

## 40<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary Speech

\*Note: Yellow highlight is said by Ed

Our lives together started around Christmas 1984. Late one night I went out to a nightclub in Connecticut. I got a cocktail and noticed Ed hanging out alone across the bar. Time passed and since neither one of us made a move, Ed decided he was leaving. Ed headed for the door and I made a bold decision to go and talk to him. We talked for a few minutes and I found out that Ed's car was being repaired and he was waiting for a ride home from his friend, who was the nightclub bartender. Ed had set up the perfect pickup line. I offered to give him a ride home and later we exchanged phone numbers.

A few days went by and I decided to call Ed. I asked him if he would like to go out for something to eat. He quickly said yes and then I asked him what he wanted to eat. He said, "**I really have a craving for nachos**". Connecticut is not well known for Mexican food but I told Ed that I knew a restaurant that had really good nachos. We chose a date and I drove 20 miles to pick Ed up and then drove another 30 miles to the Mexican restaurant. While we were eating the nachos, I asked Ed how they compared to nachos he had eaten elsewhere and Ed replies "**I've never had nachos before**". I should have known at that point what our future would be like.

We dated for a few months and then Ed dropped a bomb. He said he had to leave Connecticut and move to Florida for a while because his mother had just gone through a difficult divorce and she was struggling and he needed to help get her back on her feet. So, in early 1985 Ed moves to Florida and for about the next nine months we communicated by phone (and for those that remember, long distance rates applied) and chatted by computer. During the year I made several trips to Florida to visit Ed and in December 1985 after Ed's mother was settled in her new life, I called Ed one evening and told him I was coming to Florida on January 15<sup>th</sup>. I told him that I had bought a one-way airline ticket and that he needed to load up a uHaul with all his belongings because the next day January 16<sup>th</sup> we would be driving his car and the uHaul back to Connecticut. I was hoping that this was going to be the start of our lives together. Ed didn't say anything so I told him to think about it. We never talked about it again and when I arrived in Florida lo and behold the uHaul was packed and the trailer hitch was attached to his car, Ed was

ready to leave. The next morning we left for Connecticut. That is how January 16<sup>th</sup> became our first Anniversary date.

Life is great. During the next eight years we had a great time. We bought a boat in 1987, with two staterooms and lived on it from April until October. We took many boat trips to places like Martha's Vineyard, Provincetown, the Hamptons, Newport, Rhode Island, Mystic Seaport and many marinas along the northeast coast. We often took the boat out to dinner at Dock 'n Dine restaurants. It was a great way to get fresh seafood.

Then in 1994, my job relocated to DC, so I started commuting 5 days a week from Connecticut. One weekend in early 1997, Ron and Sue, two of our boating friends in Connecticut invited us to dinner. After dinner, while eating dessert, Sue said that she never understood why we hadn't moved to DC. I said Ed wouldn't move because he had completely redone our house, replaced the siding, replaced the roof with iridescent blue shingles, added a front porch, had the back porch replaced, and landscaped the yard. Ed chimed in and said, that's wrong, the real reason we don't move is because Larry has lived his whole life in this small town and knows everyone and wouldn't permanently move.

Obviously, Ed and I had never talked about moving because we were so sure the other didn't want to move. We were shocked at the reasoning of each other and immediately realized that we both really wanted to move. So, right in the middle of dessert we said to Ron and Sue that we needed to go home and pack. We got up from the table, went home, and the next day we put the house up for sale. We then made several house hunting trips to DC and finally had a house built in Old Town, Alexandria, VA. We moved into the house ten months later, in December 1997.

Life in the DC area is going great. I thought there would be no more surprises. Well, two years later in 1999, on a Saturday morning, Ed wakes up and says to a groggy me **"I am going to convert"**. Not knowing what he was talking about I said, "convert to WHAT?". Ed says **"I am going to become a Jew"**. To my surprise, Ed embarks on a two-year journey to becoming a Jew.

