WEDDING CEREMONY

FOR

KEVIN VAN DYKE

Hello everyone and welcome to this eagerly anticipated and extremely happy occasion. Today we are here to bear witness to the marriage of two beautiful people- Holly O’Dell and David Briedis. Many… if not all of us have traveled from far and wide to celebrate this great couple… some have come from as far away as Australia!! **(If you want to make a joke you can say with a little exaggeration**)… **WOW**… with dedicated guests like **THAT;** I don’t feel **ANY** pressure to make this ceremony compelling, entertaining, worthwhile and **unforgettable**…. (**And wait for the laugh**)…. But in all sincerity, we that know and love Holly and David know how much they love each other and what a joy it is to be here to share this beautiful moment with them.

The history of Holly and David began several years ago… in a very smart way… **really.** As students of the Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University, both were primed to be receptive to new and valuable lessons designed to guide them throughout their adult lives. Part of the intrinsic benefit of accessing higher education is to learn to be observant… to question rhetoric and to heed clues… to be able to apply theories in productive and proactive ways…. and that’s just what David did that night he and his friend Ron walked into that bar and saw a beautiful blonde…. The story could have turned into one with a weird punch line… especially since the beautiful blonde… namely Holly, has admitted to being involved in a round of beer pong at the time of the siting… but our hero, David, was transfixed. His innate ability to creatively problem solve and multi task would serve him well…. in school… in his career… and especially back in Evanston as he plotted his morning route to be concentric with that of the gorgeous blonde in the bar that night… and after getting to know one another, a few trips halfway around the world, a few years of courtship, much precious time accruing frequent flyer miles, and many priceless moments getting to know each other and love each other deeply, here we are!!! … In gorgeous Cabo San Lucas bearing witness to the power and timelessness of true, deep, and meaningful love.

(**Do you want to mention a few sentences about how you know the bride and groom? You can do that here… if you want to send me some notes about this I can tweak if you would like that**)

As we are all gathered to really observe this rare and special event when two people are joined as one, we want to remind you all that the power of this moment comes just once in a lifetime. It is fleeting and precious and as such we ask you to finish taking that last picture…. add that last hash tag and/or emoji to that final tweet or post, send that last text before the actual ceremony, because we are going to respectfully request that all cell phones, flip phones, mobile phones, and electronic devices that might in some way conspire to sap your attention…. be put away and not used until the service has been completed. (**If you want you can say**)… You’ve all traveled to be here to witness “the good stuff…” here it is!! (**You can also say**) We are about to experience the **ORIGINAL** meaning of PDA (not “personal digital assistant” but “public display of affection!”). (**And wait for the laugh**)

The eminent journalist, Charles Kuralt said, “The love of family and the admiration of friends is much more important than wealth and privilege.” Based on the presence of all of you that are here today, I think it’s safe to say that Holly and David are really very rich in what counts the most. They have wonderful friends like you and their exemplary families have blessed them both with a context and appreciation of others. The O’Dell’s and Briedis’ are wonderful people and the love and appreciation that Holly and David openly demonstrate for their parents is an inspiration. On behalf of the bride and groom, I would like to extend some very special acknowledgements.

To Holly’s parents, Bruce and Sandra, thank you for always wanting more for Holly and for sacrificing your comfort for the comfort and good of Holly and her sister Heather. As outstanding parents you have set an example of what it means to be a substantial human being by doing what is necessary and best for all. You’ve managed to find your way through the hard times and you’ve done that with grace and humor. It is no accident that your goodness is reflected in the beauty and humanity of your daughters. It is clear that when we observe the O’Dell’s together, we can easily say, “The family that laughs together loves together.”

To Mick and Mary Jo Briedis, the love and loyalty you freely show each other every day and the sense of stability and partnership you practice without fail has provided an unshakable foundation for your family. Your mutual respect for one another has left its mark. Although it’s been said that “Respect is what we owe, love is what we give,” I think it’s safe to say that the Briedis’ demonstrate, with their actions and their mutual consideration, that love and respect is a legacy that keeps giving… to each other, their children (**their son?**), and to future generations.

To all four parents, remember when you thought no one was looking or listening? Remember when there were times when it seemed like your kids might have taken you for granted or weren’t paying attention? Well they were, and they “got it,” and now that it’s Holly and David’s turn to build their own family, they are grateful to have been blessed with the richest foundations they could have received. It is thanks to all of you that this couple goes forth into the world as a new family so that they can continue to share and honor all that they have learned and received from you.

(**Candle lighting ceremony**)

Two lives are about to be joined as one. Two families, the O’Dells and the Briedis’, are about to form a new and extended family. I would like to ask Bruce and Sandra and Mick and Mary Jo to join us up here. The significance of the lighting of the unity candle cannot be underestimated. It is our parents who give us life, our souls symbolized by light. Before us we have three candles. The two tapers will be lit by each set of parents to represent “the light of their lives,” their children, Holly and David. Later on, as their first “official” demonstration of unity as husband and wife, Holly and David will take their candles, light the unity candle, and we will all witness the melding of two souls into one.

