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Friends and family,

thank you for being here to honor my dad, Michael James Carter—Mike to almost everyone who knew him.

I’m his eldest son, Daniel, and today I’m standing here with my mom, Linda, my sister, Emily, his grandkids, Noah and Grace, and his sister, Aunt Karen, feeling the size of the space he filled and the quiet he leaves behind.

Dad was born on September 3, 1958, and he left us at 66. He grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, where he learned early that you show up, you keep your word, and you do the work in front of you. He was the first in his family to graduate from college, which he did with a mix of pride and a shrug, because bragging wasn’t his style. He met my mom in college—his college sweetheart—and they married and stayed married for 41 years. That number says love; the way they looked out for each other says devotion.

He became an electrical engineer and spent 35 years with the utility company—the person who kept the lights on when the sky went dark and the wind started to roar. Storm season wasn’t a headline to him; it was a call to pack a thermos and go. When we were kids and the phone rang at 2 a.m., we’d watch him tie his boots and head into the rain. I used to think he was a superhero. I wasn’t wrong.

He brought that same steady hand to everything he did. He coached Little League for a decade—he never raised his voice, but somehow the whole dugout listened. He volunteered with Habitat for Humanity, pounding nails in the heat, measuring studs, laughing at his own dad jokes under a brimmed hat, and somehow always finding time to teach the new person how to use a tool the safe way, the right way. He used to say, “Measure twice, cut once—especially

with your words.” I’ve found that if you live by that, you avoid a lot of messes, in wood and in life.

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The traits that defined him weren’t flashy. Steadfast. Humble. Quietly funny. He was the guy who showed up with the right wrench, the jumper cables, the calm voice that made you breathe again. In a crisis, he didn’t demand attention; he lowered everyone’s blood pressure.

One of my favorite memories captures him perfectly. I was 16, it was raining hard, and I got a flat on the shoulder of I-90. I called him, panicked. He pulled up behind me, hopped out, and—only Dad—laughed. He handed me the jack and said, “Confidence is earned, not given.” He stood there getting soaked, letting me struggle just enough, then stepping in with a quiet tip at the right second. We changed that tire. We earned that confidence. And I learned that day that love sometimes looks like wet socks and a hand on your shoulder.

At home, he was our compass. He taught Emily and me how to sand with the grain, how to set a hook on Lake Erie, and how to flip pancakes on Saturday mornings into crooked shapes that somehow always became our initials. He’d stack them on our plates with that grin that said he knew exactly what he’d done. He loved his classic rock records, spinning them while working a crossword in ink, a pencil tucked behind his ear just in case. He could fix anything, and when he couldn’t, he figured out how. That combination of curiosity and patience—that’s what made him a good engineer, a good dad, and a good man.

His faith was real, but it was quiet. He attended a non-denominational church, and if you asked him what he believed, he’d talk less about doctrines and more about service. He lived his faith more than he spoke it—by building a ramp, by showing up with coffee at dawn, by letting another car take the only spot in the lot. If you want to know what he believed, look at how he treated people.

As a grandfather, he lit up. Noah and Grace were his joy. He’d sit on the floor with them, turning blocks into bridges and broken toys into working miracles,

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humming along to a Fleetwood Mac record while pretending he wasn’t. He had a special voice just for them, that gentle lower register that said: you’re safe, you’re loved, and yes, we can make your pancake into a G.

He was a husband who adored my mom. Their partnership was made of late-night talks at the kitchen table, grocery lists with little doodles, and teamwork that looked effortless because it was built every day for four decades. When mom’s car made a new noise, he heard it. When dad’s shoulder ached, mom noticed. They were best friends. They were each other’s home.

There are so many ways we’ll miss him. We’ll miss that calm voice at 2 a.m., the one that steadied the storm inside you even as he headed out into the storm outside. We’ll miss the way a broken hinge or a broken plan somehow didn’t feel like a problem when Dad walked in. We’ll miss those pancakes, shaped like initials, that reminded us—quietly—that we belonged.

If you worked with him, you knew the man who ran toward downed lines so others could sleep with the lights on. If you played ball for him, you knew a coach who believed there’s no such thing as “someone else’s kid.” If you built with him, you knew that a house stays standing when the measurements are true and the cuts are made with care. If you loved him, you knew a man who measured twice, cut once, and used his words the same way.

He taught us that confidence is earned. He taught us patience. He taught us to double-check, to look out for the person next to us, to show up. He didn’t give grand speeches about values; he handed you the jack and let you find your footing while he stood close enough to catch the wrench if it slipped.

Today, we mourn. Of course we do. But we also celebrate a life well-lived—a life that brightened rooms and neighborhoods, that steadied a family, that lifted a community, that turned a job into a calling, that turned a weekend into a boat on Lake Erie with the sun at your back and your kids beside you.

To Mom—Linda—thank you for loving him the way you did. To Emily, to Noah

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and Grace, to Aunt Karen—he was proud of us. He said it in the way he cheered at a school play, in the way he planned a Saturday, in the way he listened all the way to the end of your sentence.

If you’re looking for what to do next, I can hear him in my head: check on each other. Make a list. Start with the easiest task. Measure twice, cut once—especially with your words. And make the pancakes, even if they come out lopsided. It’s the effort that tastes like love.

Dad, Mike, you were our role model and our steady compass. You kept our lights on in more ways than one. We will keep your tools sharp and your records spinning. We will try to be as dependable in a crisis as you were on an ordinary Tuesday. We’ll keep building—homes, teams, bridges, and lives—like you taught us: level, true, and together.

Thank you for everything you fixed, everything you taught, and every quiet laugh you gave away. We love you. We’ll miss you. And we’ll carry you forward in the ways you showed us, one careful cut, one kind word, one steady breath at a time.

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