**14200, Howard Small**

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the father of the groom I want to welcome all of you to our rehearsal dinner. We thought it both fitting and romantic that we celebrate their union here at the Marie Selby Botanical Garden, where Joshua proposed and Taylor accepted. We greatly appreciate all of you who are here to share this moment, especially those of you who have travelled long distances to be here. For those of you who are local we have guests who have come from Japan, England, Michigan, New York, Florida, Ireland, Germany, Massachusetts, Illinois, North Carolina, and Virginia. I know you will make them all feel welcome. We truly have a world-wide gathering here tonight and we are thrilled that you made the trip.

I’d like to share a little background on all of us so we all know each other better. My son Joshua is the third of four children, and was born in Bradenton, Florida. I am a pharmacist and his mother Diane is a teacher. Joshua, the groom, graduated from the University of South Florida in December 2009 and became a certified history teacher. He moved to Japan to work as a teacher in a program called The Japanese Exchange and Teacher program or JET for short, in July 2010. Our older son David is a naval officer, our daughter Miriam, the oldest, is an accountant, and our younger daughter Rebekah has a degree in technical theater. She has earned her equity card in stage management and is moving to NYC right after the wedding to begin her life into the theater world. As you can see we have quite a diverse family and we all love to travel.

Taylor, Joshua’s beautiful bride, was born in Michigan but moved to England as a child. Her parents are Chris and Robin Moyer. Chris is an executive with HP and Robin is a housewife. Taylor has a younger sister named Shelby who is in college at this time. Taylor earned her college degree from University of Bristol, England and her master’s at Kings College, England. She is petite, smart, blond and absolutely adorable. Most of her family is from Michigan.

Joshua met Taylor on a rafting trip sponsored by the "Jet" program in May of 2012 in Tokushima, Japan. They hit it off immediately and started a long distance relationship with the Shinkansen or Bullet Train keeping them connected between Hagi and Nara Japan. What a way to keep in touch, travelling at high speed by rail rather than driving across town. That’s true love.

In December 2012, Josh Skyped from Japan and told us they had started looking at rings and he planned on proposing to Taylor on Valentine’s Day 2013. Of course both of them were heading to America for a visit over the holidays where we would meet Taylor and Joshua would meet Robin and Chris. Joshua then decided that instead of waiting till Valentine’s Day to propose he wanted to surprise Taylor while she was visiting us in Florida.

She flew down here for a few days and Joshua arranged with the Marie Selby Botanical garden to propose under the arbor in the Butterfly Garden during Lights in Bloom On December 27th 2012. Taylor was taken by complete surprise. She obviously said yes because here we all are the night before their wedding.

They returned to Japan and finished the school year and then Taylor returned to England to get her master’s degree and Joshua moved to Frankfurt, Germany to be closer to her. Different countries still seems a long distance to me but I have to admit Germany is a lot closer to England than Japan. Taylor has been working at the same school as Joshua since September after finishing her master’s program. They’ve decided to honeymoon in Cancun Mexico and then attend another Reception at Bart's Barn in Bay City, Michigan on April 11th 2015 to let her home town friends celebrate with them. The happy couple will then return to Frankfurt Germany and continue teaching.

Diane and myself and Chris and Robin are very proud to have such wise and accomplished children and are thrilled at their choice to marry. Would everyone please rise and share a toast with us to the bride and groom.

To Joshua and Taylor, may your life together be long and happy and may your love grow brighter and stronger every year.