**BIRTHDAY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**CORETTA COCKFIELD**

Hello everyone!!! Thank you all for being here to celebrate this incredible, momentous, rare, and wonderful occasion... and while you all are here, pretty sure that the reason is to wish my mother a happy, healthy seventy-fifth birthday..... **wellllllllllll** there’s an even more important reason.... get out your cameras.... take notes... prepare to preserve this moment for all time, because **TODAY**....right **HERE**....right **NOW**... a **MIRACLE** is taking place... before our very eyes... one we never thought we’d live to see.... my mother, Mary Cockburn.... are you ready for this??? Has allowed other people to cook for and fuss over **HER**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**)....

That’s right !! After a lifetime of service... of hustling... of putting just about everyone else before herself, this incredible woman has realized the **OTHER** joy in life... that’s not only to serve.... but to **BE SERVED... and celebrated!!! .**... And it is our complete pleasure and privilege to do that today... it’s been a long time coming, but thank goodness, she finally got the message!!!

A while ago, I heard the expression, “I am part of all that I have met.” For Mom, she clearly carries with her the parts and people that have made her just who she is.... and the people this room are a testament to what she’s made of.... let’s face it, who else would inspire a gathering this **big** for a birthday party?? Each one of you holds a special place in Mom’s heart. And her heart must be pretty big... we **KNOW** it is... because she carries with her, not only all of us, but the people and the places, and memories she’s treasured throughout her seventy five years.

During my whole life, I have seen my mother hustling, working unbelievably hard, always coming up with a plan to make ends meet and keep her family afloat financially. I remember, when I was a child, as a stay at home mom, she planted and sold vegetables every weekend at the market. On weekends she cooked food to sell and made a decent profit doing it. When we came to the U.S from Guyana, she obtained a CNA certificate and began working outside the home, logging long hours... she sometimes worked two jobs at a time to take care of the seven of us. This force of nature doesn’t have a GED or college degree but through hard work and perseverance, she’s been able to purchase and own two homes. Although she wanted to complete school and have a career, that didn’t happen because she made the sacrifice to put her children first. She **ALWAYS** made sure our needs were met.

My mother is incredibly versatile, talented, and creative. When we were children, she sewed just about everything for us....from our uniforms to the dresses she designed for us for special occasions... Easter, graduation, proms, she proved that she has “golden hands.” ... and if you ever saw my sister Carla’s wedding dress, you’d know **exactly** what I mean!!! Mom later went on to complete design school, but didn’t pursue a career in fashion because her kids still needed her ...although we were a lot older. Throughout our lives she continually sacrificed her goals and dreams, feeling that our needs came before hers. As we grew up and she realized that we were gaining independence, she began to find other interests, like traveling. Of course, she never wanted to go anywhere but Guyana. Mommy’s idea of traveling was to go to Guyana, spend two weeks, return and complain for two weeks about the people back home. Her first real vacation was in 2004 when Carla, Yolanda, Paul and i went to St. Thomas for carnival and I dragged her with us. We also took her to Nieves and Tortola island hop. She complained and protested because “These places are nothing like Guyana.” What she really meant was that she was bored because she didn’t have to cook and didn’t have anyone to argue with... a **BIG** part of her usual routine when she went to Guyana. What I realized was that my mother didn’t know how to relax and live in the moment. Mom thought that when someone goes on vacation they still had to cook and clean and argue and stress. After a few trips she eventually got it. She has come a long way; she doesn’t just go to Guyana... she’ll go **anywhere** if she gets an invite..... so... take out your calendars and planners!! (**Wait for the laugh)**. The “travel bar” has been set quite high... She’s been to London three times as well as several islands in the Caribbean. She especially likes a cruise and we’ve been advised that we should send her “**cruising**” at least twice a year!!

Mom has been through heartache and impossible situations, yet in spite of the pain she’s had to endure from illness and adversity with my father, she continued to love and care for him and those that may have wronged her. When I look back at those crises, I realize how incredible my mother is. She taught us a priceless lesson in forgiveness. She was by my father’s side every day even though she worked seven days a week, twelve hour shifts. I swear, I don’t know where she gets her strength, but **BOY** does she inspire me!!!

So here we are, in a room filled with love and admiration for this very special woman... if we could picture a fine, golden thread that connects each one of us to Mom, this room would filled with precious fibers.... and with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ sisters, \_\_\_\_\_\_ brother, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ children, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ grandchildren, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ cousins, and countless, treasured, friends, neighbors, and colleagues, I’d have to say that Mary Cockburn is very rich, indeed... Mom, the first **SEVENTY FIVE** has been incredible... Here’s to the next **SEVENTY FIVE**... filled with love, good health, family, lots of cooking and cruising and everything you might ever wish for!! Congratulations!! We love you!!