

THE LIFE CELEBRATION CEREMONY

FOR

ALAN (“WINK”) TRAVIS WILSON

**June 15, 1980 – February 29, 2016**

*At*

*Founder’s Park Pavilion*

*Annapolis, MD*

*11:30 am*

*Saturday, March 26, 2016*

DEBORAH MCGLAUFLIN, LIFE-CYCLE CELEBRANT

**Music Cue / Gathering (at 11:20 am): “I Will Remember You” instrumental version of Sarah McLachlan’s song by Neil Dorval on piano, followed by “My Heart Will Go On” instrumental version by composer James Horner.**

### **WELCOME BY CELEBRANT**

**Celebrant:** Welcome to the Life Celebration Ceremony for Alan Travis Wilson. Please take your seat and ensure that your cell phones, pagers and other beepers are turned off.

### **OPENING MUSIC**

**Music Cue / Opening (at 11:30 am): “Somewhere Over the Rainbow ” ~ Arranged and Sung by Israel “Iz” Ka’anoi’I Kamakawawiwo’Ol**

**With the Celebrant leading, the family members process in, each wearing Wink’s favorite color blue and holding one of Wink’s colorful Beanie Babies. One by one they place the Beanie Babies around Wink’s photo on a table at the front, then take their seats in the first row. The Celebrant takes a seat in the front facing the assembly, standing to speak after the music ends.**

### **INTRODUCTION BY CELEBRANT**

**Celebrant:** We come together today to remember and celebrate the life of Alan Travis Wilson, known to those close to him as “Wink.” We come together from the diversity of our grieving to gather in the warmth and support of each other’s companionship, giving witness to our belief that in times of sadness, there is room for laughter. In times of darkness, there always will be light. As Wink would want, may we hold fast to the conviction that what we do with our lives matters and that a caring world is possible after all.

## READING BY BRANDI RICHARDSON

**Celebrant:** I now invite Wink’s sister, Brandi Richardson, to read for us the poem “The Rainbow.” Its author is unknown but its words could have been written by Wink.

### **“The Rainbow” (Anonymous)**

#### **Read by Brandi Richardson**

I have been to a place  
that exists somewhere beyond.  
It is a world of peace and harmony  
Where all creatures are equal  
And dreams are fulfilled

No room for false pretenses  
or deception  
No place for prejudice or hatred.

In this land of everlasting sunshine  
and magnificent rainbows  
the scent of flowers lingers,  
their brilliant colors delight the eyes.  
Birds create a symphony of merriment  
As butterflies dance on the air.

A feeling of contentment and joy  
like none experienced before.  
Found only in this special place  
and fills me with hope and renewal.

I can believe that anything is possible  
in this land beyond.

Hold my hand.  
Let me show you the way.  
Share with me this magical place  
Somewhere beyond the rainbow.

### **EULOGY BY CELEBRANT**

**Celebrant:** Thank you, Brandi. [PAUSE] As colorful, magical and inspiring as a rainbow. As embracing as its soaring arch. Wink had a way of raising everyone’s gaze and taking their breath away. We are here today outdoors amidst the nature that Wink so loved, because his life was also as ephemeral as a rainbow. It was ended unexpectedly by a brain aneurism a month ago. To those who knew him best and loved him most, his loss is particularly hard to bear, since it came just when he seemed to be recovering from the debilitating stroke he had two years ago.

But Wink makes it easy – even inevitable – to remember him with a smile. Many of you will perhaps remember him best for the way he would flash his devilish smile and give his signature exaggerated wink and finger point, and for his gift of making others laugh with “Ay Carumba!” or one of his funny and clever impersonations or improvised comedy shows.

There was true gold at the end of Wink’s rainbow – a treasure in the depth of purpose and character behind his humor. His sister Brandi described it beautifully when she said, “I feel like his greatest legacy is that he was so willing and open to giving and receiving love. He used to always wear a T-shirt that said, “Acceptance

is the answer, no matter what the question.” And that is how he lived his life and how he treated others.”

Indeed Brandi’s words ring true. Wink was blessed with parents who had hearts as big as the world and who brought the world into their loving home. As a child, Wink thrived in this love and readily accepted his three adopted siblings into his heart and family. His brother Willy remembers how they called themselves a United Nations family because they had different races and national backgrounds and abilities under one roof. The two of them were inseparable. They called themselves “brothers by different mothers.”

