

SAMPLE 1

EULOGY *for* Jack Maguire

Welcome friends and family...

For those of you who don't know me, I am Jack's friend from college and from the early days of our business careers when we were both working for Chevron. Though Jack and I eventually moved on to work for other companies, both of us remained in the Bay Area and close enough to golf together a couple times a month and to enjoy family get-togethers on Labor Day, birthdays and whatnot. Jack was always more of a brother to me than a friend and ironically, he eventually became my brother-in-law. Being an only child, I loved being an extension of Jack's large Irish family and fortunately, I had the ginger hair to fit right in.

I am so happy to see all the beautiful faces of Jack's sisters here today, Shannon, Clara, and my wife Fiona and to see his best friend and brother, Archie. Jack was blessed with a tight clan of siblings, all of whom have looked after one another over the years. For Jack, having his siblings nearby as his health was fading made everything more bearable. They reminisced with him, brought him his favorite comfort foods and sat with him on the couch watching endless hours of sports on Sundays.

I imagine Jack looking down on us all right now... at his good-looking children and their children, his many nieces and nephews and at the ocean of business colleagues and friends who have come to celebrate his life with us. I thank you all for being here.

Jack was a complex character. He was laser focused and conservative as a businessman, yet gentle and generous as a parent, husband and friend. Though Jack was a master organizer and a taskmaster at work, he would whittle away untold hours in the garage on weekends tinkering with his fishing rods. Jack required his offices and warehouse be kept immaculate and he ran his plant like a military operation, but at home Jack enjoyed the chaotic pile of shoes at the front door, the menagerie of pets that roamed the house (including the big Maine coon that slept and shed on his favorite recliner) and he thought nothing of leaving a big pile of dishes in the sink to be cleaned the next morning. Jack was a bit of an enigma, until you got to know him. Once you understood what was important to him, all of this made sense.

What exactly was most important to Jack? The answer is simple: people. Everything he did was to lift up and protect the people he loved... his family, his workers, his friends. Jack was precise about his business because he knew how important profits were toward supporting his workers and their families. And make no mistake here, Jack's employees understood this. Jack was soft at home because "home" was the nest for his family. It needed to be like one of his big hugs. It needed to be safe, warm, loving, forgiving and nurturing.

Jack's depth of character and his deep compassion for those who worked for him were legendary. Jack was not just a man of words; when he said a thing, he meant it, he did it. Jack's employees knew that if they had his back through a crunch, they could count on him to reciprocate (and generously). They considered themselves to be on the same "team" as their boss. When employees faced a family crisis or had a health issue, Jack took care of them, filling in the gaps as needed and helping them solve problems. On one occasion, his receptionist (who was a single mother)

was going through cancer treatments and had exhausted her allotment of time off, running short of cash to pay bills. Jack stepped in immediately, keeping her on payroll and purchasing a laptop for her daughter so she could do her studies online and stay at home with her mother. This was the kind of thing Jack did all the time, as a matter of course. As he used say so matter-of-factly: “It’s what you do.” Jack’s employees were his part of his “family.” He took an interest in their lives and invested in their well-being. And when Jack took ill, his employees remembered all he had done for them and they followed his example... they brought food for the family, they picked up all the loose ends at work and kept the plant going exactly as he would have wanted, they regularly checked in with his wife and they took turns stopping by to help with yardwork, a bit of maintenance and to run errands. I’d like to say “we should all be so lucky,” but luck had nothing to do with it. Jack got back what he had put in for all those years. Jack had tended his garden well.

For those of us lucky enough to be one of Jack’s friends, we enjoyed the company of a man who was intelligent, humorous and insightful and with whom we could share a game of golf, go fishing, dish the dirt about business, talk frankly about our problems and strategize about finances. Jack was a great listener, and although he had strong opinions (from which he would rarely back down), those of us who knew him well, knew those strong opinions invariably came from a good place. Jack bothered to do his research and to mull things over. He took time to weigh the benefits and downside of a thing and he thought long and hard about whether a thing was right. If it turned out he was wrong about a thing, he was the first to say so. And when he was right, you were really glad you took his advice. Whenever Jack’s friends had pressing work or personal issues to resolve, Jack

would set aside time to help. Jack was someone all of us leaned on, counted on and looked up to. To me, he was the big brother I never had.

