Eulogy for a Friend – In Memory of Lisa

Mother Teresa said,
"I am a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world."
She could have been speaking of our friend Lisa. Lisa sent much love into this world.

It has been said that Leonardo da Vinci kept the finished 'Mona Lisa' in his back room for many months before he showed anyone. This could be our friend Lisa. Lisa had no need for public recognition of her achievements and generosity.

John Milton, the English Poet said,
Grace was in all her steps, Heav'n in her Eye, in every gesture dignity and love"
He could have been speaking of our friend Lisa. Lisa was a woman of Grace, dignity and love.

Today I offer a tribute to Lisa not of one voice.
I will speak with a thousand voices for this would be at least the number of people this extraordinary woman touched with her love and friendship.

We are all united in our love for this beautiful Lady who was the very essence of Grace, elegance, compassion and heart. Today we honor you Lisa and thank you for touching each of us with your bright smile, your brilliant mind and your boundless love. Your acceptance of all of us, no matter where we came from, or what we believed will never be forgotten and although we wish from the bottom of our hearts that your beauty and grace was still with us we all feel grateful to have been touched by you at all.

Lisa, I offer you a thousand voices today, the voices of your friends, whose memories of special moments with you will be shared.

You didn't need to know Lisa a long time to be close to her. She welcomed so many friends into her life. One friend was a stranger to this area yet Lisa opened her arms to her. She says, "The friendship became very deep very quickly. Our friendship embraced spirituality, intellectual discovery and my emotional life was nourished. I felt nourished through being with her. Another friend describes her friendship with Lisa as a beautiful steady friendship that was always there. No drama, no wild stories, just there.

Lisa was kind, gracious and her care was boundless. Friends knew they could take a problem to Lisa and know that she would handle it with love and care, think about it with her brilliant mind and return armed with an incredible response articulated with love and compassion.

Lisa's analytical ability was well known and appreciated. But sometimes there was a funny side to it. Many of us have enjoyed being with Lisa and David. David would say
something in jest and Lisa would apply her brilliant mind to what he had said and deliver a full analysis complete with quotations and researched facts as to why he was wrong. Sometimes this could take 20 minutes. David would simply grin impishly and have another glass of wine.

Lisa was in her own way a brilliant Professor. She could profess lines and full character analyses from every classic novel. Car-pooling with Lisa to school was often a comprehensive educational experience as she shared her knowledge with her passengers many of whom are here today.

She loved children and young adults alike. She was always interested in what her boys and their friends were studying in school and enjoyed engaging you all on the drive to and from school in the famous ‘war wagon’.

Her intellectual talents were extensive. Her friends will especially remember her exceptional vocabulary. "Did you understand what she said?" "There were four words in a row I didn't understand" "Do I need to go back to school?" "I've got a new word to use at Book club - will Lisa be there? These were typical comments following time with Lisa.

Her raw intelligence was legendary. Yet, she never made anyone feel they needed to be any different to what they were in that moment.

One friend says, "I loved her words - I didn’t need to subscribe to a word a day - I had Lisa!" Another says, "Half the time I felt like I needed a dictionary just to hang with her. But I never let on I did not understand every word."

Speaking of words, you may be wondering about the significance of my yellow rose. Lisa and I shared a great love of words and we used to laugh about our respective accents. One day, early in our friendship, we discovered that the only word we both pronounced in the same way was "rose". Although I hasten to add that she said it far more beautifully than I with that charming Carolinian accent. This quickly became a thing with us. I would ask her repeatedly to say, "rose" and she would and we would laugh.

During one of her hospital stays, I took a yellow rose in to her. When I walked in the door with the rose she burst out laughing and without any prompting said "A rose for a rose from a rose"

Today I wear my yellow rose for our friend Lisa.

I am certain we all firmly believe she was born fiercely clutching a book in her tiny hand. We must ask Anne about this! Coffee with Lisa at the Bookworm was an institution. She would never fail to leave with an armful of books. In fact I hear The Bookworm is having urgent meetings to discuss the impact on their balance sheet.
having lost their most loyal customer and friend. Lisa cherished her Book Club. One of you told me that one-day an email arrived from Lisa. It was sent to all the members. "Call me - I've found a book I think you'll all enjoy. I have copies for all of you"

That was our friend Lisa.