Wink accepted himself as a gay man and accepted Marcus as the love of his life. He accepted all the kids he worked with exactly as they are and helped them to accept themselves. And although he so loved playing basketball and pickle ball and being physically active, Wink accepted the loss of mobility after his stroke.

The extent to which Wink respected every color in the rainbow was reflected in his personal beliefs. He never gravitated to a particular faith or political persuasion. He never needed or wanted anyone to be anything but who they were.

The one thing Wink refused to accept was new technology. He was allergic to whatever was the latest and greatest gadget, and he had nothing but disdain for everything except the camera function on his cellphone. Many of you no doubt lived through his prodigious selfie phase and found yourselves in selfies with him.

But it is also true that the most brilliant rainbows appear against the darkest skies, and there were indeed some dark storm clouds in Wink’s life. The loss of his dear

little sister Alyssa, known in the family as “Tink”, was almost more than he could bear. It brought on a depression that Wink hid behind his humor, behind all the Beanie Babies he collected for her, and, starting in his teen years, behind a passion for the dark and shredded sound of loud, metal music. His depression only grew deeper after serving in the Army for four years and coming home with PTSD. And it grew deeper still with the attacks on 9/11. At times the world seemed too cruel for his gentle and sensitive soul.

But, like a rainbow, Wink’s story is one of triumph over dark skies. The music that seemed so dark and tortured was also life-affirming. And with his brother Willy’s help and the support of his whole family, he conquered his depression and a drinking problem, came out, found true joy with Marcus, the love of his life and his domestic partner. Wink emerged from the darkness to travel the world with Marcus, taking photos, collecting refrigerator magnets, and returning to spend six happy years working with children as a Recreation Aide at the Boys and Girls Club before his stroke.

So, while the rainbow has faded from our sight, its promise turns our faces to the future – a future without Wink but one in which his memory will endure in all of your hearts. This gathering reflects the instinct that the best way to honor Wink is to be equally accepting -- accepting of his death. Better yet, to help each other accept his death and continue his legacy of giving and receiving love. **[PAUSE]**

Marcus has asked me to read on his behalf some heartfelt words he has written and wishes to share with you.

*“I am so grateful to all of you for coming today and, more importantly, for all you did to bring joy to Wink’s life and final days. He was my soul mate. I can hardly bear starting the day without seeing his blue eyes and his wide grin.*

*Wink and I were in our late twenties when we met and we had eight wonderful years together. Willy knew better and earlier than either of us that we were made for each other. As someone who works with wounded vets, I know all too well that many never overcome their physical and emotional trauma. Since Willy had told me about the demons Wink was struggling with, I was more than a little apprehensive about getting involved with someone with a lot of painful baggage.*

*But, as fate would have it, from the first moment we met, I was completely hooked. Wink had defeated his demons and was ready to embrace who he was, to embrace life, and to embrace me. Our time together was much shorter than we’d hoped, but it was overflowing with joy and good times and a long list of shared loves – including our love for travel, for sports, and for our dogs.*

*We even differed in the right ways. Wink loved to cook, and I love to eat. He was always impeccably dressed, and I wasn’t. He liked hard rock and was dismayed that I prefer Celine Dion, but we both were willing to take turns gritting out teeth.*

*It turned out that our families were also made for each other and that has been such a blessing. Gabe and Laurie welcomed me with open arms. I am so grateful to you both. I dearly love you and the whole Wilson family. You all considered us as married as Wink and I knew ourselves to be. That was a good thing because, by the time the Supreme Court ruled on Gays’ right to marry, we were too busy dealing with Wink’s stroke. Thank you for never letting that matter.*

*Wink and I pledged that we would never let each other lose our “sparkles” – that twinkle in the eye and glow you get from being completely and utterly in love. Someone who surely knew once said that grief is the scar of love. Well, I am now a deeply scarred man. But I know how fortunate I am to not be alone in my grief. I will honor and carry the many gifts of Wink’s love for the rest of my life and I know that you will join me in remembering him as he would want...with a smile.”*

### **RING RITUAL**

**Celebrant:** Indeed, Wink and Marcus were as wedded as two hearts could be. However, they never got around to exchanging rings. In recognition of how their deep love will never die, Marcus invites you to witness their ring ceremony now.

