**BIRTHDAY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**JUNE HARRIS**

Hello everyone... For those of you that may not know.... I’m June and I am delighted to share in this **SURPRISE** birthday celebration for my brother-in-law, Thornton. Life is full of so many different kinds of surprises and by far, this has to go down in the books as one of the sweetest and most enjoyable that I can recall. It honors a man that joined our family by marrying my sister, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and over the course of many tests, challenges, and occasions, has really become a true brother to me. I want to thank my niece and nephew (**??? Nieces?? Name his children who are sponsoring the party**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for taking the initiative and throwing this lovely party in honor of a man that means so much to all of us.

I’ve heard it said, “In moments of surprise, we catch a glimpse of the joy to which gratefulness opens the door.” Thornton, I hope the surprise you experienced a few moments ago brought you all of the genuine joy we saw in your expression when you entered the room. I know you appreciate all of the meaning and planning and thoughtfulness that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ intended as they worked out the details of this very special celebration. And while, at our age, every single day is a blessing, and every morning we wake up to face new adventures is an immeasurable gift, it’s still very comforting and humbling to have so many people recognize, acknowledge, and honor us on such a special day.

There’s an expression I’ve heard that means a lot to me. “I am part of all that I have met.” Thornton has been apart of each one of us... and our lives.... for a long, long time. For some of us, it’s been a lifetime of friendship and shared memories. Thornton Reid came into our lives many years ago. My late sister, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was attending \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ College back in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and as promised... or assumed, as we leave one school and go onto the next adventures in life, that we would learn a lot of different lessons, meet many new people, and expand our horizons. That certainly held true for my sister when, one day, she met a young man. Her destiny was determined.

Who would have thought, on the day they met, almost a lifetime ago, that we would all be gathered here today, witnessing our brother, father, (**grandfather??**) and friend, blowing out the candles on a cake big enough to sweeten all of our lives.... and hold so many symbolic points of light representing all the years of life and lessons he has earned?? (**If you want to make a joke, you can say**) I have to say, this reminds me that the “burning of Atlanta” in the movie, “Gone with the Wind” has **NOTHING** on this cake!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Thornton, you’ve earned every bite of this cake and we all know it... as the years and the memories hold the testaments of time.

(**Name two or three outstanding memories or events involving Thornton**) I remember, over the years, how you became part of the family and how you and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ created your own. I will never forget the time, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and then \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The road may not have always been smooth.... and there have been challenges and crises along with the blessings, but we are family. We stick together through thick and thin. We are there for each other. We learn from our elders and we inspire our children and their children. To celebrate the milestone of turning **SEVENTY NINE** is an opportunity to come together and acknowledge just how blessed we are to have the chance to take this ride of a lifetime together.

I would like to think of this party as an acknowledgement of the **FIRST HALF** of your life, Thornton!!! There’s so much more to do and to see... to learn and to appreciate. Although there are a few aspects of getting older that aren’t that much fun.... just ask the pain in my right hip (**or name another part that hurts and wait for the laugh**), I think you would agree that, in the long run... or **walk**... **remember those hips**!!!!.... that every day we grow a little smarter, a bit wiser, and a lot more appreciative of all of the gifts and miracles God has given us. Sometimes they may be disguised as hard learned lessons, and sometimes, like today, they remind us that there really is **joy** still left to be felt... there’s cake left to be eaten, and there’s love around us to be experienced.

Happy, healthy, joyous birthday, Thornton Reid.... here’s to the next **SEVENTY NINE**!!! Thank you all!!