**WEDDING SPEECH**

**FOR**

**JIM RICHARDS**

Good evening everyone. In December of 1984 we bought the Bergen, a 57-foot longline fishing vessel. That following February, on my inaugural trip as captain, we fished for Black Cod in the southeast Alaska area, but it did not go too well...the grounds had just been fished, so instead we went on a five-day journey straight across the Gulf of Alaska, and for the second trip of that first season, I found myself perfectly alone in a nice big 450 fathom deep gulley full of black cod just 15 miles southeast of Chirikoff Island. Chirikoff Island is a small Island about 5 miles long about 35 miles south of Kodiak Island and Shelikoff Strait. Before this particular voyage, I had never been this far west in Alaska that early in the year. The fishing was tremendous and we were successful with our catch, however, like life and all things worthwhile, it was a struggle. On the third day of what was to be eight days of fishing we received a horrible weather forecast....Northwest winds at 80 knots, seas to 40 feet and -40 degrees wind chill, with hurricane force northwesterly coming out of the Bering Sea, across Bristol Bay, over the snow covered Alaskan Peninsula right at us. (**If you want to make a joke you can say**) .... it appeared that I **WOULD NOT** be needing that bathing suit I hadn’t packed (**and wait for the laugh**). After I heard that forecast we hauled the gear in, a task that took about twelve hours, and headed for shelter behind Chirikoff Island. The Bergen made about 9 knots under perfect conditions, but now the conditions were deteriorating quickly. It took five hours to get there, bucking into the building wind and seas. We would climb up to the top of a 40 foot swell only to come face to face with 10 – 20 feet of white, breaking, churning sea at the top. We would go right thru that sea and come out the other side, and slide down the back side of the swell toward the bottom of the trough. After we plunged down into the bottom of the trough, the Bergen would start climbing the next 40 foot swell and do it all over again and again and again. Eventually we made it into the lee of Chirikof Island and dropped the anchor about a quarter mile off the beach. There we were in hurricane force winds with the raging ocean storm just off our stern not far behind us. About 200,000 pounds of the Bergen and her crew were held fast and safe by an anchor that weighed just 125 pounds.

Life, in all of its beauty, challenges, celebrations, and glory, offers us many metaphors and reminders, and ironically that is about what my wonderful, beautiful wife Susan weighed when we met in 1974. I think we all need an anchor in our lives to help us through turbulent times and through all of the storms we all encounter through life. I know now that I did, but what I didn’t realize for a long time was that Susan has been that for me and for our family all along... even more important than the anchor on the Bergen during a hurricane. I probably would have survived without the anchor on the Bergen but I wouldn’t have made it and our family would not be what it is today without her. She has spent her lifetime devoted to me and our family while helping and doing things for everyone around her. For years she was alone half the time, at one point with six children... the oldest 11, helping me run our business, doing the accounting, sending me parts, all the while doing everything for our kids and I’m sure doing things to help everyone around her. She does so much for others that no one will ever know about, and I bet there’s so much positive contribution for those around her that I don’t even know about - **every day** of her life, but she does not talk about those things very much because to her it is the way she is. It’s the way she is supposed to be based on her faith and Jesus Christ, so it comes so naturally and beautifully from her. Combine this together with her unusually great wit, sense of timing, and sense of humor and you have the most incredible person I know.

I have a feeling that right about now you may be thinking, “Why is Jim telling fishing stories and toasting Susan? Has he lost what remains of his senses?” Well as I was preparing for this event and thinking about the honor of giving the first toast to Nick and Rheanon and thinking about my daughter... how beautiful and wonderful she is, and how she is such a good, loving, dedicated, human being; I realized that Rheanon is so much like Susan it is crazy. Yes, it’s bizarre how much alike they are.... and that is the most sincere compliment I could give to Rheanon or anyone.

I’ve seen Rheanon weather turbulent situations, where friends or family members are having problems in their lives and need support... when they need an anchor to hold onto, and Rheanon is there, even in those situations where others may judge or even abandon them. But Rheanon has always shown compassion. She naturally puts herself into that other person’s shoes and is with them with her love and support for as long as it takes. That is the gift of empathy and that gift is a blessing.

Today, as a bride, her presence and poise are almost other-worldly... but even when one first meets Rheanon her beauty is obvious. If you spend just a little time with her you experience her joy, her incredibly quick wit, and like her mother, her sharp sense of humor. With her energy and spirit, she has a way of transforming the room just by being in it. As she was growing up, somewhere along the line, her five siblings started calling her Rhea Rhea. This nickname spread outside of our family and stuck and in fact, her fourth-grade teacher Mr. Senko still refers to her as Rhea Rhea to this day. Rhea Rhea is not a shortened version of her full name - it takes just as long to say as Rheanon, but the reason it fit her so well and stuck with her, is because Rheanon is like a ray of sunshine. She brightens things up just by walking into the room and being there. If you are lucky, you get to hear her sing. She has the voice of an angel and it is unique and wonderful. One year I told her that for Christmas I wanted a CD of her singing. To this day that CD is in my truck stereo, it’s the only CD I have in my truck and I love listening to it.

