**WEDDING SPEECH**

**FOR**

**ANNELIE McCREIGHT**

Good evening and welcome!  For those of you who don’t know, I’m Annelie, Joe’s mom, and it is an honor to say a few words and offer a toast to the bride and groom. First and foremost, thank you for joining us today. As I look around me, I am reminded of the role that family and friends play in our lives…and the importance of those relationships. Your presence has made a special day even more wonderful.

Marriage is a daring journey... into the unknown.Having friends and family here to share the excitement is indescribable. I want to acknowledge Joe and Anna for their bravery and dedication, and for venturing off together, into the future, willing to forge through whatever presents itself... even without verified course conditions... Joe, I want to acknowledge that you agreed to wed on a day when you could have been playing golf. I know you were torn between your two great loves and I am proud of you for following this part of your heart…well, actually, **BOTH** parts...you’ve demonstrated today that, indeed, you... **WE**... **CAN** have it all...and thank you for parking the golf cart, showering, and allowing enough time to get here after this morning’s round... **THAT’s** m’boy!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

Weddings are about looking forward...They are about celebrating love... new beginnings and honoring age old traditions.... they focus on partnership.... as two people pledge to grow together and strengthen commitment. Weddings are also a time for a little nostalgia.... for recalling the memories and milestones that led to this wonderful moment.

Joe, as I look at you today, I see a handsome young man, dressed in a sharp tuxedo, poised to embark on the greatest adventure of his life.... but if I close my eyes for even half a second, I see you on another threshold... you’re five years old, heading off to kindergarten, wearing a backpack that’s almost as big as you. I blink my eyes again and see you’re graduating from grade 8, walking away with all of the accolades you’ve earned, including the leadership award. ... I blink again...you’re a teenager and you and most of your hockey team have taken over my living room, playing video games. I wouldn’t have minded, but I worked at home, so it was more than a little distracting. It was always an interesting balancing act running both VP Construction and a full video arcade in our house.

**HS... I like the humor... think I’ll rearrange... try this...**

**Other milestones I vividly recall...Your** **first job, at twelve, was working for our family business.  Construction work is hard, and historically so, especially back in the day when Grandpa Van Pelt was at the helm. He made sure you understood the work ethic demanded through your Dutch roots. You met the challenge, getting up early and working your tail off.**

**My mind fast forwards to a few years later.... I’m picking you up at your college residence and I remember being intrigued... OKAY.... HORRIFIED... at the way you guys were living.  I considered going in and cleaning it myself.... but I value my life and health and it was the weekend so I couldn’t get my hands on a hazmat suit and padded gloves.... (Wait for the laugh) then I thought of hiring one of those firms that clean up natural disasters and crime scenes. Fortunately, I came up with a better solution – the next time I picked you up for dinner, I sat in my car and waited for you to come out.... (Do you want to add)... and made sure there was enough hand sanitizer and disinfectant spray... for BOTH of us... (and wait for the laugh)**

**After college, you pursued your career elsewhere, moving up the ladder and honing your skills. So often, in life, things come full circle, and a year ago we got to welcome you back as our General Manager.**

As a parent, you hope your children will find partners who will not only love and support them but challenge them. Joe has certainly found that in Anna. She is kind, loving, generous, and we simply could not imagine a more wonderful daughter-in-law. ...And that’s not all...she loves golf and hockey. Joe, if I didn’t know better, I’d think you created her in a lab. The stars truly aligned for you the night of Neve’s hockey banquet where you first met.

Anna, I’d like to take this opportunity to officially welcome you into our family. You risked quite a bit to commit to this relationship, leaving your teaching position with the York Region School Board and moving to Mitchell, not knowing anyone. It didn’t take long for you to become an indispensable part of our community and our lives – and we’re so glad you did. You complete our family and you complete Joe in more ways than we can count. Also, I know every bride is beautiful but you are simply stunning....and if the care and thought you put into planning this event are any indication, you have your future well in hand. Plus, you’re a Red Sox fan, which means you’re not only loyal, but you understand life’s ups and downs. What more could a mother want for her son?

To Anna’s mom, Elaine, welcome to our family. We’ve shared a few holidays and you and Anna were gracious enough to include me in the wedding-dress shopping. You and your husband have raised an incredible daughter and we are blessed to have her – and you – in our lives. Thank you for your part in making today come together so beautifully.

Joe and Anna, you’ve now officially embarked on the adventure of a lifetime. It may not always fit your pictures, but with love, respect, resilience, and humor, I know you’ll stay the course. ...And if the going gets tough, never forget that a successful marriage is comprised of two people who refuse to give up. I’d like to recall the wisdom of that renowned sage, Jon Bon Jovi, who shared his secret to a long, and healthy marriage..” My wife tells me that if I ever decide to leave, she is coming with me.” (Wait for the laugh)

.... And speaking of music... You know it’s love when, despite Joe’s legendary two left feet, Anna still wants to dance with him, so I’ll wind this up before she changes her mind!

Our family **also** has Gaelic roots, so let me leave you with a proper Irish Blessing:

***May you always have plenty and never lack***

***May you both always have each other’s back.***

***May you always be healthy and rarely ill***

***May you, in each other, feel loved and fulfilled.***

***May your lives be long and full of grace***

***May you always seek the good Lord’s face***

***May both your heart and your home be warm***

***May peace and joy always be your norm.***

Ladies and Gentlemen, please stand and raise your glasses with me…. To Anna and Joe: Here’s to a lifetime filled with love, health, happiness, and more than you could ever wish for!!

Congratulations!! We love you!! Thank you!!