Then in 2000, Vermont passes a same sex Civil Union law. In January 2001 we travel to Vermont and have a Civil Union ceremony on January 16<sup>th</sup> preserving our

original anniversary date. This was our first big step in creating a recognized legal bond. The following day we leave for a honeymoon in New Orleans.

In the spring of 2001, after two years of rigorous Jewish studies Ed appears before a panel of three rabbis who assess Ed's sincerity, commitment and readiness to live a Jewish lifestyle. The panel approved Ed's readiness for conversion. Immediately following their approval Ed is immersed in a ritual bath symbolizing spiritual cleansing and rebirth. After several blessings Ed becomes a Jew.

Over the previous few years Ed and I travelled to many destinations around the world with an interest in finding a future place to retire. We really agreed on any of the places we visited so we decided to take a break from looking.

At the end of 2001 my aunt Nettie had decided to have a Bat Mitzvah. This event celebrates religious Jewish maturity and when Nettie was of age to have a Bat Mitzvah, at 13, it was only available to teenage males, but in modern times it was now available to all Jews. Nettie very much wanted to complete this Jewish lifecycle event and decided to have a Bat Mitzvah. Nettie sent us an invitation in the late summer of 2001.

When we received the invitation, we decided to combine her event with a two-week vacation in Pasadena. After a week in Pasadena and much discussion we decided to go to Palm Springs for the second week of our vacation. When we arrived in Palm Springs and totally unplanned we immediately realized this was the perfect place to retire.

The owner of the B&B where we were staying introduced us to Ron, a realtor, just a couple of days before we left Palm Springs. We told Ron that we might be interested in moving to Palm Springs but we weren't ready to buy a house since we needed some time to become more familiar with Palm Springs and also the housing market was over-priced. That didn't stop him from emailing us listings, almost daily. Also, during that first visit Ron took us out for cocktails and introduced us to some of his friends who also have become our friends and are here with us today. The excitement grew and we started coming to Palm Springs at least a couple of times a year looking for the right house. Each trip required Ron to show us at least a dozen houses and each time we left Palm Springs we would return home to rest from the Ron trip.

Things go smoothly for the next few years, so I think all the surprises are over, well think again.

Ed, once again, wakes up on a Saturday morning in 2009 and says to a groggy me, **"I am going to change my name"**. Not knowing what he was talking about I said, "change your name to WHAT?". Ed says **"I want us to have the same last name"**. The next week Ed sees a lawyer and shortly thereafter, Edward Popowski becomes Edward Sogolow.

Things are calm and in 2010, we get a call from Ron and he says he has found the perfect house. He reminds us that it was one of the first houses we looked at eight years earlier, that we had liked but it was over-priced. He said the current owners were getting divorced and had to sell the house. Ed and I couldn't exactly remember what the house looked like, since over the years Ron had probably showed us half the houses in Palm Springs. We finally recognized the house and the location from the listing. Ron said, like any realtor, this house is going to sell quickly and you need to act soon. So, we flew to Palm Springs the next day and made a low offer for the house with a guarantee to close in thirty days or less. The sellers said they would agree to our price and terms under one condition. They asked us to put a large non-refundable deposit into escrow. Ron was against the non-refundable deposit idea, but Ed and I did it anyway and we closed on the house three weeks later.

Time marches on. We get settled in our new house and we started our six-year renovation and restoration project.

Now it is 2013, and Ed decides he wants to have a traditional Bar Mitzvah in 2014, thirteen years after becoming a Jew. So, Ed talks to Rabbi Sally and she agrees to teach him to read Hebrew and assist him in learning the music necessary to lead the Bar Mitzvah Service and read the torah.

In June 2013, California reverses the Proposition 13 ban on gay marriage. We immediately decide to have a big Jewish wedding in May 2014 and we started planning.

