**EULOGY**

**WRITTEN FOR**

**JUNE HARRIS**

Hello everyone. Today, we mourn the passing of James E. Griffin, known to most as Peete. While I did not know Peete personally, I was very close with his mother, my cousin by marriage, Delsie. As we all know, when we have people that are close to us, their family serves as an extension of them… an expression of their memory… a marker of their time here on earth. That is what Peete is for me. I didn’t have to know him personally to feel sorrow at his passing.

An ancient Roman philosopher once said, “Let no one weep for me, or celebrate my funeral with mourning; for I still live as I pass to and fro through the mouths of people.” Today is a clear demonstration of that. Whether we knew Peete a lot or a little, he lives as we speak of him… or, as Cicero said, “The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living.”

I knew Delsie, Pete’s mother, for most of her life. She married my cousin, James Edward. We were all born and raised in South Mills, and Elizabeth City, Peete’s hometown, is not far from here. I say this to paint the background of the picture known as Peete Griffin. Delsie was kind and quiet, gentle hearted and compassionate. She was devoted to her friends, family, and community, and I have no doubt that the values she held so dear were instilled in her son.

From what I know of Peete, he, too, was a person who preferred his own company. The Russian playwright, Anton Chekhov said, “Any idiot can face a crisis. It’s the day to day living that wears you out.” I have a feeling Peete experienced both crisis and calm. While he kept to himself, word of his talent got around. I’ve heard that he was an accomplished artist…. He loved to draw. That says a lot about a person…. To have the desire to express oneself through any form of art is telling…. It gives us a clue into one’s life… one’s thoughts… how one chooses to literally leave a mark on this earth, and whether anyone liked his work or didn’t, whether anyone saw his work, or it remained private, like the man himself, it is a measure of a person and the way he chose to spend his time on earth, and that is to be respected and acknowledged.

Peete may have been a loner…. For whatever reasons he may have had, but there’s one thing that’s very clear… he has brought all of us together today, to invoke the meaningfulness of his life… to encourage us and inspire us to think of others we have known, loved, and lost, and to hopefully rekindle a respect and caring for those that are in our lives.

Memorials and funerals offer us a time to stop what we’re doing…. They provide a time for us to pause and reflect… to think about the value of the time we spend here, and maybe…. hopefully, commit to being more conscious and aware of those that come into our lives for, as it is said, a season, a reason, or a lifetime. While it might seem odd to stand here before you and say I didn’t really know Peete, the truth is, I did. His reflection is in all of us and his passing leaves a deep impression. The eminent scholar, Henry Louis Gates, said, “There are so many stories buried on family trees.” Pete’s story was buried to greater or lesser extents for me for quite a while, but today, he is honored. Today, I, and we, think of him… the man… the son… the father and friend that he was…. The spirit that he offered… the light that he shared. It is a simple fact that James E.Griffin, also known as Peete, lived, and that is worthy of honoring. May he Rest in Peace. Thank you all.