Rehearsal Dinner

1. Can I have everyone’s attention, Thanks so much for coming? Michelle and Joe, the Nissens and the Menges’

Very much appreciate you being here and the planning and effort to come. So thanks again. A special note that Joe’s grandmother Harriet Felis is with us tonight from Mobile, tomorrow Michelles grandmother and my mother Joe’s grandmother will be with us. I think that is very special that Grand Parents are here to celebrate this special day. Well the rehearsal itself is in the books it looked like we all know what to do tomorrow. Michelle and Joe’s rehearsal for their life is over tomorrow and the big event starts their life together. One other thing I wanted to comment on is Michelle was introduced to Joe at another family wedding that between Bridget and my nephew Bill Menges, I think those things are special in life and I know Michelle and Joe are proud of meeting because of Bridgett and Bill and will remember that the rest of their life.

1. I want to take a step back and tell you, the world u know today will be profoundly different in your next 30 years. I know the world around me is much different than 30 years ago when Joe and Michelle were born, Ronald Reagan was President actually my favorite President to date. He was a little different then the president we have today. I was 27 when Joe and Michelle were born, other than a few nieces and nephews if it were today I would probably be one of the youngest in the room, not one of the oldest. One of our most memorable wedding presents a must have was a micro wave. A fairly new product at that time.
2. At work we just got a fax machine which was really an awesome tool, almost extinct today. The cell phone was never imagined as to the thing we carry with us that can do most anything, we all imagined a device mounted in the car that could be used only as a telephone which we thought would be awesome, not carried in our pocket or purse and used for just about anything like it is today. Roger probably remembers the amount of records kept by a hospital were stored in another building larger than the hospital itself. Not on small hard drives like we have today. The desk top computer came of age really in the past 30 years. Since then Walmart, Apple, Microsoft, Google, Amazon, came into existence, Block Buster the video rental company came and went in your life time . One of the largest Companies in the world on the cutting edge of technology a house hold name that everyone used for taking photographs , Eastman Kodak vanished. I picture the guys at Kodak scratching their heads today saying what happened. My beloved Sears Roebuck is on the mat and at a count of 10. Sears Roebuck was truly the Amazon of its day. Our Country has been involved in many conflicts, back then we had no idea that people would willingly blow themselves up to kill others. 911 was experience by all of us how we shall never forget. Medicine as Roger, Michelles Dad can attest has advanced at light speed, I can only imagine the processes Roger used back at the beginning of his career as Cardiologist and how they have changed to today. Most everyone has heard the quote by Charles Duell the Commissioner of the US Patent Office when he said in 1899 “Everything that can be invented has been Invented”. How wrong he was how short sighted.
3. I’m here to tell you this is just the beginning of wonderful things you will see in your life time that make the world better than it is today. I dream of technology for the driverless car what that will do to the trucking industry. I dream of technology to end hand gun violence, I think it will be a technological solution. My point Michelle and Joe you are going to go on the adventure of your life during the greatest technological age ever during the next 30 years and your life time. Things that we can’t even imagine like the internet was and is are just around the corner, many new things are going to come into existence, you are in for big changes ! The most important of the next years is that you are going to have this relationship with a person who cares as much as you do about this marriage. You each will always want your spouse to be the healthiest and happiest and the most comfortable , you will help each other become successful not just in your financial endeavors but the game of life. Throw in some children in your plans god willing and you won’t believe how unbelievable it will be.

Michelle we love you and are very proud to be giving our son Joe to you and so happy you will be joining our family and he and us yours. I know you will have the best day of your life tomorrow and we are all looking forward to seeing you tomorrow so beautifuland in your beutiful dress, you deserve a wonderful day and I know you will have one. Our family thinks you are a beautiful l competent smart and caring person , again we love you very much. , You like Joe have an old sole, by definition means in no matter what situation you are always thoughtful to the other, easy going , kind and comfortable to all, a certain peacefulness of personality ,not tremendously worried about things certainly not material things. A person that many depend on for support. Our entire family find a certain ease in talking with you , that you are very comfortable in your own skin and all situations , you always know who you are, and show this confident humility , that I see came from your parents. Never respond negatively always upbeat . Joe needs someone like you in the opinion of his mother and I someone that has learned how to be a leader in the home when he can’t be there and share that role, someone to support him , anchorage him and comfort him really to be his soul mate. We know you are going to make a wonderful wife and life partner for Joe.