Rheanon gets joy from, and is committed to, helping other people. A year from now she will be a nurse. She has already worked at the Veterans Hospital in Boise and she has been and is working with the Make a Wish Foundation. I’ve known her to sit up all night with people doing suicide watch. Sometimes the things she does are not easy or pleasant, but she knows her strength supports and comforts others, and so, like her mother, her dedication is practically boundless. These are just some of the things I know she has done and she is selflessly there for others all the time. Rheanon is devoted to her study of the Bible and she lives her life by the examples and lessons demonstrated by Jesus Christ when he was here exactly 2000 years ago.... it is heartwarming to know that, as we would have wished, my daughter has found a kindred depth of faith in the man she chose as her life partner.

It was during Rheanon’s sophomore year at Boise State when Susan and I started hearing about a young man named Nick Propp. I had heard that they would frequently see each other at Young Life. That February at the Dance Marathon, they spent a lot of time together, but they both wanted to take it slow and not get into a serious relationship too quickly... but there was an undeniable attraction.

On March 7th, 2015 Nick sent Susan and me a message on our Facebook page to inform us of the possibility of him asking our daughter to be his girlfriend in the near future. He said that he felt like God had put her in his life for a reason and every time they hung out he was drawn closer to her. He wanted to make sure we were all right with him pursuing our daughter before anything else happened, and he asked us to please call or message him if we had any questions about his intentions, life goals or anything. Wow what a guy... what respect for Rheanon and for her family. Susan and I were impressed with this mature thoughtful approach. His consideration for our concerns and respect toward us and Rheanon was impressive. That was just before spring break.

After being apart during spring break, Rheanon and Nick agreed to meet at Table Rock. Table Rock is 3,629 feet high and it has a giant 60-foot tall illuminated cross on top of it that looks down over the city of Boise. It was then and there, under that cross, up high and looking down across Boise and the entire region, that they committed themselves to each other.

Susan and I first met Nick just a short time later in May. Rheanon had some time off and had come home for a few days. Nick was the new Boise State student body Vice President and had a meeting so he didn’t have much time. After the meeting, he jumped in his car and drove most of the night to our house from Boise so we could meet him and he could meet us in person. When he showed up at our front door, even in those first moments, it didn’t seem like the first meeting, it was like we had known Nick for a long time. He has so much positive energy that it’s contagious. Nick’s personality is a lot like Rheanon’s and they have so much in common. It was easy to see why they were drawn to each other. He hung out with us for about a day and then got right back in his car to drive all the way back to school. That’s over 8 hours of driving in each direction. It was an incredible effort on Nick’s part to do what he saw as the proper thing, just so we could meet the young man that was now officially dating our daughter. Nick again showed a lot of respect for us and most importantly a lot of respect for Rheanon. This young man that we didn’t know and had just met briefly for the very first time was demonstrating a lot of character.

After graduating from Boise State Nick got accepted into Dental School at the University of Utah, one of only 25 students accepted into that program annually. It was from Utah about one year ago on May 3rd that Nick called us. Susan and I were driving down the coast highway from San Francisco heading back to Capitola where we were staying at the time. Nick asked us if we could FaceTime him when we were not driving, so later we did. That is the day he asked us for our blessing for him to ask for Rheanon’s hand in marriage. Susan and I were extremely happy and excited and gave him our blessing.

Nick wanted to make his proposal and engagement to Rheanon as special as he could. So, with yet another demonstration of his thoughtfulness and care for Rheanon, Nick came up with this elaborate secret plan to surprise her and make this special. And special it was. Last year on May 23rd, Susan and I boarded a plane and flew to Montana, rented a car and drove to this beautiful cabin on Lake Mary Ronan. Nick’s plan was for us to meet up with his parents at the cabin and secretly wait while Nick was at Glacier National Park proposing to Rheanon. After the proposal, we would be waiting at the cabin to surprise Rheanon upon their return and celebrate together.

Today is special for so many reasons. We’ve officially welcomed a new son into our family and I received one of the most amazing and memorable hugs of my life...the hug a father gets from his daughter at the culmination of a 23 year and 50 foot walk down the aisle together... it’s a journey that I have been blessed to share with Rheanon...a journey that is ending as another begins with her and Nick. In some ways, today symbolizes the beginning of a new and exciting voyage for this beautiful, strong, purposeful anchor.

But getting back to that day in that beautiful cabin on the banks of Lake Mary Ronan out in the middle of Montana; when my daughter came through that door and saw me standing right there, she ran up to me and wrapped herself around me in a bear hug, with her sobbing joyful face on my shoulder, tears running down her beaming cheeks. I felt so much joy and so much love it was indescribable. It was the most incredible and powerful and emotional hug I have ever received, one so powerful that the love that I felt while she was hugging me will always remain with me. Now I know Rheanon loves me a lot and I know she was surprised and happy to see me and Susan, but she had just gotten engaged. I know and appreciate that the love and joy I was feeling from her during that incredible moment was the love and joy she has for Nick.

After feeling and experiencing Rheanon’s love for Nick thru that almost overwhelming hug, I know that there is no way anyone could be that much in love - unless of course that love is mutual. I knew at that moment how much Nick must love Rheanon too.

I am extremely happy and proud to have the honor of giving the first toast. I’d like to invite you to raise a glass. To paraphrase Vincent Van Gogh, “The fishermen know that the sea is challenging .... but they have never found these challenges sufficient reason for remaining ashore.” Rheanon and Nick, you are now officially each other’s anchors and sails....be bold and open to your journey together through life....

To Mr. and Mrs. Nick and Rheanon Propp, ... Congratulations!!! We Love You!