

Good afternoon, everyone—on-site and tuning in from wherever your VPN says you are.

Mike, today's about you.

But before I get sentimental, I want to start with a simple truth we all know: for twenty-seven years, if something mattered, you showed up.

You walked in here in 1999 as a junior technician with a calm grin and a toolbox that looked twice your size.

Back then, our idea of “the cloud” was just what ruined the company picnic.

You learned fast, asked good questions, and you listened even faster.

That's been your quiet magic ever since.

2008 is burned into a lot of our memories.

Data center migration.

New racks, new routes, new ways to find trouble we didn't even know existed.

You led that move like a ship's captain—no fireworks, just steady bearing.

Zero downtime.

People toss that phrase around like it's marketing copy.

But those of us who were there remember the click of relays, the hum of fans,

the spreadsheet you carried like a pilot's checklist,

and that nod you gave before each switchover.

We slept like babies that night—after not sleeping for three nights straight.

And then there's the part of your story no résumé captures.

Fifteen-plus apprentices who now walk around here like they were born knowing how to trace a fault, document a fix, and keep a cool head when alarms light up.

I've watched you explain the same step three times without even a hint of impatience,

and then hand over the screwdriver and say, “Your turn.”

Half the time, they were convinced they couldn't do it.
All the time, they left your desk convinced they could.

Safety Champion, 2015.

It wasn't about the plaque on the wall.
It was the way you'd pause a job, eyeball a harness, and say,
"Let's redo that—ten seconds now saves a week later."
You treated safety like part of craftsmanship,
not a binder you pulled out when someone from compliance came by.
We all learned that from you.

Then came 2020 and the Orion rollout.
While the world was shaky, you were unshakeable.
New system, new protocols, remote everything.
You mapped dependencies like a carpenter measuring twice and cutting once.
And when a workflow misbehaved, you didn't blame the tool—you found the
seam, fixed the join, and showed the rest of us why it failed so we'd be better
next time.

Speaking of 2020—there's a morning I'm never going to forget.
Winter storm, power flickers,
phone buzzes with too many exclamation points.
By the time most of us threw on boots, you were already here at five a.m.
Thermos in hand, hat pushed back, that "we've got this" look on your face.
You rerouted loads like a chess player who'd rehearsed the board,
gave the all-clear in your inside voice,
and then cracked a dad joke so bad the control room groaned in harmony.
Systems stayed online, and somehow the temperature in that room rose ten
degrees.
That's you, Mike—steady hands, warm heart.

And while we're setting the record straight:
the job you did for our systems, you also did for our people.
"Unofficial morale captain" doesn't begin to cover it.

You rallied Friday standups before the weekend brain-drain could set in.

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You organized holiday potlucks that somehow got everyone to cook their grandma's best dish and label allergens better than any caterer.

You turned a stack of sprint notes into something we actually looked forward to.

I've never seen someone fix a network loop and a team wobble in the same hour.

If there's a common thread through your twenty-seven years, it's this:

reliability without the need for a spotlight,

humility without making yourself small,

and a craftsman's respect for every detail—whether it's a cable run, a runbook, or a dovetail.

Which brings me to the other half of who you are.

The guy who can talk for fifteen minutes about the satisfaction of a hand-cut dovetail that seats perfectly flush.

The weekend woodworker who treats a workbench like a sanctuary.

The fisherman who knows exactly where Lake Superior keeps its secrets and kindly won't tell us.

The classic car whisperer, sleeves rolled, patience on tap, rebuilding a 1968 Mustang one beautiful, stubborn bolt at a time.

I swear half of our problem tickets could have been solved faster if more of us had your patience for a frozen fastener.

You once told me something I wrote down because it felt like a blueprint for how you live:

"Good work is quiet, but it shows up everywhere."

I see it in the apprentices who now mentor apprentices.

I see it in how we document before we improvise.

I see it in the way people breathe easier when they realize you built that thing they rely on.

Today isn't goodbye.

It's a service change.

We're retiring a very precious resource from the night shift and giving him to long mornings, garage radio, and fresh coffee.

We're routing him to lakes with names we can't pronounce right, to family road trips that don't need a calendar invite, and to the final stretch of a Mustang build that's been waiting patiently, like all great projects do.

Here's what we wish for you:

slow mornings in the garage where the only meetings are between walnut and chisel,

tight lines on calm water and a cooler that closes with that satisfying clunk, the deep satisfaction of turning that '68 into a purring, gleaming chapter of your life,

big laughs that start low and roll across the room, and road trips with the people you love most, windows down, playlist up, no deadlines, no tickets.

Before we wrap, we've put together something small to hold a big story.

Mike, we'd like you to have this shadow box—your first employee badge from 1999 and a miniature wrench inside.

The badge because it started a chapter that made us better.

The wrench because you've been our fixer, our tuner, the one who knew when to tighten and when to ease off.

To everyone here and everyone on screen:

let's take a moment—wherever you are—to raise whatever you've got handy.

To reliability done right.

To humility that teaches.

To craft that lasts.

To Mike Carter—our teammate, our mentor, our friend.

Cheers, and thank you, Mike.

You've built things that will keep working long after today.

And that, my friend, is the mark of a life well made.

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