**60th BIRTHDAY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**BEA RHODES**

Wow!!! Hello everyone!!! It's so great to see all of you here.... I guess you got the memo... to SHOW UP! Tonight is dedicated.... welllll to ME.... I can't imagine a more wonderful group to celebrate.... uh.... ME...and I'm so thankful that all of you are here, to reminisce, share a laugh, and raise a glass to..... you got it!!! ME (**Wait for the laugh**). I would be remiss if I didn't start my acknowledgments by letting all of you know that if you're here in this room, it means that I love you very, VERY much.... especially (**find out the name of the bartender and caterer and say it**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_the bartender and the caterer, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.... (**Wait for the laugh**) **TWO** new best friends!!

As I look around the room, it's so gratifying to see family, old friends, new friends, **older** friends, colleagues.... so many "points of light" that have illuminated my life are here. So many eras and milestones are represented.... let's check.... by a show of hands...how many of you.... can't quite talk yet??? Parents... you can help out with this one... Put up your hand if you've seen the last Lego movie??? Enjoyed it??? (**Wait for the laugh**). **AWESOME**!! Put up your hand if you remember 9/11..... Put up your hand if you can remember when John Lennon was shot... okay... now put up your hand if you were present for the Battle of Scheldt in World War II.... not many....this is to illustrate that our youngest guest is just five months old and our "most distinguished" is almost 95.... I suppose I could ask if anyone was present at the Battle of Bull Run (**or name a really old Canadian holida**y) .... but I guess I'd be going just a little too far back on that one!

Yes... milestone birthdays are a time to look back, reassess... and chart one's course for the future... which reminds me.... a few months ago, Mike looked at me with that "concerned" face and said, "Honey, are you mad at me??" Then a few weeks ago, he told me I look tired... apparently I had to set the record straight... so I broke it gently.... "Honey, I'm neither angry nor tired...this is my face now!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

Since I've been preparing myself for this day for... a long time.... like maybe my entire life, things I've learned have a way of staying with me... in ways I never experienced before.... like...let's take one example... if you aren't an accountant or an estate executor, you probably.... hopefully... don't know that when someone dies, a final tax return has to be prepared and filed.... this is called the "terminal return..." REALLY! When my mother died, my brother Art and I were the executors and we had to do just that.... we also had the chance to go through old photo albums... there were wonderful old black and white images... each one told a story... most of which I didn't know, but somehow they spoke to me.... I didn't even know most of the names of the people in the pictures, but it got me thinking...wouldn't it be a good idea to make new memories and celebrate with new experiences and new pictures while we're all still alive and able to enjoy each other... and yes.... that includes YOU, Bartender and caterer!! (**Wait for the laugh**) ... now don't worry... I know that this is NOT an original idea, but when ya get to be MY AGE..... (**Wait for the laugh**)

I know it's not often that I have such a "captive" audience... so I have a feeling that I better be either really funny or really brief... so let's go...

I want all of you to know that I have to say that I've had a great life. I got to go to University, travel the world, and do interesting work. I spent ten years working in prisons and that experience shaped me like nothing else could have done. My former boss and his wonderful wife Barb are here tonight. Don’t worry Henry... I know you think you weren’t my boss but you were. Henry taught us that the inmates were our business and not an interruption from our business. That wisdom and perspective has stayed with me my whole life. I remember thinking, "Wow... I am going to work with the worst people in Canada. People in Federal prisons." What I found out is that most of these guys were just like you and me but with crappier parents and maybe a learning disability and mental health and addiction issues and a personality disorder or two or three thrown in. But that experience taught me to stop being afraid of “bad” people. In spite of, or aside from our circumstances, we are all human.

I had a few best friends through part of elementary school and all of high school. We would spend all day together at school and then come home at night and talk on the phone ...in those days there was only one phone per household... can you IMAGINE???? ....until our parents kicked us off. As I get older, I realize that these lifelong friends hold memories of a time in my life that no one else has. Who else knows you when you are 12 or 15 better than your best girlfriends? Wanda, Tom, Donna, Denise, and Gord.... I would not be who I am today without your help... oh and... remember how precious it is to have each other's backs... I know we'll remain friends forever... mainly because we all know each others' secrets.... (**Give a sly smile and wait for the laugh**)

And then there's Mike... I met my husband "later" in life. Well, back then it seemed later... now it seems like I was just a mere spring chicken.... I was 33. I remember telling him I would never date anyone who was 40. That was **really** old. Now of course old is - like **SEVENTY**. Mike's family has filled our lives with fun and joy... in fact, there are a lot of Mangan’s here tonight. Some of them are even kind of famous. I’ve come to really like and respect them. Louise and Liz. Kate and Scott Neil and Kate Dan and Kirsten. Matt and Liam Pat and Penny, Tim and PJ . See! Lots of Mangans!.... and of course there are PLENTY of Anderson's too.... like Scott and Cheryl and Don. Mike is not only my biggest supporter, he is also just about the best person I know. Just ask his dry cleaner. .... he constantly tells me, "Oh you’re Mike’s wife. You are so lucky. He is the nicest person in the world." – I get that a lot... but you know what? Older guys really ARE cool!!

I once read a quote that said, “Children get spoiled because you can’t spank Grandmas”. ...or Auntie’s for that matter.... . I want you all to know that the chocolate fountain is part of this celebration in honour of all the kids here tonight. Zach and Alex, Kian Logan, Isaac and Cleo Liam PJ Jude and Hayden. I love you guys!! Kids just rule.

Uncle Ed is here tonight. He is our most senior guest and liveliest Uncle and well he's the one that's proved his "staying power...." and we are so glad because witnessing his energy... it gives us all hope. And looking back on our extended family, I'd always thought that your cousins are your first friends. We were so lucky to grow up with our cousins. There were 9 of us. I'm so happy to share this evening with Val and Harriet and Ian who are here.

It was also great to have an older brother and sister to do the "heavy work...." breaking in our parents. By the time I came along, my mother and father were too worn out to discipline me so I was the spoiled one. My mom always used to say, "Why cant you be a good little girl like your cousin Valerie.?" Why, indeed.... I guess I had a bit of a mouth on me. I do remember it getting washed out with soap. That ALSO taught me.... My brother and sister produced four wonderful nieces and nephews. I adore every one of them. Heather and Chuck Sheri Carrie and Mike, thank you for being here....

Finally I want to thank my workmates, who were smart enough to show up for the Boss’s party. Greg, Janice, Marcus, Faris, Katarina, Chad, Jill, Clay. You make coming to work fun. My dance friends, Paul and Kathie and Mark. My adopted kids Aaron and Lauren. My most adored friend, Lauchie, each one of you has been a gift... when I look around this room, I know I am a rich woman.... I just hope when the time comes for my "terminal return," they realize my treasures are far more valuable than stocks and bonds, real estate or retirement plans...

A wise man once stated, "I am part of all that I have met." As I think about this milestone and look around this room, I can clearly count my blessings and it's easy to see exactly where the secret of my happy life is rooted.. it is thanks to all of you that have showed up throughout my life and continue to show up.... and to even laugh at my jokes, that makes this all so special.... thank you all for being here.... there.... and everywhere in my life.... I love you all!