**ARMED FORCES SPEECH**

**FOR**

**DANA** **WRIGHT**

Hello everyone... to family and friends, fellow military personnel, colleagues, and distinguished guests, it’s great to see so many of you here as we honor an exemplary career. As you’ve heard, I am Dana Wright, USN Senior Chief retired. Having the opportunity to say a few words on this “auspicious” occasion is, I must admit, a **unique** honor and distinction... and for those of you that know me somewhat better than others, you’ll understand when I say that given the “animated” relationship I share with today’s honoree, i was rendered somewhat speechless when asked to say a few words today... so if you notice me checking the perimeters of this room... and especially the darker corners... it’s because I am fairly certain that this **MUST BE** a special episode of “Punked...” I will expect to see Ashton Kutcher emerge from the shadows... right....about ...**NOW!! (Wait for the laugh**). Right? Ashton? **ASHTON**??? **MR. KUTCHER**?!?!? Not here? Then **MAYBE** this is real!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

Throughout our careers in the armed forces, one of the interesting aspects we encounter is that we get to meet, work with, and serve with many different people.... from varied geographic locations... from all walks of life. As the poem goes, I am part of all that I have met... and I’ve met **PLENTY** of colleagues, friends, and others, and it’s true... each person makes his or her mark on our conscience... Navy Chief Tamika Simmons is one of those people that **leaves an impression**. Tamika has raised the bar when it comes to enthusiasm, dogmatic devotion to a purpose, and unrelenting dedication to the principles in which she steadfastly believes. Long story short... **I. BETTER. DO. THIS. RIGHT !!!** (**Wait for the laugh**). All jokes aside, it’s also very fitting that I am the person charged with “welcoming” Tamika “to the other side.... you see, I, myself, was in this very same spot just seven months ago... I, too, have retired, and when faced with wondering who and how my own ceremony would be planned, Tamika was the first person that came to mind... for so many reasons. First of all, as we know, she’s a **BULLDOG**!! And I mean that in the most positive, loving, and respectful way. **POINT BLANK**, she will **GET IT DONE**!, Her tenacity... her commitment to the task at hand... her (**can you say this**) “take no prisoners” attitude may seem a bit zealous to some, and with her focus on committing to E**very. Single. Detail**, I’m not gonna lie... a person might go a little **GAGA** in the process.... so considering that we should be careful for what we wish, I **DID** would **STILL** wish for Tamika to be my “get it done, tenacious, bulldog, **ONE WOMAN WRECKING CREW**!!”... and I mean that with the utmost admiration. Working with Tamika keeps a person honest and accountable.... and if you’ve given your word, **WATCH OUT**... you’ll be held to task... even I, as the “boss,” on occasion, had to step in while the tables were about to turn... but she kept me in line, kept me on schedule, and taught me more angles on how to lead than I thought were possible... in Tamika’s world view, even superiors had deadlines and had to keep their word... **NO EXCEPTIONS**.... an admirable quality indeed...

Tamika does not know this, and so I have to tell you all and her at the same time…please bear with me and I will try to get through this... When I first met Tamika, she was the hard-charging “get it done” person that intended to change the world. As we began working together, we were clearly two months behind **her** timeline;... even though she had only been there **two days**.  I repeatedly reminded her, “Slow down ‘IT1’…Rome wasn’t built in a day. I understand your concerns, however, I also understand our challenges…”  She learned really quickly that if she came to me with a problem, she was going to be the one to work on devising the proper solution.

Looking back, I have to say that in spite of the twists and turns and “animated exchanges” we might have shared, Tamika Simmons is the **TRUE** definition of a leader. She’s a shining example of why we do what we do, and her actions and presence leave a situation in better shape than before she engaged. A wise entrepreneur once said, “True leaders understand that leadership is not about them but about those they serve. It’s not about exalting themselves, but about lifting others up.” Ladies and gentlemen, that describes Tamika as far as I’m concerned and we are all very lucky to have known her and served beside her.

Now that “one of us,” yet again, stands on the threshold of retirement, it causes all of us to think... and with years of experience and dedication come questions and considerations. Ultimately the choice on how or If to proceed with one’s career must be made. While Tamika has chosen to explore the next adventures in her life, we also must acknowledge all those who taught, inspired, and influenced this fine sailor who morphed into the Chief and leader we salute today.... and when I, as my own retirement approached, may have had doubts about my own efficiency and impact, it was Tamika that provided the support and backbone... and mirror, that I needed to keep me going. While I spent the greater part of my career watching out for others, it was she who taught me, that self care comes **first**... or there’s not much left with which to lead... or to face my new adventures with my daughter in my life of retirement. For these reasons, Tamika will forever and always be “My Sister”.  To me, that’s an acronym for:

**Steadfast**

**Innovative**

**Supportive (or... choose one) Sincere, Sympathetic, Scrappy**

**Thoughtful**

**Energetic**

**Reliable**

Tamika, on behalf of everyone here today, we thank you for your years of service. We appreciate the sacrifices you’ve made in order to serve your country. We acknowledge the obstacles, both personal and professional, that you faced with bravery and resolve... always focusing on doing your best, no matter the concerns or limitations that threatened to impact your results. It’s now **YOUR** time... it’s time to nurture yourself and enjoy your new found freedom with your daughter, MacKenzi.... it’s time for you to commit to **YOUR** **OWN** goals and schedules and we’ll being... heaven knows, you’ve earned it... it’s time for you to reimagine **YOUR** life and live it as you’ve always dreamed... **YOU MADE IT!!**  We wish you the best of health, happiness, enlightenment and fulfillment for your future!! Thank you!