**14830, Sally (Mcclain) Hernandez**

Good Evening Dear Friends,

First, I want to thank each and every one of you for coming tonight to share my special event. Some people stop celebrating birthdays at a certain age, but I believe in celebrating every birthday. I don’t believe that I’m getting older so much that I’m getting better. Each year I can look back and see how much I’ve learned. In addition to celebrating my birthday, I like to celebrate the close friends in my life, those who are more than casual acquaintances, those who are more like family.

From the attendance tonight, I can tell that all of you agree with me. I’ve known most of you for more than 25 years. We’ve literally been through thick and thin together. We’ve laughed together and cried together. We’ve shared our successes and we’ve shared our failures and remained friends no matter what. It is you who I consider my “chosen family”.

Everyone needs people around them that they know they can trust, no matter what happens to them. If I’ve learned one thing in life, it's that it’s not where you go in life, it's who you travel with. Some of you I have known forever, while others I have only known a few years. But, one thing I do know is that we can lean on each other. We can depend upon one another. That’s why we can come together today and celebrate together.

I used to hear people say that blood is thicker than water, but I don’t believe that is true. I believe that true friendship is thicker than anything. Blood relatives may or may not stand by you. They may do it for real or they may do it only out of obligation. But, when a friend stands by you, you know that they are doing it because they really believe in you.

Even though we’ve all known each other a long time, we don’t necessarily see each other often due to where we live and the jobs we work. But, no matter how long we’re apart, once we get back together it’s like the time apart melts away. We can literally pick up a conversation where we left off.

All of us have traveled a journey in life. Our journeys have been different in some ways but alike in others. Our journeys have held the basics – we were born, we graduated from school, we got married, maybe we got divorced, we built a career. The fact that we travelled this road together has made the journey richer and more memorable. After all, what good is a celebration if you have no one to join in your celebration? We all have each other to share our celebrations.

Not everyone has the type of friendships that we have. Not everyone has their own “chosen family”. I like to think that ours is pretty unique. I don’t have to name names for who is the best of this or that. We each know the bond of friendship that we share. It’s a little different with each of us, but we each know what part we play. And, that’s the beauty of a friendship like ours. We don’t have to tell the whole world all the details. We just know the ones who are our real friends.

Would everyone join me in a toast – To Friendship?