BIRTHDAY SPEECH

FOR

BERNARD REITER

Hello everyone and thank you for being here to commemorate this milestone with me. It’s not every day that a guy turns 80, but here we are and I cannot think of people I’d rather be with than all of you! I look around the room and I see representation of so many stages of my life and I can’t help but be reminded of the quote, “Money and possessions may make a person wealthy, but true friends make a person **rich**,” or, as Emily Dickenson said, “My friends are my estate.” If that’s the case, then we better post some bodyguards at the door, because this is one priceless crowd!! It’s such a gift to have all of you together in one room, ostensibly to mark what is generally considered as “My Big Day,” but as far as I am concerned, I am here to celebrate, honor and acknowledge all of **YOU** and to really let you know what a gift you are to me.

We’ve invited all of you to wear nametags because, let’s face it; each one of you has played a key roll in the saga of my life. I’ve been friends with some of you for more than sixty years. Several of you have been more recent arrivals, but no less precious in the big picture. My beautiful daughters and their families are here, as is my partner and muse, Janet, and truth be told, although each one of you may not have met the others in person, I’ll bet you’ve heard the stories… some of them **LEGENDARY**, so now it’s time to put faces to those legends as we mix and mingle and make new memories tonight.

Life has been very, very good to me. I was blessed to be born with this ethic and heart and values and it has been a privilege sharing it with my three greatest accomplishments (**name** **your daughters**) Cheri, Lisa and Lauren... but more about them later! Life has thrown me curve balls and some unexpected twists and turns, but every single challenge and triumph brought me to this exact place, with all of you as my wing men and women, witnessing the lessons I’ve learned and the ones I’ve taught. I also have to say that for the most part, you’ve “done your homework.” You know what it takes to earn and retain my loyalty and friendship and I am grateful for the part you’ve played in my life.

Victor Hugo may have said, “Forty is the old age of youth; fifty is the youth of old age.” And I’m sure some clever upstart has recently said, “Eighty is the new fifty.” I would have a hard time disputing that. I have to say; as I look around the room I am transported to so many places in time. Some of you like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ really knew me **WHEN**. We actually go back to our grade school days!! Some like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, were there with me in college; and speaking of homework, some, like Joe Gluckman really come with a legend attached. People like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ were right by my side when we passed the Bar… and then we graduated from Law School…. (**Wait for the laugh**), I want to acknowledge each and every one of you that has been by my side, or on my phone, or in my hands in the form of a letter or card or whatever connection it took for us to maintain our relationship all these years. In different cultures, there are legends that state that at birth, an invisible red string is tied around a finger and leads from one person to the person he or she is destined to meet. Some folklore deems this is true for soul mates, but I think true and deep friendship of all sorts is ***bershert***… meant to be… and if we could take a moment to think about that, we would be able to visualize those symbolic, invisible red strings connecting each one of us, and they would become evident to us, right here, right now in this room, and for that I am so thankful.

Take the red string that connects me to Joe Gluckman. Joe, why don’t you give a wave so the rest of the crowd sees the victim-I mean **SUBJECT** of this little anecdote. Joe looks like a great guy, right? Respectable…. successful… well… when Joe and I met back in the early 70’s… it was a slightly different dynamic…. You see, I was teaching at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ University and Joe was a student. One day the class was reviewing the assignment that was due and the younger, less responsible, more Maverick Joe was unprepared. As I chastised… I mean… forgave him in front of an intimate gathering of two hundred of his peers, he glared at me, heartily hurled an epithet, spewed forth the phrase, “You son-of-a-bitch” and stormed out of the room… Of course there’s no denying that what’s meant to be is meant to be. Joe apparently likes a good challenge and wouldn’t you know it-he and I became great friends. Forty odd years later, (**If you feel it’s appropriate you can say**) it is such a treat to be able to call **HIM** a son-of-a-bitch!! But this time it’s said with love, respect and acknowledgement of what it means to really know someone. And after all, it’s my birthday and turn about is fair play!! So thanks for sharing this moment with me, you **SOB**!!

