**BIRTHDAY TOAST/SPEECH**

**FOR**

**KEN SAMPONG**

Hello everyone!!! (**Name the person who gave the toast**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I want to thank you so much for that kind, meaningful, and most of all, **EXPRESSIVE** toast! It really sounded like you put a great deal of thought into what you wanted to say, but then again, you had about **FORTY** years to gather your material and **PRACTICE**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). It really is such a joy to be here and celebrate this milestone birthday of mine with all of you...or as some American comedians might say, “At **MY** age, it’s a joy to be **ANYWHERE**.... (**Wait for the laugh**) many of you already know what this feels like.... and truthfully, what I feel is tremendous gratitude..... especially since, as I was eagerly anticipating this evening, I wondered what it might be like to walk into a room filled with **OLD PEOPLE**.... but I mean it when I say.... that’s not the case at **ALL**!!! Take a look around,... We look **FANTASTIC**!!! I’m beginning to believe it’s true.... that **SIXTY** is the **NEW** forty-five.... I bet we would all take **THAT** number.... but honestly, I wouldn’t trade he wisdom, the knowledge, or the appreciation I have every day for my wife, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, my family, my profession, and, of course, my dear, **DEAR** old friends.... like the old rhyme teaches us.... “Make new friends and keep the old... one is silver and the other is **GOLD**.... your friendship truly is **GOLD** to me...and I thank you for that from the bottom of my heart.

Who **EVER** thought... forty... **FIFTY** years ago that we’d come together on a night like tonight, and celebrate one another... and **ME**, of course... (**Wait for the laugh**)??? Oh the thoughts and dreams we had when we were kids... In thinking about this gathering, I also started to notice treasured memories return.... (**Name three things from your youth... like this, or pick three other points the crowd will relate to**). I started thinking back to when I was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years old and all I wanted to be was a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.... and here I am... a cardiologist in Florida!!!! To so many people it’s a dream come true... and although it may not have been in my original “game plan,” my life and my work have brought me so much love, satisfaction, insights.... **insurance paperwork.**... (**Wait for the laugh**). But it’s all good... really.... I thought back to the days when I used to hang out with (**Name three of the guys that are there with you celebrating and describe a fond memory**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Sometimes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ would join us.... **BOY** did we love to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!!!!! Forty years later and it **STILL** makes me smile to think of those times.... or what about how we (**Name something typical... maybe a little mischievous that happened in school)** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .... and **MOST** of the time we got away with it!!!! (**Wait for the laugh**) ... **BOY**... those were the days....

But as we grew older we began to travel our own paths... we established our lives...but most importantly, the distance didn’t matter... it didn’t test our bond... here we are... more than half a lifetime later, and we’re **TOGETHER**. That is precious and a **FAR** **GREATER** cause for celebration... my birthday was a great excuse... our closeness was the reason we got together.

So much has been said about deep, lasting, genuine friendship.... a man named John Leonard said, “It takes a **LONG** time to grow an old friend...” Don’t we **KNOW THAT** to be true!!! Former American President Woodrow Wilson believed that, “Friendship is the only cement that will **EVER** hold the world together...” that becomes more obvious every day in this world... and someone... somewhere out there, who remains unknown, said it best... “Best friends don’t necessarily have to talk every day. They don’t even need to talk for weeks... or months... or maybe even years...But when they do, it’s like they **NEVER** stopped talking.... and **THAT’s** how I feel about all of you.... Friends really **ARE** the family you **CHOOSE**, and I am proud to have chosen all of you...

And speaking of **FAMILY**... there is someone who has been my friend... my love... my confidante... my best cheerleader and booster as well as my greatest critic, nurturer, and sounding board..... I don’t know if I would categorize myself as “a “great man,” but behind me, beside me, leading me, and nourishing me, there has been my wife, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .... and believe me... she deserves a round of applause for **THAT**!!! Thank you... for our **THIRTY** years of marriage... for our challenging yet rewarding and happy life, for our **THREE AMAZING** children, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I love you... (**Lead the applause if you want to**).

I also want to thank God for all of the gifts and blessings in my life... none of this would have been possible... or appreciated, without his goodness and mercy.

(**Do you want to propose a toast to all the guests in acknowledgement? If so, you can say the following.... if not, just say the words and don’t make it in the form of a toast**).

I’d like to invite all of you to raise your glasses **ONE MORE TIME** as I propose a toast to all of **YOU**...

Here’s to another **FORTY** years of health, happiness, friendship and **CELEBRATION**... may we all be together many more times as friends...as mates... as **FAMILY**... and toast to one another each time... Thank you all... you are **TRULY** the **GIFT**!!!