**MEMORIAL SPEECH**

**FOR**

**STEVEN GROSS**

Hello everyone. Today we’re all here, under one roof, for one purpose and that is to celebrate the life of a wonderful woman, mother, wife, grandma, sister, friend, golf buddy, and most of all, **TEACHER**... Diane Gross. I’m so happy to see so many of you here... each one of us represents a different facet and phase of my mother’s life and through our collective stories and reminiscences, she really does live on.

A child’s perspective usually has a single focus and until he... and we... learn about the world around us, that’s how it remains.... for instance.... imagine my surprise... **SHOCK**... when, in my early twenties, I realized that Mom had a life prior to 1979, the year I was born.... and what a life it was! The pre-Steven era... that sounds almost Paleozoic... (**Wait for the laugh**) was filled with lessons and adventures not often experienced by many people, but that’s what made her so special.

While most of you know this, some do not, so please allow me to give you a brief biography. Mom grew up in a military family and was the eldest daughter of four. Before she turned twenty-nine, she had lived in eleven states and three foreign countries... with **THREE** return stints in El Paso, Texas. She lived and learned in China, Germany, and France, as well as other European countries, and while I am sure the constant change was challenging, it provided an opportunity to really see the world, get an incredible glimpse of humanity, learn to adapt to any situation, and address and resolve problems with a unique perspective. My mother was the most resilient person I ever knew.... and I have a feeling that as a young child.... I did my part in refining that skill. (**Wait for the laugh**).

By 1971, Mom had returned from Europe and was teaching school in Fayetteville, North Carolina. One of the great things about life is that it can change in a minute... we don’t know what opportunity lurks...but there it was... a young man arrived in town on assignment with the ATF. With vision and ingenuity... after all back in that “Post-Paleozoic era” humans roamed free of cell phones, dating apps, text messages... and actually called on the phone- you know... the kind with a curly cord... and asked her out on a date. Something must have clicked because that man is here today.... he’s also known as my my father, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and to prove **HIS** ingenuity, that call turned into a date **AND** a job interview... he got the job and they were married.

1974 saw this couple arrive in Phoenix, and in 1979, the fun began... I was born. Remember I said my mom was the most resilient person I knew? Guess what? I trained her ... (**Wait for the laugh**)... fortunately she stuck around longer than most of those babysitters and day care workers... yes.... I tried to train **THEM** too... sadly, they weren’t quite as resilient... (**Wait for the laugh**) . I have a feeling there were plenty of people in Phoenix wishing I would have been an “easy” child like my brother, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.... of all the memories I have of my mother, one really stands out... When I was in half day kindergarten at Roosevelt Elementary School and Mom was working, she would devote her 25 minute lunch break to... guess who? Picture this... she would pick me up to take me to day care... she would be driving, eating her lunch... and fielding no less than 50 questions from **Yours truly.**  Did I mention I was a talker? (**Wait for the laugh**). Her devotion to her family was only surpassed by her talent for multi-tasking. Thank goodness she didn’t crave soup for lunch... (**Wait for the laugh**). Looking back on those times, I am filled with love and gratitude... especially since she also remembered to pick me up from day care every day after her work was done... although I have a feeling that on some days she **might** have been tempted.... (**Wait for the laugh)**

Thosefifteen minutes in the car with Mom every day were precious and it’s those little, normal, seemingly ordinary moments that I hold so dear to my heart. My mother was resilience personified, but remember that military upbringing. In certain ways, she was resolute. Take going out to dinner.... 4.30 **SHARP** or it was too late. And there were only **TWO** acceptable choices... Serrano’s or Olive Garden. .... And Friday night was pizza **OR ELSE**... and of course there were our regular phone calls. ... looking back, it really is the little things, when added up, that form a life... the simplest of memories bring the greatest joy.

Mom always had her priorities and her family came first. Her roles as a wife, mother, grandma and sister were her mission and passion. So were her students.... for over thirty years, Mom cared for, nurtured and taught her elementary school kids, many of whom came from underprivileged backgrounds, and she gave them a foundation on which to build and grow. And although **ALL** of that was more than enough, back home the lunches were always packed, the laundry was always done and folded, the dinners were cooked, and my **ZILLIONS** of questions were always answered.

We have a lot to celebrate today. Boy, are we all blessed to have known and loved this woman... (**Name her sisters**) my aunts, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ all got first dibs on knowing her... as a child, an adult, and as a friend. Dad, my brother, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, her grandchildren, (**Name them**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , (**Do you want to name daughters-in-law?**)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, all got to learn from and laugh with the best. So did her colleagues and friends, and all of her “posse” from her beloved golf club, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Diane Gross lives on in the jokes and stories and memories we will all share, and for that I am eternally thankful. Thank you all!