January 10,2018

Good evening everyone.

In December of 1984 we bought the Bergen, a 57-foot longline fishing vessel. That following February on my inaugural trip as captain we fished for Black Cod in the southeast Alaska area, but it did not go to well, the grounds had just been fished.

So, we went on a five-day journey straight across the Gulf of Alaska, and for the second trip of that first season I found myself perfectly alone in a nice big 450 fathom deep gulley full of black cod just 15 miles southeast of Chirikoff Island. Chirikoff Island is a small Island about 5 miles long about 35 miles south of Kodiak Island and Shelikoff Strait. I had never been this far west in Alaska that early in the year before. While we were successful catching fish and the fishing was tremendous, it was a struggle. On the third day of what was to be eight days of fishing we received a horrible weather forecast. Northwest winds 80 knots, seas to 40 feet and -40 degrees wind chill. A hurricane force northwesterly coming out of the Bering Sea, across Bristol Bay, over the snow covered Alaskan Peninsula right at us.

After I heard that forecast we hauled the gear in, a task that took about twelve hours and headed for shelter behind Chirikoff Island. The Bergen made about 9 knots under perfect conditions but now the conditions were deteriorating quickly. It took five hours to get there bucking into the building wind and seas. We would climb up to the top of a 40 foot swell only to come face to face with 10 – 20 feet of white breaking churning sea at the top. We would go right thru that sea and come out the other side, slide down the back side of the swell toward the bottom of the trough. After we plunged down into the bottom of the trough the Bergen would start climbing the next 40 foot swell and do it all over again and again and again. Eventually we made it into the lee of Chirikof Island and dropped the anchor about a quarter mile off the beach.

There we were in hurricane force winds with the raging ocean storm just off our stearn not far behind us. About 200,000 pounds of the Bergen and her crew held fast and safe by an anchor that weighed 125 pounds.

Ironically that is about what my wonderful, beautiful wife Susan weighed when we met in 1974. I think we all need an anchor in our lives to help us through turbulent times and the storms we all encounter. I know now that I did, but what I didn’t realize for a long time was that Susan has been that for me and for our family all along. More important than the anchor on the Bergen during a hurricane. I probably would have survived without the anchor on the Bergen but I wouldn’t have made it and our family would not be what it is today without her. She has spent her lifetime helping me and our family and helping and doing things for everyone around her. For years she was alone half the time, at one point with six children the oldest 11, helping me run our business, doing the accounting, sending me parts. All the while doing everything for our kids and I’m sure doing things to help everyone around her. She does so many things for others that no one will ever know about, I’m sure she does things for others that I don’t know about every day of her life. But she does not talk about those things very much because to her it is the way she is, the way she is supposed to be based on her faith and Jesus Christ, so it comes so naturally and beautifully from her.

This together with her unusually great wit and sense of timing and sense of humor and you have the most incredible person I know.

Right about now you may be thinking why is Jim telling fishing stories and toasting Susan? Has he lost what remained of his senses? Well as I was preparing for this event and the honor of the first toast to Nick and Rheanon and thinking about my daughter, how beautiful and wonderful she is, and how she is; I realized that Rheanon is so much like Susan it is crazy. It is crazy how much alike they are. And that is the nicest compliment I could give to Rheanon or anyone.

I’ve seen Rheanon in turbulent situations, where friends or family members are having problems in their lives and need support, need an anchor to hold onto. Those situations where others may judge or even abandon them. But that is not who she is, Rheanon has always shown compassion, she naturally puts herself into that other person’s shoes and is with them with her love and support for as long as it takes.

When you first meet Rheanon her beauty is obvious. If you spend just a little time with her you experience her joy, incredibly quick wit and sense of humor. She has a way of transforming the room just by being in it with her energy and spirit. As she was growing up, somewhere along the line her five siblings started calling her Rhea Rhea. Her fourth-grade teacher Mr. Senko still refers to her as Rhea Rhea to this day. This nickname spread outside of our family and stuck. Rhea Rhea is not a shortened version of her full name, it takes just as long to say as Rheanon. The reason it fit her so well and stuck with her, is because Rheanon is like a ray of sunshine, she brightens things up just by walking into the room and being there.

If you are lucky you get to hear her sign, she has the voice of an angel, it is unique and wonderful. One year I told her that for Christmas I wanted a CD of her signing. To this day that CD is in my truck stereo, it’s the only CD I have in my truck and I love listening to it.

Rheanon gets joy from and is committed to helping other people. A year from now she will be a nurse. She has already worked at the Veterans Hospital in Boise. She has and is working with the Make a Wish Foundation. She has sat up all night with people doing suicide watch. Sometimes the things she does are not easy or pleasant. These are just some of the things I know she has done. She does things for others she comes in contact with all the time.

