60TH ANNIVERSARY SPEECH

FOR

HAROLD LEBLANG

Hello everyone, and what a day for a celebration…and what a celebration it is!! It’s not every day that we get to commemorate a milestone as wonderful as a 60th wedding anniversary, but every day I am reminded of how blessed I am to have lived this life with such an extraordinary woman by my side. My life would have probably been a nice, enriched existence, but somehow, through tragedy and adversity, two unlikely souls met in the most unlikely of ways-a blind date, no less, realized they were really one, and married 60 years ago on December 25th, 1952. Every day I have lived since I met Lisa has brought me so much more than I could ever have imagined. As I look around at all of you, here to share this great occasion with us, I am reminded of all of the most precious gifts I have, and I can’t help but think I just might be the richest man in the world. An expression that has inspired me through life is, “Love one another and you will be happy. It’s as simple and as difficult as that.” We can also put a slightly different “perspective” on this tenet as we contemplate a quote from the comedienne, Rita Rudner, who said, “It’s so great to find that one special person you want to annoy for the rest of your life.” (**Wait for the laugh and turn to Lisa and say)** Lisa, I can’t imagine that I **ever** annoyed you, and I also cannot imagine even thinking of attempting to annoy anyone else. I’m all yours and I wouldn’t have it any other way! Our life together has been an incredibly rich and diverse journey and we’ve had quite a trip.

It’s almost as if good fortune and blessings have watched over us throughout our lives. There’s an old proverb that teaches us “that the child is born with a loaf of bread under the arm.” Simply stated, the universe provides. Lisa’s early life is the embodiment of this proverb. Her early childhood experiences exposed her to more heartache than any one of us could possibly endure in an entire lifetime. It’s unimaginable to think that this beautiful, intelligent, and accomplished woman we celebrate today, began her life as an orphan. With a mother who died in childbirth, a father that was killed, and the necessity to flee her native Austria for the US at just 6 years old when the Nazis arrived, an ordinary person would have cracked. She was brought to this country by Moe and Ruth Bernhardt, and let’s face it, the rest was history!!! Fortunately for all of us, my Lisa is a force to be reckoned with!!! Not only did she demonstrate her resilience and fortitude when she was just a young girl, she took that spirit and determination and really built an exemplary life. From her exceptional career as a high school principal to her dedication to her family, Lisa showed us what a real Superwoman was and is. From the time Lisa arrived in the US, it took 10 years but our paths crossed irretrievably on that fateful blind date. I suppose you might say that before long, I was toast!! You might also say that we both recognized that we had an innate passion for travel, and life’s metaphoric journey applied to every era in our lives. Once I returned home from serving in the Army during the Korean War, we settled down and began to create and raise our family. (**Please revise the chronology as necessary**).

Our life’s journey took us to parenthood and gave us our two wonderful children, Karen and Kevin, our terrific daughter-in-law, Saundra, and the two greatest grandchildren in the world, Jason and Ilana. Life has been a long, strange and sweet trip, and apparently, the travel bug had quite a feast when it came to the Leblangs! From the early days with that travel trailer, going cross country not only once but TWICE with our kids, to our round the world cruise on the Queen Elizabeth, we have made one luscious and enduring feast for that travel bug! In addition to the cross-country trips, we enjoyed motorboat trips, taking the kids to Europe, and visiting every country we could imagine. Lisa and I are thrilled that the Leblang smorgasbord continues to feed new generations of hungry travel bugs and we love that Kevin and Saundra replicate our passion for globe trotting, in fact, they just returned from a trip to Kenya and Tanzania with our grandchildren…and the legacy continues!

in her book, A Short Guide to a Happy Life, Anna Quindlen says, "Life is made of moments, small pieces of silver amidst long stretches of tedium. … We have to teach ourselves now to live, really live...to love the journey, not the destination." Our life together has been an amazing journey filled with even more amazing journeys. Lisa and I have done our best to spend each day appreciating life and learning the lessons placed before us. Life is even sweeter because we have each other and all of you to help us chronicle the milestones, chart the courses, and listen to the stories of our lives and loves and adventures. Each one of you here with us today has made our lives rich and worthwhile. Each one of you provides a reflection for Lisa and I to acknowledge how fulfilled our lives have been with each other and with you. As Anna Quindlen reminds us, we have many small pieces of silver and honestly, not so many stretches of tedium.

The “magic” continues for us wherever we find ourselves. Whether we’re here in New York, or living it up in the “6th borough” … that would be Florida, Lisa and I savor and appreciate each moment of each day. It doesn’t matter if Lisa is sharpening her skills at bridge or I’m having the time of my life playing gin rummy, life is good. I mean … water aerobics every morning!!! What could be bad? It’s delicious!!

(**Turn to Lisa and say**) Lisa, you’ve been by my side …. officially… for 60 incredible years. We’ve been to every corner of the world together, in fact, we may have to consider changing our last name to “Fodor.” (**Wait for the laugh**). We’ve seen a lot. We’ve done a lot. Ernest Hemingway said, “Never go on trips with someone you do not love.” (**Look up to the sky and say**) Trust me Ernest, I didn’t. We’ve put quite a few miles on our “chassis’” and we’ve had the time of our lives together. Back in the “swingin’ sixties,” there was a pop group called the Seekers, and If I may be indulged just one more quote, I’d like to dedicate some of their lyrics to you, Lisa.

“There's a new world somewhere

They call The Promised Land

And I'll be there some day

If you will hold my hand

I still need you there beside me

No matter what I do

For I know I'll never find another you”

Lisa, thank you for the best 60 years anyone could wish for. You are my light and my life and I think I’ve said just about enough…. it’s time to book a couple of tickets to … **SOMEWHERE** and continue our incredible journey!!!! Happy anniversary!! I love you Lisa and thank you all for sharing all of this joy with us!