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Good afternoon, family and friends,
thank you for being here to celebrate the life of my dad, Nigel Anthony Petersen —
our Nige.

He was born on 3 July 1949 in Port Elizabeth,
and left us on 9 February 2026 at the age of 76.
Between those two dates he fitted in a remarkable amount of love, mischief, and purpose.

Dad was the youngest of three,
the boy who grew into an English teacher with chalk on his sleeve and a story in his pocket,
then a deputy head who managed to be gently firm and unfailingly kind.
He moved from Gqeberha to East London in the 90s,
kept schools humming, and kept believing that literature could widen any window.
When he retired to Knysna, he simply replaced staff meetings with service —
volunteering with a literacy programme,
singing in the local choir,
and somehow still finding time to help the community theatre block a scene or fix a prop.

At home he was married to Mum, to Ruth, for 50 years —
a partnership of steady hands and quick wit.
He was Dad to Damon and me, and Oupa to Mia, Blake, and Emma,
the man who could turn scrap wood into a giraffe,
a rainy Sunday into an adventure,
and a lunchbox into a treasure hunt with a folded note that always began, “Just because…”

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My favourite memory is ours alone and also everyone’s:
that bright-red kite we built in the lounge,
glue on our fingers, a ruler held like a conductor’s baton,
then running the Sardinia Bay dunes while the line sang in the wind.
We laughed so hard the kite tried to tow us down the beach.
That’s how he taught — by doing,
by letting the wind show you what was possible,
by trusting you to hold the string.

He was curious, imaginative, an irresistible storyteller.
He had a choir director’s ear for harmony and a deputy head’s patience for discord.
He collected Cape jazz on vinyl,
spotted birds before anyone else had found the binoculars,
nurtured spekboom cuttings like small promises,
and whistled — that famous Nige whistle — to call us home for supper.

You’ll hear him in that whistle.
You’ll see him in a child sounding out a tricky word,
in spekboom that takes root,
in the way we show up for each other when it matters.

We will miss his booming laugh that made shy people brave,
the notes tucked into lunchboxes,
the Sunday songs in the car on the way to nowhere special.

If you’re wearing a touch of blue today, thank you — it was his favourite.
If you were thinking of flowers,
Dad would have preferred donations to a local literacy trust or the SPCA —
the two causes he backed with his time and his wallet.
If you’d like details, please email cto@kuchventures.com.

He taught us kindness first,

respect for everyone,
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and that learning never clocks off.
So let’s honour him by reading to a child,
singing the loud note even if we’re sure it’s the wrong one,
and by showing up — calmly, cheerfully, when it counts.

Dad,
thank you for the stories, the songs, the kite string pressed into my palm.
We hear your whistle.
We’re coming home.

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