My Aunt Maureen

By Jennifer Lugo
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I would like to first thank everyone for being here today to celebrate the life of Maureen Martin.

My name is Jennifer Lugo, I am Maureen’s niece. Over the past three weeks, I have spent quite a bit of time reflecting on my relationship with my Aunt Maureen. I reread letters she sent me over the years, looked at pictures of her and my family, and recalled the numerous books she sent me over the years. During this time of reflection, tears were shed, prayers were said, and heartfelt conversations were held with my family and closest friends. And although I have felt overwhelmed throughout this month, I began to realize all of the life-lessons my Aunt Maureen taught me.

On The Heartland Institute Web site, my aunt was described as a gifted attorney, writer, and scholar. I couldn’t agree more. As a young child, I have vivid memories of my grandparents bragging to their friends about their daughter Maureen, the attorney. She was the most educated person in my family, and I saw how proud that made my grandparents. When I was in high school, my aunt would talk to me about the importance of higher education and being able to support myself. She set a great example for her young impressionable niece. And although she did not enjoy the Arizona heat, she made a trip to Arizona in May of 2003 to watch me receive my bachelor’s degree.

However, her influence as a gifted scholar did not stop there. Shortly after I began my teaching career, she began strongly encouraging me to obtain a master’s degree. At the time, I didn’t think I could teach full-time and attend graduate school, let alone pay for it. But then she reminded me: She did it! I can recall one particular conversation where she explained to me that if you want something bad enough, you will find the means to get it. After that conversation, the decision was made – I was going back to school.

In addition to having a major impact on my pursuit of higher education, my Aunt Maureen also taught me about the importance of being informed about issues facing our country. She loved to send me books, articles, magazines and some of her own writings, so I could gain a better understanding of current legal issues. She would always write an inscription in the books she sent, and today, those inscriptions are even more appreciated. I have never met anyone who shared the same passion for reading, writing, and researching as my Aunt Maureen. I am sure there are many people here today who asked my aunt a question and received a complete dissertation on the topic.

I will be the first to admit, I definitely appreciated her passion for research when I needed help in graduate school, especially when taking law and politics courses. Her desire to completely
understand an issue was contagious. Conversations with my Aunt Maureen were long and they left me motivated to learn more and speak up.

My Aunt Maureen also taught me about the importance of caring for your family. As my grandparents aged, I witnessed firsthand how my aunt took care of everything for her parents. Although my grandparents lived almost 1,800 miles away from my aunt, they were able to live the last years of their lives with little worries because my aunt worked constantly to make sure bills were paid, paperwork was completed, and their house was cared for. And although she could not convince them to leave the sunny Arizona climate, she visited as much as she could and called often, at times daily, to make sure they were well. She was everything a daughter should be, and her actions have had a huge impact on decisions I have made with regard to my own father. Again, she set the example. If she could do it, I can do it.

Over the past three weeks, I have cried many nights because my Aunt Maureen is no longer here on Earth. I miss her. The thought of not being able to call her to get her advice is overwhelming. My Aunt Maureen was always able to provide advice to solve my problems and comfort me when I was upset or confused. At the end of each conversation, she always told me how much she loved me and how proud she was of me. I will miss those conversations. But I take comfort knowing that she has helped shape the woman I have become and the mother I will soon be. She is always in my heart, and I will do my best to teach my son everything she taught me.