And in being part of Jack's family, I can attest to this part of his character as well. Jack was "traditional" (or "old school" as his son Ben described him, with a raised eyebrow). He had high expectations for his kids in the realms of grades and sports and he expected everyone to "do their share" around the house. If you failed on one of these fronts, good luck to you. When Jack laid down the law, infractions had real consequences. Jack was unambiguous in this.

But when it came to affairs of the heart, you would be hard pressed to find anyone as kind, caring and generous as Jack. Jack was always the first person on the scene during times of trouble, when someone got injured or was upset and about to jump off the deep end. He generously doled out his famous bear hugs and reassured you in his deep, strong voice and he was the kind of guy who thought nothing of snuggling up with a heartbroken 14-year old daughter to watch "Little Mermaid" (for the 10th time) should the need arise. When his son threw the pitch that resulted in a triple (and the loss of a championship game for his Babe Ruth team), Jack took Ben straight home, packed up the car with camping and fishing gear and off they went to the Russian River for the rest of the weekend. Jack paid attention to what people needed and he took care of those he loved.

And I would be remiss if I did not speak about the love of Jack's life, his late wife Linda. Jack and Linda officially met at Pacific Union College in their freshman English class. Linda would be Jack's first and only girlfriend, ever. Though the two had actually been in the same class at Lincoln High School (in Stockton), both had been too shy to ever strike up a conversation.

Linda was very beautiful and exceptionally smart and once the two of them were at PUC and away from the prying eyes of their parents, Jack had a hard time holding back his feelings for her. That first year in college, Jack managed to wrangle his schedule so that he could get into two of her classes and he started showing up at all of her softball games (where she was the star hitter on the team). These attentions did not go unnoticed. Yet, while doing all of this, Jack could not muster the courage to even say “hello” (and believe me... this was unusual for Jack). Finally, halfway through one of her ball games, Linda came over to the stands to where Jack was sitting and shouted “Are you going to ask me out or what?!” The evening after that romantic encounter, Jack and Linda went on their first date and the rest is history. Jack fell head-over-heels for his star softball player (with the mile high legs) and Linda was so determined that Jack should marry her and not run back to his mother that she learned all of his favorite recipes (and improved on many of them).

I think we can all agree that in the realm of friends, family and colleagues that Jack was batting a .400. And as Jack used to say, people do “everything like they do anything.” And for Jack this was the case... he was just as successful in his academic and business endeavors as he was in his personal life. And none of this was “luck” or by accident. Jack worked his tail off at everything!

At Lincoln High, Jack had been star quarterback his senior year, all while maintaining his spot on honor roll while juggling college-prep classes. Jack’s superior grades and his football prowess earned him a full scholarship to Pacific Union College, where he graduated in 1976 in political science and business. Immediately following graduation, Jack was offered a job as executive assistant to the V.P. of marketing at Chevron. In fact, Jack and I both got executive assistant

gigs, though mine was for the C.F.O. While Jack loved working for Chevron, he knew that eventually he wanted to have his own business and soon he discovered he had a passion for print technology as well. Jack's next job would be for Blumenthal Systems in Vacaville, which produced plastic bags for most of the bread companies in Northern California. Jack's work at Blumenthal began in the print part of the plant but soon vacillated between that, technical management in extrusion and production and then negotiating and closing sales with Blumenthal's largest customers. Mr. Blumenthal was so impressed with Jack's hard work and versatility, that he paid for him to attend U.C. Davis for an MBA, with some coursework in polymer chemistry. Armed with this additional education and Mr. Blumenthal's gentle guidance, Jack blossomed at his job, coming back after completion of his master's degree to triple their gross sales in one year.

Sadly, several years after Jack's return from the MBA program, Mr. Blumenthal experienced a sudden decline in his health and having no children interested in taking on his business, he turned to Jack to keep it running and to take over management of the plant. The year prior to his death, Mr. Blumenthal mentored Jack through all of the logistics of continuing his business operations in his absence, eventually working out financing for Jack so he could purchase the company outright. In 1985, Blumenthal Systems became Jack's company and as a result of his many years of leadership and hard work, it continues to thrive. Unlike Mr. Blumenthal, Jack's children did take up the mantle of the business and it is their intention to continue running it as they have.

Jack passed away on December 22, after nearly a year of unsuccessful treatments for pancreatic cancer, and having spent a month at Dove Family Hospice. Jack died peacefully, surrounded by his wife and siblings. To those who remained by Jack's side to the end, Jack had conveyed how glad he was for the life he had. He had no regrets.

