BIRTHDAY SPEECH

FOR

ANGELITO CADIENTE

Hello everyone and welcome!! Today we have the privilege of celebrating an amazing milestone. I am Angelito and as we all know by now, it is my mother-in-law, Bebet’s **ONE HUNDREDTH** birthday!!! She has had all her life to prepare for this celebration and I want to make sure that I remain the **best** son-in-law, so I would like to share some thoughts as we honor the woman who has meant so much to all of us for as long as we can remember. Lucille Ball once said, “The secret of staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly, and **lie about your age**.” (**Wait for the laugh**). Really? This is one example of a woman who doesn’t have to do that!

It has been said, “Our birthdays are feathers on the broad wing of time.” If that’s the case, then I think it’s very safe to say that Elizabeth Joco Ferrer has the wingspan of a very bold and proud eagle. Over the past ten decades, in her own quiet way, she has left her mark on this world and on all of us. In a time when so much is changing all around us, Bebet has had a constant and profound effect on her family, friends, and of course, her church. The woman we know is a quiet, reflective, indoor person, devoted to everyone…. she was a great chef and homemaker, a wonderful wife to her husband, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who was a Senior Military Officer, and now there are four generations of her family that share her living legacy. This all sounds great, right?? Well, all I can say is time gives us perspective… but not **THAT** much!! I will **NEVER** forget how **strict** she was when I was courting her daughter in those early days of our relationship!! You thought she was quiet? Try being a young man dating her daughter!! (**Wait for the laugh**). But let’s remember… she was the wife of a military officer, she ran a tight ship, she kept a well-run household, she kept **ME** in line…. or **ELSE**! And now there are FOUR generations that have been inspired by her ethics, her faith, her devotion to her family and friends, and the incredible relationship she has had with her “younger” sister, Priscila.

Many smart minds have shared the same thought and that is in order to have a worthwhile life, it is important to live for others, and that is exactly what Bebet has done. Maybe one of the keys to her long and well-lived life is that she was a wonderful homemaker…. that is REALLY something to consider. While everyone was running around and getting the next best, biggest thing, Bebet maintained her devotion to her family and friends… and we are all so much richer for it!

Because this is such a wonderful accomplishment, I decided to do some research to see the elements that the experts say that contributes to a long and healthy life. I found suggestions like… One factor that helps to insure a long life is to be conscientious. We **ALL** know that Bebet is the living proof of **THAT** one!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Another is to accept challenges but don’t get overwhelmed by stress…. I guess she knew that deep down inside and it’s probably why she was so tough with me!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Researchers found it is also vital for a long and well-lived life for people to spend time with the right crowd- dependable, kind, respectful people…. I guess after all of these years she really **DOES** like me! (**Wait for the laugh**)… and she likes all of you too! Another thing I read is that in order to live a long and healthy life, you have to eat SUPER FOODS…. That’s very new age now. Scientists suggest, broccoli, berries, grapes, garlic, avocado… it sounds like an entire grocery list… As far as I can tell, Bebet has her own secret to longevity…. and that is that she ALWAYS prepared and served her own **SUPER FOOD**!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Before it became fashionable, we were already on the cutting edge of the trend thanks to her skills as a chef and homemaker.

So much has happened in the world since May of 1916 when Elizabeth Joco Ferrer was born. She has seen so much and she has traveled far, but the one thing that has been almost constant is the love and companionship of her **younger** sister Priscila. So much has been said about the relationship between sisters… from “ I smile because you’re my sister. I laugh because there’s nothing you can do about it.” (**Wait for the laugh**) to “A sister is a little bit of childhood that can never be lost,” Bebet and Priscila have been by each other’s side for their entire lives. Of all of the gifts in life, this relationship has proved to be the most enduring. When I think of the real secret to a long and healthy life, I look at these two and I realize that there is no amount of broccoli or avocados that can provide the love and nurturing of a sister who is also a best friend!!

With four generations of our family here to celebrate this extraordinary birthday, we have a chance to see what this woman means and how she has inspired all of us. (**Perhaps you can get a sentence or two from someone in each generation to give perspective**). When I was younger, as I have already said, I saw a woman who was strict. Now I see a woman who provided a wonderful loving home for her family. Her strictness was her way of demonstrating her love… either that or she was testing me! (**Wait for the laugh**). But we’ve both mellowed over the years and I think we both know how blessed we are to share this family. If I asked my wife, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ what the most outstanding memory of her mother is, she would say, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. If we asked my son (daughter?) some of his/her thoughts she would share the following. And if we asked our grandson, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, he would say, “Where’s my iPhone? I have to charge it… (**Wait for the laugh**). I’m just kidding about that of course, but there are people alive today that can’t even imagine a world without mobile phones and the technology we all take for granted. Bebet came from that world and has managed to have a wonderful and meaningful life. It’s hard to believe all of the changes that have taken place in the past one hundred years… and she did more than survive… she has thrived. Bebet can tell us what life was like in simpler times before phones and televisions and conveniences we all take for granted. A woman like Bebet is a treasure. She and Priscila provide a window onto a very different and simpler world but one filled with devotion and respect for her family, friends and her church. Those are the constants in life that keep her strong… and young.

To paraphrase the Bible, “The glory of youth is in its strength, but the splendor of old age is in its grey hair.” Each one of us has the wrinkles and grey hair that we have earned in life. And as we remember how blessed we are to have Bebet in our lives for one hundred years, we know what true love and devotion looks like. While I am pretty sure that I probably gave her at least **some** of those grey hairs, (**Wait for the laugh**), I can’t imagine what life would have been like with a different mother-in-law. (**If you want you can add**). And although many jokes have been repeated about the classic mother-in-law situation, I can’t say that I understand them… I guess I got lucky!!

And of course, after this big celebration, Bebet and Priscila will go back to their residence in Highland, but this is a celebration that none of us will soon forget. How many people do we know that have the blessings and gift of such a long and fruitful life? To be able to have one’s best friend and sister by your side… it fills my heart with joy. To keep them interested in each other and in life is truly a miracle and we are so happy they’re together.

Bebet, you’ve lived a simple, quiet, humble life, but it is clear that your legacy will last lifetimes. With your (**Name the number of each**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ children, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ grandchildren, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ great grandchildren, you have given so much to this world. We would not be here without you… really!!! And for that we are so grateful and happy to celebrate you today and always.

As you begin “the next hundred years,” we want you to know that we will continue to celebrate you and all that you have taught each one of us. We wish you a very happy birthday and many, many more! Congratulations! We love you!