



Oren Dwight Culpepper

August 12, 1945 - August 26, 2026

Joplin, Missouri

Oren Dwight Culpepper died in Joplin on August 26, 2026. He was eighty-one. Born there on August 12, 1945, he grew up hearing a mine before he understood a map. His father walked a drift. Oren learned that a bolt is a promise: it holds, or the whole story comes apart in the dark.

For eighteen years he worked underground, then another two decades behind an auto-parts counter that sold fasteners to people who did not want a lecture. He arrived early. He did not advertise. Customers called him because he would write up a cracked caliper even when the Saturday was already promised. He charged a fair hour and a smaller one when a church van needed a lift more than a sermon.

He married Velma Culpepper in 1967. They raised three children in a frame house that needed a new porch every twenty years. Velma kept the garden and the choir. Oren grilled on Sundays and considered a plate of smoked chicken a seasonal obligation. After his knees quit the worst pits he still came out for a favorite job, moving slower, doing the same honest work.

Friends remember a man who wiped his hands before he shook yours, who could stand in a noise without making it a personality, and who left a floor cleaner than he found it. He loved the river at evening and a glass of tea he did not finish. He died in Joplin, in the city whose ground had written his calendar. The counter still opens.

Services

Visitation in Joplin, then a simple service. A gift to a mine-workers' assistance fund is welcome.

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