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Family, friends, neighbours,

thank you for standing with us here at Mick's graveside,
in the quiet air of this place he knew so well,
to lay to rest a good man, and to give thanks for the life of Michael Byrne.

He was born on the 28th of July, 1952, in Galway,
and the sound of home never left his voice.
In the 1970s he took his courage and a small bag to London,
to learn his trade properly, to test himself, and to earn his keep.
He returned with calloused hands, sharper tools, and that steady eye of his,
and he set up a small carpentry business that, truth be told,
helped to build and repair half the town.
If a door hung straight, if a handrail sat quiet in your palm,
if a shopfront felt welcoming, there was a fair chance Mick had been there first.

He was predeceased by our mother, his beloved Bríd.
He was father to the two of us, Siobhán and myself, Patrick,
and granda to Oisín and Ailbhe, who lit him up from the inside out.
He was brother to Niall and to Eileen, and he was proud of that too—
proud in the modest way that was his language,
never spoken loudly, always understood.

My father was a master carpenter, but that title never sat heavily on him.
He was happiest with sawdust on his sleeves,
sleeves rolled, measuring twice with that little hum in his throat,
and then making the cut he knew would last.
He could fix boats as well as he fixed chairs—
and there's a difference—because a boat answers back.
He mended old ribs and replaced planks with the kind of patience

that turns time itself into a material you can work.

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When the roof of the community hall was failing,

he didn't wait to be asked.

He turned up with his ladders and his level,

and before long there was a small crew around him,

and the hall stood true again.

He made it look simple. It rarely was.

Humble, meticulous, steady under pressure—

those are easy words to say until you've seen them in the wild.

His steadiness was most visible when there was a leak

and the water was running where it shouldn't,

or when a storm had lifted slates and nerves alike.

He would arrive, soft-spoken, eyes scanning, hands already working,

and the room would quieten around him.

He had a dry wit that appeared like a nail tapped flush:

one small line, and the whole thing held together.

He'd say, "We'll not make a song and dance of it,"

and then proceed to do something that saved the day.

If you ask me when I felt closest to the centre of him,

it was on an evening at Lough Corrib.

We were repainting Grandad's old punt,

the one that had ferried too many summers to count.

We worked in companionable silence broken only

by the soft slap of the brush and the lake answering back.

He hummed The Fields of Athenry under his breath

as the sun dipped and the light thinned to gold.

He showed me—without once turning it into a lesson—

how to lay the paint with the grain, how not to rush the corners,

how to leave room for tomorrow's coat.

I learned that day that boats, like families, are kept afloat

by small, patient acts repeated faithfully.

And when I look at this well-worn toolbox by the graveside,

its handle polished by years of lifting.

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I see the same truth carried in steel and oak.

Father had simple tastes that told the whole story.

He liked the garden neat but not fussy;

he liked trad on the radio on a Saturday morning,

with the kettle giving its own percussion in the kitchen.

He took long walks on the prom,

reading the water, nodding to people he'd once helped,

or whose fathers he had helped long before.

He didn't make a fuss of kindness.

He believed in it like he believed in keeping your word:

you just do it, and you do it properly, and then you get on with the day.

He taught me and Siobhán how to build a good life

one honest day at a time.

He did it with actions more than speeches.

Be on time. Clean your tools. Own your mistakes.

If you say you'll call, call. If you're able to help, help.

Measure carefully. Leave a job better than you found it.

He made reliability feel like a form of love,

and I still think that's what it is.

There are pieces of him scattered through this town

that you could point to.

A bannister sanded to the softness of river stone,

a door that closes with a proper, dignified click,

a boat that kept a family fishing another summer.

But there are pieces we cannot point to as easily:

the confidence he gave a young apprentice with a quiet, "That'll do now,"

the calm he lent to a bad day,

the way a neighbour slept better knowing

that if something broke, Mick would know what to do.

What people will miss most are those careful hands,

that quiet wisdom, and the solid comfort of his presence—
the knowledge that, whatever it was, he could fix it,
or at least make a start.

He did not overtalk his work, or his life.
He preferred the clean line to the flourish.
But if you watched him long enough you saw the artistry:
a joint that would never creak,
a repair that respected the age of the piece,
a compromise made only when it improved the whole.
He granted the world a craftsman's attention,
and the world looked better under it.

These last years, after Mam died, were not simple.
Grief never is.
But he bore it with that same quiet steadiness.
He took more walks. He tuned the radio a little louder.
He found reasons to check on other people's small problems,
and in doing so, he kept his own from hardening.
To his grandchildren, Oisín and Ailbhe,
he was a safe harbour.
He showed them how to hold a hammer,
but more importantly, how to hold themselves.
He laughed at their jokes before the punchline,
because he knew where they were headed,
and he wanted them to get there delighted.

To Niall and Eileen, his brother and sister,
he remained the dependable middle beam of the old house,
carrying weight without drawing attention.
And to the many friends, customers turned neighbours,
neighbours turned friends,
he was simply Mick—present, capable, wry.

It is right that his toolbox is here beside him,
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It has lived in sheds and vans and on kitchen floors,
it has been opened in emergency and in peace,
it has held the tools that built cradles and coffins,
picture frames and footstools,
and all the practical poetry of an ordinary, excellent life.
Today we close it one last time,
not to store it away,
but to acknowledge that what he built endures.

Standing at the graveside sharpens the truth:
we measure life not by the grand declaration,
but by the line we kept straight when no one was watching.
My father's line was straight.
He was faithful to his work, to his word, to his people.
He never promised more than he could do,
and he always did a little more than he promised.

If there is comfort to be found today,
it is in knowing that we can honour him best
by taking up what he laid down for us:
craftsmanship in whatever we do,
reliability that other people can lean on,
kindness without ceremony,
and the habit of keeping our word.
We can hum a tune while we work.
We can take our time with the corners.
We can show our children how to leave room for tomorrow's coat.

On behalf of our family, I want to acknowledge those who stood by him,
who shared tea and time,
who called at the right moment, or at any moment.
It mattered.

In lieu of flowers, we ask that any who wish to give
consider a donation to the RNLI.

He respected the men and women who go out when the weather turns,
the kind of people he understood instinctively:
skilled, calm, dependable.

Michael Byrne, Mick to almost everyone,
goes to his rest today beside his love, our mother Bríd.
We return him to the Galway soil that shaped him.
We place by him the toolbox that testified to his days.
We keep with us the measure he used for a life well built.

Dad, thank you for the roof you kept over us
and the ground you helped us stand on,
for the punts you patched and the hearts you steadied,
for the laugh under your breath
and the way your hand found the right fix without fanfare.

We will miss you in the ordinary ways
that matter far more than we ever guessed:
the cup of tea after work, the nod across a room,
the sure step on a ladder, the plan that made sense.
We will carry you in how we do our work,
how we treat each other, how we keep our promises.

May the lake be calm for you.
May the timber be sound.
May there always be enough light to see the grain.

Goodbye, Dad.
Go easy.
We'll mind the tools.

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