**EULOGY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**STEVEN GROSS**

Hello everyone and thank you for being here today to celebrate the brief but incredible times of my son, your friend, our spirit, Hunter. I want to express my profound appreciation to everyone for... literally.... **showing up**. Your support, presence, and attendance, when it was **REALLY** needed most, has made a world of difference to my family and to me.  Every gesture is an acknowledgement of how much you care... about Hunter... and us, and although there is no good way to endure the impossible, you did everything you could to close ranks, surround us with love and care, and “buffer” the impossible journey. We have received your cards, gifts, food, tokens of friendship and remembrance, and, of course, generous contributions, all given with the intent to honor how much my son meant to all of us. If we have not yet had an opportunity to thank you personally, I want you to know that your thoughtfulness has really touched us, and we are grateful.   In addition, many of you have travelled long distances to be here today and your efforts have not gone without notice.

Occasionally we’re tasked with an assignment that pushes us to our limits – takes us to places we’ve never been….places we hoped we would never go.  That is where I am. The depth of the void created by the loss of a child is immeasurable... we may try to rationalize and define it.... it might be commensurate to: (1) the impact which they had on your life; and (2) the potential impact they would eventually exert as he... or she grew up.  The permanent extinguishing of future memories or experience... your child’s graduation….their wedding……the joy of becoming parents to their own children, is almost unfathomable to grasp..... but we go on... somehow, we find the way to place one foot in front of the other and we move forward. Life, as we know it, has been changed forever. Sometimes it seems almost impossible to put the pieces of our lives back together in some kind of working order, but we must... for our families, our selves... we go on in order to honor the light and the love... and most of all, the smiles... of those we’ve lost.

I imagine that most of you here today might only remember that Hunter’s parents suffered a loss.  I’d like to tell you a little bit about who Hunter was, what he meant to us, and how he impacted our lives.  (**Does this sound like Hunter? If not, please adjust**)... Hunter \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Gross... he was, I guess, a little imp ... in the sweetest sense of the word... it’s hard to imagine him without a smile on his face... he had a great sense of humor and always made us laugh... he was also.... at such a remarkably young age, an astute connoisseur of the finer things in life...

For anyone that really knew him, it was no secret.   Hunter **loved** pretty girls.  I recall one ordinary January evening when Corben, Hunter, and I met some of my friends for dinner. A woman at our table... **multiples** of Hunter tender age ... he was **five years old** at the time... caught his attention.  Not satisfied with the seating arraignment, Hunter stood up from his seat, walked over to me, and whispered in my ear….lets face it... it was a **stage whisper** that **EVERYONE** was able to hear:  “**Can I sit next to the pretty girl???** Themotioning with his finger was also pretty **SUBTLE** (**Wait for the laugh**).... and you guessed it... A seating change was made.

Even though he was so young, I think he had what we might call an old soul.... as he demonstrated his appreciation of beauty, at an early age, he exhibited other adult-like capabilities... Yes... he was instinctively learning the merits applications as a world class.... **PROCRASTINATOR**... especially at bed time.  Every night, as he prepared for “dreamland,” Hunter required a bottle of water... and he only **NEEDED** it **AFTER** he was tucked in.  Without fail, I would hear little feet on the stairs.  Sometimes he would sneak down and I would hear him crawling across the wood floor in the kitchen.  I would say (well knowing what he needed), “What do you need?”  And he would respond, “Dad I forgot my water.” **Uh huh..**.  He never departed for bed without an “I love you Dad.”  Sometimes, though, he would crawl into my lap and put his hands on my cheeks and kiss me. I learned that procrastination could be a good thing...it gave us some precious moments together, just him and me... and I’d like to think that was at the root of his **thirst**... In the mornings, I would collect the bottle of water…and many times, it wasn’t even unopened.

Hunter had other unique sensibilities and gifts... once he gave me a Christmas gift that he picked out for me all on his own.  The school sponsored a holiday gift store and Hunter was given money by Lindsay to buy gifts for the family.  He wasn’t told what to buy or for whom to buy.  Imagine my surprise when I got my gift... he bought me a pink key chain that says “MOM.”  On Christmas morning he proudly presented me the key chain reminding me that he knew my favorite color was pink.  To this day and for each day forward, my mail key is attached to this pink key chain that says “MOM.”... That thing better hold up... because I **DO** love pink ... and all that this symbol means... and meant... to Hunter... more than I ever realized.

While my pink key chain was a notable tangible gift I received from Hunter, he gave me... and **us**... many gifts.  At only four feet and five inches tall, Hunter had the heart of a giant.  Anyone in this room who truly had the pleasure of knowing Hunter, felt his compassion.  And that is the most precious gift Hunter has given me:  A deeper understanding of “compassion for others.” As I said earlier, he was an old soul with a gift that’s rare in someone so young... he observed... he innately understood... he appreciated... and he **cared**...

In closing, I would like to share one more story with you.  When Hunter graduated preschool, a ceremony was held.  Each child stood at the church podium and announced their name and what they wanted to be when they grew up.  As you can imagine, there were future nurses, police officers, a veterinarians….all noble professions.  When it was Hunter’s turn, at 4 and ½ years old, he stood at the podium, lowered his voice similar to the actor Will Arnett, and with a deep, rumbling voice extending from his diaphragm, announced to the crowd that when he grew up he wanted to be “**Batman**.”

Like Batman, Hunter was a super hero.  When he survived his fifth heart surgery as a neonate, he was awarded a heart hero cape.  Like Batman, Hunter was brave and stood up for the weak. Like Batman, he made his mark.... **WAY** beyond “Gotham City.” Like Batman, the “legend will live on...” and like Batman/Bruce Wayne said, “It’s not who I am underneath, but what I do that defines me.” Hunter definitely had his own unique set of “super powers...” and he used them all to be the best son, brother, and friend...and through his unbridled love of life... and pretty girls... he taught us.... his light will continue to live in in all of us.

Batman might have been a super hero but he could never **really** fly…..and now Hunter **can**.  Son…I say thank you for your friendship and love these past seven years.  You have truly taught all of us who know and love you how to be better people. Thank you.