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Family, friends, neighbours, and all who cared for him,

Thank you for being here to honour the life of George William MacLeod—our Gramps.

I speak today as his eldest grandson.
He taught me patience.
He taught me pride in our Nova Scotia roots.
And on a foggy morning by the water, he taught me how to tie a proper fishing knot, then waited while I fumbled through it until my hands learned what his already knew.

Gramps was born in Sydney, Nova Scotia, on August 14, 1936.
He passed away on March 5, 2026, at the age of 89.
These dates hold a whole world between them.

As a young man, he served in the Royal Canadian Navy.
The sea set his rhythm—measured, steady, alert to what matters and untroubled by what doesn’t.
After his service, he spent 35 years at the Halifax Shipyard as an electrician.
He was known there not only for expertise and safety, but for mentorship: he made sure the new hands went home with all ten fingers and a sense that they belonged.

He married Mary, our Nana, and together they walked 62 years in step.
Three children—Colin, Fiona, and Bruce—grew up under that roof of care and common sense.
Seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild followed, each greeted by the same warm laugh and the same handshake that could steady a room.

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When he retired, he returned to Cape Breton as if heading home with the tide.
He gave himself to the places that knit a community together—community halls where he fixed a light before someone asked, wharfs where he kept the boards true and the rails safe, shorelines he helped keep clean so that the water could keep telling its stories.
He volunteered with the local Sea Cadets, sharing seamanship and discipline without ever raising his voice.
He had a way of placing responsibility in your hands and making you proud to carry it.

Gramps was a man of few words whose actions spoke loudly.
Steady, humble, quick-witted, and unfailingly kind.
He didn’t advertise virtue.
He practised it—quietly, every day.

He loved his shed—cedar shavings on the floor, a favourite plane within reach.
In there he turned scrap into shelves, driftwood into picture frames, and an old oar into a coat rack that still greets us at the door.
He loved Cape Breton fiddling—he tapped a beat that only his boots could hear.
He loved the Montreal Canadiens with a loyalty that withstood bad calls, long seasons, and good-natured teasing from anyone brave enough to offer it.
And he loved fly-fishing, where patience meets precision and the world is measured in small, beautiful moments.

My favourite memory lives on the Bras d’Or Lake.
We set out before sunrise—no chatter, just the soft knock of the hull, the whisper of line through guides, and the quiet companionship that belongs to people who don’t need to prove anything.
He poured hot chocolate from a dented thermos and said it always tasted better outdoors.
He was right, of course.
Everything good tasted better beside him.

His values were simple and demanding: hard work, integrity, service to others,

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and treating everyone with respect.
He would lend a tool and return it sharper than he found it.
He would remember your birthday with a phone call at precisely 7 a.m.—no matter your time zone, no matter your plans, his voice would arrive first.
He believed a handshake should be firm, an apology should be plain, and promises should be kept.

We will miss that laugh that warmed a room before the kettle even boiled.
We will miss the way he could fix a rattle in a minute and a mood in even less, often with the same screwdriver.
We will miss those early-morning calls that began with, “Up yet?”—a question, a nudge, and a blessing in three words.

In his company, humour lived alongside reliability.
He was quick with a dry aside, but quicker still to lift a burden.
He did not chase attention.
He earned trust.

Gramps taught us that being from Nova Scotia is not only about where you stand, but how you stand—shoulders square, eyes level, hands ready to help.
He showed us that pride is not loud.
Pride is in the careful knot, the safe circuit, the well-swept step, the cleaned shoreline left better for the next set of boots.

To Nana, Mary—your partnership with him is part of what we honour today.
To Dad, Aunt Fiona, and Uncle Bruce—your lives carry his imprint, and through you, so do ours.
To all seven grandchildren and to his great-grandchild—we are the lucky ones, because we knew his voice, his laugh, and that impossible-to-imitate birthday timing.

Grief is heavy, but it is not empty.
It is full of the people we became because of him.
It holds the mornings on the lake, the hum of the shipyard, the sound of a fiddle

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in the kitchen, and the certain knowledge that kindness does not end with a life—it multiplies.

If you want to hold on to him, do it this way:
Call someone a little earlier than they expect and a little more often than you did.
Offer your hand, then your time.
Leave places tidier than you found them—beaches, workbenches, conversations.
And when you tie a knot—any knot—make it well, and make it hold.

In a short while, a piper will close our service.
That sound—plain and strong—will carry what words can’t.
It will travel like a faithful tide, past the wharf boards he kept sound, across the lake where the thermos steamed, and out to the wider waters he loved.

On behalf of our family, in lieu of flowers, we welcome donations to the Heart and Stroke Foundation.
It feels right to honour the heart that steadied ours and the strength that lifted so many.

Gramps, you never asked for speeches.
You asked that we show up, do the work, and look out for each other.
We will.

Thank you for the lessons learned in silence, the jokes you placed like small anchors, the dignity you wore as lightly as an old sweater.
Thank you for the way you loved Nana, for the way you guided your children, and for the patience you pressed into your grandchildren’s hands—knot by knot, morning by morning.

Rest easy, Gramps.
We’ll keep the lines true.
We’ll keep the lights on.
We’ll take it from here.

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