**EULOGY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**BRIAN YAROLEM**

Hello everyone. Today we’ve gathered together to mourn the loss, yet honor the life, of my brother-law.... really, my **brother**... Jeff. I believe it’s true that we can gauge the measure of a man by the footprint he leaves on this earth and in our hearts. (**If you want to make a little joke you can say**)... I’m not sure that Jeff’s feet would have left... **literally**... a **huge** impression, but his spirit... his love for his family.... for all of us.... his enthusiasm... his appreciation for life and all of its blessings, have left a massive, indelible mark on so many people.

Throughout his life.... and to the very end, Jeff was a warrior (**Do you want to add**)... and trust me when I tell you.... I can identify one when I see one... (**Wait for the laugh if appropriate**). From the moment I met Jeff.... as the “unknown entity” in his little sister Lisa’s life to his six year battle with cancer, he showed us how to live and how to love, and he even provided the background music.

I want to thank Jeff for being a great role model in my life... he led by example... as a proud son, a devoted husband, a loving father, a caring and protective brother, a dedicated friend, colleague, co-worker, and neighbor, I know he wondered about me and the kind of person I **might** be. I’m pretty sure he probably feared that I was some “**interesting** piece of work;” a young Marine that seemed to have no sense of direction, a mystery person that he would have to grin and bear for the sake of his sister. I’ll admit, I was afraid myself. I was afraid that I wouldn’t measure up, and that Jeff would think I wasn’t good enough for his sister or his family. Through months of dating Lisa, I heard all about this “Jeff guy,” but hearing about someone and experiencing the reality are never quite the same thing. Big brothers are usually very protective of their sisters, however, there was, admittedly, a palpable relief that washed over me after the first family ‘holiday’ gathering... Jeff the “myth” transformed into Jeff the “man” and I fell.... hard... he was kind, open-minded, and non-judgmental. From that day forward I felt blessed regarding our relationship, and that feeling has never stopped, nor will it ever. I may have fallen in love with the woman who would become my wife, but having the gift of a brother like Jeff was more than I could have ever wished for.

There comes a moment when one realizes just how blessed they are. I was blessed in love, friendship, and family. I’m so grateful to Jeff for having been more than a friend over the past thirty years... he always treated me as a brother with love and understanding during the ups and downs of marriage, raising children, and deployments. Lisa and I were so grateful to have him videotape our wedding, and we both still laugh when we talk about how he **provoked**... I mean **encouraged** me so **enthusiastically** to smear cake in her face at our wedding reception. I’m grateful that I was welcomed to and included in, the family as though I’d always been there....But most importantly, I’m grateful for Jeff, one of the kindest, most loving, and supportive individuals I’ve ever met. While we are left with a void that can’t and won’t be filled, love leaves a memory that will endure. I’m pretty sure that Jeff is watching over all of us right now, giving a thumbs up (**or mention a special gesture that Jeff would do**) as we take our turn and relate these wonderful memories....all inspired by the central figure he so lovingly represented to all of us..

There’s a line in a British poem that teaches us, “I am part of all that I have met.” Everyone in this room... everyone who had the privilege to know, love, laugh with, and sing with, Jeff Russell, has a cherished part of him that lives within. His warm personality and infectious laugh were born and bred from his wonderful parents, Phil and Dorothy.... (**Do you want to say**) It was the Kryptonite... the good one... not the red one (**Wait for the laugh**) that drew in Lindy, his loving wife of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years, and it was those same endearing, strong, principled, and dedicated qualities that live and blossom within his kids, Jarrod, Janna, and Jamie. As we all dedicate ourselves to sharing the life and times and cherished memories of Jeff Russell, his light will continue to guide us.... to make us laugh... to tell stories... and to sing of the mark he left on this earth....

No matter what we go through in life... whether it’s challenges or triumphs, our time seems too darn short.... Thirty years becomes a blip on a timeline... what was it that Jim Croce sang???

“But there never seems to be enough time

To do the things you want to do once you find them...”

There really is never enough time... but to honor Jeff, we can do our part to be conscious in our lives... to live our lives with grace...to be present in each moment... to take nothing for granted... to honor those we love and say what needs to be said... and carry those treasures with us always...

Jeff... until we meet again in Glory... I will be waiting and preparing... so you can teach me how to play Frisbee golf... **AMEN**... Thank you all.