

Lydia Jane Reynolds

Good morning all.

My name is Steven Lewis and I am Lydia's son. On behalf of myself and my sister Valerie, I want to thank you all for being here today as we formally say goodbye to our mother. I recognize most of the faces here, but there's a few I don't know. I would love to speak with you and shake your hand after today's service, if you have a few moments before you leave. Each of you was special to Mom in one way or another and I want to recognize that.

My mother was born Lydia Jane Ethridge on February 25th, 1959 to my grandparents, Lucille and Edgar. She spent her childhood in Oklahoma City, where she made many lifelong friends. At the tender age of seventeen, she met my father, Hank Lewis, who was visiting the area from Kentucky. The two eloped on September 1st, 1976 and he took her home to Louisville.

Valerie and I were born just one year apart. My parents were still very young when we came around, and were struggling to get by. When our dad was laid off from his job, Mom took it upon herself to help make ends meet. She was a wonderful painter. She was able to create artwork and sell it at school functions, local fairs, and even neighborhood garage and estate sales. Mind you, the internet was not around back then for her to market her work--Mom's paintings were good enough that word of mouth alone brought her quite a bit of opportunity. Mom would never say this, but her work was actually compared more than once to that of famous artist Claude Monet...and maybe you knew this or not, but Mom once won a contest for best Monet impressionist. Mom was also a big giver and often painted her birthday and Christmas gifts for friends and family. I wouldn't be surprised if many of you here today own one or two of her original pieces!

When my parents separated in 1985, Mom decided to go back to school. She moved us to Lexington to start classes at the University of Kentucky, where she graduated in 1991 with her degree in Art History and Visual Studies. The next year she realized her lifelong dream of becoming an art teacher when she joined Edwards Christian Academy in nearby Southerfield. At Edwards, she met the man who would become the love of her life, Sam Reynolds. The two wed on July 7th, 1993 in this very church.

I see that many of you here today are teachers and students from Edwards, which sadly closed its doors for good in June of last year, about a year after Mom first started to get sick. I just want to take this time to acknowledge each of you, and to say thank you for welcoming my mother to the school like you did. She loved that school and I think her love for the kids there it was evident in the work she did. The art club that she started in 1996 went strong until the school closed its doors, starting out the first year with just 13 attendees and ending its final year with almost 100 members.

Today I also want to acknowledge my stepfather Sam. As many of you know, Sam Reynolds is no longer with us, but the years that he and Mom were able to spend together were the greatest years of her life. It gives me peace in knowing that he and Mom are finally together again.

Besides her love for painting, for Edwards, for her children and for Sam, Mom had a love for Mother Earth. It drove her mad to see litter on the side of the highway and she would often stop herself to pick it up. She stopped using plastic bags and straws long before it became trendy to do so. She had a compost garden bed and regularly participated in not only the city's recycling program, but also her neighborhood's Green Club. This club met once a month to make crafts out of household odds and ends that would otherwise be thrown away. Having lived an eco-friendly lifestyle for as long as we could remember, Mom instilled her passion for caring for the earth in my sister and I, and eventually in Sam, although it took him a little bit longer to adopt her ways!

That passion is actually why Mom's remains are not here with us today. Several months before she passed, and still feeling relatively okay, Mom began to research her own final disposition. She discovered that, after death, her body could be cremated and placed in a biodegradable pod. She could be "planted" rather than buried or inurned, and her remains could provide nurture to a tree for years and years, possibly centuries, to come.... In other words, as I speak, Mom is caring for the planet in her own special way, even in death.

How wonderful is that?

Before I close, on behalf of myself and my sister, I want to share a special memory of our mother that I think does a really great job at highlighting just how wonderfully bright her heart was. From the time we were tots until probably our mid-teens, Mom thought it was fun to randomly stop whatever she was doing-- painting, cooking, laundry, whatever-- and yell out at the top of her lungs, "dance party!" And whatever my sister and I were doing-- playing, studying, even arguing-- we were obligated to stop and dance with our mom for about ten minutes, or however long Mom wanted us all to dance together! Both Valerie and I attribute this little ritual we grew up with as one of the reasons we have always been very close, and there is no else to thank for that but our wonderful mother.

So, thank you all once more for being here today as we say goodbye to our beautiful mother. A very special thank you to Angels Among Us Community Hospice, who took such good care of her in her final days. Also a big thank you to Little Bethel House of Faith for opening their doors to all of us today. Mom was not a member here but it means everything to us that we can send her off today, back to Sam, in the very place where they were united.

Thank you.