Jack was preceded in death by his wife, Linda and his parents, Abigail and Henry Maguire and by Linda's parents, Bill and Fran Hamilton. Jack is survived by his siblings and their spouses, Shannon and Richard, Clara and Ben, Archie and Christina and Fiona (my wife), by his children Adrian, Ben, and Rachel, by his grandchildren Samuel, Bennett, Sarah, Francis, Jonathan, Erin and Paul and by his many nieces and nephews.

Following our service, Jack's family asks that you join them for a lunch in the tent behind the winery. We look forward to seeing you there.

*SAMPLE 2***EULOGY *for* Nancy Roberts**

Greetings! Bon jour!

Many of you do not know me, as I have been living in France for the last three decades (only visiting Chicago a couple of times a year), but I am Christina, Nancy's oldest daughter. My mother often called upon me to put things in order for our family and today was no exception. I have many fond memories of growing up in this neighborhood and of attending this church and though I have been away for many years, I still recognize many of your faces.

Nancy would have been so happy to see all of us gathered here today: her dear friends, long-time neighbors, her music club colleagues and everyone in the three generations of her family, her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren... the fruits of her well-lived, long life.

Nancy spent considerable time thinking about what this day might be like. She wanted it to be beautiful for all of us and for it to be a happy gathering, where the many people in her life could meet each other, forge new friendships and lean on each other in their sadness over her absence. Nancy loved gardening and she wanted us to enjoy fragrant flowers. She loved playing Debussy and Ravel and wanted us to be surrounded by their ethereal chords. And Nancy also loved poetry and had a huge collection of it. She spent many weekends at 57th St. Books in the poetry section, looking for anything new and interesting.

And Nancy enjoyed cooking and taking a “nip” of wine as she did her chopping (not unlike her favorite chef, Julia Child). Her well-loved (and slightly charred) copy of “The Joy of Cooking” sat on a music stand next to the kitchen counter, always open to her latest project. For today’s celebration, Nancy asked that we enjoy some of her favorite foods (and do that we will, post-ceremony). Before she passed away, she made a neat, handwritten list of her favorite dishes from restaurants in this neighborhood as well as a list of favorite pastries from Bouchon Bakery. Those of you from the neighborhood will likely recognize some of these dishes. We will enjoy all of them shortly!

And in picking a setting for her celebration of life, there was only one acceptable location: this majestic First Unitarian Church, which she loved so much. Nancy was part of this congregation for over 50 years and it was her extended family. The church was especially important to her after she lost our father, Erwin, (she being 48 at the time and also having to deal with us children leaving the nest). It was a difficult time for her, and this church and congregation helped her weather that storm.

Nancy loved being part of the church’s weekly altar preparations, creating huge arrangements from flowers she picked from our garden. And she loved bringing classical music groups in for holiday services, with her playing the piano, of course. And for years, Nancy was a teacher to the middle school children in the congregation, both in religious studies and art. For today’s service, Nancy requested that the church’s assistant minister, Reverend Sarah, be the officiant. Reverend Sarah has become an important part of our family over the last few years, having kept track of Nancy’s health and state of mind as all of us children live far from Chicago. But most importantly, Sarah was our mother’s best friend

and was by her side for the last six months of her life. For this we are deeply grateful.

In summary, Nancy wanted her “celebration of life” to be a concert, a poetry reading, a flower show, a gourmet dinner and a party... all-in-one. A *very* tall order, especially for her grieving family. So... for the last two weeks, my siblings and I shoved our tears to the side and got down to it and we planned. Let me tell you... this was a labor of love. In reconnecting with each other and with all of mom’s friends, we realized, our mom was the coolest mom ever. The more we immersed ourselves in picking music and poems, food and flowers, and in writing out our favorite stories, the more joyful we became. Our revelation: Nancy had led a really good life and she had passed that joy of living on to us.

So, we pulled out mom’s rolodex (yes, she was still using one) and called up her music friends, book club friends, “girl” friends, the guy who did her yardwork and we visited all of her favorite neighborhood restaurants and her favorite bakery. Everyone we talked with had valuable input and many of these folks helped us in putting together today’s celebration. And thanks to Nancy’s many friends, instead of an afternoon “celebration of life,” we have enjoyed a two-week celebration of her life. Her many wonderful friends have helped fill the big hole in our hearts. And in meeting all of these people, we discovered so much about our mother... that besides being our mom, she was a fascinating, funny, outspoken, artistic, multi-faceted woman, someone really remarkable.

