Dear family, dear friends,

thank you for coming together to honor the life of my brother, Robert James Carter—our Uncle Bob.

I speak today as his younger sister, and as someone who watched him become the fun, steady uncle to all our children, the family anchor we leaned on without having to ask.

Bob was born on March 5, 1956, and left us at 68.
He grew up with me in Baltimore, where he learned early that hands are for helping and that jokes land best when delivered under the breath.
He hid a generous heart behind a dry sense of humor and a meticulous way of moving through the world.
If you wanted to know what he believed, you didn’t need a speech—you could see it in how he showed up, week after week, year after year.

He studied mechanical engineering, which surprised no one who’d ever seen him take apart a toy just to see how it worked—and then put it back together better.
He spent forty years maintaining the city’s infrastructure, a phrase that sounds large and distant until you remember the people who crossed the bridges he kept safe, rode the systems he kept running, learned the trade because he patiently showed them how a bolt should feel when it is truly tight.
He mentored apprentices the way good craftsmen do—by standing beside them, letting them try, and stepping in only to teach, never to show off.

He was a devoted brother to me, and even more, he was the ballast of our family.
He and Linda were married for forty-two years, a partnership built on ordinary

loyalty and small, daily kindnesses.
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He was a loving father to Daniel and Claire, proud in that quiet way that looked like nods at a distance and unexpectedly perfect advice when you needed it.
He was preceded in death by our parents, Harold and Louise, whose steady hands he carried forward in his own.
And he was Uncle Bob to seven nieces and nephews who learned that a toolbox and a smile could fix almost anything.

My favorite memory of him is not one moment but a pattern, like the grain that appears when you sand a board smooth.
Summer cookouts in the backyard.
Bob at the grill, turning food with the same focus he'd give to a stubborn valve, tossing out one-liners that made you laugh a second after he spoke them.
Before anyone arrived, he would make a small circuit of the yard—tap each chair, check each screw, tighten the wobbly ones without a word.
By the time we sat down, everything was level and safe.
If you think that's just a story about furniture, you didn't know my brother.
He made sure people had a steady place to sit in more ways than one.

He loved woodworking.
The shop smelled like cedar and machine oil, and there was always a pencil behind his ear.
He could coax a clean edge from a dull board and had little patience for shortcuts.
He listened to classic rock records while he worked—needles dropping, the gentle crackle before the song—and sometimes he'd hum a bass line as if it were a measurement he was checking twice.
At dawn, when many of us were asleep, he would be at the water with a thermos and a lure, accepting the calm that arrives only before the day has announced itself.
He liked anything with moving parts, mostly because he liked the moment when motion becomes purpose.

Bob's faith was quiet and steady, like the way he locked the back door each

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night: not performed, not announced, simply done.
He attended church weekly.
He served when asked and often when not asked, preferring to stack chairs in the hall or fix the hinge on a classroom door rather than stand at the front.
He believed integrity was what you did when you were tired and no one would notice.
That belief shaped him, and in turn, it shaped us.

What people will miss most, I think, is his reassuring presence.
The way a room calmed when he walked in with that toolbox that solved crises—flooded basements, flickering lights, a railing that suddenly felt trustworthy under his hand.
And the way he remembered every single birthday with a handwritten note.
His handwriting had the neatness of someone who measures twice; his words always landed just where you needed them.

He was dependable without being dull, humble without being invisible, servant-hearted without keeping score.
His humor was dry—he could slay a tense afternoon with a single, almost whispered comment, then go back to slicing tomatoes.
He wasn’t trying to be the center of attention; he was trying to be useful, and somehow that made him the center anyway.

To Linda, Daniel, and Claire—your grief is our grief, and your love for him is the clearest reflection of who he was.
The steadiness he offered you lives in you now: in the choices you make, in the way you care for others, in the patience you show even when it’s hard.
To our nieces and nephews—he taught you how to hold a wrench and how to hold your word; keep both lessons.

Today we celebrate a life that tilted toward service.
The city is full of proof you can’t see, work done right and left unadvertised.
Our family is full of proof you can feel, steadiness that remains after the tools are put away.

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I would be remiss if I didn’t note one last detail, because he would tease me if I forgot it.
Bob loved the color blue.
If you’re wearing a touch of it today, thank you.
It would have made him grin that small grin he used when something quietly pleased him.
And after the service, our family asks that you share a story for a memory book we’re creating—about a chair he fixed, a joke he told, a note he wrote, or a way he once made your day a little easier.
We want to gather those steadying moments and pass them down.

When I think of saying goodbye, I picture him at that backyard grill, making a final pass across the yard, palm to each chair, testing the legs, one last turn of the screwdriver.
He did that for us all his life.
He made sure we would have a good place to sit when he was gone.

Thank you, Bob, for every note written in your careful hand, for every early morning on the water that taught us how to love the day, for every apprentice who now does the job the right way because you took the time.
Thank you for choosing usefulness over noise, and for showing us that the most reliable kind of love is often the one that doesn’t announce itself.

We will miss you more than we can say.
But we will honor you in the way you taught us:
by showing up,
by tightening what wobbles,
by keeping our word,
and by leaving things a little better than we found them.

Rest, dear brother.
We’ll take it from here.

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