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Family and friends,

Thank you for being here to honor the life of my father, Richard Alan Mercer—Rick to almost everyone who knew him.

He was born on March 5, 1956, and after 68 years of steady, generous, quietly remarkable living, he has gone home. Today we grieve, but we also give thanks for a life that measured twice and cut once—especially with people’s hearts.

Dad grew up in Cleveland, the son of a city that knows hard work and plain talk. He earned an engineering degree, married his college sweetheart, and for 42 years shared a partnership with my mom, Elaine, that showed us what devotion looks like in the everyday. They settled in Ohio and raised the two of us—my sister, Sara, and me—with a toolbox of values that never wore out: dependability, humility, patience, and an unassuming kindness that showed up before it was asked for.

For 35 years, Dad worked as a mechanical engineer. He loved anything with moving parts because he loved understanding how things worked—machines, yes, but also people. He believed patience could loosen a stubborn bolt and soften a stubborn moment. He was a patient teacher, with a dry sense of humor that slipped in at the exact right time, the way a well-fitted gear slips into place. After hours and on weekends, he volunteered with the high school robotics team, coaching students toward solutions and, more importantly, toward confidence. If you were on one of those teams, you know the look—Rick standing just off to the side, hands in his pockets, that little half-smile, letting you find your way and somehow making sure you did.

He served quietly at our non-denominational church, preferring to stack chairs or fix a hinge rather than stand in front. His faith was practical and steady—less

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about what he said, more about what he did. If there was a need, he met it. If there was a burden, he carried part of it. He believed serving others was simply the right way to walk through the world.

Dad loved woodworking—the bench in our garage still smells faintly of sawdust and linseed oil. He loved fishing at dawn, when the water was still and the world was honest. He loved weekend bike rides, the kind that took the long way home. And on Saturday mornings, if you came by our house early enough, you'd hear classic rock on vinyl and the sizzle of his pancakes on the griddle. There are grandchildren in this room—three of them—who know those pancakes were somehow fluffier when Grandpa flipped them.

He taught us a lot without making it a lesson. He timed his guidance to the moment you were ready to receive it. I think of a summer weekend when we built a treehouse together. I was little; the hammer was big. He let me drive the last nail, even though it took me forever. He never took the hammer from my hands. He steadied the board, he steadied the ladder, he steadied me. When that nail finally set, he nodded like we'd both done something important. I know now that we had.

To Mom—Elaine—you and Dad built a life of constancy and care. Forty-two years is a lot of breakfasts, a lot of fixed leaky faucets, a lot of inside jokes, and a lot of shared quiet. Thank you for loving him so well, and for letting all of us feel the warmth of that home.

To Sara—he was so proud of you. To his three grandchildren—your grandpa adored you in that gentle, attentive way of his, kneeling to tie a shoe, pausing to explain how things spin and why they keep spinning. There was always time with him. He made sure of it.

In the town where we grew up, Dad was the neighbor who just showed up. Snowstorm? He'd be at the end of someone's driveway with a shovel. Stalled mower? He'd be under the hood before you finished your sentence. Community projects found their way to his garage, and he never kept score. If you asked

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him why he did so much, he'd probably shrug and say, "It needed doing." And then he'd make sure you had a plate of pancakes before you left.

He had a dry wit that snuck up on you. Just when the tension was high and everyone was talking at once, Dad would offer a single line that cracked a smile and reset the room. He was a calm voice of reason, the pause in the noise, the person you called when you needed things to make sense again.

His favorite saying has become a touchstone for me: "Measure twice, cut once—especially with people's hearts." He lived by that. He measured before he spoke, he measured before he judged, he measured before he decided. And when he finally made the cut, it was clean, careful, and kind.

We will miss so much. We will miss the early-morning fishing trips, the hum of a bike tire on weekend rides, the needle finding the groove on a well-loved record. We will miss the way he listened—really listened—and the way his hands could steady a wobbly chair or a wobbly day. We will miss his Saturday pancakes, which tasted like tradition and patience and home.

But grief, as hard as it is, is also gratitude wearing heavy clothes. We are grateful for 68 years of Rick's steady presence. Grateful that he raised two children with a clear compass and a gentle hand. Grateful that three grandchildren will grow up with stories of a grandpa who showed up, who taught them how to hold a hammer, how to cast a line, how to be gentle with people's hearts.

If you want to honor him, build something—together. Fix something that's broken. Show up for someone without being asked. Put on a record and let a child stand on your shoes while you sway in the kitchen. And when you're tempted to rush, remember his way: slow down, measure twice, and be careful with the cut.

Dad believed that serving others quietly was a form of worship. He lived it. And though his chair is empty and his tools are at rest, the work of his life continues

in the lives he shaped, in the projects he started, in the people he steadied.

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Today, we entrust him to the God he quietly followed, with thanks for the love he gave and the love he leaves behind. May we carry his patience, his humility, his generosity, and—when the moment calls for it—his dry grin that told us everything would be okay.

Thank you, Dad. Thank you for being dependable when the world wobbled. Thank you for teaching without lecturing. Thank you for that final nail and for every steadying hand before and after it. We will take it from here—me, Mom, Sara, and your grandkids—measuring carefully, cutting kindly, and showing up the way you taught us.

We love you, and we'll see you at dawn on a quiet lake, where the water is still and the day is just beginning.

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