Who exactly was Nancy Roberts?

Early in her life, in Oak Park, Nancy Williams was the big sister (much as I am) and this role defined her early years. Growing up in a large Catholic family, Nancy was the second “mother” in the household. She helped cook, did dishes, folded laundry, cleaned the house and watched the little ones as well as getting up in the middle of the night to feed the baby. Though she loved her siblings, this was a huge amount of responsibility for a young girl and she yearned to do other things.

For Nancy, school became a reprieve from a chaotic home life. At school she could focus on reading, math problems, geometry diagrams and creating maps for social studies. And she also loved taking piano lessons with Mrs. Klinkie, who lived around the corner and who let Nancy practice in her peaceful studio in the evenings. And Nancy was an avid reader of *anything*... whatever was available, she read it. She borrowed books from friends and neighbors, collected old magazines from the family doctor, and visited the library every two weeks to get a new stack of books.

Young Nancy was a hard worker, a kind sister and daughter, an excellent musician and she excelled academically in every subject. By the end of high school Nancy was accomplished enough academically to attend any college she wanted. It was an easy decision... she chose Wellesley College. She loved its long tradition of preparing women for important roles, as she aspired to be an important person.

Once Nancy moved to the Boston area, her life changed dramatically. She became fully immersed in the popular intellectual movements of her time, and expanded her studies beyond Wellesley to Boston University, where she took piano and

music theory lessons. During one of her forays to B.U., Nancy met her future husband, my father Erwin Roberts. At the time they met, Erwin was finishing a PhD in philosophy. Within the year, Nancy and Erwin were inseparable and had decided to get married. Erwin finished his degree and secured a teaching position at the University of Chicago. The two of them eloped, much to the dismay of Nancy's Catholic parents, then moved to the south side of Chicago to start a life together.

Sadly, Nancy did not complete her degree at Wellesley. This was something she regretted her whole life and having her three daughters complete their degrees was a goal she voiced to us throughout our childhood. To her credit, all of us did complete our degrees (and master's degrees beyond) and our brother Peter is a pediatric heart surgeon. In the school of parenting (and preparing her kids for college), my mother graduated summa cum laude.

Though Nancy gave up her academic career, she did not become a typical housewife. And though Erwin had a challenging career in academia, he did his part in contributing to our household, freeing my mother up to practice piano and to take music lessons with faculty at the university and to enjoy classes at Roosevelt University and at University of Illinois, Chicago. He also saw to it that we had a housekeeper and someone to tend the yard so she had time to "feed her mind," as he called it.

Nancy relished her excursions from home and delving into intellectual pursuits. And she joined numerous women's organizations over the years, many centered in our neighborhood and with spouses from the university. It was a rich social life for her and one she thoroughly enjoyed.

And our mother devoted untold hours to us every day, correcting essays, helping us work through calculus problems (yes, she was fabulous at math) and checking our procedure on chemistry labs. She was amazing! And it paid off, as all of us did well in school and beyond. And though Nancy was not athletic, per se, she did love being outdoors and took us to every park and beach on the south side, taught us to play catch, throw a frisbee, ride a bike and to play wiffle ball. And she made sure all of us could swim well, enrolling us in years of classes and team workouts through the Southside Swim Team at the University Club.

And as Nancy's children, we remember other fine details of the rich, happy life she provided for us. Meals were lovingly made from scratch, always with a mind to our eating wholesome foods (i.e. lots of veggies) and dinner time was sacred. Everyone was to sit at the table and for an hour share the day's tribulations as we cleared our plates. And there was always dessert, either homemade by my mother (or father) or from our favorite bakery. In the evening, us girls sat around the kitchen table doing homework with mom popping in between loads of laundry to check in on things (with Peter always off in his room, away from our chatter).

Summer weekends (and long stretches of vacation) were spent at a cottage we rented in Grand Haven, Michigan. Though the packing up and preparing the house and pets could be tedious, our mother saw to everything being a positive and enjoyable group labor of love. Those weekends in Michigan were absolutely lovely and some of our most memorable times together as a family: long walks on the shores of Lake Michigan, evenings around the campfire, hours of board games and cards played at the kitchen table.

