**15725, Susan Ackerman**

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to welcome everyone here tonight to celebrate with Father Petar Jovanovic for the 37 years he served as priest for the Serbian Orthodox Church. For anyone who doesn’t know Father Petar has been devoted to the St. Sava Serbian Orthodox church from its inception in 1980. He has been faithful in ministry, faithful in friendship, and faithful in good works. He worked diligently on the Church interior mosaic project and along with Hugh Howser made a beautiful TV show that features the church interior and the Serbian culture.

I've known Fr. Petar for most of his 37 years of service. He baptized my son and later married my son as well as their children. He officiated the funeral of not only my parents but also my grandfather. It just won’t seem right for anyone else to do the baptisms, weddings, and funerals in our family. But, I guess we’ll just have to muddle through and get used to someone new.

When he blessed my home he blessed my son's room twice "just in case". You see, my son is a wonderful, respectable and responsible man now. But, in his youth he did have a time of rebellion, like most of us. But, Father Petar had faith in him and faith in God that he would learn from his mistakes and overcome his youthful exuberance, and he has. Father Petar didn’t just help my son, he reached out to help many young people over the years. His influence with our youth will be missed.

When he suffered a little heart condition, I asked him to spend a week in Hawaii and he eagerly accepted. I cautioned him about his health, especially when he visits the beach and sees those beautiful girls. "O, he said, but my doctor told me that would be excellent for my heart as it needs to beat faster".

Father Petar, you have been an integral part of our church for most of my life. As eager and qualified as the new father will be, he won’t be able to replace you. I know he will serve us faithfully, but he just won’t be you.

We could all share stories with you tonight of our experiences of the years with Father Petar. But, we’d be here all night if we did. But, I think what has been shared by me and others gives everyone an idea of how much we love and respect Father Petar. Would everyone please stand and join me in a toast for him.

Father Petar,

May the rest of your days be filled with the joy of the Lord.

May your heart stay strong and may you be mightily blessed by God

May your days of retirement be a time of fulfillment

May you see dreams fulfilled that you had forgotten you dreamed

May you see new dreams conceived and new dreams fulfilled

 But, most of all may your retirement be filled with peace.