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Family, friends, neighbours, thank you for being here to farewell and to celebrate the life of Arthur James McKenzie — our Pop.

Pop was born in Geelong on 12 March 1939.

He grew up with sawdust in his boots and the bay wind in his lungs.

He apprenticed as a carpenter, a trade that suited his hands and his head — steady, careful, practical.

In 1962 he married Margaret.

They moved to Melbourne, rolled up their sleeves and started a small building business.

It wasn't fancy, but it was honest, and it built more than houses — it built a life.

He and Margaret raised Peter and Elaine.

Later came five grandkids, including me, all of us lucky enough to know what a bear-hug greeting feels like and how a low whistle can fill a room when someone is thinking through a problem.

Pop was a coach for junior footy for years — the bloke with the old cap, the warm thermos, and the voice that could both steady your nerves and make you laugh in the same sentence.

He retired to the Mornington Peninsula, but he never really stopped.

There were always tomatoes to stake, surf to check, boats to sand, and a shed with a light on.

If you asked Pop what mattered, he'd give you the short list.

Work hard.

Be fair.

Keep your word.

Help your mates and look out for your neighbours.

He didn't need posters on the wall to remember those values — he lived them.

It was there in the jobs he finished properly, even when no one was watching.

In the extras he did for families who were doing it tough.

In the way he turned up for the local SES, year after year, rain or shine, no questions asked.

Pop had a way of mentoring that never felt like a lecture.

He took on young tradies, not to bark orders, but to show them how to line up a spirit level with patience, not panic.

He'd pass you a tool and say, "Let the timber tell you what it wants," and somehow the timber always did.

He could fix a jambed door with a plane and a smile, and then stick around to show you how to keep it swinging straight.

My favourite memories of him aren't grand occasions.

They're early mornings at Frankston Pier.

The air cold enough to sting, the planks damp under our boots.

He'd thread a line and say, "Knots are just stories you tell the rope — make them clear and they'll hold."

We'd watch the sun push up through the water and he'd start on his tales — a leaky clinker he once brought back from the dead, the day the Cats won after he swore he wouldn't watch, the neighbour's fence that leaned like it had opinions. There was always a cheeky punchline tucked in there, never at anyone's expense, just enough to shake a laugh loose.

He loved old timber boats, the stubborn ones.

He said restoring them taught him patience because timber remembers.

He'd run his hand along a hull like you might greet an old friend.

Slim Dusty on the radio, a pencil behind his ear, that low whistle while he worked out how to nurse another plank back to true.

And later, tomatoes ripening on string lines, a bit of sea-salt in the breeze, and the Cats on the telly — that was his version of a holiday.

Pop's advice came from a toolbox, not a textbook.

"Measure twice."

"Keep your chisels sharp."

“Don’t rush the set on the glue”

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And when life threw the trickier jobs at us, it was the same approach.

Pause.

Think.

Do it properly, and do it kindly.

You could ring him about a wobbling table or a wobbling heart and get the same calm answer: “We’ll sort it. Put the kettle on.”

He carried a quiet strength.

Not loud, not showy.

Just the certainty that a person who keeps turning up can hold a family, a team, a street together.

After we lost Margaret, he felt the gap like all of us did, but he kept moving gently forward.

He asked after people.

He turned up to grandkids’ games with a thermos and the old cap.

He whistled when the problems were big and then made them smaller, one careful step at a time.

We will miss the little things that turn out to be big.

His bear-hug at the front door.

That thoughtful whistle that meant he’d found a way through.

The way he’d hand you a tool and somehow, with that simple trust, you felt capable again.

We’ll miss the smell of fresh-cut pine from his shed and the radio crooning Slim Dusty while the shavings curled to the floor.

We’ll miss his tomatoes that somehow tasted like summer itself.

But he hasn’t left us empty-handed.

He left us with skills — how to tie a proper knot and how to untie ourselves from worry.

He left us with stories — not to cling to, but to pass on, like a well-oiled hand plane.

He left us with standards — fairness, a word kept, a mate helped, a neighbour

checked on.

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And he left us with his humour — the cheeky lift of an eyebrow that turned a long day into something bearable.

To Peter and Elaine, to all of us grandkids, to the mates from the shed and the footy oval, this is what Pop would hope we carry:

Do the job right, even when no one's clapping.

Look after the person next to you.

Keep your tools sharp and your promises sharper.

And when the sun's coming up over the water, take a breath.

That's time you never regret.

Pop, you taught me patience on a cold pier at first light.

You showed me how steady hands and a kind heart can build more than houses — they can build a life worth living.

Thank you for every early start, every quiet rescue, every lesson you tucked into a story.

Give Nan our love.

We'll keep the shed tidy, keep the lines untangled, and keep barracking for the Cats with the same stubborn hope you did.

In lieu of flowers, our family invites donations to the SES — the place where you spent so many nights and weekends helping strangers who never felt like strangers to you.

Rest easy, Pop.

We'll whistle when we're thinking, hug like we mean it, and do you proud.

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