**ANNIVERSARY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**GEORGE GRIBBLE**

Hello everyone! Wow!!! What a special moment this is!!! Jay and I are thrilled to share this wonderful occasion with all of you, and honestly, if we would have known how amazing, eventful, and yes, even fleeting the past **FIFTY** years were to be, we just might have gotten married sooner! (**Wait for the laugh**). Everyone in this room is very special to us and we really appreciate that you’re all here and present to share our joy, our memories, and our hopes and plans for “the next **FIFTY**.” I also want to acknowledge the “host committee,” Julie, Will, Jen.... how is it possible that your mother and I could love you even more than we **already do**? Your thoughtfulness, graciousness, and love is reflected in every detail.... (**If you want to make a joke you can turn to your wife and say**)... Jay, I **TOLD** you we got it right with these kids!!!

A lot has been said regarding the secret to a happy.... satisfying... long-lasting marriage. Mignon McLaughlin has said, “ A successful marriage requires falling in love many times, always with the same person.” The comedian, Henny Youngman, had a different bit of advice. Long ago, when asked, he observed, “...My wife and I are often asked about our secret to a successful marriage. We take time to go to dinner **TWO** times a week... a little candlelight, soft music, fine wine... she goes Tuesdays, I go on Fridays... (**Wait for the laugh**).

With all of the “wisdom” out there, with all of the jokes.... I truly believe that I know the **KEY** to a happy marriage... I found the woman of my dreams... I knew it... and I was patient until she **woke up**... I mean realized it too (**Wait for the laugh**). Jay and I met in an economics class at Georgia State and I was quickly smitten by her. She was as beautiful then as she is now, she was the best dressed girl I knew, and to top it **ALL** off, I later found out she was also the best dancer any place we went. ... However, as all of you know, I am a slug on the dance floor, but it didn't matter as everyone had their eyes on Jay, not me. For a long time I was not able to see Jay as much as I would like as she was dating a **much less attractive** guy who was attending University of Texas... this is the period in our budding relationship that might be referred to... as is done in advertising... as “**positioning**.” By comparison, I knew I had what it took for the “long haul,” and there I was, always lurking in the shadows. It also helped that I fell in love with Jay's parents, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. They were supportive and insightful. Her father said he knew I would win because I fed her better. (**You can make a stroke in the air with your finger and say**)... that’s one... or **TWO** for **OUR** side!! (**and wait for the laugh**). Sadly, my parents, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ died before meeting Jay but I know they would have loved her as my sister, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and her husband, Ray did. All of my fraternity brothers had only one thought - George outlived his coverage and I could not agree more. I’m one blessed man!!

Over the years, Jay has been by my side as my best friend, my soul mate, my love.... and, as her father predicted all those years ago.... and my eternally fascinating dining partner.... (**If you want to make a joke you can add**) and yes... she’s been a “**good eater**” (**Wait for the laugh**).

As further proof and acknowledgement that my bride made the right choices in life... sorry Mr. University of Texas... many of you have been with us since the beginning... and what a blessing **THAT** has been.... several of you were part of our wedding party and some go back even further... Kay, you’ve been Jay’s best friend since childhood.... and MC, you two were roommates in college. You brought Jack and Tom into our lives, and all of you, let’s face it, are family to us. Mac, you were a fraternity brother of mine (**If you want, you can say**)... come on... admit it... that U of Texas guy was **NOTHING** compared to... **THIS**, am I right?? (**Point to yourself and wait for the laugh**). When you and Claudia, who, at the time, was Jay’s sorority sister, met and married, it was quite an occasion... mainly because it was the **ONLY** time Claudia **EVER** did what I suggested (**Wait for the laugh**). Every person in this room means so much to us and Jay and I are so thankful to have all of you in our lives. To my sister Jean and Jay’s brother, Cam, your encouragement and support have been great guideposts along the way.

(**Turn to Jay and say**)...You know, Jay, that quote that I mentioned earlier? ... about falling in love with the same person over and over? You make it easy. I’ve never compared myself to Jack Nicholson (**If you want to add a little joke you can say**)... after all, who could? (**And wait for the laugh**), but I have to say, you have **ALWAYS** made me want to be a “better man.” Our life together has been **BEYOND** “As good as it gets” and I count my blessings every day. You’ve given us two wonderful children who are the light of our lives, and through your love and guidance, Will has brought us Jen, whom we also love dearly.

So let Ray (**?**) playfully call us “the Bickersons...” we’ve had our share of challenges... every long, healthy marriage does... I know I wouldn’t change a thing... thank you for the **BEST “FIRST FIFTY.”** (**If you want to make a toast you can say**) I’d like to invite you all to raise a glass as I propose a toast to my beautiful bride... Here’s to you, by my side, arguing, laughing, and loving each other for the next fifty! Thank you all!!