

*My great grandfather, Mike Rayens, used to say, "Don't come to my funeral and say how much you liked me when I was alive. Let's celebrate together now, life and living, friends and family. Do it now." I inherited my conviction about celebrations from him, I guess. I love birthdays as an opportunity to say "I love you" NOW. And as Brendan sometimes says, significant birthdays are special opportunities not to be missed. So here we are. The Bible says, "Shouts of joy and victory resound from the tents of the righteous of the Lord." May the angels hear shouts of joy from this place tonight.*

*I met you half our lives ago. In fact I hosted your thirtieth birthday party, so it's a wonderful thing for me to prepare your sixtieth. Of course nothing and nobody is the same as that winter night in Colorado, that quiet dinner party for adult friends. Tonight you sit here by the sea surrounded by your heritage, your treasure on the earth. Tonight I can say I know you and I can also say I am still getting to know you. And I can say it's still an adventure with you, a crazy wild delightful surprising adventure. And I am certain the days ahead will be like the last thirty years, surprising!*

*I have chose the word "surprise" to express the pleasure of living with you and knowing you and going through things with you and sharing my life with you. I cannot remember what my expectations were when I said yes" to marrying you. Sometimes I search my memories and the result is always the same. Because it was a GOD-THING I had no specific expectations. I only knew to follow the path my Father had opened up before me, in peace and security and wonder. The best thing about our life together has been SURPRISE.*

*The first surprise came on our honeymoon in Hawaii when we were walking underneath some palm branches and you flicked water all over me by swishing the branches. I didn't know you would be playful. That little moment has stuck in my mind all these years as the first surprise. Not long after came the surprise discovery when we travelled to Idaho and met all your family ...that I got the pick of the litter! I was so surprised to find that you couldn't ice skate, that you cry for every child that suffers, that you can't eat a whole banana, that you kept your papers in a suitcase! And I was filled with wonder to see you calmly interviewed on live tv, to watch the development of a preacher right before my eyes, not to mention a dad and a grandfather, and a revived biker!*

*You are THE MOST non-malignant person I know. I have only ever known you to dislike one person...poor old Paul Douglas. The biggest surprise of our life together is that you have enemies! I ponder with amazement that anyone, given the choice between you and me would choose you to dislike.*

*You are THE MOST patient person I know. How many pairs of shoes have I bought that later hurt my feet? And now my motorcycle helmet!*

*You are THE MOST steadfast person I know. Even Don Crum said he would have quit over John Hooper.*

*You are THE MOST compromising person I know. How many movies have you sat through with me in thirty years?*

*You are THE MOST generous person I know. You truly have laid down every possession, every ambition, every dream, every right...for the kingdom of God, for me and our children. The day that takes the cake...when you were speaking to the church at Ascot during the Bible College years, and you made the statement, "If I go broke, I will go broke giving to my children." And on John's 18th birthday when we had pretty much nothing, you gave him your only gold coin that I gave you for Christmas in Paris. The runner-up day, last year, was on the train going over to Bruges for a night to celebrate our anniversary when you revealed to me that we were going to stop off at Antwerp to buy me a diamond ring...you said it's not about price. Pick whatever you want. " Coming from the man who was uncomfortable at setting out large glasses of orange juice at breakfast, this was a shocking surprise!*

*You are THE MOST willing to change person I have ever encountered. You have made a study of me. You have learned what I like and made it your most important project to learn and use the keys to my happiness. So here we are in 2007 going to English Country Dancing.*

*You are THE MOST spiritually balanced person I know. You know when to PRAY and you know when to PLAY.*

*You are my TEACHER, my PASTOR and my MENTOR. I can trust you with every secret of my heart. I can trust you with the knowledge of my struggles, my unfinished sanctification, even my fears. You have never cornered me, but you do not let me go on unchallenged in my weaknesses.*

*I rejoice in key decisions that you have made:*