**BIRTHDAY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**PAM SWARTZ**

Hi everyone!!! I’m happy to see all of your shining, smiling faces... shoulders... upper bodies... here on this very special Zoom session. We have to be thankful for every form of communication and get together we have available these days, and, let’s just say, we all know that this milestone is **waaaay** too important to not acknowledge.... and celebrate.... especially with all of you. Let’s face it, the two of us have been celebrating life and love and family for the past forty years.... let’s add another page to that particular book of life....

I thought. I planned. I wondered.... then wondered again... What can I say about a man I met over **FORTY** years ago??? What can I say when I look back and realize that I’ve known him for **HALF** his life.... and for **MOST** of mine.... What can I say about someone that I fell head over heels in love with.... someone who... at **almost** first sight... **grabbed** my attention... touched my soul, and was destined to change my world and everything I experienced within it?? The French have a term.... it’s known as “**coup de foudre**...”. It literally means **THUNDERCLAP** (**you can clap your hands loudly once if you want to emphasize**). Like a bolt from the blue, Fred Swartz landed in my life. Haven’t **WE** been **LUCKY**?!?!

**Ahhhhh, Fred**.... I remember the first time we met. I remember what you wore. I can’t say it was my favorite color... but I soon came to realize that the measure and character of a man has very little to do with outer appearances... although you **DID** pass “muster.” I remember where we went... how the conversation flowed... how you challenged me... in so many ways that I can... and probably won’t discuss.... how you **STILL** challenge me... or, should I say, how we manage to “keep each other going.” but ah... that **thunderclap**... it kept me interested... engaged... always eagerly waiting for the next adventure we would take.... together... Has it been your sharp, witty, funny, wise, Gemini way? Was it the challenge of the chase??? Or was it the **REAL** challenge that taught us to be strong and thrive after we both caught each other??? Who cares??? You were, are, and always will be, **one in a million**...

Lots of years have gone by... and every day I count my... and **OUR** blessings... it’s all gone so fast. I ask myself, “How is it possible that you are turning 80?” I probably asked the same at the 50, 60, and 70 year landmarks too.... some of those soul searches might have been more... or less... enthusiastic... after all... we’ve faced **A LOT** **together**.... but **TOGETHER**... that’s the operative word.... and that thunderclap... those jolts and wake up points that present themselves throughout life... whether bad... or good... we **ALL** know the good has overwhelmingly triumphed, and through it all, we had and **HAVE** each other.

Where did all our time fly away to? (**Name some of the great trips you’ve taken together**) ... I mean besides \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_... We managed to build an “empire...”. By that I mean a family... a life... a foundation for future generations... we brought our kids to the “party....” and then they brought theirs... Jake... Lola... Gracie...Benjamin... Elle... they are our true “family jewels...”. And as we all know... believe me... I know my gems!!! (**Pause for a little laugh)**... thosechildren... our grandkids... our diamonds... they shine on their own... and every time we observe them, their facets and gifts become more defined... they’re strong... attractive...dare I say... **brilliant**... and, each, in their own way, manage to make us so proud to think that maybe... just maybe... we’ve learned to build and live a wonderful life.

It’s been said that “Love is eternal... enduring. It always protects... it always **trusts** (**if you want to make a little joke you can hesitate here and go... “Ehhhh” and pause for the laugh**)... it always hopes... it perseveres... it doesn’t fail... it transcends rational understanding and thinking.... “ It’s vexing... exciting... exhilarating...and ultimately comforting.

Fred... in the beginning.... it wasn’t easy, but in my gut, I knew it would be worth it. You’ve always been so consistent... sharp, funny, witty... and always, some way or another, “hard to get...” of course as the years have gone by, the definition has shifted... yet I always felt the power of your love... unlike any other I had known, and while we, in our own ways, celebrate each other every day, a birthday... after **THIRTY** **NINE OTHERS**... is a great way to let the world... and our friends and family, know how much you mean to me. I cannot imagine my life without you.

... So, on this occasion, when the number of candles on your cake might resemble a re-enactment of the burning of Atlanta in Gone With the Wind.... I want you to know just how “**hot**” you still are... this celebration **doesn’t even hold a candle** to all you are and mean to me... (**Is that too much???? If so you can say just how special you are**). So, with **THAT**, Fred... birthday boy... love of my life... I want to wish you a **HAPPY, HEALTHY, FUNNY, EXCITING, LOVE FILLED** 80th birthday!!! Congratulations!!! Here’s to **FORTY** more!!!! Amen!!