**MAID OF HONOR SPEECH**

**FOR**

**JESSICA HEDGEPETH**

WOW!! Hello everyone! For those of you that may not know, I'm Jessica and I am so happy to be here to celebrate the wedding of my wonderful, dear, lifelong friend, Tara, to her equally wonderful, caring and loving groom, Jeff. Tara and I have been as close as two people can possibly be.... we truly are sisters by **choice** and we continue to choose to reinforce and honor this bond again and again and again. Tara, you look absolutely stunning today and your happiness is shining from every ounce of your being. (**If you'd like to congratulate Tara's family and Jeff's family, do that here**). I'd like to extend congratulations to Tara's family (**acknowledge Tara's parents and family as you feel is appropriate.... how well do you know them?**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.... (**If appropriate you can make a little joke and say**), can you believe it? Our little girl has gotten married!!! It took a village but we did it! (**And wait for the laugh**). To Jeff's family, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I don't want to seem pushy, but.... welcome to the family! I'm so happy that your son and our Tara have found each other... what a great pair!

What can one say about a friendship that has lasted almost a lifetime.... one that has survived frightening hairdos, crushing defeats for the Lakewood High School field hockey team, and late night marathons on AOL instant messenger... let me clarify... that has survived AOL instant messenger ... **PERIOD**? (**Wait for the laugh**). Tara and I go back.... back.... WAAAAAAAYYYYY back... we met in first grade. Events and shared interests have strengthened our bond over the years. If anyone needed to look up the true meaning of friendship, I promise you that there would be a picture of Tara and me.... we are the classic definition of what it means to have and to be a friend. For almost our entire lives we have mirrored one another. We were both raised in big families, we went to the same Catholic grade school, so we had communion and confirmation celebrations in common.... we both made it through band as well as the trials and challenges of high school field hockey.... and make no mistake... those field hockey challenges served their purpose. Not only did it teach us respect for the sport and for our teammates, we learned sportsmanship, endurance, how to handle defeat... oh boy did we learn that.... through the years as we grew up, we may have had our separate journeys but our paths led to good habits... as we made it to college, we got to practice typing... a lot... yes. On AOL instant messenger! (**Wait for the laugh**). Tara and I are both registered nurses, she was in my wedding party, she loves my two kids, and she has always been there for me.... no matter what. Neither distance nor personal challenges.... usually mine... have kept us apart. She kept me sane during those dark days of my early twenties.... don't ask... and the only good thing about not being in touch for a few days is how great it feels to speak to Tara again and catch up. And as if ALL of that weren't enough to cement our bond, would you believe that both of our mothers are named Concetta? Who would have guessed? It's just cosmic that we're so close! Someone once said, " Friendship isn't about whom you know the longest... it's about who showed up and never left your side." I'm so blessed to have Tara as such a good, strong friend AND that our bond has been so long and enduring makes it even more precious.

It's also worth noting that because Tara is such a special person.... she's beautiful, smart, crafty, compassionate, non-judgmental, honest, genuine.... I could go on...it only makes sense that her gifts and fine qualities would shine through to everyone she'd meet. I'm sure that's what happened when she was introduced to Jeff. They met through their mutual friend, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**Will that person be at the wedding? Do you want to name him/her?)** became friends and roommates, and here we are! (**Turn to Jeff and say**) Jeff... you **KNOW** how happy I am that you two found each other, and I want you to know that I appreciate how much you love my very dear friend. Naturally someone as fine as Tara would attract a kindred soul and from your free spirited attitude towards life, your sense of humor, your ability to "go with the flow "and roll with the punches as you handle stress that life tends to have, I thank you.... and if it's even possible, she's a better person thanks to your love and encouragement.

Tara and Jeff, now you two get to spend your lives together as **ONE** wonderful, dynamic, loving couple. Here's to a lifetime of happiness and fulfillment, love and friendship, health, prosperity, and more than you might ever wish for! We love you!

Thank you!