(**Kevin insert- Please advise what you want to add here**- **here is a suggestion of a poem to include)**

Holly and David, I know that much of your relationship has taken place in far off lands and that the two of you spent lots of time traveling, exploring, searching, both apart and together, as you pondered the meaning of life and love, commitment and ultimately togetherness. I would like to share this poem with you, and although it is unattributed, legend has it that it too, has traveled from far and wide…. from the distant land of ancient first century China. It is called **“The Key to Love.”**

"The key to love is understanding ...

The ability to comprehend not only the spoken word,

But those unspoken gestures,

The little things that say so much by themselves.

The key to love is forgiveness ....

To accept each other’s faults and pardon mistakes,

Without forgetting, but with remembering

What you learn from them.

The key to love is sharing ...

Facing your good fortunes as well as the bad, together;

Both conquering problems, forever searching for ways

To intensify your happiness.

The key to love is giving ...

Without thought of return,

But with the hope of just a simple smile,

And by giving in but never giving up.

The key to love is respect...

Realizing that you are two separate people, with different ideas;

That you don't belong to each other,

That you belong **with** each other, and share a mutual bond.

The key to love is inside us all...

It takes time and patience to unlock all the ingredients

That will take you to its threshold;

It is the continual learning process that demands a lot of work ...

But the rewards are more than worth the effort ...

And that is the key to love."

We are about to witness the exchange of vows, but before we do, I would like to share a few more thoughts.

It is always a privilege for me to officiate at a wedding. This rite of passage is not a frivolous one. It is an age old ceremony that holds meaning and hope and promise for the future… not just for the bride and groom but for all of us that have the honor of being present… **really** present to witness such a significant and timeless moment. In life… every day life, we all endure what Shakespeare has called “life’s petty pace.” But every so often, life … and love…conspire to remind us that there **IS** magic in life and it is **real**. Weddings are that sort of an occasion. They take us out of our way and call on us to travel… to possibly dress up… to take ourselves out of that “petty pace” and remember that having the opportunity to share such profound joy is **really** a gift.

Today is one of those very special exceptions. Here we are in Cabo St Lucas…. surrounded by the beauty of nature and the love that naturally emanates from Holly and David. They traveled quite a road to get to this point, but today is the real beginning of their life as a new and loving family. They have taken the time to explore the possibilities life had to offer. They tried life apart and they saw that it was much, **MUCH** better together. The poem said it all…

“The key to love is inside us all...

It takes time and patience to unlock all the ingredients

That will take you to its threshold.“

All of their life experiences have led to this point… from the love and lessons shared by their families to the support of David’s “wingman” Ron that first night at the Keg (**Is that the name of the bar where they met?**) every action caused a reaction and a response all intended to further their connection, as it should have been.

Soon enough those of you that have had to ignore your phones for the past half hour or so will be able to go back to them…. but… **NOT YET!!!** (**Wait for the laugh**)… and your coverage of this wedding will spread virally… and so will the love in this venue that we are sharing. As you review the events of the weekend and of this day, and as you reminisce about the stand out moments of this wedding, I invite you to remember a few things… Genuine, authentic love is **possible** for all of us. If you’ve already found it, appreciate it every moment. Remember what it feels like to be truly happy for someone…. that’s a feeling we all tend to take for granted as we get distracted in this world. Every once in a while, be present. Put down the phone… look up from the computer screen… drop the remote and look across the room… you never know who might be admiring you from a distance… Acknowledge the people who mean something to you. Everyone wants to know that he or she is special… appreciate your friends and family members and don’t forget to honor and respect them as Holly and David honor and respect their families.

Our bride and groom met in a situation in which they were open to learning and experiencing new things. That is possible for all of us at any age. Use this moment as a lesson to take this share of happiness with you. Maya Angelou said, “Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope.” Apparently it also shows up at the school library early in the morning pretending to study….. while all the while peering over the computer screen displaying ESPN…. (**Wait for the laugh**).

(**Should you say this next part before the vows portion so that people pay attention and the flow is more seamless? Just a thought**)

In a few moments, after the vows portion of the ceremony, as Holly and David take their first walk back down the aisle as husband and wife, you all have another opportunity to participate in an age old tradition…. You will see at the end of each row there are baskets of confetti… Tradition teaches us that the custom of throwing confetti at the bride and groom may have originated in Ancient Roman times or possibly even in ancient China. The action was taken as a gesture to protect the happy couple from evil spirits and to insure prosperity and fertility. I read somewhere that back in those old days, the Romans threw **nuts**…. Holly and David… I bet you’re both relieved society has evolved **somewhat** since then… or you might have needed a bridal first aid stand… (**Wait for the laugh**). So everyone, grab a handful of confetti and as they walk back down the aisle, and congratulate our happy couple the old fashioned way!!

I would now like to ask Heather, Holly’s sister and made of honor and Tyler, David’s best man to step forward so that we may do the exchange of rings…