I first met Pat in November of 1995 when I started working in the Office of the Registrar at UT Austin. Over time we became friends, and with these two women [Char and Kristin], started a tradition of always getting together to celebrate our respective birthdays. We did this for years and years, and shared some great times.

There was a period of time, after Pat had moved to the College of Natural Sciences and these two had left UT, when Pat and I had lunch together at least once a week. There was a Vietnamese restaurant on The Drag that was cheap and so good that we couldn't resist it, even if we had brought our own lunches from home. We always intended to work through lunch and avoid carbs, but when 11:45 rolled around, one of us would email the other and before I knew it I was waiting for Pat in the hallway of the main building, and she would always approach with a big smile and a wave, with her quick step, and off we'd go to enjoy our noodles and each other's company. Thank god we did that. Thank god whatever work seemed so important then, whatever diet we were on, didn't actually keep us from spending those hours together.

Pat affected my life profoundly, and gave me several gifts over the years, of all different kinds. Some were lovely, tangible things, but there were also more important ones. I'll mention just two of them.

1. She made me read books I wouldn't normally read. I was snobbishly stuck in the Victorian age when it came to books, but Pat didn't stand for that kind of bullshit. She made me read books from my own time, and introduced me to writers, like Kate Atkinson, that I now love. I can still hear her voice saying "I've got a book for you." She tried to get me to read the Harry Potter books when they first started coming out, and I pooh poohed them of course. If they were that popular, they probably didn't fit my definition of literature. But she persisted, and gave me the first two books for my birthday. I read them both in one weekend and panted for more. Those books and the subsequent movies have given me so much joy and comfort over the years, and I owe that to Pat, who somehow knew I needed Harry and Hermione in my life.

2. She's the reason I bought my house. When she and Walt moved to Windsor Park, she hinted that homes were affordable there, and that maybe it was time I stopped renting. She talked up the neighborhood better than any realtor. So when I found myself looking for a house just a few years later, and the actual realtor pointed me to Windsor Park, it was the Harry Potter experience all over again. Somehow Pat knew that I belonged in that neighborhood, where I live to this day, with hardwood floors, and trees, and no gentrification (yet).

Pat was dear to me because she was smart, funny, tough, and as I said before, didn't stand for any bullshit. She told great stories and had energy and enthusiasm that seemed boundless. She was so proud of her kids. She generously shared her experiences of being a young woman, of having children, of aging, and I prayed that I could be as brave and sensible. She was a staunch leftist who lived her values, and she was profoundly fair-minded. The older I get, the more I realize how truly rare those qualities are. Democracy wasn't an intellectual concept for her. It was how she lived her life and interacted with the world. I loved her dearly.