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Kia ora koutou,

thank you for coming together today at the Lower Hutt Events Centre to remember and to celebrate the life of our Poppa Pete — Peter Robert Ng.

I’m his first grandson, and most of what I know about curiosity and kindness began in school holidays with him in Lower Hutt.
Windy weeks, messy projects, patient explanations, and a steady hand on my shoulder when things felt too hard.

Poppa Pete was born on 5 July 1945 in Wellington.
He passed in Lower Hutt, aged 79.
Those are the bookends.
What lives between them is the part that matters, and that’s why we’re here.

He was the son of Cantonese immigrant grocers in Te Aro.
If you ever wondered where his precision came from, imagine a small shop where a miscounted coin meant a late bill.
He learned to weigh fruit with care and give change without fuss, to listen properly before answering a question, and to know his neighbours by name.
He kept those habits for life.
They showed up in his classroom, at family dinners, and in the way he spoke to the person behind the counter or the kid stuck on their times tables.

He was the first in his family to attend university.
He never boasted about that.
He made it sound ordinary, like catching the right bus.
“Education is a pathway,” he’d say, not a finish line.
Then he spent 30 years at Hutt Valley High proving it, one lunchtime tutorial and scribbled margin note at a time.

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Poppa Pete met Linda — Nana, to us — and together they built 52 years of the kind of marriage you notice for its quiet warmth rather than for any big speeches.
Mum and Dad — Michael and Sarah — grew up with a father who could turn fractions into little puzzles and conflict into a cup of tea.
He wasn’t loud about it, but he was always there.
For Nana, for you both, and for us grandkids — Ethan, Ruby, and Aiden — he was the steady centre of the room.

If you knew him as a teacher, you might remember the way he’d stand at the board, draw a right-angled triangle, and then pause.
He’d look around the room until the noise settled not out of fear, but out of interest.
Then he’d ask a small, exact question that made everything else click into place.
He was meticulous and unfailingly fair.
The sort of teacher who remembered names and noticed effort, who ran weekend maths clubs for the kids who loved numbers and the kids who were scared of them, and he made room for both.
He believed everyone deserved a good explanation.

Out of school, he carried that same care into the community.
He helped run chess tournaments, setting out clocks and score sheets with a precision that felt almost ceremonial.
He volunteered in community gardens, staking beans straight, labelling seedlings neatly, and teaching newcomers why compost matters.
He was an advocate for migrant families — not with a banner, but with late-night phone calls, form-filling, and a lift when someone needed to get somewhere important.
He understood what it means to arrive, to feel unsure, to need a hand that is offered plainly and without conditions.

He was gently funny in the way that sneaks up on you.
If you asked how his day was, he’d say, “Productive enough to earn a biscuit,”

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and produce a tin where the best biscuits were always hidden under the plain ones.
If you beat him at chess — it did happen occasionally — he’d nod, tap the clock, and say, “We’ll schedule my comeback for next week.”
No grandstanding, just a twinkle and a plan.

Some of my favourite memories are from blustery Saturday mornings on Wellington Harbour.
We’d take model boats down to the water, wind tugging at our jackets, spray on our faces.
He’d kneel at the edge, adjusting a line by a millimetre, checking the rudder twice.
The boats would wobble out, catch a gust, and suddenly they were away — a small triumph against the elements.
Afterwards we’d get hot pies, sit in the car with fogged-up windows, and he’d tell me stories about his students’ triumphs.
Not marks.
Triumphs.
A kid who came to every Saturday maths club for a year and finally asked the question they’d been too shy to ask.
Another who stayed after class, not for calculus, but to talk about homesickness.
He treated those moments like gold.
He taught me that small, steady wins are what life is really made of.

He had a way with simple things done properly.
Sailing, yes, and chess.
But also baking sponge rolls so light you worried they might float out the window.
He measured flour with care and folded the batter like it was alive.
If you asked why his sponge never sank he’d say, “Patience, boy. The tin tells you when it’s ready.”
On weekends he’d walk the bush tracks in the Remutaka ranges, unhurried, pointing out a fern you’d missed or the way a stream makes its own path around the stubborn parts of the land.

He loved the long view and the small detail at the same time.

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In our family, he was the quiet backbone.
You could feel the room relax when he walked in.
People will miss his reassuring ‘we’ll work it out’ smile — the one he used for school algebra and for life’s messier equations.
They’ll miss his careful explanations that made hard things simple — not by magic, but by respect for the person listening.
And we, as a family, will miss that steady presence at dinner, the way he’d sit back and let the conversation find its level before nudging it forward with one good question.

He was not a saint; he wouldn’t want that said.
He could be fussy about the dishwasher, and he thought a poorly sharpened pencil was a moral failing.
On gardening days he had an outfit that no one could convince him to retire.
But even his fussiness had a purpose: small things done properly add up.
It was never about perfection.
It was about care.
About showing up with your best attention, whether you were marking homework, mending a model boat, or talking through a problem that had nothing to do with maths.

To Nana — Linda — your partnership with him is something we all look up to.
The ordinary heroics of years count for more than any single story.
To Mum and Dad, to Michael and Sarah, he was proud of you in that particular way that didn’t need announcing — the packed lunches made with precision, the late-night text that said, “You’ll sort it.”
To us grandkids — Ethan, Ruby, and Aiden — he left a trail to follow: be curious, be kind, count properly, and put the kettle on before you try to fix anything complicated.

He believed in inclusion not as a slogan but as a habit.
Make space.

Listen longer.
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Split the last piece evenly.
He believed patience isn’t passive — it’s active, it’s paying attention.
He believed education is a pathway, and that pathways only matter if you walk them together, looking back now and then to check no one has been left behind.

Standing here, I keep hearing his voice in the back of my mind, the same way you hear the tide in the harbour even when you’re two streets back.
We’ll work it out.
He said it when the weather turned on us and the boat line tangled.
He said it when I failed a driving test and didn’t want to try again.
He said it when we worried about things that seemed too big to name.
And he was right more often than not.
We do work it out, together, if we take our time and bring our best to the small tasks right in front of us.

So how do we honour him now?
We can show up for each other the way he did.
We can take an extra minute to explain something to a person who is struggling.
We can volunteer a Saturday morning and not make a song and dance about it.
We can sharpen the pencil, label the seedlings, reset the chess clock, bake a sponge roll for someone who needs a soft slice and a cup of tea.
We can keep learning, because he never stopped.

On behalf of the family, thank you for the love you’ve shown — in the stories you’ve shared, in the old class photos you’ve dug out, in the meals left on the doorstep.
If you’re thinking about how to continue his legacy in a practical way, we welcome donations to the Wellington City Mission in lieu of flowers.
He would like that: help that moves, help that lands somewhere useful.

Poppa Pete, you taught in classrooms, yes, but you also taught in car parks with pie wrappers on the dash, in gardens with dirt under your nails, in quiet lounges where the kettle clicked and steam rose like a small flag of truce.

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You taught me that a fair game is better than an easy win, that a good question is worth more than a quick answer, and that kindness is the simplest way to change the shape of a day.

We will miss you.
We will miss the way you made space for all of us to be a little braver, a little more exact, a little more generous.
But what you built in us doesn’t vanish.
It carries on in the way we show up, in the way we explain, in the way we say, without fuss, we’ll work it out.

Thank you, Poppa Pete, for every careful note in a margin, for every pie on a windy day, for every quiet laugh at the right moment.
Thank you for the patience you practised and passed on.

Sail on, old friend.
We’ll see you in the small, good things we do next.

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