**The Celebrant nods to Marcus, who moves to stand just stage right of her, facing the singing bowl. Wink’s parents and Marcus’ mother join them, standing facing Wink in a line stretching stage left from the singing bowl.**

**The Celebrant picks up the closest chain holding it up so that the ring is heart high, Marcus’ mother (closest to the bowl) simultaneously removes the mallet from the bowl.**

**Celebrant:** Marcus, please repeat after me:

“As this ring has no end” **(pause for Marcus to repeat)**

“neither shall my love for Wink.” **(pause for Marcus to repeat).**

Marcus' mother strikes the outside rim of the bowl once, firmly but gently – one long note, which she lets trail off into silence before placing the mallet back inside the bowl.

Marcus receives the chain from the Celebrant and, continuing to hold it so that the ring is heart high, moves to drape the chain and ring on the photo of Wink, kissing it as he does. He then returns to his place next to the Celebrant.

Marcus' mother moves stage left to the end of the line, and Wink's mother moves up to the position nearest the bowl and removes the mallet.

**Celebrant:** Gabe, on behalf of Wink, would you please present the second ring?

Gabe walks across pausing to pick up the second chain. While holding it so that the ring is heart high, he moves to stand so he and Marcus are facing each other with the Celebrant and the photo between them.

**Celebrant:** Please repeat after me:

“As this ring has no end (pause for Gabe to repeat)

neither shall Wink's love for you, Marcus.” (pause for Gabe to repeat)

Wink's mother rings the bowl. Gabe presents the ring to Marcus, who receives it, kisses it, and places it around his own neck.

Wink's mother places the mallet back in the bowl and moves to the end of the line. Gabe takes her place next to the singing bowl.

**Celebrant:** These rings will be converted into mourning rings – each containing intertwined strands of Wink’s and Marcus’s hair and some of Wink’s ashes. May they be a symbol and reminder of the complete, beautiful and endless love that Wink and Marcus shared. May their circles of wholeness heal Marcus’s broken heart so thoroughly that he might someday love another just as deeply. For, indeed, the world needs such love.

**Gabe picks up the mallet and rings the bowl. Gabe then places the mallet back in the bowl and returns to his seat, with first the mothers then Marcus following him and returning to their seats.**

#### **EULOGY BY WILLY WILSON**

**Celebrant:** Willy Wilson will now share with us his memories of being Wink’s brother and best friends and about Wink’s military experience and its aftermath.

**Willy comes forward and speaks for 3 minutes.**

#### **EULOGY BY GREGG WILDER AND ROBIN BAXTER**

**Celebrant:** Thank you, Willy. No one understands better Wink’s love of loud metal music than his mates in the band The Red Hots, Gregg Wilder and Robin Baxter. They will tell us about what playing in a hard rock band meant to Wink.

**Gregg comes forward and speaks for 2 minutes, then Robin joins him and speaks for 2 minutes. As he ends, Robin introduces “Mourn” by Sentimental as being one of Wink’s favorite instrumentals.**

## MUSICAL INTERLUDE

**Music Cue / Guitar instrumental “Mourn” by Sentimental**

## EULOGY BY BRIAN COX

**Celebrant:** Thank you, Gregg and Robin. Next to speak will be Brian Cox, Wink’s former boss at the Boys and Girls Club. He will give us a glimpse of how important Wink was to the club and the kids and how Wink’s work there deeply fulfilled him.

**Brian comes forward and speaks for 2 minutes.**

## CHILDREN’S LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

**Celebrant:** Thank you, Brian. I now invite all the children who are here who knew and loved Wink to stand and join me in a Litany of Remembrance for Wink. After each line I speak, please say together, “We remember Wink.”

**The children stand.**

In the rising of the sun and in its going down,

*Children: We remember Wink.*

In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,

*Children: We remember Wink.*

In the opening of buds and in the rebirth of spring,

*Children: We remember Wink.*

In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer,

*Children: We remember Wink.*

In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn,

*Children: We remember Wink.*

When we are weary and in need of strength,

*Children: We remember Wink.*

When we have joys we yearn to share,

*Children: We remember Wink.*

So long as we live, Wink too shall live, for he is now a part of us.

*Children: We remember Wink.*

**Celebrant:** Thank you, children. Please be seated.

### SLIDESHOW ACCOMPANIED BY MUSIC

**Celebrant:** I now invite you all to remember what Wink meant to you as you enjoy a feast of photos from throughout his life prepared by Wink's family.

