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Good morning, everyone.

I’m Sarah, Tom’s daughter, and on behalf of my mum, Elaine, my brother, Michael, and our whole family, thank you for being here to remember my dad, Thomas Andrew Bennett—Tom to almost everyone who knew him.

Dad was born on May 3, 1959, in Halifax. He grew up with ocean wind in his hair and salt on his jacket, and he carried a Maritimer’s steadiness with him when he moved to Toronto in his twenties. He built a life here—quite literally, in wires and beams and the quiet confidence of a master electrician. He passed peacefully this March at 66, and while that number feels impossibly small to us right now, the life he fit into those years was full, sturdy, and good.

If you knew my dad, you knew dependability looked like a person. He wasn’t loud about what he believed. He didn’t need to be. He showed up. He kept his word. He helped where help was needed and didn’t wait around for a thank-you. He loved his work, not just for the craft, but for the people. He taught apprentices with patience, served as a union steward because fairness mattered, volunteered with Habitat for Humanity because homes—and the dignity that comes with them—mattered too. In our neighbourhood, if a light flickered, a hinge squeaked, or a furnace rattled, you’d see Dad’s toolbox appear like it had legs of its own.

He built a small business, but what he was most proud of was his big family. For 38 years he was my mum’s partner—Elaine and Tom, a true team. He was Dad to me and to Michael, and “Papa” to two grandkids who thought he could fix gravity if it got too pushy. He had a calming voice that made even tangled wires feel simple, and a dry joke always tucked in his back pocket. He listened before he spoke. He made room for other people’s stories.

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My favourite memory of him is winter-quiet. I’m small, the pond is glassy under a pink sky, and Dad is beside me in a wool toque, his hands steady at my elbows as I learn to skate. We move in this careful circle while the day gives up its light, and he says, “Bend your knees, kiddo. I’ve got you.” We were just two figures on a frozen pond, but that’s how he loved—no speeches, no fanfare, just the sure grip that says, I’m here.

Dad’s life had these steady rhythms. Fishing weekends in Muskoka, where he could sit with a line in the water and call that perfection. Wood shavings on the garage floor, the smell of cedar and a half-finished shelf clamped in place. The Maple Leafs on the TV, hope alive every season. And every morning, a crossword puzzle with his coffee, muttering hints under his breath like he was negotiating with the clues.

He wasn’t only about home. He coached community hockey, the guy who believed every kid should have a chance to feel ice under their skates and a team behind them. He volunteered on neighbourhood projects without needing his name on anything. He was Anglican by upbringing, and while he was not one to lecture about faith, he knew the cadence of hymns and the comfort of familiar words. Today, hearing his favourite hymns and seeing the photos of our family camping trips, I can almost hear him leaning over to Mum to whisper a tiny joke, just enough to make her smile.

Dad’s values were reliable as sunrise: honesty; hard work; show up for family; keep your word. He didn’t talk about principles; he demonstrated them. If he said he’d be there, he was there—on a rainy sideline, in a late-night emergency, in the boring parts of life where character actually grows. He liked the quiet satisfaction of a job done right and a dinner table where everyone had what they needed.

He also had a way of making complicated things simple. When something in life felt like a snarl, he’d take it apart, lay it out, and hand it back in working order. That’s partly what we’re going to miss most—the feeling that as long as Tom was around, the lights would come back on, the wobbly chair would be steady,

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and your heart would slow to a manageable beat. That, and his big bear hugs that made the room feel like home.

There is a temptation on days like this to make someone larger than life. Dad would roll his eyes at that. He didn’t believe in being larger than life. He believed in being large in life—present in the everyday. A Saturday morning hardware run. A spare seat at the dinner table for a neighbour. Hands on your elbows on the ice until you found your balance.

His influence shows up in the ways we carry ourselves. In Michael patiently teaching his son to tie a knot. In Mum’s gentle way of checking that everyone is fed before she sits down. In the little habits I’ve found myself keeping: finishing what I start, and when something breaks, at least trying to fix it before I give up. He would say, “Give it a look, kiddo. You might surprise yourself.”

He surprised all of us with how much goodness can be built quietly over time. That’s the lesson I’m keeping. Grief visits loudly, but love endures in soft routines: a phone call returned, a promise kept, a light left on.

Dad asked that, instead of flowers, donations be made to the local food bank. That’s exactly like him—practical help where it matters most. If you’re looking for a way to honour him, that’s one he’d approve of with a small nod and maybe that half-smile of his.

To Mum—thank you for being his partner in all things. To everyone who worked with him, learned from him, fished with him, or just watched a game with him, thank you for showing up today. Your presence is a kind of repair too.

Dad, you taught us how to skate, to work, to listen, to laugh quietly, and to keep going. We’ll miss your voice, your hugs, and the way you made the hard parts seem manageable.

Bend your knees, you’d say. I’ve got you.

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We’ll keep moving, one steady glide at a time, carrying what you built into the days ahead.

Thank you.

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