Margaret M. Foran Speech
Linda Quinn Lifetime Achievement Award
Women 100 Conference
June 1, 2015

I am truly blessed to be here today.

Thank you, Theresa, for that heartwarming introduction. Every day, I am grateful to you, and to all my colleagues at Prudential, for your support, collaboration and encouragement.

We at Prudential don't have a blimp, a dog, a duck or a lizard…but we do have a company that firmly believes in building value by promoting values, including the values of integrity, transparency and diversity. Prudential is a rock—and I'm proud that it's my rock. I absolutely love what I do and the people I work with. I believe we have the best executive team and Board and I am proud to be part of such a wonderful group.

A special call-out goes to my boss, Susan Blount, a role model, and John Strangfeld, our CEO. John explains Prudential's culture as high impact and low drama. Because of his leadership, Prudential is truly one of the best places to work and grow.

Before I begin, I would like to thank Broc for creating this amazing event, which includes such interesting and talented women. I personally know many of you and have read all your responses. Wow - you inspire me. Where do you all find a time to do all your amazing accomplishments? I am humbled in your presence and know that each of you is equally deserving of this award.

Broc is a one-of-a-kind person and he has been my go to guy whenever I needed a smart, creative and out-of-the-box type of honest, corporate finance, securities and SEC lawyer. He knew all the players, their next moves and the reasoning behind their thinking. He was not afraid of change and just because something creative and sensible had never been done, that would not stop him. He would support and collaborate with you to get it done. He has inspired a generation of securities lawyers and his blog is the first place I go to get news and the real scoop. He is always creative and funny and will always take my call when I need to bounce an idea off of someone who is both and expert and a friend. I know he does this for countless others including many of you in the room. I'm grateful for what he does for all of us and think we should all applaud Broc.

I would also like to recognize the first recipient of the Linda C. Quinn Lifetime Achievement Award -- Meredith B. Cross. Meredith – you have been a personal inspiration to me and many of the women in the room today. Your intelligence, grace, hard work, insight and kindness are legendary. Thank you for all you have done, and continue to do to demonstrate that really smart women who also write really well, can be kind, compassionate, supportive, and extremely effective.

Now, a lot of thoughts went through my head when I was given the good news about the Linda C. Quinn Lifetime Achievement Award.

My first thoughts centered on that phrase “lifetime achievement.” Unless you’re Taylor Swift…“lifetime achievement” means that you’ve been around for a while. You are a person of a certain age. On the positive side, you have a body of work, built over a number of years and experiences. Thank you for judging that body of work as worthy of this award.

My next thought was almost overwhelming—it is humbling to be associated, in some small way, with the legacy of Linda Quinn.

To be honest, I felt like a baseball player getting an award named after Joe DiMaggio, or a songwriter getting an award named for Paul McCartney. This is a deep, rich honor, and I am genuinely grateful for it.

Of course, I also had to think…well, what would I wear? Even here, I’m reminded how much Linda influenced me. Every time I saw Linda, she looked absolutely regal. Finally, one day, I got the nerve to ask her where she shopped for her clothes. As a young lawyer I decided to emulate her—not just in her bearing… but also in her style.

And finally, I had to think about what to say. I don’t have an easy act to follow. Last year, the first winner of this award, our dear friend Meredith Cross, moved us to tears with her treasured memories about life and work with Linda.

I don’t have those stories. Linda and I knew each other but I was more of a familiar face than a close friend. I admired Linda from afar, but wow, did I admire her. She had stunning brainpower and an amazing work ethic. Her word was stronger than any contract. She was one of those rare leaders who had both a vision and the ability to carry it forward.

I especially appreciated Linda because she knew that she was a pioneer…and she realized, early on, that the upcoming generation was looking to her for guidance and inspiration.

She was tough when she needed to be, fair always, and exceptionally generous to people like me, who were often star-struck in her presence. She fully understood that the most important responsibility of leadership was to bring along the next generation of leaders.

I believe Linda would be heartened by a conference like this—one where we gather as a professional community, share ideas freely, test our assumptions, and build friendships that will, I know, outlast our working days.

Perhaps Linda’s greatest legacy is that for us who admired her…the answer to a tough problem becomes much clearer when we ask ourselves the question, “What Would Linda Do?”

I've asked myself that question many times in my career. Many of you know that I had an eleven-year stretch of my career where I worked for a company that went through three of the largest acquisitions in business history, a sudden replacement of a CEO by the board, and one annual meeting circled not just by picket lines, but also by a plane carrying a banner promoting a shareholder proposal.

There were days where I wished I could just donate a kidney instead of having to face another set of rancorous meetings or the sweating-out of a close shareholder vote.

What Linda would do, and what I've tried to do, was to face those situations with grace…with courage… with a sense of personal integrity… and with the goal of fair play for all shareholders, from pensioners to billionaires.

And as I look out at you, the 100 magnificent professionals here today, I'm immensely proud of the progress we have helped to forge in improving corporate governance.

Let us never under-estimate what we have done to rebalance the rights and responsibilities of shareholders and management…to make corporate reporting more accessible, understandable and readable, and to give shareholders a larger voice in the governance of the companies they own. We've worked to bring Linda's legacy of innovation to life…in what was, for decades, a group of hidebound institutions.

I see in all of you, Linda's unswerving dedication to representing the best long-term interests of all an organization's stakeholders. Of protecting investors. Of keeping our promises.

I see, in all of you, leaders ready to ask the difficult questions…and willing to make the toughest decisions to uphold the trust placed in them.
I see, in all of you, people who, like Linda, followed the call of duty to keep America's capital markets the most transparent and robust in the world.

And I see, in all of you, a shared quest not only to be the best we can be in corporate governance and corporate law, but also, to serve the next generation of women leaders as Linda served us—as mentors and role models.

Before I close, let me express my thanks to the special set of people who are central to my life. My husband Dave, our daughters Megan, Sarah and Kelly, my mother-in-law Lois and my many friends here and elsewhere…I am what I am because of them. People like Theresa, Rosemary Kenny, John Santoro, Tena Rufo, Sarah Teslik, Ann Yerger, Amy Goodman, Holly Gregory, Carol Ward, Tina Van Dam, Gene Capello, Bob Lamm, Mary Ann Georgeson, Broc, Anne Mule, Kathy Gibson, and so many more. Thank you.

In two weeks Dave and I, who met as associates at our first law firm, will be celebrating our 31st wedding anniversary. Together we have three wonderful daughters – Sarah, Megan and Kelly. Kelly is our youngest. Kelly is a very special person who was born with cerebral palsy and is very physically challenged. She has had a significant effect on me as I watched her patience, hard work, perseverance, and humor as she navigated tasks that most of us do not think twice about.

And let me close by saying that few of us knew what to expect when we chose our current careers. All I know is that when many of us started, role models were few and far between. Thank you for this award, named in honor of a role model who is still fondly remembered and greatly missed. I will do my best to uphold Linda's legacy, and continue to pay forward to the next generation of women leaders…what Linda did for mine.