

This evening is a very special celebration of a very special lovematch. It began more than fifty years ago, when a couple of sweethearts at Mark Twain High School in Shotesbury, West Virginia ~~first~~ exchanged chewing gum - and <sup>soon</sup> ~~first~~ discovered the joy of each other's company. The world has turned over many times since then. The couple whose first home was a rented room with orange crates for furniture and an open window for a refrigerator has long since become accustomed to the corridors of power and the trappings of state.

But whatever else has changed, they haven't. Their love has remained constant. And it's that love to which we pay tribute this evening. Someone has defined a truly happy marriage as the process by which a woman gives the best years of her life to the man who makes them the best. That's certainly the case with Bob and Erma.

Maybe one reason for their success is their division of labor. Bob runs the Senate, but Erma runs the House - the Byrd house, anyway. She's a one woman system of checks and balances. And she never hesitates to invoke cloture when a senatorial filibuster goes on too long. She is Bob's most constructive critic and most loyal campaigner. On top of everything else, she's on a firstname basis with most of West Virginia.

As for her partner, politics may cast Bob Byrd and I in the role of adversaries. But it has also made us warm and abiding friends. When I refer to him as "my distinguished colleague" I'm not just indulging in senatorial courtesy. The fact is, that over

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the years I've learned a lot from the Majority Leader. No man in Washington knows or loves the Senate as he does. No one has a deeper insight into its ways or a greater appreciation of its history. Bob Byrd is a Senate Man, first, last, and always.

But our purpose this evening is to pay <sup>a personal</sup> tribute to <sup>a couple</sup> ~~Bob and Erma~~ <sup>who just happen to be in the public eye.</sup> ~~as private friends and not public persons.~~ <sup>Bob and Erma,</sup> age does not take its toll. It bestows its blessing. You can see those blessings all around you: in a pair of loved and loving daughters - in a brood of grandchildren <sup>whose behavior is</sup> ~~that are~~ no doubt less unruly ~~in their behavior~~ <sup>than most senators</sup> - and in this circle of friends and admirers <sup>that are</sup> touched by the same magic that first drew you together in the hallways of Mark Twain High.

By most standards, fifty years is a long time. But it must go by awfully fast when shared with one whose <sup>affection</sup> ~~love~~ is constant and whose support is unfailing. Those who love deeply can never grow old. For them, it is always springtime in the hollows and the beauty of wildflowers on a green hillside. ~~For them,~~ <sup>I</sup> it is their wedding morning, with all the years before them, and all of life eager to be explored.

I know I speak for all my colleagues when I congratulate you on a love story that is fifty years young. And while I lack Bob's command of poetry, I am reminded of the lines from Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

"Unless you can muse in a crowd all day  
On the absent face that fixed you,  
Unless you can love as the angels may  
With the breath of heaven betwixt you;

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I'm afraid I lack Bob's command of poetry. But that doesn't keep me from remembering some lines that seem especially written for such an evening as this. They come from Robert Browning.

"Grow old along with me  
The best is yet to be,  
The last of life, for which the first was made  
Our times are in his hand!"

Bob and Erma: the best is yet to be.

Bob Byrd Anniversary Dinner - toast

Bob and I have a lot of things in common. We both like to think of ourselves as self-made men. But of course, as this evening demonstrates, there's no such thing as an entirely self-made human being. <sup>For all</sup> We are the product of other people: <sup>of</sup> their ideas and ideals, their <sup>fall and their</sup> perspectives ~~and experiences~~. Above all, <sup>of</sup> their love.

And so I would <sup>like</sup> all of you to join with me, in raising a toast to a love that has stood the test of time, and a couple whose ~~example~~ mutual affection is timeless. To a golden anniversary - and a pair who are pure gold.

PROGRAM

50th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY DINNER FOR SENATOR & MRS. BYRD

6:30 pm - 7 pm	Cocktails	The Great Hall, The Library of Congress The Palm Court Trio will provide music
7 pm		Senator and Mrs. Byrd will arrive
7:30 pm	PROGRAM	30 Minutes
	Sen. Rockefeller	Welcome/Remarks
	Mrs. Dole	Presents Set of Senate China
	Mrs. Rockefeller	Presents West Virginia Quilts
	Sen. Dole	Remarks
	Doles & Rockefellers	Present Silver Tray
	Senator Byrd	Respond
8 pm	Dinner	Harp and Flute/background music
9 pm	Sen. Dole/ Dessert	Champagne toast & introduce after dinner entertainment which will begin performing immediately during dessert
9:30 pm	Sen. Rockefeller	Thank guests for attending
	Sen. Byrd	Express appreciation for dinner.

HEAD TABLE

Senator Byrd  
Mrs. Byrd  
Speaker Jim Wright  
Mrs. Dole  
Senator Rockefeller  
Mrs. Wright  
Senator Dole  
Mrs. Rockefeller