Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Peter, the second oldest of Joan's four children, and I've been told to keep this short because there is cake.

Mom, eighty years.

I want to talk about the address book.

Most of you have seen it. It lives by the phone. It is handwritten, it has been rewritten twice, and there are names in it of people who have been gone for thirty years and are still not crossed out.

Here is the thing about that book. My mother has four children, eleven grandchildren, and now some number of great grandchildren that I genuinely cannot keep track of. And she has never gotten a single birthday wrong. Not once. In eighty years.

There's no app. There's no reminder. There's a book, and there's the fact that she decided a long time ago that remembering people is a thing you do on purpose.

When I lived overseas in the nineties, she wrote me letters. Real ones, every few weeks, for four years. Not about anything important. Who she'd seen, what was happening at the lake, what my brother had done that annoyed her. I still have all of them in a box in my closet.

Every single one of the eleven grandkids in this room learned to play cards at her kitchen table. Every one. And not one of them was ever let win, which several of you clearly still resent.

She is not a sentimental woman, and she is going to be annoyed that I'm doing

this, so I'll stop soon.

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Mom, you have kept this entire family in touch with itself for six decades. The four of us would have drifted apart years ago. We didn't, because you wouldn't allow it.

Look around this room. Thirty five people, four generations. That's not an accident. That's the address book.

My wish for you this year is a year full of exactly this.

Everyone, on your feet.

To Joan. Eighty years, and the memory of an elephant. Happy birthday, Mom.

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