**BIRTHDAY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**THELMA VANLARE**

Hello everyone and thank you for being here to share this wonderful party. Today we are not only celebrating a very special man. Some people are just born to be there for others... to be of service, to heal, to take care of, and to make sure everything is alright with everyone they love... and like... the real heroes in our lives are the ones that do their work quietly, but oh!! What an impact that work has.... what a difference their presence makes in our lives and in this world!!

I suppose you all know by now that I am speaking of my husband, Kenneth... loving father, devoted, brilliant doctor, kind, considerate friend and neighbor.... oh... and **very tolerant** and patient husband!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

So how can you tell the measure of a man? How can we learn of the character, the modesty, the kind of things he likes and dislikes... we take a look around and try to see and observe his friends, his family, his professional colleagues. I may have mentioned this before, but a wise poet once said, “I am part of all that I have met.” To understand what makes my husband “tick,” all we have to do is take a look around this room... all of you mean something special and unique to Kenneth, and although most of the time he won’t pretend to like the attention and focus on him, he is reflected in all of us. As that expression teaches us, we are all lucky to be a part of the life of Kenneth Sampong, and I know once he gets over the shock of being the center of attention, and once he comes back to his senses.... (**Wait for the laugh**), he too, will proudly count his blessings for having known all of us.

It’s not easy honoring a man who prefers to avoid the limelight or any personal recognition, but in this crowd here tonight really are his nearest and dearest, so maybe there’s a bit of hope for all of us. It says something about a person to have kept and remain in touch with old, dear friends. Kenneth has friends from high school and we are lucky enough to have them here with us tonight... (**Turn to his HS friends and introduce them**).... \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Thank you so much for being here to celebrate Kenneth’s big day. Old friendships are the dearest kind!!

It also shows the measure of a man to look at his children and see that they are healthy, intelligent, well cared for, and loved. Kenneth and I were blessed with three beautiful children, our son Nana and our daughters Athene and Adede.... now, I am **NOT** gonna lie... I had **PLENTY** to do with raising these three great kids...(**Wait for the laugh**) but Kenneth has been the best father any of us could have ever imagined.

And then there’s Kenneth as a patient, caring, devoted husband. To me, what makes Kenneth so special is that he has tolerated **ME** for the past twenty-nine years!! I know it’s hard to believe, but sometimes I can be a little.... okay **VERY** difficult (**Wait for the laugh**), but Kenneth has only ever shown me love and patience. He keeps quiet. He lets me **FLOURISH**. He is the sole breadwinner in the house and he is proud to be able to care for his family. Even when he is sick, he finds a way to get to work to make sure we are cared for. He pays very little attention to himself, and sometimes we joke around and call him “Our President Obama” as he walks around in his old shoes, living his true purpose in life.... that of being able to care for others without needing to pay much attention to his own needs.

So, while Kenneth Sampong truly **BELIEVES** he doesn’t need the spotlight... doesn’t need to be celebrated...shuns being the center of attention, we who love and respect him believe otherwise.

Kenneth, I want you to know how I appreciate you as a husband. I may not say it all the time, but I **DO** believe it with all my heart. I am so blessed to have met you all those years ago, and I am even more thankful and appreciative of the life we’ve built together thanks to your patience and devotion. Marriage is hard, but somehow, we’ve made a go of it. .... And by the way, Kenneth, you can relax.... we are not the only people who think marriage is hard work.... I’ve discovered every couple has their own miracle “fixes.” I heard of one husband and wife that have their own secret recipe for a successful marriage....the husband told a friend, “How do we make our marriage last? Easy. We have a ritual.... without fail, we go out **TWO** nights a week... great dinner... good wine.... soft music.... a little dancing... I go on **Tuesday**.... she goes on **Friday**... (**Wait for the laugh**).

Kenneth, I hope this is the happiest birthday you’ve had so far in your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years of life. I wish that each year after this you enjoy your special day even more, because no one I know deserves to be celebrated more than you. I hope you know how much the children and I love you and cherish you and wish for your continued health and happiness. Your humbleness is matched only by your brilliance and dedication to those you love and we are blessed to call you ours... Happy birthday and **ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY** happy, healthy birthdays to follow!! Thank you all !!