What can us siblings say, except that we could not ask for a better mom. The home life she created for us was *her* work of art. She provided the fertile ground we needed to grow strong, happy and be successful. Both Nancy and Erwin set a very high bar in the departments of parenting and marriage.

But who was my mother outside of her life as our mother and wife to Erwin? Her friends tell the story best *and* let me preface this by saying my mother enjoyed the company of every type of person. She appreciated the valuable gifts that all people brought to the world (and to our lives specifically).

One of my mother's oldest and most constant friends was Jack, our landscaper. Because Nancy loved gardening, she and Jack had a fast connection. And because Jack's whole life was about plants and soil and whatnot, he brought to her all sorts of practical knowledge about what to grow and how to keep everything looking great in a challenging city environment. Our entire garage became their "potting shed" and eventually he helped her set up a small green house so she could jumpstart veggies for Chicago's short growing season. Jack stayed on to help Nancy after Erwin died, doing odd jobs for her in addition to yardwork and checking in on her at least once a week, often talking with her by phone. And even after Nancy moved into assisted care, Jack continued to see her in person every week. Thanks to Jack, Nancy's small room was always filled with beautiful, well-tended plants and those were a great source of joy to her.

Another source of joy for my mother (and for decades) was the Southside Music Club, a group of mostly university wives who gathered every two weeks to play for one another and to enjoy a potluck lunch. The women in the group would form various ensembles (duos, trios, etc.), getting together between meetings to

learn new repertoire. Some of these neighborhood ensembles endured for years and in my mother's case, her dear friends Sally (the cellist), Ingrid (the soprano) and Katrina (the flutist) found ways to keep their ensemble intact, even for lack of repertoire. They transposed pieces meant for other instrumentations, wrote their own arrangements and several times even commissioned pieces from university composition students. And they would break down into smaller groupings, while continuing to bring the quartet together to coach one another. They were an inseparable group, until they lost Sally six years ago to cancer and then Ingrid moved back to Denmark. Katrina and Nancy continued to meet, even when Nancy went into assisted care and they gave holiday concerts for the residents there. Many of us attribute Nancy's long life and sharp mind (even in her old age), to her music. It was her refuge and her joy.

Then there was Annie from the Bouchon Bakery. Annie was originally Bouchon's pastry chef, but after the original owner passed away and Annie bought the business, she became "front of house" and subsequently became good friends with my mother (who was likely putting her kids through college with the prodigious number of pastries she bought).

My mother frequented Bouchon at least five times a week, always in the morning and she would sit at the bistro table closest to Annie's register, where she could chat with her between customers. My mother loved Annie's cappuchinos and her favorite breakfast food was the Napoleans (for those of you unfamiliar with this decadent confection... this is puff pastry layered with sweet pastry cream and strawberries - a real "breakfast of champions"). We do laugh (and shutter) to imagine how many times our mother consumed this breakfast, but I have to believe that this pleasurable routine plus the animated political conversations she

shared with Annie nearly every day were good for her. Annie and Nancy had a history together that spanned nearly three decades and we are grateful that Annie was able to be here today. And although Bouchon Bakery has long since closed its doors, Annie made Nancy's favorite Napoleans for today's lunch. That will be a great slice of nostalgia for us all.

Nancy's other wonderful, constant friends include neighbor Sophie, whose backyard butted up to ours, Nadia, her longtime creative writing teacher at University of Illinois (and fellow poet addict), Jim, her pal at 57th St. Books, Cynthia at Noodles, Etc. (Nancy's very favorite restaurant), and Dustin, the chef at Kenwood Grill, where Nancy loved to go for brunch on Sundays. Nancy always had a few younger friends, who I believe were surrogates for us faraway kids, and her most recent were Salvador and Marta from her assisted living home. They saw to decorating her room for holidays, bringing her books and music and an occasional treat from the outside.

There are so many other important people that were part of Nancy's life, many of you here today. Know that she dearly loved her time with you... the faculty dinners, the various get-togethers, the church events, the parent activities and so many of the other gatherings that made up the beautiful fabric that was Nancy's life. All of you deserve credit for your contributions to her happiness and her will to live to the age of 98. On behalf of Nancy's whole family, I thank you.

And before we head down to the community room to enjoy a wild mix of noodle dishes, Greek food, Cajun casseroles, Thai curries and gourmet pastries (thank you very much mother!), I would like to close with one of Nancy's favorite poems:

The Road Not Taken

by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sign
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.