

Toast to the Groom – Erik Olson – 29 July 2018

Good evening, I have the pleasure of offering a toast to one of the best men I know – in fact he was my best man too! I met Erik 23 years ago when he joined Holy Cross in Saskatoon and we quickly became good friends. I want to share a few memories about Erik and some words I think about when I think about Erik. I promised both Erik and Aimee that I'd keep it PG, and keep it short – 3 minutes right Aimee?

Back when we met, our fun was simpler, like making shopping cart art with Benny and Earl, borrowing playground equipment or road signs, or rollerblading at the Saskatoon airport on the tarmac late at night. Who would have guessed that Erik would be landing Westjet Encore planes on that very tarmac years later? Well, my Mom didn't necessarily like my choice of friends then. She'd often say when she saw Erik's shoes at the front door again generally covered in mud from taking his Toyota truck off-roading or in snow banks, "Can't you get new friends? That one has too much adventure in him!" Well, he basically joined my family to such a point that my Grandma Banda would refer to him as Erik Perrault, since he would often come to family events with me as my date. We couldn't really get a lot of dates then and Erik was way more fun than a date at a wedding, or an engineering pub crawl, or an engineering Ski Trip even and we had lots of fun together.

Well, we all wind up growing up eventually, and it wasn't long before Erik was flying planes all over the world, including the High Arctic, and as far south as you can go to the South Pole. Before Erik took his first trip to Antarctica, he was over at my place and we were thinking about cool ways to mark the occasion of such a cool trip. Erik thought it would be a neat idea to take a loonie to the Pole and bury it there. The Canadian Olympic hockey teams had good luck with a loonie buried under the ice at Salt Lake

City in 2002, so he thought it would be cool. So we pulled out the Dremel and engraved our names on the loonies, and Erik stuck them in his pocket. He tells me they are now buried just outside the South Pole with our names on them, which I think is pretty cool.

One of the character traits I always appreciate about Erik is his giving nature. My wife wanted me to tell the story of how he took her out for dinner at our local Chinese food restaurant when I wasn't home and he was staying at our place on a flight pairing. He really wanted to say thanks for letting him stay with us periodically, and so he took her and Henry out for dinner. And she was pregnant. And he left his wallet at home. So there he is, feeling sheepish walking out of the restaurant with very pregnant Natalia, and the restaurant owner is just scowling at him. Too funny.

I was thinking more about how giving Erik is though and I thought about when my Dad had retired in 2010. I really wanted to take my Dad for a special trip to celebrate his retirement and I was talking to Erik about ideas, he immediately volunteered to take us north for a fishing trip. Erik clearly learnt generosity and hospitality from his dad, since Ron hosted us at his amazing Crystal Lake Lodge for that trip. Well I'm not much of a fisherman, but on this trip, my Dad and I caught the biggest fish I had ever seen (even though my Dad insisted on using 5 lb line so that you could 'feel the fish better'. I have Erik and Ron to thank for a very memorable trip that I will always remember.

As I was trolling through my website looking at funny photos and great stories from the last 23 years like past New Years' parties, shooting off fireworks in BBQs, many great ski trips, and other stories I can't share, I actually thought it was fitting to close with a more recent memory from earlier this month when Earl, Benny, Erik, and I did our annual boys' trip, this time down to Elbow. So, as I said earlier, I'm not much of a fisherman. But Erik is, and Benny is turning himself into one, and Earl now owns fishing gear.

So, Erik got his boat all shined up, and we took his boat and Earl's RV to Elbow for the Canada Day weekend. One day, after waiting out a bit of rain in the RV, and then a tour to the Gardiner Dam, we thought it would be a fun idea to go fishing after about 4pm. It was so important for Erik that we all had a good time fishing that he spent most of the time in the boat trying to position the boat in 'the right spot' to fish, helping us with our lines and tackle, even if it was at the cost of him actually fishing. That's just the kind of guy he is – thinking about others first and wanting to make sure we all had a chance to catch fish. Well, it turns out that Lake Diefenbaker is a LONG lake and we just kept getting further from the marina as we trolled and explored. So it's getting later and later, and after realizing that we were easily 20 km from the marina and it's after 9pm, we decided it would be smart to head back. So, Erik pins the motor and we spend a good hour getting splashed and freezing since 1000 lbs of man doesn't just glide in the water that well. As we're finally in view of the marina, we hear one of the loudest sounds I've ever heard and we all fall off our seats as the low light meant we didn't see the rocks we grounded into. Erik immediately made sure we were all okay and was still somehow in a good mood and laughing about grounding the boat. But, as we got the boat out of the water, I had the opportunity to see Erik get the maddest I've ever seen. You have to realize that we're all totally soaked to the bone at this point, Erik's boat has already run aground, the sun is long down, we're all cold, and Benny and I are futzing about trying to get Erik's boat onto the trailer. It's about this moment that Benny rips Erik's tail gate off the truck. Here's Mad Erik, "Benny, can you PLEASE get out of the way so I can put the boat in?" He later apologized about 50 times for 'getting mad' as he's filleting our fish for us, and just generally being the most good-natured, easy-going person that I know.

Aimee, today you are marrying an adventurous, generous, kind, easy-going man. You're lucky to have him. My Mom would want me to close with, "May all of your troubles be little ones", and I would add "May all your little ones be trouble, like Erik."

Please join me in offering a toast to the groom – To Erik!