**Music Cue / Play recording of Nat King Cole singing Charlie Chaplin's song, "Smile" as musical background to the slideshow with captioned photos.**

### REFLECTION

**Celebrant:** With tears and laughter, we have dipped in the deep well of love and memory. Now, you are invited to imagine that you are able to have one last conversation with Wink.

Imagine first that Wink is in front of you and you are able to say, "I love you" in your own way. **[PAUSE]**

Next, bring to mind any regrets or unfinished business to mind and say to him, "I'm sorry. Please forgive me." **[PAUSE]**

Then, imagine Wink asking your forgiveness for any regrets or unfinished business, for anything out-of-character he might have said under the influence of powerful medication in his final days. Tell him, “I forgive you.” **[PAUSE]**

Finally, remember the many gifts of having him in your life and say, “I thank you.” **[PAUSE]**

And with that, we release Wink with pure love, free of any shadows or regrets.

### **FAMILY CANDLE RITUAL**

**Celebrant:** Will the family please join me up front.

**The family gathers at the lit candle on the table next to Wink’s photo.**

**Celebrant:** Today, as we honor Wink, may you hold each other close in the pain of knowing you will no longer share the touch of his hand, the sound of his voice, the sight of his smile. Acknowledging and supporting each other in this shared loss, please lean in together and blow out the flame.

**The family blows out the candle.**

Yet, you also acknowledge and share the memories of Wink’s special character and gifts that live on in your lives. His beautiful spirit is indomitable. Please join hands while Marcus relights the candle to symbolize his influence, which endures in all of you, individually and together.

**Marcus relights the candle.**

**Celebrant:** In mystery we are born, in mystery we live, and in mystery we die.

**[PAUSE]** Please return to your seats comforted by your shared love and remembrance.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Celebrant:** As we near the end of the ceremony, Wink's family has asked me to express their gratitude for all that each and every one of you meant to Wink and for attending this celebration of his life today. They invite you all to join them right after this ceremony at a barbecue outside this pavilion to celebrate Wink's love of cooking and good food. Members of his band, The Red Hots, will also share more of the music he loved.

### **MILITARY HONORS**

**Celebrant:** Now an Army honor guard from Fort Meade will present The Colors in recognition of Wink's military service to our nation. Midshipman Steven Jones, a student at the U.S. Naval Academy who was sponsored by Wink and Marcus during his Plebe Year, will play "Taps" on the bugle. Please stand and remain standing until after the playing of "Taps."

**The celebrant stands, waits until the assembly is standing and then cues the Color Detail and bugler. They march in and present The Colors.**

**Music Cue / "Taps" -- played after the flag is presented/opened and while it is being saluted.**

The celebrant sits, cuing the assembly to sit. The Color Detail refolds the flag and presents The Colors to Marcus with a salute. Then the Color Detail and Bugler march out.

### CLOSING REMARKS

**Celebrant:** As we go from here today, may we keep the following words in our hearts from the “Benediction” by Dawna Markova:

#### *Benediction*

May I, may you, may we

Not die unlived lives.

May none of us live in fear

Of falling or catching fire.

May we choose to inhabit our days

To allow our living to open us,

To make us less afraid,

More accessible,

To loosen our hearts

Until they become wings,

Torches, promises.

May each of us choose to risk our significance,

To live so that which comes to us as seed

Goes to the next as blossom,

And that which comes to us as blossom,

Goes on as fruit.

**Celebrant:** As you leave, the ushers will guide you to come forward to receive a

gift of remembrance from Wink's sister, Lilli Wilson, and from his niece and two nephews. The gift is a smooth river stone lovingly painted with a symbol of a winking eye with rainbow eyelashes by the children at the Boys and Girls Club. Please keep the stone close to you for as long as your heart is aching and then, when you feel ready and if you would like, leave it in a place that has a view or significance that Wink would appreciate. Go in peace.

