

Dear Julia and Miranda,

I've enclosed three pictures of a day in my memory that was spent with your mother. The pictures were taken at the Homestead Resort in Virginia in October 2004, and our family and yours were there for a retreat for the DowLohnes partners (including your Dad and my husband Kevin Mills.) We had beautiful weather that weekend and Cynthia and I took our kids out to play near the golf course and the little stream near it. I took these pictures and particularly like the one of Cynthia looking so relaxed and natural by the water. Your mom was a lot of fun, always ready with a wisecrack, and we loved exchanging the stories of our roles as mothers of young kids, especially the highs and lows of parenting. Now that she is gone I am learning more and more about how special she was in other, more intellectual, ways. My friendship with her was simply and pleurably sociable, and was based on our long connection through the firm. We were always glad to see each other at firm events, looking for each other as ports in a storm, ready to engage in our own brand of conversation (that had little to do with the law, despite both being lawyers!). I don't have pictures of our most recent trip to the same resort. We were all there together in October 2006 and Cynthia and I spent even more time together then, sharing a rainy afternoon in our hotel room, just the girls, while Jamie, Kevin and Scott were out playing golf and shooting – you two and my two girls, Alison and Robin. We colored pictures and played with dolls and Disney Princesses, and kept up a running stream of conversation about parenting, generally and specifically. I have another memory in mind to share – not about the Homestead. This night was spent in Washington, September 2006, at a party where we all came dressed in “1970's” clothes, which will seem really bizarre to you someday, but that was the time period when we were all little kids, so we actually remembered people dressing that way. Your mom wore a glamorous strapless gown, earrings in the shape of glittering disco balls and spiky heels. She looked beautiful when the rest of us looked silly. That night she was teasing your Dad for not remembering that they had met 20 years ago that very weekend, and we all sat around in awe that they had been together for so long compared to the rest of us. They were very lucky that way. And, finally, while I'm thinking of parties, your parents used to give a fabulous Halloween party, and one of the costumes I remember was your Mom's “Freudian Slip,” a slinky black slip with little psychoanalysis words pinned to it...it was hilarious, smart as a whip and gorgeous all at the same time. Just like her.

Your friend, Franny Peale