**BIRTHDAY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**NANCY WYATT**

 Hello everyone and thank you for being here to celebrate an incredible milestone for an incomparable woman.... tonight, we honor my mother, Oddbjorg, on the occasion of her **NINETIETH** birthday... and while old wives tales and “urban myths” might have us believe that one really shouldn’t discuss a woman’s age, in instances like these, it’s a **BLESSING** AND A **PRIVILEGE**!!!

Some superstitions might say, “He who has the most toys, wins,” tonight all I can think of, when I think of my mother, is “She who has the **MOST JOY** wins!!! Believe me.... in **NINETY YEARS** of living and learning and nurturing... to greater or lesser degrees, practically every single person in this room has been taught by, fed, encouraged, supported, and loved by this woman. And my brother, Allen and I have the honor to call her “Mom.”

A great deal has happened in the world.... and in our family, since Oddbjorg Olsen was born on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, 1930. There’s an expression that teaches us, “I am part of all that I have met.” If we take a brief look back, we can begin to count the elements and influences that have made our mother who she is today. . Oddbjorg, born in Norway, is the youngest of five children.... There were three sisters...Ragnhild, Marget, and Torhild, and one brother, Peder, made up the Olsen sibling “lineup...” My mother is the last child alive, but as we all know, and as I’ve said, they are all a part of us... as we were a part of them.    (**Say something about growing up in Norway and moving to America)**. Throughout her childhood in (**name the town**), \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ she \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Our mother met and married Arnfinn Olsen and they were together for sixty years.  Two children were born in that family... Allen age 56 & me.   As the Olsen legacy grew, so did the family... I’ve been married twenty eight years to Doug and we have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ children and three grandchildren, Jason, Chris, and Gideon. Oddbjorg has seen her family grow even further to include several nieces and nephews, grand nieces and nephews and great grand nieces and nephews.  There are also more blessings... four great grandchildren.... Jason Jr.  Cassidy & Tayden are Jason’s and Eli is the son of Chris & Jamie.

Our home was filled with love, respect, and lots of lessons. We learned from the example set by our parents and we are very blessed to bring the lessons and legends of Oddbjorg and Arnfinn to our children and their children.

Life wasn’t always that easy, but heaven knows, we did... and do our best to find meaning... and humor... in every phase of our lives...I will never forget, several years ago, when my mother felt a deep, abiding, and intense desire... it was when my father was ailing... he was in the final stages of his decline... and my mother, devoted as she was, felt this **yearning**... for a **CAT**...  Although her hands were full as my father was dying, Mother had her urges... for a pet... but realized the fragile situation in the house, was concerned and afraid it would get underfoot and might make my father fall, so, being the devoted wife, the idea of having a cat became a sweet, distant dream.    About three or four months after my dad passed away, oddly enough, a stray cat showed up at her door.    Mother is pretty convinced that Angel was sent by my father.  Some people even say she’s my father reincarnated.   Me??? I hope not.  The cat doesn’t like me..... (**Wait for the laugh).**

There’s so much to celebrate today... so much to be thankful for... our mother is here, with us, inspiring and leading all of us to lives of meaning and longevity... teaching us... leading by example, demonstrating the importance of family and what it means to be devoted to those we love....(**Is the cat still alive? If so, you can say something like**) .... and still trying to coax Angel the cat to give me a chance (**and wait for the laugh**).

It’s been said that mothers are great and unique... their “super power” is to “outlast” just about everything... with their influence, wisdom, guidance, and devotion. Others have said that no matter how old we get, we still want the loving care and protection of our mother... the connection we have is beyond the physical... and throughout my life, I’ve been blessed with the best mother I could have ever imagined.... to have the gift of celebrating this milestone birthday for her, with her, and with all of you, is one I am sure I will never forget. It’s true that “sometimes the strength of motherhood is greater than natural laws...” ... I’ve learned that from Oddbjorg Olsen and in turn, I hope I’ve passed that onto my own children, and they to theirs. That is the legacy of family and longevity....

To my mother, Happy, Healthy, Joyous Birthday, Oddbjorg.... May all your dreams and desires be fulfilled... and as the saying goes... **One hundred and twenty more**... **AMEN**!!! We love you! Thank you all!!