EULOGY

FOR

SWAPNA BIRDSALL

Hello everyone and thank you all for being here. Today we are going to celebrate the life of Richard Birdsall in a place in which he loved to be… right here in his house, at **HOME**. These rooms are filled with memories and anecdotes of what it was like to witness all of the facets of this wonderful friend, colleague, comrade, father, brother and husband. Although the last years of his life were challenging (**If you want to make a little laugh you can say**)… awww… who am I kidding… they were **BRUTAL**!! Richard somehow managed to retain his dignity, his strength, and most of all his sense of humor. Richard’s favorite quote was short, sweet, simple and to the point. “Have a nice day.” And in his honor and memory, it is my intention that we heed that command beginning right now.

It’s been said that what we’ve done for ourselves alone dies with us, but what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal. It is through his humor, partnerships, generosity, and strength that we will feel him with us. I know that there were so many things about him that I found so admirable: His sense of humor (**Tell a little one liner or small joke about some little thing that Richard did that always made you laugh**) can set me off…. just thinking about him saying something so simple like\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. His integrity never ceased to amaze me. He never had a mean thing to say about anyone …. and believe me… in his line of work I’m **SURE** he could have been inspired!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). But also in true Richard style, he found a way to turn what others might experience as a stressful job into a positive…. Can you imagine the neighborhood kids just waiting for him to come home on his police motorcycle lined up to have their turn around the cul de sac?? Such a simple gesture created a neighborhood superstar… the kids loved it and he was happy to give them a thrill. Richard loved kids and he was a great dad. I’m sure Rylee and Loren agree with that. Richard really was an officer and a gentleman… and whether in uniform as a police officer, a soldier (?.. **Please be as specific with his rank and title as you think you should be**), or civilian hunter, sportsman, fisherman, athlete, he knew what it meant to love and appreciate life.

Although for the past eleven years Richard was confined to the limitations of his disease, nothing could have conquered his wonderful and energetic **soul**, and that’s why we’re here today. We know his journey doesn’t end here, in fact it’s just beginning a new phase, and in order to provide a fitting initiation for this new chapter in the life of Richard Birdsall, there are a few people I would like to acknowledge… (**If you feel comfortable saying this look up and say**) and I better get it right because you-know-who is watching…. I would like to express a special thanks to Bill Marquez. You were a caring friend, trusted colleague and dedicated hospice volunteer. Thank you for taking Richard to the beach and allowing him to dream. What a gift that was to him. To Bernard and Ollie, aka the “Partners in **crime**”… no **REALLY** (**wait for the laugh**), you made us laugh every time Richard was with you…. and you know I expect to continue that… we can use those moments now more than ever…To Richard’s brothers, Bob, Steve and Bill, I will try to respect your mutual “cone of silence” when invoking the credo, “What happens in the hills **STAYS** in the hills…” okay…. if you say so…. I won’t push but **SOMEDAY** I will find out what went on!!! To \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Richard’s devoted sister who loved her “Ricky” so much. What a rare and special connection the two of you shared. I want to thank my mother \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for being there when I need her most especially when she stepped in to help Richard when he was (**instructions unclear-deported? Please check and fix this**). To my sister MInni and her family who, without hesitation, jumped on a plane to be here today. To my sister Punam who deserves a very special note of gratitude for putting together this tribute and insuring that Richard will get a “send-off” worthy of his grace and integrity and the love he shared with all of us. And of course to our beautiful daughters Rylee and Loren, there’s no getting around it. Your father passed way too young and it’s hard for all of us to accept that but he loved you both with all of his heart. I am here for you and will take care of you and make sure you always smile when you think of your father. It was a real gift to have him in our lives.

There’s no easy way to process grief and loss and there are no shortcuts. But I truly believe there are ways to honor Richard’s memory and that will keep him alive within each one of us. Tell an amusing joke that he would have told. Give a neighborhood kid a ride on your bicycle and throw in some motorcycle sound effects. Do something just a little naughty and if anyone catches you just say, “What happens in the hills **STAYS** in the hills”….Rylee and Loren… you two can skip this one!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Go to the beach and “dream” about the good times with Richard…. I know he’ll be looking down and smiling on **THAT** one. But most of all tell the people you really care about that you love them. Don’t take **ANYTHING** for granted. Be present and appreciate the **little** moments in your lives. Be inspired to keep fighting for a cure for this debilitating and insidious disease. Maintain hope that someday soon there will be a cure and others won’t have to say good-bye too soon. Please continue to learn from Richard and use those lessons to have a rich and worthwhile life, and most of all, “**Have a good day**.” Really. Thank you. I love all of you.