POLICE MEMORIAL SERVICE

SPEECH FOR

MARK CASTEEL

Hello everyone. I would like to thank all of you for being here today at this year’s Police Memorial Service. **(If there is anyone in particular you want to acknowledge, mention him or her here**). I want to welcome our distinguished guests including \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. We are particularly privileged to have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with us today and I wouldalso liketo extend a special hello and acknowledgement to the families of Marshal Clapp and Marshal Oaks. (**Name the family members present**). \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This week we stand with the rest of the country as we honor the lives, legacies, and dedication of these fine officers along with other members of police forces who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Our nation’s police stand guard over communities and cities throughout the country. They are committed to their service twenty-four hours a day and every moment of those hours they are poised to lay down their lives for others. We lost two of our own many years ago, and as they selflessly served us, we continue to hold them and their families in our thoughts, prayers and memories.

To paraphrase words expressed about the purpose of memorials, it has been said that these occasions “provide us with a focal point for our remembrance. We cannot bring the dead back to life, but we can recall their contributions to our communities and ensure they are not forgotten. We can undertake in our lives to do what they were prevented from doing in theirs.” Richard Mark Clapp and Leslie Dale Oaks were two fine men and exemplary police officers. Each man placed the well being of others before their own safety and the level of risk each one was willing to take demonstrated their commitment and dedication. Just ask Aaron Clapp who was inspired to be by his father’s side in the line of duty. The Oaks family is also just as proud of Marshal Leslie Oaks today and their devotion to his memory has not wavered in the thirty-two years since the accident that took his life back in 1982. That kind of dedication reminds us every day just how unique these officers were.

Nothing we do will bring these men back to us, but as we remember their lives and legacies, they live on. They live on in the family legends and stories that friends will tell and now that new generations of Clapps and Oaks and their children are here to inherit their fine qualities, we come together and we acknowledge how thankful we are that we had such fine men in our midst; men who set the bar for others to raise. Today we remember that nothing can be taken for granted. Nothing is guaranteed for tomorrow. Today we are reminded to appreciate what we have and the people who work tirelessly to protect us.

In honor of those we lost, and as an expression of just how unique Marshal Clapp and Marshal Oaks both were, we are officially retiring the unit numbers used by each officer.

To the family of Marshall Richard Mark Clapp, number 54-26 is now officially retired. To the family of Marshal Leslie Dale Oaks, number 54-24 is now officially retired. Consider this Montgomery County’s way of letting you know what you already knew-your loved ones are irreplaceable.

According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, throughout the country, over the past ten years, more than 1500 law enforcement officers have died in the line of duty. There were one hundred deaths in 2013, or about one death every 58 hours. Every hour of every day it is incumbent upon each one of us to remember how precious life really is. I want to thank each one of you for being here and I want to give special thanks to those who protect and defend us selflessly, devotedly and unconditionally. Thank you all.