Rheanon and Nick both study the Bible and love and live their lives by the examples and lessons demonstrated by Jesus Christ when he was here exactly 2000 years ago.

It was during Rheanon’s sophomore year at Boise State when Susan and I started hearing about a young man named Nick Prop. They would frequently see each other at Young Life.

That February at the Dance Marathon they spent a lot of time together, but they both wanted to take it slow and not get into a serious relationship to quickly. But there was an undeniable attraction.

On March 7th, 2015 Nick sent Susan and I a message on our Facebook page to inform us of the possibility of him asking our daughter to be his girlfriend in the near future. He felt like God had put her in his life for a reason and every time they hung out he was drawn closer to her. He wanted to make sure we were all right with him pursuing our daughter before anything else happened. He asked us to please call or message him if we had any questions about his intentions, life goals or anything.

Wow what a guy, what respect for Rheanon and for her family. Susan and I were impressed with this mature thoughtful approach. His consideration of our concerns and respect toward us and Rheanon was impressive.

That was just before spring break.

After being apart during spring break, Rheanon and Nick agreed to meet at Table Rock. Table Rock is 3,629 feet high and it has a giant 60-foot tall illuminated cross on top of it that looks down over the city of Boise. It was then and there under that cross, up high and looking down across Boise and the entire region that they committed themselves to each other.

Susan and I first met Nick just a short time later in May. Rheanon had some time off and had come home for a few days. Nick was the new Boise State student body Vice President and had a meeting so he didn’t have much time. After the meeting, he jumped in his car and drove most of the night to our house from Boise so we could meet him and he could meet us for the first time.

When he showed up at our front door and we first met it didn’t seem like we were meeting for the first time, it was like we had known Nick for a long time. He has so much positive energy that is contagious. Nick’s personality is so much like Rheanon’s and they have so much in common. It was easy to see why they were drawn to each other. He hung out with us for about a day and then got right back in his car to drive all the way back to school. That’s over 8 hours of driving each direction.

It was an incredible effort on Nicks part to do what he saw as the proper thing, so we could meet the young man that was now officially dating our daughter. Nick again showed a lot of respect for us and most importantly a lot of respect for Rheanon. This young man that we didn’t know and had just met briefly for the very first time was demonstrating a lot of character.

After graduating from Boise State Nick got accepted into Dental School at the University of Utah, one of only 25 students accepted into that program annually.

It was from Utah about one year ago on May 3rd that Nick called us.

Susan and I were driving down the coast highway from San Francisco heading back to Capitola where we were staying at the time. Nick asked us if we could Facetime him when we were not driving. So later we did. That is the day he asked us for our blessing for him to ask for Rheanons hand in marriage. Susan and I were extremely happy and excited and give him our blessing.

Nick wanted to make his proposal and engagement to Rheanon as special as he could. So, with yet another demonstration of his thoughtfulness and care for Rheanon, Nick came up with this elaborate secret plan to surprise her and make this special. And special it was. Last year on May 23rd, Susan and I boarded a plane and flew to Montana, rented a car and drove to this beautiful cabin on Lake Mary Ronan. Nicks plan was for us to meet up with Nicks parents at the cabin and secretly wait while Nick was at Glacier National Park proposing to Rheanon. After the proposal, we would be waiting at the cabin to surprise Rheanon upon their return and celebrate together.

Today I received one of the most amazing and memorable hugs of my life. The hug a father gets from his daughter at the culmination of a 23 year and 50 foot walk down the aisle together. A journey that I have been blessed to share with Rheanon. A journey that is ending as another begins with her and Nick.

But that day in that beautiful cabin on the banks of Lake Mary Ronan out in the middle of Montana; when my daughter came through that door and saw me standing right there she ran up to me and wrapped herself around me in a bear hug, with her sobbing joyful face on my shoulder, tears running down her beaming face. I felt so much joy and so much love it was indescribable. It was the most incredible and powerful and emotional hug I have ever received. The love that I felt while she was hugging me was so powerful.

Now I know Rheanon loves me a lot and I know she was surprised and happy to see me and Susan. But she had just gotten engaged. The love and joy I was feeling from her during that incredible hug was the love and joy she has for Nick.

After feeling and experiencing Rheanon’s love for Nick thru that hug I know that there is no way anyone could be that much in love; unless of course that love is mutual. I knew at that moment how much Nick must love Rheanon. The love I was feeling from Rheanon was really the love they have for each other.

I am extremely happy and proud to have this honor of the first toast.

To Mr. and Mrs. Nick and Rheanon Prop, We Love You!