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Family and friends, thank you for being here to honor my father, Thomas William Bennett—Tom to almost everyone who knew him.

Born on January 22, 1949, Dad lived 75 years with a quiet dignity that steadied our lives. He was raised in Des Moines, came of age during the Vietnam era, and served our country in the Army. He married my mother, Margaret, in 1974, beginning a partnership that lasted 50 years and taught us what steadfast love looks like.

He built his life, one faithful step at a time. He earned his MBA at night after long days at the bank. He rose to lead a regional branch not by flash or favor, but by integrity—the kind of integrity people could feel. He mentored dozens of young tellers who still talk about how he listened first, asked good questions, and believed in the person sitting across from him. And beyond the bank, he served on the board of the local food pantry, where his belief in quiet acts of mercy became practical: full shelves, warm hands, and neighbors seen.

At home, he was our gentle anchor. To my mother, Margaret; to my sister, Sarah; to me, Claire—his youngest, his fiercest supporter, and the one he championed at every turn. To his grandchildren—Lily, Owen, and Max—he was the patient teacher with a pocketful of peppermints and a pocketful of time. He grieved the loss of his brother Robert, and taught us how to remember with tenderness, not bitterness.

Some of my clearest memories are simple ones. Dawn walks before school, the world still quiet, my small hand in his. He’d quiz me on spelling, smiling when I got it right, and even when I didn’t. Before I’d head off, he’d press a peppermint into my palm and say, “For luck.” I carry that small ritual with me still—a reminder that encouragement, given early and often, can last a lifetime.

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If you ask what defined him, I would say his honesty, his generosity, and his listening. He had that rare gift of making you feel unhurried in a hurried world. He tended roses with the same patience he brought to people. He watched birds with delight that never grew old. He played chess in the park, always teaching, never gloating. He read biographies because he wanted to understand how character takes shape—and then he quietly shaped his own.

His faith mattered deeply to him. A devout Episcopalian, he found solace in the liturgy and the Psalms. When life was heavy, he would often rest on the verse he loved: “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted” from Psalm 34:18. Today, in our broken hearts, we trust that nearness. Dad believed faith was best expressed in small mercies: a handwritten note tucked into a coat pocket; a calm word when the news was bad; a promise kept, even when no one was looking.

We will miss those notes—his careful script, the way he could fold courage into a few lines. We will miss the counsel he offered without judgment, the way he sat beside us in silence until our breathing slowed. We will miss the roses, the bird calls he could name, the chessboard set up on a Saturday afternoon. We will miss him, profoundly.

But we also celebrate the life he lived and the life he planted in us. He taught us that integrity is a daily practice. That generosity is not a performance but a habit. That listening can be a form of love. He showed me how to be strong without raising my voice, and brave without making a show of it. He showed Sarah and me how a husband honors his wife, and how a father lifts his children, not by carrying them, but by walking beside them. He showed his grandchildren what goodness looks like when it grows old—unfussy, steady, and kind.

To Mom, Margaret: fifty years is a rare and beautiful testament. Thank you for the love you and Dad made visible for all of us. To Sarah, to Lily, Owen, and Max: the best way we can honor him is to live the values he lived—tell the truth, show up, and write the note.

Dad, you were our gentle anchor and my fiercest supporter. You ran your race

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without fanfare and finished with grace. We commend you now to the God you trusted, grateful for every dawn walk, every peppermint, every quiet mercy.

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted. May that nearness be our comfort today. And may the peace you carried so faithfully now carry us.

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