**BIRTHDAY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**CARA ZAHN**

Hello everyone! Thank you all for being here to celebrate this momentous and very special occasion....Yes. After years of waiting, anticipating, wondering...."What will it be like? Will he change? Will he be able to actually **accept** and follow through?" Of course you know I'm referring the obvious.... Tommy **took a couple of hours off from work** to join us here tonight for dinner!! Woo Hoo!!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). All jokes aside, tonight we witness and celebrate the **Big 4 OH!!** of the most wonderful person I know.... my best friend, my partner through life, **my bulldog**, Tommy....

To know him is to love him.... and I know every person in this room will back me on that (**Do you want to make a joke and say something like**)... of course liberal infusions of adult beverages don't hurt.... (**and wait for the laugh**).... but really, Tommy is the gift that keeps on giving... selflessly, **passionately** (**do you want to wink when you say this?**),.... to me, our precious kids, Thomas, Olivia, and Elizabeth, to his family, to his friends, and to all who are lucky enough to know him. (**If there is a contractor or some worker with whom Tommy has add famous arguments or issues you can say**) .... well.... except for maybe the plumber (**or whoever it is**)....he wasn't that thrilled... (**and wait for the laugh**).

Tommy, it's been fifteen years since we met... that's almost half of our lives that we've been laughing, loving, and **skiing** together... more about that later! (**Wait for the laugh**) and I really have no idea what life might have been like had we not met.... but from the very beginning you showed us the real **you**... nothing can suppress or diminish the incredible person you are... of course you may try with some of those "off the wall" diet schemes.... but your heart and integrity will always be the greatest things about you. I will never forget the night we met back in October, 2002 at Buon Gerino Café in Market Square. You were pretty much done with Pittsburgh you were packing it in to go back to Long Island.... yeah... I got it... a **NY snob** (**does that work**)... or so you thought.... someone was watching over us back then... we just placed one foot in front of the other and walked towards our destiny.... Six months later.... and waddya know?? We've got ourselves a full fledged Steelers fan!! **WOOO HOOO**!!! You met my parents a couple of nights later and when my mother heard that you planned to take your grandparents to Italy on vacation... **DONE**!!!! Signal received!!! She knew this one (**point to Tommy**) was a keeper... and she was right.

I will never forget the first ski trip... Remember that Tommy? You assured me you were a skier... We got to the top of the mountain.... your efforts were so valiant... you fell... how many times? I stopped counting at \_\_\_\_\_\_. But that moment taught me so much more about you than I could have imagined... it showed me your willingness to work on issues. It showed me your resilience and tenacity... it showed me how you absolutely refuse to accept defeat... it showed me how ready you were and are to constantly learn and improve... although I think you're **pretty perfect** just as you are... it showed me a man that always, without fail, does his best to honor his word and give his all, and with every miss and every fall, I knew I was falling too....

(**Please correct if timeline is a little off**) You had accomplished so much when we first met...you were a great student, you played football at Carnegie Mellon, and had a group of crazy, super, loyal friends.... like Cheech and Russ.... and we're so happy you guys are able to be here with us tonight. You went on to be Number One in law school.... you were so dedicated to your studies... always "crackin' the books" at the law library... of course for those of you that were there, you know I'm referring to the **traveling** law library... in the trunk of the '88 Le Sabre... you know, the car that if you turn the wheel to the side it still goes straight? **THAT** law library!!! (**Wait for the laugh**)... you've always been a "mover and a shaker... " and as we have learned from experience, do not take one of your business cards... cause the info is always changing... with each step, once again, you show your commitment to success... I'm even more proud of you now that you're up for partner....

Tommy, like I said, you're a loyal friend, a talented lawyer, and an all around great guy, but we also know that the measure of a man and his character can be gauged by his closest relationships.... his family.... and in that regard, you hit the jackpot. Your parents did an incredible job raising you and your sister, Kristy and brother, Brian, and it means so much to me that you have such strong values. We all know of the relationship you had... and have with your dad (**Do you want to mention his name?**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .... what a guy he was..... and he taught you well..... and from the **heart**. He lives on in you and Kristy and Brian everyday, and his legacy will carry forward with Thomas, Olivia, and Elizabeth. I know that you will build memories and traditions with our kids with more enthusiasm and drive than you even brought to skiing!!! I mean, all I have to do is mention Christmas and.... step aside... Alvin and the Chipmunks... Disney sweaters... Santa... comin' thru!! I just about burst with love when I see you with our kids and I know history will repeat itself as you and Thomas form that unbreakable father/son connection... just like you had with your dad. As we all "grow up," we realize the real wealth in life is found with the people we love...

So for all of us in this room and beyond, (**Name your parents, Tommy's mom, his brother-in-law, sister-law, etc**)... from my parents, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, to (**Tommy's mom**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, to Kristy and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and Brian and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and **ALL** of you, we all connect through Tommy... we all truly are **family.** I want to propose a toast to my husband, and I don't want to get too corny, but to quote the Beatles, "....and in the end, the love you take...."

Here's to Tommy, for all of the love and friendship, caring and enthusiasm, and most of all laughs you give all of us, here's to the happiest of birthdays and may you have many, many more!!!! We love you!