**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 my pleasure to say a few words and offer a toast to the bride and groom. First and foremost, thank you all for joining us today. As I look around the room, I am reminded of the importance that family and friends are in our lives…Your presence has made a special day even more wonderful. I also want to acknowledge Joe for agreeing to have this wedding on a beautiful day when he could be out golfing. Joe, I know you were torn between your two great loves and I’m proud of you for making the right choice.

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 bright, handsome young man, beautifully 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 (**If you want to make a little joke, you can say**) .... and wonder if I have something in my eye and if I need to make an appointment to visit my ophthalmologist first thing on Monday.... (**and wait for the laugh)**...the memories continue to flood back, the “movie” of your life plays before me... you’re a teenager and you and most of your hockey team have taken over the 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. And heaven only knows what the neighbors thought of the WWF trampoline tournaments that went on in our back yard.... you won some... you lost some... but you always found a way to bounce back... in any situation...

My mind fast forwards to a few years later.... I’m picking you up at your college residence and I remember being horrified at the way you guys were living.  I considered going in and cleaning it myself.... but it was the weekend and 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 cleans up natural disasters and crime scenes, but when I explained the conditions they mentioned something about an extra deposit and catastrophe insurance.... (**Wait for the laugh**). 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.

Your first job, at twelve, was working for our family business.  Construction is hard work, and Grandpa Van Pelt owned VP at the time, so he made sure you understood the work ethic of your Dutch roots. You met the challenge, getting up early and working your tail off.  After college, you pursued your career elsewhere, moving up the ladder and honing your skills. As so often happens 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.  I knew Anna was a keeper when she was able to maintain her cool and “survive” one of our family Christmases. It’s not easy to keep the holiday spirit when you’re thrown into a house filled with people .... and a crazy mother in law, laser focused on the bird in the oven. Anna, you rose to the challenge and did so with grace and confidence. 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, remember the wisdom of Jon Bon Jovi who shared his secret to a rare, long, and healthy marriage... “My wife tells me that if I ever decide to leave, she is coming with me.'” (**Wait for the laugh**)...

You **KNOW** it’s love when, despite Joe’s legendary two left feet, Anna **STILL** wants to dance with him. So I’ll sum up with this ... since our family also has Irish roots, I’ll leave you today with a proper Irish blessing.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please stand and let’s raise our glasses…. To toast the Bride and Groom:

***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.***

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