

## **SPENCER AND SHEILA'S 25<sup>th</sup> WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

### ***Symbology of the weaving***

The fabric that Spencer and Sheila will be walking under was woven by their friend, Bonnie Tarses, and was used in their wedding, 25 years ago. There are three weavings, one that represents Spencer's astrological chart and another that represents Sheila's. The third was crafted from a composite of their joint chart. What is most significant to Spencer and Sheila about the weavings is that – all those years ago – their composite chart revealed that community would play a crucial role in their life together. And so it has been - their life and this event today are testament to how accurate that prediction was.

*I live my life in widening circles*

*that reach out across the world.*

*I may not complete this last one but I give myself to it.*

*I circle around God, around the primordial tower.*

*I've been circling for thousands of years and*

*I still don't know if I'm a falcon, a storm or a great song?*

*(Rilke, translated by Joanna Macy)*

### **Welcome**

Hello everyone.....My name is Dianne, and on behalf of Spencer, Sheila and myself, I would like to welcome you to this part of today's celebration. There are people here today who represent many aspects of the community that Spencer and Sheila have built around them. There are family and friends here; people from EarthSave are here; riders from the Evergreen tandem club; people from their Buddhist Sangha are here; and the newest addition to their life, the co-housing community affectionately known as CHUC. Spencer and Sheila have told me that without all of your support – not just today but during the last 25 years - this celebration would not have been possible. You are all part of the bedrock upon which they – and their marriage - stand. And as their community, we are here today not only to support them as they renew their vows of love and commitment to each other but also to bear witness as they step into the 3<sup>rd</sup> act of their life.

## Address

What is the urge, the impulse, the idea that calls two people to move towards each other; despite vulnerability, to each move from their separate worlds towards creating another world in tandem; a world, that each hopes, will find a central axis around which to move?

For Spencer and Sheila, the central axis was not only their love of each other but their shared love of the earth. From the beginning of their relationship, their vision was to reach for greater and greater levels of congruence with their environmental ethics and to live – what I would call – a deep ecology.

So, it was a natural first step that in 1989, they met John Robbins, read his book, *Diet for a New America*, and without hesitation, became vegan. They made this change not for themselves and their own health alone but for the environment; understanding – perhaps for the first time – how all of life is interconnected.

Then, in 1995, they were introduced to Vipassana meditation and the teachings of the Buddha. Spencer and Sheila immediately resonated with these teachings, feeling that they carried the same message of interconnection they were already living only at a deeper level. They began a daily meditation practice, spent time each year in silent meditation retreats and became part of the Buddhist community here in Seattle. In their blog posts from this summer, Spencer said that the wind can be a powerful agent of change, carving rocks into spectacular formations. From my vantage point as their friend, I have seen their commitment to Buddhism work on them much like the wind works on a landscape. Each of them has been worn down and carved in certain ways, layers have been revealed that were just beneath the surface. I have witnessed a deepening kindness and compassion in both of them; an ability to be present to whatever arises; and a willingness to experience the newness of each day. I have seen Sheila soften and open like the petals of a rose and watched Spencer grow in wisdom and in the ability to articulate what he knows. 25 years ago, these features were there in each of them but, as yet, unrevealed.

And now, as they enter this 3<sup>rd</sup> act of their life together, the circle is widening and deepening once again as they step into a co-housing community and take up their place as the elders in that group. Perhaps, this is the largest step they have yet to take – the one that all else has prepared them for; a step that requires a complete letting go of the primary structure of their life together; a letting go of the autonomy of living alone that most of us take for granted and a stepping into a life in which they will not only share meals but also share the literal ups and downs of daily living. This is the truest nature of *Sangha*, for in Sanskrit, the word *Sangha* literally means community.

In twenty-five years of marriage, they have done all of this one step at a time, talking their way through each change, each challenge, each turn, much as they did this summer as they navigated 4444 miles of headwinds, slow-motion tumbles, thunder, lightning and 9,000 foot gains. There have been surprises along the way much like the antelope and sand-hill cranes they encountered in Wyoming. But their

marriage has made it evident that life is easier, far more rewarding and certainly more fun when we work in tandem with someone we love.

*And so, Spencer and Sheila, as you stand on this next threshold of your life together, are you ready to renew your vows of love to each other?*

### **Vows**

Spencer, I will continue to love, respect and nurture your body, your mind and your spirit as we enter this third act of our lives. I promise to cherish and encourage our fulfillment as individuals and members of the community through all the changes that this phase of life will bring.

Sheila, I again promise to love you, to keep talking and listening to you (even when it's a challenge), to stay in this moment just as it is, to continue growing and learning about myself, yourself, the world and all that is. While we would like this to last forever, every night we remind ourselves of the truth of impermanence by singing this Buddhist chant to each other....(chant together in Pali then in English).

### **Blessing**

Spencer and Sheila, you have spoken again your vows of love to each other.

As you enter this 3<sup>rd</sup> act of your life together, may you give yourselves to it completely.

May you live it with eyes and hands and hearts wide open.

May you be blessed with tailwinds and wide-open skies?

May you come to know if you are a falcon, a storm or a great song?

### **Pronouncement**

Spencer and Sheila, it is with great love and affection that I reaffirm you as partners in this grand journey of life.