she always remarked on what a fun flight that was. However, the experience might have explained her insistence down the road that I contact her each and every time I landed from my own flights. Over the course of her career in education which included stints at the Glade Valley School here in Sparta, Chatham Hall, Junior Appalachian Musicians, and Oak Hill Academy, she displayed her greatest talent. No matter the student's situation or circumstance, she was able to inspire a calmness and confidence that had an immeasurable impact to so many young lives. She inspired this same confidence in Devin and I, even if at times she didn't always have that same level of confidence in herself. It's the many people in this room today that brought color and vibrancy to Jean's life. It was your many kind words and deeds that allowed her to prevail in times of uncertainty and self-doubt. Every expression of love and support you extended was another song performed, another story written, another important milestone witnessed in her sons' lives, another book read to Nico, and most importantly, another Callison laugh. Throughout today as you reflect on your many memories of Jean, just remember how grateful we all are that you remain such a strong part of her story.

During her last visit with us in January, though we did not speak of it at the time, I think we both started to feel as if this might be the last of our time together. We made the most of that precious time and that month saw an amazing growth in Mom's relationship with Nico and afforded us the chance to see several plays and musicals in the Saenger theater in New Orleans. I'll always remember the many musicals and stage shows we saw together, and the appreciation of the arts that opened a world of possibilities. I'm comforted that she was able to spend her final days in the home she helped build and among the friends she held most dear. Thank you for coming today and I look forward to seeing many of you at the reception later today at Crouse Park.