**ANNIVERSARY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**EDWARD T. RYAN**

Hello everyone! It is truly a joy to be here tonight to celebrate this wonderful occasion with Nancy and Ken. It’s not every day that a couple celebrates their fiftieth wedding anniversary, but it’s at times like this that we get a chance to look back on life and remember what makes it so very special.... and it would have been more than enough to celebrate this wonderful Golden Anniversary with Nancy and Ken, but there’s one other very important reason why I am so thrilled to be here.... You see, **FIFTY YEARS AGO**, at their wedding, I had the honor of being Ken’s best man.

Tonight, especially for me, is filled with acknowledgement, gratitude, reminiscence, and, of course, admiration. It’s a feeling we don’t often express... maybe we get caught up in the “daily grind” of life, but providence has a way of giving us the opportunity to pause, take a look around, and recognize those in our lives that have meant so much.... I must say, a fiftieth wedding anniversary apparently is the perfect place and time to share treasured memories and sentiments.

As I thought about what life was like back in the late sixties, I was transported back... waaaay back, to my freshman year at St John’s Academy. You know who else was there? If you guessed Ken Downes, you would be right!!! I have a few very clear recollections about that time in our lives..... I can remember that Ken and I played on most of the school’s ball teams together.... and I remember one other thing.... He was good and I was **BAD**... and **THAT’s** **enough** reminiscing about St John’s Academy!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Although we haven’t been directly in each other’s lives, we have remained “virtual” friends for all these years, and that just shows that opposites really **DO** connect! Our lives took different turns and paths, but through it all... through the ups and downs, trials and triumphs, tests and victories, one thing has remained constant and unswerving, and that is my deep affection and appreciation for the rare connection that Ken and I forged all those years ago.

Fifty years ago, I “stood up” as best man for my great friend Ken. He was marrying Nancy, a young woman who was quiet and happy, and a wonderful match for Ken... a really great, down to earth kind of guy. Over the years, Nancy and Ken have become synonymous with the concept of longevity, happy marriage, partnership, and enduring love. A French poet once said, “True love is like ghosts, which everyone talks about and few have seen.” Ladies and gentlemen, thanks to Nancy and Bob, we have **ALL** witnessed true love.

Fifty years ago, we were kids. Fifty years ago, we plotted and planned and made our lists of how we would conquer the world, individually and together. Ken and I shared thoughts... plans... dreams... one of his was to marry Nancy... isn’t it incredible that even though so much time has passed- let me rephrase that...we’ve had so many experiences.... and through it all, Ken and I were **STILL** blessedly able to reconnect and recreate a little bit of that fifty year old magic. Ken, I want you to know something... like the saying goes, “Life is what happens when we’re off making plans,” circumstances and situations kept us separated... and while I may not have been around as much as either of us would have preferred, I want you to know that you and Nancy were on my mind and in my heart, and the proof is that... **HERE WE ARE**!! Together again!! A little older, somewhat wiser, and **A LOT MORE** grateful for all we’ve done and learned throughout that span of time.

I want you to know, I honor our friendship, I celebrate our history, and I am eternally grateful for our lifelong bond. With that, I would like to invite all of you to raise a glass as I propose a toast:

To Nancy and Ken, Pablo Picasso once said, “Love is the greatest refreshment in life.” (**If you want to make a joke, you can say**).... and quite frankly, who would know that better than **HIM**? (**And wait for the laugh)**. Here’s to many more years of you two finding sustenance at the fountain of love... to nourishing and nurturing each other, and continuing to discover and express joy every day. Please accept our gratitude for showing us all that true love is timeless and enduring!!! Thank you!!