1. I have a list here of 21 suggestions for success in life I hung it in our little lunch room at work. The very first on the list #1 is Marry the right person this decision will determine 90% of your happiness or misery. I believe that one important trait in the right person is one that has good values we see those values in Michelle, and know the Nissens see those in Joe. We see tremendous values were instilled in you your sisters and brother, all the 6 children are solid, poised, well-educated love each other have great spouses and children , the biggest reason for these values is because the Nissen Kids had wonderful parental leadership in their parents Eileen and Roger Nissen. Speaking of Roger and Eileen I like to tell my 2nd wind story from time to time. Not often I can use it you will understand why in a minute. You hear people say oh I need to get my 2nd wind and I’m going to start something new or I’m going to get my 2nd wind and finish that project. In my opinion many people never come close to using up their first wind let alone need a 2nd. Most people leave the planet with much of their first wind never having been nearly used up. See they never tried, never put themselves out there. Not even recognized the meaning of a life of significance which I define as making a true difference in the lives of others . This team of Eileen and Roger , met after Roger was a State side Dr. While. in the Army during the Vietnam War. I may have the story a little mixed up but I think it was at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota where Roger started his career and Eileen was a nurse. I have two close friends that are Dr.s , I recently spent a week this past winter in Beaver Creek with one and his wife he had just retired we actually met up with the other and skied a day with him as well. You see having these 2 very close friends it gave me a look inside as to what it’s like to be a DR. Certainly not the actual Dr part, I know nothing about medicine and little about anything else. I got to know them very well and saw what their lives were like. Through our friendship I actually rarely saw either of them because of their schedules, one tells me he has no friends because he couldn’t keep them with his schedule he and his wife couldn’t do the things that couples do together with other couples like dinner and events. He worked almost every day or had some kind of work to do in the office when not seeing patients. Being a Dr. is a hard profession my 2 friends they didn’t do it for the money they do it to help patients the money isn’t enough for as hard as these people work. I believe the 2nd hardest profession is that of a Dr., the hardest is that of a Dry’s wife I will highlight that more in a minute . Dr’s Through their training they of course develop that brain power through years of Academia. Hard grueling study no question but this is what they were born to do their mental makeup is meant for this few others of us could ever get through it. My friends retired now like Roger but when working like Roger regularly put in 80-90 hour weeks, had to miss Dance recitals and little league games. Spent much time under heavy stress and took the job home with them every day. Roger retired after 40 some years of that grueling schedule in his 70’s. An unbelievable career, I take my hat off to him. Now an even harder job as I just said is to be the spouse of a Dr. It is a different kind of hard I certainly don’t want to say that Dr’s wives work harder than there Dr husbands but in a different way, they do. You see Eileen had to deal with the rigors of this profession and keep the balance of the family life while Roger dedicated his career to helping others. The Heart Ailments of his patients didn’t come at scheduled times between 9 and 5 and take holidays off. Eileen I can bet was often holding dinner to 8 or 9 at night going to bed without Roger home from the hospital and I’m sure waking the next morning to see he had already left for the office. A Dr’s schedule at holidays is even worse often being in the hospital on those days to check on patients, the rest of us have no idea the stress this adds to the family life, he needed someone like Eileen to hold it all together and she did. Very few can be Dr’s I think fewer can be the spouse of a DR. That’s why you see many Dr’s marry Dr’s. It’s the only way it will work. You see Dr’s are everywhere but Eileen’s they are hard to find.
2. Roger and Eileen didn’t only tackle the toughest profession together they did it while raising 6 children. My god I wrote this and I can hardly believe it, 2nd wind wow they had 5 or 6 winds to get this done. Eileen and Roger you have the Menges Family’s sincere congratulations and respect for accomplishing a career that helps others and at the same time raised such an unbelievable family. You two were meant for each other and what a great team you are !

Joe, your family loves you and we are all very proud of you. Joe had some funny quirks while growing up the funniest I remember is that until Joe was like 6 years old he called me Matt not Dad, we don’t know why but that’s what he called me. We aren’t sure why probably because Janis called me Matt, and he being first born nobody else was around to call me Dad so he called me what Janis did I guess, it was really funny but I got used to it. I would come home from work and Joe would say Hi Matt ! I remember a friends parents hearing him call me Matt and they thought it was some new thing that new parents were having their kids call them by thier first name. They thought it very unnatural and I should try to stop it. . I told them I had no idea why Joe called me Matt but he wouldn’t understand me telling him not to and I would just let it go, anyway he eventually started calling me Dad, to the relief of many. Joe was a very easy kid to raise really no problems, happy, respectful, helpful a good brother and son.

There was one particular challenge. That to me and Janis defines him we refer to it once in a while amongst ourselves. I have to share with you and tell you how serious it was and how Joe overcame it. A good part of the story that relates to it is Joe applied for the Coast Guard Academy during his search for a college, he received all his recommendations and thought he would like that choice, in his application they asked for an essay on the hardest thing he ever did in his life. Let me set this up for you,l Joe at a young age which we didn’t recognize had some sort of learning block ( I changed learning disability to learning block didn’t want Michelle to get cold feet!) he couldn’t learn to read in the classroom in the normal process he had a tremendous difficulty learning to read. We read to Joe as an infant and toddler every night before bed he loved books and wouldn’t go to bed without one read to him. That was the essay Joe wrote to the United States Coast Guard Admissions department, the hardest thing I ever did in my life was learn to read. I can’t be more thankful to the learning specialist that identified this problem, in fact we sent her a note when he received his Juris Dr in law ,that she indeed changed his life and we were more than grateful. Joe was taken out of the classroom for 5 or 6 years for special help during the time when the other kids took reading. This reading specialist worked with Joe until he overcame the issue and learned to read it was a big challenge for Joe. Well not to worry Eileen and Roger your soon to be son in law can now read ! In fact sometimes we do something important together like Brew Beer, where we each read the directions, Joe reads it 10 times faster and comprehends 100% on the first read, I read it 10 times and end up at the end with extra ingredients. I believe this teacher made this difference not only did he learn how but he came out loving to read he would read like the 4” thick Harry Potter Book in a couple nights before bed. How do you go from not being able to learn to read to an Attorney. Last time I checked that reading thing pretty important for an Attorney. That’s what they do all day, they read. He is an unbelievable reader.

