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Hi everyone.

Thank you for being here to celebrate the beautiful, big-hearted life of my husband, Daniel Robert Carter—our Dan—born May 6, 1974, and gone from us on February 2, 2026, at just 51.

I was lucky enough to be married to Dan for 15 joy-filled years.
He was my favorite person, my greatest cheerleader, and the one who could turn an ordinary Tuesday into a small holiday with a playlist, a grill, and a grin.

Dan was a California native through and through.
He started as a line cook and, with the kind of optimism that didn’t check the forecast, built his own restaurant—more like a second living room—where he welcomed everyone like family.
If you ate there, you know.
If you worked there, you really know.
He remembered your name, your favorite table, and whether you liked an extra spoon of chimichurri.

At home, he was husband, stepdad to Lily, dog dad to Bruno, and a cherished son-in-law to Carol.
He was spontaneous in the best ways, always the life of the gathering, and somehow never too busy to notice when someone needed a hand—or a plate.

My favorite memory lives in our backyard.
Summer nights, a bedsheet as a screen, fairy lights, and Dan at the “podium,” introducing the movie like a Hollywood host.
He’d give dramatic speeches about popcorn “notes” and “buttery finishes,” then insist on his homemade batch being treated with the respect of fine wine.
He took a bow, we rolled our eyes, and then we laughed until the credits.

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Those nights taught me this simple truth: joy likes to be curated, and Dan was a master curator.

He found sacredness in community and kindness.
Church for Dan could be a sunrise surfing session, a shared meal after a long shift, a bonfire where the shyest guest left with a friend.
He believed love is the legacy we leave.
And if love is a ledger, Dan’s pages are full.

We’ll miss his bear hugs—the kind that told you to exhale.
We’ll miss that signature chimichurri he guarded like state secrets and then handed out with a wink.
We’ll miss the way a stranger became an old friend in under five minutes.

He was happiest at dawn with a board under his arm, in the kitchen experimenting with whatever the farmer’s market surprised him with, flipping through vinyl and insisting the second track was always the best, and tending backyard bonfires that somehow never burned out before the conversation did.

Dan told me he wanted today to have good music, good food, and stories that make us laugh through the tears.
So let’s do exactly that.
Let’s tell the one about the time he tried to teach Bruno to surf.
Let’s argue about which record he overplayed.
Let’s pass the bowls and plates and remember that he never let anyone leave hungry.

To Lily: your kindness is one of his greatest successes.
To Carol: thank you for loving him as your own.
To everyone who loved Dan: keep his welcome alive.
Set one more seat at the table.
Offer the hug.
Share the recipe.
Start the fire.

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Dan, my love—
thank you for every morning coffee, every pep talk, every ridiculous movie intro.
Your optimism still lights our backyard.
Your laughter still cues the opening credits.

We’ll carry your legacy the way you taught us:
with open doors, warm plates, and a little music in the background.

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