Lunches with friends were joyful occasions. But it was rarely just lunch - it was often lunch with a good chardonnay. My sister visited me last season from down under. Lisa insisted we take her Beano's. At the time Lisa had been through chemotherapy, radiation and surgery. "We'll snow shoe up" Lisa announced. "Wonderful" I thought but are you really up to this Lisa? Well...
Not only was she up to it she flew up that Mountain and left the rest of us panting.
She was a woman on a mission. I yelled out to her "Lisa, what's the rush?" She said, "I'm already tasting that glass of Chardonnay. The Queen of Beano's was ready for her Chardonnay!

But we all willingly admit there was an aspect to lunching with Lisa that drove us crazy - she would often tip more than the total of the bill. "He has done such a good job - he was so sweet - he deserves to be rewarded for that", she would say with that quiet smile. Similarly, she made a point to patronize shops and restaurants owned by people she knew. She wouldn't hesitate to spend twice the amount if it meant supporting a friend.

That was our friend Lisa.

But it wasn't always about going out to eat with this amazing lady. She loved cooking and many of you would have enjoyed the fruits of Lisa's loving hands in the kitchen. In this age of instant packets and short cuts there were no short cuts for Lisa. She prepared everything from scratch. Often seemingly from nowhere. I would sometimes drop by on my way back into town keen to see her looking for a chat. Within 10 minutes the most amazing meal would be produced. There was always a freshly baked cake or brownies on the counter. She loved baking for her boys and their friends often producing delicious goodies and favorite birthday cakes.

But what was the essence of this remarkable woman and friend? Her friends are unanimous...Lisa was "God's grace personified" Lisa's relationship with God was very important to her. Yet she didn't force it on others. It was simply, quietly a part of her.
One friend said, "Lisa lived it while I am still learning. Lisa taught me to be proud of your faith and to speak of it even when you were not supposed to. No one ever doubted where Lisa was coming from. She was proud to be a devout Christian."

I remember one day we were speaking of faith and I said to her,
"Lisa you are one of the most Christian people I know - you give so much to others and you accept everyone no matter where they come from or what their faith is."

To my surprise her eyes filled with tears and she whispered, "Oh Lynda I do try so hard".

She was quite simply a woman of Grace. Hospital staff were overcome by her love, care and concern for everyone around her despite her own suffering.

But if anyone tried to tell her this about herself she would brush it off saying "Stop, oh just stop" Her humility was both touching and inspirational. But sometimes you just wanted to say "Lisa, listen, you are amazing and people want to tell you that"

Lisa was a deeply compassionate woman.

On October 5 a friend was with her during her second to last chemo treatment at Shaw Cancer Center. As they were leaving a couple came up to Lisa thanking her. She had heard through her church that a couple had a premature baby who was still on oxygen. Despite Lisa's struggles with her own condition at the time she had found a way to deliver a meal to this family.

Last Christmas, at church, the Christmas tree had several envelopes on it for Adopt a family. After the service was over and everyone had left, guess who snuck back into the building and took the remaining envelopes?

This was our friend Lisa.

When Lisa believed in something she did not hesitate to lead. An example of this was the way she threw herself into Fundraising for the Vail Mountain School. Someone who worked with her said, "People couldn't say no to Lisa. She had a way about her that drew people in to the cause she was representing. She would take on tasks that she hadn't necessarily done before. Nothing would daunt our Lisa. Yet despite her tireless work for the causes she believed in she had no need for public recognition.

This was our friend Lisa.

There was one word in Lisa's vocabulary that brought an immediate sparkle to her eyes and fear and trepidation to the rest of us. Scrabble!

One friend recalls..."One day Lisa said this is a good day for Scrabble. I was horrified - Lisa I need three dictionaries plus the internet to play scrabble with you." Yet - she helped me throughout the game and said, you know, no one wins in Scrabble - it's just fun playing the game."