Joe often started things slower than others weather it was baseball, hockey, wrestling or reading he started off at the back of the pack and finished at the top. I think he finished on top because he worked so hard alone he figured things out. His freshmen and soft more years of high school he participated in 2 high school sports that shared the same season. He wrestled on the wrestling team the practice was like 4:00-6:30 every day after school, he would get home, eat, do homework and go to hockey practice from 10:50 to midnight. Not getting to bed to 1:00am. Really an unbelievable feat . He did that for 2 years then dropped wrestling for his first love Hockey, hockey was a big part of Joe and Charlie lives they both played 9 years of travel hockey, I think their work ethic comes from Janis and I but also from that hockey they skated at not fun times, others where at sleep overs and they were skating somewhere, anyway Joe finished his senior season as the Assistant Captain of the hockey team.

Joe often got trapped in many of my hobbies and he still does. He has humored me and supported me through many hobbies, hunting and fishing, little league where we had to have a full batting tunnel in the backyard, sailing more on that in a minute, lately he has been my assistant in beer brewing, wine making, chicken, turkey raising , and duck farming and bee keeping, Michelle I believe Joe has a great future as a bee keeper if this law thing doesn’t pan out. This year our 2nd we look like we are going to get some honey if we don’t screw things up again. Were going to sell the first hundred jars for $1000 each so we can get back to breakeven.

The sailing thing we sailed our own boat through the British virgin islands with the rest of the family, alone, I’m lucky to be alive I slept that week with one eye open as I was sure they were making plans to have a que and tie me up and put me in the bottom of the boat someplace or at least make me walk the plank. Joe and I took a week long course prior to the trip with 2 full hours a day for a week of instruction from a college kid, I was sure those 10 hours of training from that college kid was going to get us through, and I was right, no matter what Janis, Joe Charlie or Emily tell you they are all present and accounted for here tonight., we had fun damnit !

Finally Joe your Mom I couldn’t be more proud of you earning your Law Degree and then going on to start your own practice. You and I remember the early days I remember your first case, Joe told me one day he had to go to court, I’m like wow finally really what for he said Judge Tonigan referred me, I’m like wow what is it, he said aw nothing and turned a little red I kept asking him and he gave it to me, some 16 year old girl just got her license she passed a stopped school bus. Too funny. Actually I went home that night and played it up to Janis. I said honey our boy is going to the court house in the morning, she like really, yes mam our boy is starting out in an Illinois Court Room just like honest Abe Lincoln, let freedom ring honey ! She is like ok what is it , I’m like didn’t you see the news trailer on TV tonight “Suburban teen passes stopped scholl bus FILM at 10 ! Well we know where this has gone since that day when Joe started in Wauconda we would attend events golf outing etc. and people would say that’s Matt Menges’ son, now we go and they say that Joe Menges Dad. Joe You are growing a wonderful practice I’m so proud of all the compliments I get on your Law Practice helping those businesses and families in Lake County. Many tell me weekly they use you and you do a great job. One of your large clients told me a few weeks ago that he is looking for that young kid from just a few years ago who is now a mature confidant and he listens to you for advice on some of the key matters of his business. He said I can’t believe it last week he was actually lawyering me. I was most proud to hear that from him. Keep working, as my late Dad told me when he heard you were going into Law He said He’s going to work hard the rest of his life but that won’t hurt him. Joe when you’re in your own business you can’t stand still. There is only forward or backwards there is no standing still. I look forward to your continued growth of your practice.

To the Nissen family I take only a small amount of credit for raising Joe into the fine man he is. Janis should get most of the credit she did a great job with all our kids like Eileen did with theirs. Anyway to the Nissen Family your daughter and sister Michelle is in good hands , all of you and especially Michelle can count on Joe Menges to be a loving husband, great father given the chance, and you will love him and enjoy him as your son in law, brother in law and friend, remember you heard it from me , Joe Menges won’t let you down !

Lastly but not leastly to my wife partner and love of my life, Janis , who I can guarantee u has a 2nd wind I would recommend everyone just stand back and get the hell out of the way, because here she comes. Honey congratulations on your part of raising Joe you did a great job and I love you very much for the support you have given me through our life together so far and that of our children ! Michelle Janis loves you very much as do Charlie, Rachel and Emily. PS – Rachel can fill you in on all our quirksif she hasn’t already we love Rachel and she desperately needs a friend share the journey with our crazy family. Now with no further adew . Please join me in Raising your glass to Michelle and Joe,