**FATHER OF THE BRIDE SPEECH**

**FOR**

**WALTER FINNINGER**

Hello everyone!!! This is a very special moment for the Finninger family.... and not just because we made it to Brooklyn!! Tonight we witness the marriage of our (**Note: Not sure if Rachel's mom is in the picture as nothing was mentioned.... if she is, it would be nice to acknowledge her**) daughter Rachel to the dashing and talented Bennett Johnson. This intimate gathering provides a perfect setting to celebrate two talented and beautiful young people...both inside and out. It is a great pleasure to welcome Bennett into the Finninger clan, (**If Bennett's parents and family are there, please acknowledge them**) and I would like to extend warm congratulations and welcome to Bennett's family as well. (**Name the family members**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, thank you for being here with us to share in all of this... we look forward to a future filled with many happy family gatherings.

I can't help but see visions and flashes of memories of what it was like to have the privilege for the past twenty three years to share in the evolution and coming of age of my oldest child, Rachel. To say that Rachel "gets around" is an understatement. She had a kinetic childhood... always gravitating to movement, adventure, sports, cheerleading for sports... you get the picture. To know Rachel is to appreciate how centered she is after a good run. Who would have thought in those days when soccer and snowboarding and horseback riding were such priority activities, that she would blossom into the breathtaking creature that has graced some of the greatest runways in the U.S. and abroad? Who would have thought that the spirited high school cheerleader I escorted to the Nationals in Florida would bring us all here on this special day to celebrate her wedding to Bennett Johnson...(**Do you want to make a little Austin Powers joke and say the following? If not, you can ski it**)).... "**International Man of Mystery (and wait for the laugh)**. Rachel and her squad won the Nationals back then in Florida and as I look around at all of you and at Rachel and her husband, I know that Rachel has always had the heart and the spirit of a winner.

Running may conspire to take people away... depending on how fast or slow they might go, but I have to say that one of the greatest memories of sharing time with my daughter takes me back to Rachel's sixteenth birthday... of course she was on the go, as always, but this time I was with her. Together we conquered Hawaii... and in Waikiki we ran a 10k and learned to surf on the North Shore. Talk about memories that last a lifetime! That was such a special experience.

The great English documentarian, Michael Apted, made a series of shows for the BBC known as the "Up" series. It started in the 60's as 7 UP... it was a documentary chronicling the lives of seven year old English children.... I mention this because in the piece, Apted uses the phrase "Give me the child when he is seven years old and I will show you the man." To that I say, give me my daughter as a young girl and I will show you the woman.... many years ago, Rachel began a wedding album... before that fateful trip to LA... before that chance meeting at a church function... before that soon to be superstar discovered that **international man of mystery** was **THE ONE**.... the faces and places may have been updated from that original album but Rachel had her vision.... and now she has her man... and I know we're all so thrilled for this bride and groom and their future together.

As much as I don't want to get too overly sentimental, if I don't do it now.... **WHEN**??? (**Wait for the laugh**) .... so indulge me if you will, as I quote a little lyric from a country song.... (**If you want to mention it... it's from Tim McGraw**) "Chase your dreams but always know the road that will lead you home again."

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to invite you to raise a glass as I propose a toast:

To Rachel and Bennett.... you two are now officially **ONE**. .... and now the road you're on will lead you home... to **each other**. May you have a life filled with health and happiness, humor and surprises, and more good fortune than you might ever wish for. Congratulations! We love you!

Thank you!