

Wedding Anniversary speech
11 January 2014

First, let me explain that this is one of the few speeches in my life that Gillian has not drafted. Secondly, Gillian and I are delighted to welcome you all today for what she describes as a mid-summer party for our family and friends. We have invited you because you are all treasured people in our lives.

Special people have special days.

Today is Adair's birthday. Adair is both Gillian's cousin and her godchild. So Dair Dair, may today be a very happy day for you.

Today is also a wedding anniversary day. For Kip and Joan it is their 50th anniversary and like us, they have had 50 wonderful years together. To have them share today with us is terrific and much better than having a separate wedding on the same day as Gillian and me as they did 50 years ago. We offer them our warmest congratulations on what I know has been 50 very happy years. We would like them to join us in cutting the cake shortly.

We first all met at the Central Baptist Youth Hostel in Boulcott St in Wellington, along with our other lovely friends who are here, Glenys and Jill and Bob.

Bruce and Lynne have a wedding anniversary today but they have to wait several more years to reach the golden mark. One of the joys of our lives has been the privilege on each 11th January for some years now of having dinner together with Lynne and Bruce and also Chris and John who got us all together in the first place.

Some of you happily go back to our childhoods, like my dear sister Jill and my cousins Reg and Bill, who introduced me rather unsuccessfully to haymaking and underage tractor driving; and Ann who with Colleen rather more successfully introduced me to museums. Shirley and Nynette are part of our wonderful team from Tauranga and of course Jill's husband Murray hails also from there.

For Gillian, her brothers Barry and Ross are here, Barry and Carol having just flown in from London for the occasion. Ross is all the way from Gisborne, Gillian's old hometown, where she went to school with Julie, who is here today and who sung beautifully at our wedding 50 years ago.

Our organist that day was our dear friend Glenys, with whom I also went to school in Opunake. In the same class was Joan Riddell, now Joan Bolger, who is here.

Dave Launder was also at the same school with us. He and Isobel recently migrated from Otaki Gorge to Kaipara Harbour so they are down from Auckland. Of course like all good Prime Ministers should, Jim Bolger also went to Opunake High School.

My sister Jill was a bridesmaid at the wedding and Gillian's brother Barry and our old friend Bob were groomsmen.

Many other family members are here. It is very special that Auntie Ibbey from Wainamua could join us, with her lovely daughters and Gillian's cousins, Sue, Sally and Adair, together with Simon and John, all from Auckland.

My cousin David Waite and dear Janet are here as is Gillian's cousin Natalie along with Malcolm. And we are delighted to have our Masterton family contingent here, Tim, Melissa and Jason, whose children have brought great joy to our lives.

Others of you have also come a long way to join us, including our wonderful friends Manuel and Laura Chiesa from Italy. Manuel and I share a common birth date, as some of you will recall. Gillian calls us her twins.

Our very creative friend and prolific international author, Helen Brown, has come from Melbourne but originally was also from Taranaki and Wellington.

David and Charlie have come from Australia and have just returned today from exploring Mount Taranaki, a visit stimulated by a print of the mountain Gillian gave David very years ago.

As many of you know, Gillian and I spend much time these days on a range of charitable activities. In this respect, two special friends give us marvelously unstinting and generous help. They are Paul Baines and John Judge. They are here today and Gillian and I wanted to acknowledge all that they do for us and for people across the spectrum of the talented to the disadvantaged.

Against explicit instructions, some of you have been bearers of gifts for which we thank you. I could happily talk about each of the rest of you and where you have so generously come from to join us today but that could take longer than you might care for.

To lighten the formalities I understand the recently formed choral group, the Taranaki Singers, will entertain us shortly. I think we will be appreciative.

So can I thank all those who have traveled to be with us and all our wonderful friends whom we have acquired as the past 50 years have gone by and who are so fantastically supportive of us in so many diverse ways.

Family and friends are great gifts and we treasure you all.

Many of you know the story of how I met Gillian the day she arrived in Wellington in 1961, 53 years ago. I carried her bags into the Baptist Youth Hostel and 24 hours later plucked up the courage to ask her out. By that stage she was booked up every night for two weeks. I am not well known for patience.

But I was totally smitten. So I waited.

Some months later when I asked Gillian to marry me she laughed as she so often does in life.

I do not recall her ever saying yes but nonetheless it all happened. It has been the best thing that ever happened in my life and it's as simple as that.

If I talk about how much I love her I will not get to complete this speech and in any event you all know that I am nuts about her. She has done so much for me that I could spend the whole day telling you about it.

The warmth and caring and loving;
The spirit and creativeness and enthusiasm;
The calmness and intelligence and generosity;
The love of music and opera, art and history,
and travel;
The gift for making friends and helping friends;
The support for young people and those who are
disabled;
The commercial savvy and the technology guru;
The intense interest in things scientific and
medical;
The bookworm and the constant learner;
The gardener and native plant specialist (she
topped the Royal Horticultural Society exams,
being their best student in 10 years at the time);
The potter and weaver;
The educationalist and marvelous cook;
The pride in her Maori ancestry;
The uncanny intuition and insightfulness;
The unfailing positiveness and good humour;
The shared love of dogs;
The constant adviser and companion;
The extraordinary homemaker;
The great love of family and for me;

All these things are Gillian.

I have been the overwhelming beneficiary of these extensive and wonderful talents. But then you all know what she is like. I must conclude. Thank you Gillian for everything and especially for loving me. Now it is her turn.