**WEDDING SPEECH**

**FOR**

**JIM YEAGER**

Hello everyone....Mary and I want to thank all of you for being here and sharing our joy as we witness the marriage of these two fine young people... our daughter, Caroline and our new son-in-law, Tom. As “they” say these days.... **IYKYK**.... which, I understand means... in contemporary culture, “If you know, you **KNOW**,” and if any of you .... and I hope this includes **ALL** present, if you are familiar with our family, you **KNOW** how much we love being in Montana. For many years, we’ve thought of this place as heaven on earth. Who could have imagined it could get any better? How could our expectations be surpassed??? Simple... seeing our daughter so happy... being in this gorgeous setting, sharing our joy with all of you.... it’s just wonderful!!! For those of you that have traveled from near and far, we truly appreciate the time and effort you invested to be here. We’ve all been through some challenging times these past several months... I don’t know about you, but this fresh mountain air... this entire moment, has brought a new appreciation for life, love, family, and friends.

Although we live in Madison, Wisconsin, Montana, and Bozeman, is literally our home away from home. Mary and I, and our kids, Steve, and of course, Caroline, have made many happy memories here, and as I think back on the times we spent, as the kids grew up and learned to find their own unique footing in the world, Mary and I also learned.... about life, nature, and the resourcefulness of our children, especially Caroline. It was in Montana that Caroline learned to love and appreciate sports and nature. She learned to explore and dare.... to experiment and strengthen her reserves on so many trips here. She learned to drive and hike, she tested and honed her skills and daring while paddle boarding....cliff jumping... she learned about **FIRST AID**... **she had to...**... maybe I should mention that as a dutiful father, Caroline and I had some wonderful father daughter bonding moments... at least that’s what I **THOUGHT** they would be.... some of the high points of my life as a father were when we explored together. It was here in Montana that I taught Caroline how to drive... to fish... to shoot... to really live and experience life to the fullest.... in turn, she would push me **further** than this “father” would have dared to go... always into doing more and literally going “**the extra mile**”.... or **SIX. Yes.** We’d set out on twelve mile hikes... that somehow were really **EIGHTEEN MILES**... ah Caroline... the old “bait and switch....” I was a willing participant... until she had me jump off a rock into **REALLY** cold water.... who **KNEW** I’d slice my foot open on the dismount??? ... Good thing there were no sharks around.... oh wait... that’s the ocean... (**Wait for the laugh**)... take it from me, her first aid skills were on point.... as was that rock!!! I have to also say, hiking and being with Caroline has always been an adventure...it’s always been exciting.... especially that time last year when we encountered a grizzly bear.... I was ready... with a gun and bear spray... she screamed and whipped out the camera to document an “Instagrammable moment...” (**Wait for the laugh).**

I say all of this as a form of invitation to, and acknowledgement of, our new son, Tom.... Tom, Mary, Steve, and I want to officially welcome you to our family. You already know how we feel about you and we love how you fit so well within the Yeager clan. You’re officially part of the traditions and legacies we’ve established here, in Montana and beyond, and I cannot imagine being happier to have a son-in-law like you. As you take our daughter’s hand in marriage... please never forget the words of Helen Keller who said, “Life is either a daring adventure or it is nothing.” Out here, those words have extra special meaning!!! Please also never forget that family comes first, live life to the fullest, and don’t leave home without bear spray and a first aid kit... you **NEVER** know where this young woman will lead you!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

To Tom’s parents, Paul and Lorraine, thank you for traveling here from England to share our mutual joy. Mary and I want to congratulate both of you and welcome you to our family as well.... we are so thrilled that the Yeager’s and Casson’s have gone “international!!!” Here’s to many, **MANY** years of making wonderful memories thanks to our children.

(**As an idea, do you want to toast the bride and groom with bottles of Kokanee? If it’s a surprise, the bride and groom might really like that**)

I’d like to invite all of you to raise a glass.... or more importantly, a **Kokanee**, as I propose a toast for the bride and groom.....

To Caroline and Tom.... A successful marriage is like a good, long, challenging hike.... it may seem easy on the outset. The climb might get steep... and though the rocks and crags might conspire to trip you, remember you have each other.... to lean on... to blaze the path... to enjoy the view... to accomplish **together**... Here’s to a life filled with fresh air and adventure.... loving family and more friends than you can count... to good health and great fortune... and to more than you might ever wish for!!! Congratulations!! We love you. Thank you!!