

50th Anniversary Speech

Welcome. Thank you for coming to help celebrate my parent's 50th wedding anniversary. Being married for 50 years – and raising four children – certainly demands some kind of festivity and recognition. They deserve a party.

I am [REDACTED] – the elder, most loved daughter; my brothers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]; and my sister [REDACTED]; we appreciate you coming out and joining us, and we hope you enjoy yourselves.

If you don't mind, I would like to take this opportunity to say a few things to my mom and dad, and I promise not to go on and on. But these are things that probably should have been said long ago.

Mom and Dad, none of us four need to be reminded of how absolutely lucky we were to have been raised in the kind of home you provided. There are so many, just by chance, who were never given the gifts we received. And, in this case, I think we can only understand how lucky we were with the help of retrospect.

But let's not kid ourselves... There were many, many times when one or more of us didn't feel like we had very much luck – or gifts... We could probably talk the longest about the bad luck of John and Emily – and I don't know who would come out the unluckiest. My luck was always pretty good because I was too chicken to take any chances or break the rules. So I was lucky but boring. And Matt always contends that it's better to be lucky than good.

But those unlucky times were our doing. We made our own ridiculous choices. Pat and Mary just had to respond to our bad decisions, like parents do.

We know as parents your job was to put us on the right path and give us the skills we needed to be successful. To teach us all the lessons that needed to be taught. So at this point, I would like to assure you, Mom and Dad, we get it. We understand. You have taught us well and we learned the lessons you wanted us to learn. We all survived and are now mostly responsible adults. We live in the light, not the dark. We give our employer a solid day's work, we know what fork to use when, we're nice to old people, we wash whites in hot water, we give to charity... we get it.

But I also want to assure you that this knowledge is the least important of what you have given

us. I don't know when it happened, but over the years, we have come to acknowledge and admire the way you two choose to live. We had a hard time putting this vague notion of "how you choose to live" into words, but what we came up with was that you embrace values that dictate your actions. Namely: integrity, kindness, tolerance and faith.

You chose to make these a priority in your lives – it's the way you make decisions, and live, and exist. I'm sure it's not even a conscious decision. It just is.

I don't know if these characteristics are the measure of a man – or a woman – but I do know that these gifts were freely given to the four of us, because you two were and are our biggest influences.

It could be that you accidentally taught us these principals. Going with the "nurture" argument, I think it's pretty simple – after years and years of YOU, we've learned these things – maybe not even realizing it. And I want to ensure you that these traits are not lost on us. We see and listen and understand.

We have all absorbed varying degrees of these qualities, and sometimes with varying levels of success. These values, however, taught through your actions, are part of what binds the four of us together, and what will continue to bind us together in years to come.

Integrity, kindness, tolerance and faith – these are the most valuable things you have given us. I don't think they can be called anything less than a gift, because they are – a gift and an example on knowingly and willfully deciding how to exist.

We continue to get these from my parents, every day. They may not know they are giving these to us, but they are engrained in the four of us and we are the better for it. And this time we don't need retrospect to know how lucky we are.

So thank you, mom and dad, for more than we can ever express. Please join me in lifting a glass honoring Pat and Mary's accomplishment. To you – Happy Anniversary.

One more note... My parents were adamant that we not spend money on party favors, but we didn't listen. But you're not getting chocolate covered almonds or M&M's with their picture on them. Everyone will be getting two magnets. In honor of my mom, a magnet that reads, "Well Behaved Women Seldom Make History"; in honor of my Dad, a magnet reading "COEXIST".

If you don't happen to believe in these thoughts, leave them for someone else. But if you put them on your refrigerator, I promise you'll never forget Pat and Mary's 50th anniversary party.

Thanks, again, for coming to help us celebrate. Please eat and drink as much as you like and enjoy each other. John has found a way to write off the whole event as a charity donation. I think we just have to do a short 5K before we can leave, and maybe donate blood.

About This Project

Emily Navin:

“We planned a party for our parent’s 50th wedding anniversary – we had the food and 50 years of pictures and over 125 guests coming, but we still needed something to convey to our parents how important they are to us and how much of them we have absorbed into our own lives. I gave the task to my sister, Kate, and she wrote and delivered this speech. It was perfect. Most of the room was crying at the end, but it couldn’t have shared more about how my siblings and I feel. Guests still call and ask me for copies of the speech...”