Throughout my career in both Texas and California, I’ve had the privilege to know and be inspired by some of the smartest, wisest, colleagues with whom a person might wish to be associated. My career has spanned almost six decades and to see such enthusiastic representation from such varied sectors, I have to say, you bring life to my CV!! If anyone wants to know what it was like working with me at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, just ask \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I bet he’s got some stories!!! (**As an aside you can say**), and don’t forget, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ you have a birthday coming up soon as well so be kind!! (**And wait for the laugh).** There’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who worked with me at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who was probably the best client someone could ask for. It’s so gratifying to see how professional respect and commonality transformed into lifelong friendships.

Of course as a family man, I’m so proud to have such wonderful siblings and grateful that my brother Norman is here with us. (**Tell me if they will be there and I will add this part)** He knows me longer and probably better than anyone else in this room (**will expand this if other of your siblings are alive and in attendance**). And thanks to them, my life has been made richer with the presence of great nieces and nephews like (**Name some of those who are there with you**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

The lights of my life have always been my daughters. From the day each was born, my life became richer and filled with deeper meaning. And of course, seeing the world through the eyes of such brilliant and unique young women has kept my perspective fresh, contemporary, and compassionate. Cheri, you’re my oldest and you always amaze me with your strength, smarts, wit and resilience (**If you want to make a joke you can say**) Sounds like someone I know! (**And wait for the laugh**). You and Mike met and married at a time when you had the wisdom and integrity to really appreciate each other and I am so happy for you and Mike and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**name their daughter**). You guys are terrific together and I’m proud to relate stories of your adventures to these people you see here now!! Lisa, you caught the “law bug” and found your success in one of the toughest cities in the world. You made it there… in New York and I knew before the song came out that if you could make it there… YOU, of all people, would make it anywhere!! (**If you want to make a joke you can say**), Howie, you’re every Jewish parent’s dream… my son-in-law the doctor!! What’s even better than your dynamic lives are the wonderful grandchildren I got out of the deal!! The Reiter legend lives on in the adorable Brittany and the cute, smart and feisty Benjamin!! To Lauren and Sam, you complete the trifecta of great daughter/husband combos. As you pursue your tandem financial careers, I survey my “estate” as Dickenson referred to these riches, and I see my life is filled with priceless blessings.

Over the past eighty years I’ve been witness to some of the greatest moments in modern history. I joined this earthly plane just as the depression was in full swing and my earliest memories were learning resourcefulness, resilience, and respect for what we had. As I grew older and went to school, this country was plunged into “the Great War.” (**Give a sentence about how that affected you**). From that I learned \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. By the time I graduated from Ohio State and went on to get my Law degree at Georgetown, the world was on the cusp of a revolution. It was the fifties but little did we know what awaited us around the corner… The sixties brought us more war and revolution as well as evolution. Men walked on the moon and little did I know when the race for space began that I would be a privileged participant in my role as Patent Counsel for NASA. All of the dots along the journey of my life led to this spot-right here and right now and I can honestly say it’s been an incredible ride-so far!!

Tonight we celebrate and tomorrow we resume our plans for the future. I look forward to continue setting goals, seeing the world with Janet, and continuing to make a difference with the philanthropy and charitable work that I find so fulfilling. As I support so many people-whether they know it or not, I know that I cannot be as effective without the love, wisdom, friendship, and support of those that keep me together and strong. That would include people like (**Name your doctors**) Dr. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**if they’ve** **also become friends, say a sentence about each** **one**). \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

(**Is there anyone else that will be present that you want to acknowledge? Let me know)**.

(**Do you want to express further acknowledgement to Janet? If so, you can say**) Janet, thanks for being my partner and sounding board. Life is that much more special when experience is shared.

After all is said and done, I realize all is not done and all has not been said. I also now believe that life begins at 80!!! So doctors, make sure you’re all on board and ready to keep up with me!! The first half was a real trip. The next half is going to be even better!! Thank you all! I love you!