**Introduction - Looking towards Audience**

**Good evening and welcome! For those of you who don’t know me 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 me I am reminded of the role that family and friends play in our lives… And the importance of those relationships…Your presence here has made a special day even more wonderful.**

**DO I NEED ANY OF THIS?**

Another thank you must go to Joe for agreeing to have this wedding on a beautiful day when he could be out golfing. I know you were torn between your two great loves. You made the right choice.

*ALT: Just as importantly, thank you to the Almighty for bringing Joe and Anna together – and for giving us rain today so Joe didn’t have to choose between Anna and eighteen holes at Mitchell Golf and Country Club.*

*[Audience will laugh here, so don’t worry too much about the transition]*

Weddings are primarily about looking forward. They are about celebrating a new beginning and honoring a couple who have pledged to grow together in love and strength and commitment.

But weddings are also times for briefly looking back. For remembering the memories that led to this perfect moment.

**Looking towards Joe – CAN I SUMMARIZE THE GROWING UP, LEAVING THE HOME, FINDING A CAREER AND BEING LURED BACK TO WORK FOR THE FAMILY BUSINESS?**

Joe, when I look at you today, I see a bright, handsome young man in a tuxedo. But if I close my eyes for even half a second, you’re five years old, heading off to kindergarten, wearing a backpack that’s almost as big as you are.

I blink my eyes and you’re graduating from grade 8, walking away with all the awards, including the leadership award.

Blink again and 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.

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 or hiring one of those firms that cleans up natural disasters and crime scenes. But 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 have come full circle, and a year ago we got to welcome you back as our General Manager.

**Looking back towards audience**

**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.**

**Not only that, but 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.**

DO I NEED THIS AT ALL?

I’m not sure when you knew, but I knew Anna was a keeper when she was able to keep her cool during one of our family Christmases. It’s not easy to keep the holiday spirit when you’re thrown into a house with 35 people and a crazy mother in law focused only on the bird in the oven. Not only did Anna rise to the challenge, she did so with grace and confidence. **(I keep going back to this paragraph and I am unsure. I don’t like 35? Maybe I don’t like bird in the oven? Any comments Joanne?)**

**Looking towards Anna**

**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 today– the picture of elegance. And if the care and thought you put into planning this event are any indication, you have your future well in hand.**

**Anna, you are smart, generous, caring and not afraid to speak your mind. Never lose that. Especially in this family.**

**Looking towards Anna’s Mom**

**I’d also like to welcome Anna’s mom, Elaine, to our family. Elaine, we’ve shared a few holiday moments together and you and Anna were gracious enough to include me in the wedding-dress shopping. You and your husband have raised an incredible young woman and we are blessed to have her – and you – in our lives. Thank you for your part in making today come together so beautifully.**

**Looking towards Audience**

I’m sure you’re anxious to get to the dancing, so I’ll sum up with this ….

ALT: “Well, I hear a lot of money has been spent on a live band, and, despite Joe’s legendary two left feet, for some reason Anna still wants to dance with him. So I’ll sum up with this …”

**Looking towards Joe and Anna**

Joe, **the road has been rocky at times**, but I am so proud of the man you’ve become. You’re kind, generous, loyal to a fault, and a born leader. You tell it like it is, **and your BS meter doesn’t have an off-switch.**

Anna, you’re bright and ambitious and you give so much to our family and community.

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?

I wish the two of you every happiness this world has to offer.

**Looking towards the Audience**

**And now, since our family also has Irish roots, I’ll leave you today with a proper Irish blessing. Ladies and Gentlemen, please stand and raise your glasses with me…. To toast the Bride and Groom:**

**(Look at Joe and Anna for the toast, wait for people to raise their glasses)**

***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.***

To Joe and Anna!

END

I know that everyone is waiting for the festivities to begin this evening...

And there is no doubt in my mind that tonight will be a wonderful party...

You will need to work together to maintain balance. Sometimes you will stand in the middle and hold each other; other times you must move apart to balance each other and this lifeboat. Every so often you must allow the other to go and adjust the sails so that your boat can stay on course. But no matter what, your mission is to "Stay the Course!"

Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.”

-Henry Ford

“A great marriage is not when the ‘perfect couple’ comes together. It is when an imperfect couple learns to enjoy their differences.”

“Motto for the bride and groom: We are a work in progress with a lifetime contract.”

“As for his secret to staying married: ‘My wife tells me that if I ever decide to leave, she is coming with me.'”

— Jon BonJovi

The bonds of matrimony are only a good investment when the interest is kept up.

Some things I left out….

1. Now I know that I can sometimes come on too strong…. But Anna held her own and quickly found her place in this family……..
2. Months of intense planning
3. While I know that my son could fend for himself and survive alone in the world, I also know how nice it is to have someone to care for you and spend the rest of your life with
4. Joe – where do I start with you?. It is about time you found a partner and settled down.
5. Our relationship hasn’t always been easy. Parts of our personalities can be very similar. Sometimes it was like two pieces of sandpaper.
6. You have chosen a bride I embrace as my daughter and I know you will be ready for the roles God has for you in the future….
7. Men forget everything; women remember everything. That’s why men need instant replays in sports because they’ve already forgotten what happened.
8. This small army you call a wedding party has been an important and significant part of your life
9. Proportionalatly distributing…
10. Joe is well liked, very involved in community. See Facebook Joseph McCreight
11. Let me begin by saying that it is an honor and privilege for me to share a few words this evening. This is an opportunity to recite my well prepared speech which is totally awesome. It was created by my producer…….
12. We’ve been given three minutes to speak and Alicia (MC)has the stopwatch going……