ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

FOR

BILL BRYAN

Wow!!! That was quite an introduction!! I’d like to thank you Joe Jennum, and your team for doing such a thorough and careful job in pulling together all of the background information. Let’s face it, after fifty years, more than a few memories may have “gotten locked I the attic” (**If you want, point to your head and wait for the laugh**). The points and highlights you’ve gathered spark some terrific memories…. (**If you want you can say**) … But I promise to focus on the ones we can discuss in mixed company!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Back then; it was a thrill to feel so connected and to be on a winning team. Tonight, as I listen to that recap of what those two seasons were like, I am filled with gratitude and pride. It is such a gift to be the recipient of acknowledgement and it is even a greater blessing to receive it at a time when, with distance and perspective, we can really appreciate it. It’s wonderful to be a champion. It’s **SUPER** to be recognized… and it’s **SUBLIME** to be here tonight to really re-call… and I mean really bring back to life, the magic of those two terrific seasons. I want to thank the Mount San Antonio Hall of Fame Committee for considering us and bestowing this honor upon us. Receiving this award is a genuine testament to the power of commitment, teamwork, sportsmanship, dedication and appreciation. (**If you want to make a joke you can** **say**) and on behalf of my teammates, we want you to know we unanimously agree that you made a great choice!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

Yogi Berra said, “It’s like déjà-vu all over again!” I have to say that it’s a pleasure for me to have the honor of stepping back in time and saying a few words on behalf of our teams and it’s a privilege to “represent” – to be the voice for all of us-both the outstanding individuals who are here with us tonight and those who could not be here. I would like to extend a very special thanks to Roger Freed’s wife, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Roger passed away in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but the contribution he made to the Mounties was considerable and his impact lives on today.

Back in ’64 and ’65 one of the great lessons we all learned, and one of the secrets to our success was that although we knew we had that thing or two to learn, we also were very aware that we were all equals united in a common goal. And even though we were “just a bunch of guys from Southern California,” somehow we innately knew our chemistry was unique and this group was special. We learned priceless lessons that have lasted a lifetime. We learned how to communicate with each other. We learned how to interact with respect for our teammates. And no matter the level of accomplishment or skill…. and keep in mind we did have some very gifted teammates who even went on to the majors, **everyone** was on the same level. When asked about those seasons, Joe Flammini recalled, “1964 to me was a learning experience about ‘WINNING.’ After the first third of the season I think we as a team began to realize how good we really were…” When Joe Keogh recalled his entry to the team in the second winning season, his consideration for his teammates resonates as strongly today as it did back then. He said, “My only thought re: that year was that I knew the team was already good and a champion in 1964 so how would I fit into the group. Fortunately I either played with or against most everyone on the roster throughout HS & Legion baseball so I knew I could contribute on the field.” It was consideration and thoughtfulness like that which contributed to our success. Life lessons as timely today as they were back then.

We also had the benefit of training and performing under the watchful eye of two great men, both with very different styles, and it was a real gift to be coached by both. Although one was fairly laid back with a seasoned baseball mind, experience and intuition, the other focused more on conditioning and situational opportunities that can occur in the course of the game and how to handle them. Hitting philosophies differed as well, but in the end, we all benefited. The first year we had overpowering pitching and good hitting. The second year we had good pitching and more hitting and power, and each year each coach worked their “magic” to bring out the best in us individually and as a team. We may have been kids, but we were given the chance, through baseball, to keep an open mind, learn how to focus and most of all, remember to believe in ourselves and our abilities. Yogi Berra may have also said, “Baseball is ninety percent mental. The other half is physical.” (**Wait for the laugh**) Yogi was a real legend in the world of baseball-player, coach, manager… but I have to say that Coaches Arambide and Squire did just fine with us!! Both men led with compassion and inspired us to do our best. They both knew how to elicit the required result and they knew how to keep us focused with our minds in the game. In this day and age where I think most if not all of us have evolved into a society of distracted citizens, back then we all had the chance to focus on the goal and win. There’s something to be said for that purity of purpose.

Another great coach, albeit in football, Vince Lombardi, had this to say about teamwork. “Individual commitment to a group effort-that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.” Boy, were we all so lucky to have been in the right place at the right time, ready to work, willing to learn, able to win. We approached the team and each season with the simple intention of playing at the best of our capabilities. We didn’t plan on being the state champions but I have to say, there is something to be said for the adrenalin rush that comes with a win… or two… or more. That feeling becomes contagious and confidence… not cockiness… begins to come forth. There is nothing like the feeling one gets when he or she believes in him- or herself. And even though I mentioned earlier that as players we had different backgrounds and levels of skill, ranging from average to exceptional, we were a group of young men who came together over the course of two years who gained skills, confidence and a deep appreciation of what it means to be part of a team-to fit in, to produce a win and to succeed. And no matter how “wise” or “mature” I grow, nothing will replace the joy of being a Mountie for those two seasons.

There were many memorable plays we can review like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , but I’d like to leave you with some personal observations. We tend to not recognize it at the time but there are a number of life lessons that serve us well later on as we grow older. As a team we all wanted to reach as far as we could and we all nurtured aspirations of playing at higher levels. Even though that did not happen for most of us, the experience taught me things that eventually helped my career--- teamwork and respect for others taught me how to provide effective leadership as a manager and executive throughout my professional career. By learning to conquer difficult challenges, by practicing to maintain poise in tough situations, by initiating actions for what needed to be done through effective communication, we transformed ourselves from eager kids that wanted to play ball to champions who hopefully, inspire by spreading the stories of the life lessons we learned.

There’s a line in the poem “Ulysses” by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and it states, “I am part of all that I have met.” Or, as Daryl, (Buck) Tatum from the ’64 team said, “Back to back championships, especially in California Is unheard of… It was an honor and a pleasure to enjoy such success with my teammates.” I am so proud to have been a part of this experience and I am even more proud to share this honor with my team. Fifty years later, and we’re **stil**l making headlines!! (**Wait for the laugh**) What a thrill!! Thank you all!