## **RECESSIONAL WITH FINAL GIFT OF REMEMBRANCE**

### **Music Cue / "What a Wonderful World" by Louis Armstrong**

**As the music starts, Marcus accompanies Lilli and the other children to the front and they stand facing the audience next to the basket containing the painted stones. The rest of the family comes forward, receive a rock from Lilli and recess out. The Celebrant exits behind the family. Then the ushers guide the members of the audience forward row by row to receive their gifts and exit. Marcus, Lilli and the children exit after the last guest.**

COMMITTAL CEREMONY

FOR

ALAN (“WINK”) TRAVIS WILSON

**June 15, 1980 – February 29, 2016**

*In the garden of the home of*

*Gabe and Laurie Wilson*

*Annapolis, MD*

*4:00 pm*

*Saturday, April 30, 2016*

DEBORAH MCGLAUFLIN, LIFE-CYCLE CELEBRANT

## CEREMONY FOR COMMITTAL OF CREMAINS

**The family gathers standing around a custom-made double-niche columbarium which has been installed under a spreading oak tree in Wink's parents' garden. There is a new visitation bench nearby.**

**Celebrant:** Welcome everyone. We are here today to commit the ashes of your beloved Alan "Wink" Wilson to their final resting place in a columbarium niche in this lovely and familiar spot. In the words of A. Powell Davies:

Let us be honest with death.

Let us not pretend it is less than it is.

It is separation. It is sorrow. It is grief.

But neither let us pretend that death is more than it is. It is not annihilation.

As long as memory endures, his influence will be felt.

It is not an end to love-

Humanity's need for love from each of us is boundless.

It is not an end to joy and laughter –

Nothing would less honor one so vibrant

Than to make our lives drab in counterfeit respect!

Let us be honest with death, for in that honesty

We will understand him better

And ourselves more deeply.

Indeed, as long as your memory endures, Wink's loving influence will be felt. A part of him remains in each of you and in every person who was touched by his sparkling life.

In the presence of death, we continue to sing the song of life. We make our peace with death and go from its presence strengthened in our commitment to live out our own lives according to our own highest and best values.

At this time, I would like to invite Willy to place the urn in the niche.

**Wink's brother, Willy, places the urn with Wink's ashes into the niche.**

**Celebrant:** We thank Wink for his presence on this earth and in our lives. We commit this lovely blue urn containing his ashes to this specially and lovingly built columbarium niche in this garden he knew well and where he will be visited often by all of you. There is a second niche in the columbarium in which, someday, Marcus' ashes may rest beside Wink's, if he so chooses. Please place the mourning ring in the niche, Marcus.

**Wink's partner, Marcus, places Wink's ring into the niche next to the urn.**

**Celebrant:** In this niche, Marcus also places Wink's mourning ring, which contains a few strands of his own hair intertwined with a few strands of Wink's, along with some of Wink's ashes. Marcus keeps an identical ring around his own neck. These mourning rings were made from the rings used in the ring exchange that was part of Wink's life celebration and memorial ceremony. **[PAUSE]** Lilli, please place the river stone in the niche at this time.

**Wink's sister, Lilli, places the stone into the niche next to the urn.**

**Celebrant:** On behalf of Tink, his niece and nephews and all the children whose lives Wink touched, Lilli has placed in the niche one of the painted river stones from his memorial ceremony. This way, the love of children will be with Wink always. **[PAUSE]** Next, I invite Laurie to come forward.

**Wink's mother, Laurie, steps forward with a large flat object, which is concealed from view by a blue cloth.**

**Celebrant:** Wink will be with the family in yet another way. Some of his ashes have been incorporated into a lovely cremation art painting titled “Blue and Gold Heaven” that was commissioned by Gabe and Laurie. They generously offer it to go on tour to hang in the homes of other family members before it returns to remain in their home. Please remove the cover, Laurie. **[PAUSE for as long as it takes for those present to admire and comment on the painting and the offer].**

Now, let us keep silence while preparations are made for the closing toast.

**Marcus' mother, Rita, and Willy's wife Paula, pass out champagne glasses, pop the cork, and pour the champagne.**

**Celebrant:** Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust. To symbolize the loss in your life represented by Wink's passing, please spill some champagne on the ground.

Now please raise your glasses twice – first in a toast to Wink's life – a life that ended too soon but that, nonetheless, was lived well and fully. **[PAUSE for toasting, leaving room for whatever anyone might wish to say.]**

In the spirit of the living who must find the strength to go on with life after the death of a loved one, please raise you glasses again in a toast to each other and as a pledge to support each other through your grief and as you move on with your lives. **[PAUSE for toasting, leaving room again for whatever anyone might wish to say].**

The committal ceremony is concluded. May Wink rest forever in peace, and may peace be with each of you for the remainder of your days.