This was clearly true because another friend planned to get Lisa a membership to the National Scrabble Association for her birthday and Lisa said, "Oh no, I could never compete at this - that would take all the fun out of it."
And those five girlfriends who traveled with Lisa to Bald Head Island last May. Will any of you ever forget the PUZZLE? Lisa's determination to finish a particularly challenging Jigsaw Puzzle became a target for constant affectionate teasing.

And I can vouch for the other ladies there - Lisa was the Power Horse of the beach walks. The rest of us were fit - but we could barely keep up with her.

And she had just finished her first year's treatment! But to see her on that beach - she was in her glory - she had such a love for the island. We knew she had spent many wonderful times there with her sister, brothers and families. But all she wanted was to share it with us and show us a wonderful time.

Well Lisa - you did. And so much more. You pulled together an unlikely group of women from all walks of life and loved us all to such an extent we have ended up loving each other through your journey.

This was our friend Lisa.

Our Lisa stood up for what was right. One friend tells of a Soccer incident that raised Lisa's hackles. The following morning an email arrived in everyone's inbox offering in perfect detail the facts and the injustices fully researched. She never had a problem putting someone in his or her place. Yet it was done in a gracious way. Even if she were upset with someone it would be handled with politeness and dignity. It's not difficult to see where this originates. Lisa possessed southern poise, a deep respect for good manners and personal privacy. There are things you do and don't do. Lisa had a deep sense of propriety. She was the ultimate Southern lady. One friend has even said, "Lisa made me more of a Lady". In so many ways she could have stepped out of a Jane Austen novel. It is no coincidence that she had a deep love for Jane Austen's works. This was a lady equally at home in the 21st century or in Jane Austen's world.

What was our friend's calling?

To answer this question I will borrow from the words of the author J.R. Miller, who in 1894 said, "The woman who makes a sweet, beautiful home, filling it with love and prayer and purity, is doing something better than anything else her hands could find to do beneath the skies. A true mother is one of the holiest secrets of home happiness. God sends many beautiful things to this world, many noble gifts; but no blessing is richer than that which He bestows in a mother who has learned love's lessons well, and has realized something of the meaning of her sacred calling."

Lisa could have been anything she wanted to be.
Her choice to leave a highly successful career and follow her calling was not a difficult choice for her. She knew her true calling was to be a mother and wife. She had a deep love for her family and all her friends here today know her family came first. I would ask if she was available to meet or have dinner - her answer was always the same "I need to see about my three men first." Almost every conversation with Lisa would contain such love and pride of her family both immediate and extended. She lived for Blake and Ben and was dedicated to providing a 'support system extraordinaire' to David.

Today she would want us, her friends, to pledge our support to her three men Blake, Ben and David. We do this unconditionally and with love. Lisa's friends are here to support you in any way you want or need us to. I am certain that the quotes I am about to share from Lisa's close friends in this valley would be shared by her extended network of friends. These words could easily be heralded by the thousand voices of Lisa's friends.

"Lisa was a great example of her faith to everyone - a true disciple of Jesus."
"She's a role model and I feel so blessed that she touched my life - I thank God I was in the right place at the right time."
"In 3 ½ years of friendship the love and lessons will carry me for a lifetime."
"I will be a better friend because of Lisa. She was a fun, caring, lively free-spirited person yet a completely reliable friend."
"I have never known a friendship as deep, sincere and unconditional as my friendship with Lisa. I am blessed and very grateful to have known her."
"That level of friendship is such a gift. Just to have known Lisa means everything."
"Thank you Lisa for the gift of knowing you and thank you for letting me share this journey with you and allowing me the grace to learn about myself."

If Lisa was listening right now, and I am sure that she is, she would say.
"Who are you talking about - Oh no, I do not deserve these words."
"Yes Lisa you do - we love you"
She would answer, "Love you more"
Today, dearest Lady we, your friends, have the last word.
In the words of St Francis of Assisi. "Keep a clear eye toward life's end. Do not forget your purpose and destiny as God's Creature. What you are in His sight is what you are and nothing more. Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take nothing that you have received...but only what you have given; a full heart enriched by honest service, love, sacrifice and courage"

Lisa, you will have taken so much with you for you gave so much to us - honest service, love, sacrifice, courage and friendship.

Today we say goodbye to you, our Southern Rose, our confidante, our dear friend
With all our love.