FATHER OF THE BRIDE SPEECH

FOR

RICHARD ANTCZAK

Hello everyone and thank you for being here to share this beautiful day and this incredible moment. For those of you that may not know… and at this point, and with this crowd, I hope that would add up to **NONE** of you… (**Wait for the laugh**), I am Richard, the proud, **emotional**, overjoyed father of our gorgeous bride, Courtney. I think it’s safe to say that in this life I hit the **trifecta**… I have three amazing women that comprise the foundation of our clan… my wonderful wife Cindy and our adorable younger daughter Jamie round out our line up. We are a loving and close family and today we open the ranks as we welcome our new son Joseph. (**Acknowledge Joseph’s family and welcome them**). To \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, we want you to know that we are so happy to officially extend our family and of course that includes you. We look forward to sharing the future and making great new memories together.

Courtney, tonight is for you and Joseph. It took lots of time and planning to put together this great weekend and in that time I had the chance to think**. A lot…** About life and our family, and how wonderful it has been to be your father… especially since this entire process has the ability to open the floodgates of nostalgia, emotions, and … hey! Who even **knows** what!! I started getting nervous as I prepared what I would say and wondered, “Will I be able to hold it together? Will I get uncontrollably misty? Will I falter… or **worse**?” And then I remembered one of the reasons why I’m so proud of you…. It’s not just your beauty… it’s not just your enthusiasm, your stellar smile, or your intelligence and quick wit… I mean all of that’s really nice, but should my shaking knees and my stage fright get the better of me…. I’m okay with that…because I’m your father and that’s just what dads do… oh… and of course there’s one other thing… you’re **an emergency room RN**… you can handle my trauma!! And I also hope you can handle my jokes!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

Courtney, since the day we welcomed you into this world \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years ago, you have been a beacon of light and love and positivity, and like the atmosphere in this room, you are a breath of fresh air. Contrary to the popular saying, you put the “**fun**” into this very **FUN**ctional family and it’s always been that way. I love how close you and your sister are… after all, you DID pave the way so that **her** road to adulthood would be smoother…THAT’s paid off… hasn’t it??? While you were growing up your mother and I did our best to encourage both of you. And Courtney, I see now that you were listening… “You can do it if you put your mind to it”…was our Mantra, and look at you now!! **You DID IT**!! You’ve blossomed into a confident, caring and loving young woman and now you are Joseph’s wife. In the professional world, you have to deal with more crises in one day than many of us might be able to handle in a year, but you maintain your composure, your senses, your ability to think very quickly on your feet… **AND** you **STILL** find time to shop with Jamie… like it’s an **Olympic event**!! (**Wait for the laugh**). You truly believe that “All good will come back to you” and your integrity and commitment inspire the people that are around you. In every sense of the word, you are a **lifesaver**.

Of course I would like to think that you learned from the best ... and I would like to think that I did my part to nurture and protect you while you were growing up… after all, you were, are, and always will be my “princess….” but there was **THAT** time… We loved to vacation in Florida…. do you remember when we went to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and you and I went horseback riding? Jamie was too young so Mom stayed back with her and off we went… just you and me and a couple of trusty horses… clopping through the woods and along the trails… idyllic… blissful… **BUGGY**… and I don’t mean a carriage!! As you rode in front of me, I noticed… ahhhhh… who am I kidding… I was almost **BLINDED** by the sight of a **GIANT** banana spider on your **BACK!!** …. **YIKES!**!! I’m the **DAD**!! What do I **DO**????? I mean… I like fresh air but I’m no Crocodile Dundee!! (**Wait for the laugh**). I had to get off my horse and yell to you to stop…. **WITHOUT PANICKING. HAH**!! I swear it was **so big** it **laughed at me**… I have to admit I didn’t **LOVE** the thought of swatting that thing off your back… actually I was really scared, but I did it and you survived… Me? I must confess…. I’m still a little creeped out by the whole thing... but hey!!! That’s now Joseph’s domain!! (**Wait for the laugh**)

So, yes, a father hopes and dreams and prays for the happiness of his daughters. All fathers wait for the day when Prince Charming shows up to claim his Princess and his greatest dream is realized…. (**Turn to your father-in-law and say**) Isn’t that right Pops? **Remember when I showed up**?? (**Give a wink and wait for the laugh**)… and sure enough (**Do you want to say this? If not you can skip the part in bold**) … as the old story goes… “**A guy walks into a bar…”** … and the rest is history. (**You can substitute “Boy meets girl” if you prefer**). Courtney’s Prince Charming showed up and boy are we lucky!!

Joseph, you know that Cindy and I dedicated ourselves to teaching our girls the value of life and as I said earlier, Courtney really does believe that all good comes back to you… Lucky for all of us that you were **thirsty** that night!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Thank you for loving my daughter and for honoring her. I’ve done my best to raise her and I think we both know that tonight I have given my best to you. I also want you to know how proud we are of you for your commitment to the US Navy and for your selfless dedication and service to our country. (**If you want you can turn to Jamie and add**)… Uh…Jamie… the stakes have been raised… when **YOUR** time comes to find **YOUR** Prince Charming…. (**Point to Joseph and leave them hanging…. wait for the laugh**). Joseph rest easy in the comfort of knowing you’re the **GOOD** son-in-law… for **NOW**….

True love is timeless, classic, **exciting,** and the stuff of which legends are made. Right now the two of you are all starry eyed and beyond crazy about each other. But some people warn that these early euphoric moments don’t last… or the feelings may not stay as intense. There are different phases of love and marriage and so many of us that have been “institutionalized”… and by that I mean members of the “institution of marriage,” wonder periodically how to keep that spark alive. Over the years, we have all gotten wisdom from different sources and one of those is the glamorous way in which love is portrayed in Hollywood. Many years ago, the actress Joanne Woodward said, “ Sexiness wears thin after a while and beauty fades… but to be married to a man who makes you **laugh** every day… now **THAT’s** a **REAL** treat!” … Of course … easy for **HER** to say…she was married to Paul Newman, arguably the handsomest man of the twentieth century!! **(If you’re concerned that the younger people won’t know who they are, you can also add,** **“Go ahead!!! Google it!!** **And wait for the laugh**). But all things being equal, there is wisdom in that statement. Remember to respect and nurture each other in all ways… maintain a partnership and conversation that honors both of you, who you are in all aspects…. keep the conversation alive with love and humor and consideration and it will last a lifetime. … And always remember to **laugh**…

Time goes by so quickly and before we know it, our kids are grown up, we’ve moved to Florida, and we proudly watch our family grow. Courtney, Jamie, Joseph, I have to say, we wouldn’t be here if not for you… **REALLY!**!! And we wouldn’t have it any other way. A new chapter began tonight and it is one that brings all of us hopes and dreams for a bright future filled with love and laughter and **family**. Courtney and Joseph, I want you to know how much we love and respect the both of you and how much we pray for your safety and happiness. This life is filled with wonder and incredible lessons and if we are really observant, we continue to learn about all of the good that will come back to you. You each have dedicated yourselves to living a purposeful existence and may your blessings be multiplied throughout your lives.

(**If you want to make a toast you can say**) Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to invite you to raise a glass as I propose a toast:

To Prince and Princess Charming… I mean to Joseph and Courtney, May you have happiness, health, love and respect, throughout your lives and “may all good come back to you…” Congratulations! We love you!