WEDDING SPEECH

FOR

JAMES RICHARDS

(**If you want to begin with a little joke you can start by saying….**)…. We’re **baaaaack!!!** For those of you that know the Richards family well, you know that we’ve had a pretty wild year… or even a little more than a year… It all started on February 26th of 2015 when I got to live one of the most fateful and wonderful days of my life. I’ll tell you about it shortly, but today we are here to witness and fulfill the visions that were hatched that day…. today we joyfully celebrate the marriage of our beautiful daughter Kelsey to Paul Friedrich.

Last February 26th began like any other day… sort of…. except that Paul asked me to meet him at the Bay Café at Fisherman’s Terminal in Seattle. “Okay…” I thought to myself…it was a little early and I was a little curious. Paul proceeded to tell me he was very much in love with Kelsey and was fully prepared financially, emotionally, and in every conceivable way possible to share his life with her. He showed me the ring **(If you want to make a joke you cans say**) … and even I gasped a little… (**And wait for the laugh**) and asked for my blessing. I know Paul and I knew his fine character and how much he loved Kelsey, and of course my blessing was sincere and heartfelt, I was really very happy….

Unfortunately I couldn’t linger with Paul because I had another meeting… two blocks away…. with another young man who **ALSO** had something to discuss with me…. this time at the Starbucks on Dravus Street. He also wanted me to know he was in love with my daughter, how he was prepared financially, emotionally, and in every way possible… by this time you know what’s coming… Had I just fallen into the **parallel universe**? Was my daughter a little **too** busy? What are the odds that two fine young men would ask **ME**…. the same question on the same day **within an hour** and just two blocks apart? Don’t worry everyone… the second young man was Ryan Somers, now my son-in-law, and he was asking for Kevlyn’s hand in marriage…. neither Ryan nor Paul had spoken to the other to discuss their plan…. the whole turn of events was amazing…If I wasn’t certain before that day, I definitely knew after the second meeting how incredibly blessed the Richards family is.

Nostalgia has a funny way of visiting as one prepares for a special moment like this. I see Kelsey as she is today; a beautiful, busy, vital intelligent, dependable young woman, but the essence of her being can be defined in one small but incredibly important word…. **heart.** No matter where the twists and turns of life find her, Kelsey listens to and follows her heart…. and that is something that distinguished her as an infant and has guided her throughout life. When we brought Kelsey home for the first time, she was this tiny, precious beautiful bundle… who was… let’s say… a little, or **A LOT** fussy in her first few weeks of life. She cried and fussed and there were many sleepless nights… (**If you want to make a joke you can say**)… for Kelsey too!! (**And wait for the laugh**). Susan and I tried what we could but nothing seemed to calm this baby **(you can also add**)… remember… No user manuals back then! At one point I remember just giving up, surrendering onto the couch, and placing Kelsey on my chest…. and she calmed down. Susan and I realized that after having heard Susan’s heartbeat for the past nine months, listening to my heart comforted her…. and she’s been doing it ever since.

Kelsey is the eldest of our six children and ever since her next younger brother Jay was born Kelsey found a genuine joy in caring for others. It was an inspiration to see her share herself as she cared for all of her brothers and sisters…. and by the time she was eleven years old, she was a veteran with five younger siblings!!

Kelsey has stayed true to her heart and her self throughout her life. From traveling to Chile for an internship to going to England and Rome to study with Nicole, her dear friend and maid of honor, Kelsey has trusted her own compass. Her capacity to listen to that wonderful heart has served her well. It’s also guided her through challenges… looking for work after graduating from UW is never easy. Having to search in 2008 was a particularly difficult period in the professional world, but Kelsey followed that heart of hers, allowed herself to be guided by her fine ethics, worked hard, and found her way… she’s made wise choices throughout her fairly new career… yes Kelsey, Amazon is lucky to have **YOU**! Kelsey is a unique and precious soul… and I don’t just say that because I am her father. I marvel at the joy she genuinely exudes while experiencing and appreciating even the simplest moments… and that really is they key to a happy and contented life.

This country may commemorate Columbus on October 12th but since 2012 our family remembers that day a little differently. It is the day that Kelsey met Paul. It was right after a Husky football game… clearly a mutual activity they both love and have in common. It might not have seemed like the best time to begin a relationship, but apparently it was… In fact in retrospect it might have been the **BEST** and most fortuitous time. Kelsey was planning to move to San Francisco for her job and went to look for an apartment. Although she was scheduled to move on December third, she realized she was at a crossroads… make the move or listen to that heart that has served her so well?

Kelsey followed her heart and Susan and I were secretly very grateful to the fine young man we hadn’t even met yet. When we finally did meet at the Christmas party at our home in Gig Harbor, we instantly saw what a great person Paul was and is and what a wonderful couple they make. When something is meant to be… As we got to know Paul we saw the similarities and we all felt the fit was so right. With similar values and schooling, these two began their road to destiny, and here we are.

It is a real pleasure to know Paul’s parents Susie and Alex and his brother Mark and sister Laura are all as fine as people can be. Susie and Alex, it was clear from the beginning where Paul gets his intelligence, sincerity, and wonderful disposition and we are thrilled to welcome all of you to our newly blended family.

Every day, in so many ways and gestures, Paul demonstrates his nature.... from earning a law degree and becoming a partner in his law firm by the age of 30… to selflessly advising me on legal matters… to being there when we needed him most… helping us move from a six bedroom house… **THAT’s** dedication!! While others found their schedules mysteriously filled at critical dates in the moving process, Paul was there, no excuses, sleeves rolled up and ready to pack. (**If you feel comfortable, do you want give a little “son-in-law” line like…**) Pardon the pun but Paul definitely **raises the bar** when it comes to being an exemplary son-in-law!!! (**You can add**) We love you too Ryan!! (**And wait for the laugh**).

Susan and I and the whole family are so happy that Kelsey follows her heart and has found her match in Paul. His caring, planning, consideration and demonstration of love and respect for our daughter know no bounds.

To Paul and Kelsey, we are thrilled for the two of you. Today before the eyes of God we are proud to see our families joined. Susan and I have another son and our sons and daughters have another brother. Life is truly a blessing

To Mr. and Mrs. Paul and Kelsey Friedrich… may you always trust and follow your hearts… now they are one! We love you! Congratulations!