An untold story, only known by one other person in this room, will now unfold. In November 2013, 6 months before our wedding, we met with the CPA who told us if we got married before the end of the year we would reduce a large tax exposure

caused by my retirement earlier that year. So, we had a very small private wedding ceremony on November 29, 2013, and told no one. Now we have November 29<sup>th</sup> as a second anniversary date. We, however, had to disclose our civil marriage to Rabbi Sally, so she could perform our Jewish wedding in 2014.

Now we have two big events to plan for in 2014, a Bar Mitzvah and a wedding.

In March 2014, Ed has his Bar Mitzvah after a lot of hard work. Not only did Ed perform all the ritual tasks of a Bar Mitzvah, but he also read from the Torah, which is a difficult task since the Torah has only consonants and no vowels.

On May 17, 2014, we have our Jewish wedding ceremony officiated by Rabbi Sally. The wedding and reception was held at Spencer's restaurant and everything went as planned except for the weather. That afternoon the temperature was 115 degrees and the ceremony was held outside. We got married at sundown and now May 17<sup>th</sup> becomes our third anniversary date.

Then we had two honeymoons to celebrate our wedding.

- The first honeymoon was a vacation at The Resort at Pelican Hill, a five-star Luxury Resort in Newport Beach, California. It was given to us as a wedding gift from our local friends. We stayed in a villa that was larger than our current house and overlooked the Pacific Ocean. The villa had a dedicated 24-hour butler, 24-hour car service and anything else we might want. We lived like the rich and famous. It was a wonderful gift.
- Our second honeymoon was a trip to Israel which almost didn't happen. We got to the airport and were standing in line to check in with El Al, the Israeli airline, and an Israeli security woman approached us. She took our passports and airline tickets and asked us how we knew each other. I said we were recently married. She said when did you get married? I gave her a date in May and Ed chimed in and said I was wrong and he gave her a different date. So, picture this, we were just married and already we were arguing over the anniversary date. I finally said to the security woman, I can solve this. "We got married on the Jewish date 18<sup>th</sup> of Iyar 5774 on the celebration of the Jewish holiday Lag B'omer, end of story". The security woman looked at Ed, handed back our passports and tickets and said,

**“move on, you ARE married!”** By the way, for the record, Ed had the correct secular date of May 17<sup>th</sup>.

In 2015, I had some significant health issues which caused us to not do much of anything for the next couple of years. It was a difficult time for both of us but I successfully recovered by late 2015.

No significant events happened during the next few years.

In 2019, we take a vacation to South Dakota not knowing that it was going to be our last vacation for a while because Covid arrived in early 2020 and the world stopped until late 2021. During COVID we remodeled three bathrooms ourselves, did some needed yard work and got to better know our fairly new neighbors, Matthew and Jeanne-Pierre who are here today.

In 2023 and 2024 we started travelling again. We decided to see more of the west coast and took quite a few vacations. We travelled part of the California coast visiting the cities of Santa Barbara, Escondido, San Juan Capistrano. We also visited friends in Seattle, attended my Aunt Nettie's 99<sup>th</sup> birthday party in Pasadena, and went to the Festival of Lights in Temecula. We also hiked quite a bit in Yosemite, Sequoia, Yellowstone, and Armstrong State Park. And what would vacationing be like without wine tasting so we went to NAPA, Sonoma, Santa Rosa, Russian River, and Temecula. We found that local vacationing was less stressful and still very fulfilling.

Well, we did a lot of hiking during those two years, and it wore us down, literally. Both of us ended up needing knee replacements and in the summer of 2025 I had my right knee replaced and shortly thereafter Ed had his left knee replaced. After surgery and several months of physical therapy we are fully mobile again.

Later in 2025 Ed and I realized that our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was coming up so we decided to host a luncheon to allow all of you to share in our story and Anniversary.

And here we are today. This story is to be continued...

You have heard the story of our 40 years together and now it is your turn to speak up with any stories, anecdotes or questions. Who would like to go first?