**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SPEECH**

**FOR**

**BRIAN YAROLEM**

Good evening everyone! I would like to thank \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for the generous invitation to speak to all of you tonight I want you to know that through my service, I have found that I will always rise to the chance to acknowledge all of you and the fine work being done by the Marine Corps League. Occasions like this one serve us on so many levels. Tonight we have an opportunity to recognize one another and the fine work being done by the League. Different, and in this case, festive settings invite new perspectives. And tonight.... while we socialize and celebrate, if we pay just a bit of attention to the crowd and the cause, we also can feel that the atmosphere is filled with a sense of acknowledgement and gratitude. This year the United States Marine Corps celebrates its 242nd birthday. TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY TWO YEARS of **history**. TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY TWO YEARS of **legacy**. TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY TWO YEARS of **unwavering dedication** to our country, our comrades, our fellow citizens, and to each other.

I am sure I speak for most... and hopefully **all** of us when I say that serving in the United States Marine Corps has been one of the great accomplishments in my life. And although too many of us have had to endure impossible and unimaginable situations, we took a pledge of allegiance and our commitment was, is, and always will be, unflinching and non-negotiable. And while the last thing on a Marine's mind when literally **in the trenches** is.... "**MAN**, I could sure use a 'Thank you' right about now," ..... of course the first thing being.... "**HOW THE HECK DID I WIND UP HERE??**" (**Say this with some animation and wait for the laugh**), knowing that family, friends, community, and most importantly, the Marine Corps League are there to provide encouragement, solace, and a greatly needed and appreciated helping hand, provides the literal and figurative lifeline that is so needed.

Ever since the dawn of civilization, as long as more than one person has been alive, there has been potential for conflict, engagement, and defense of personal rights, property, and liberty. Although counterproductive forces loom throughout our lives, it is through fostering a sense of community, appreciation, and gratitude that we can sustain ourselves and protect and defend our precious way of life.

"**TELL IT TO THE MARINES!**" .... a classic quote if ever there was one... tonight there are a few things I'd like to tell all of you... I want to tell you how much it means to me to have been (**Do you prefer to say "Be?"**) a Marine. I want to express my gratitude to this League and to let you know that every single thing you do in support of our troops allows our men and women to know that their service, allegiance and sacrifices **matter**. I want to tell you that no matter the current conditions that conspire to divide us, we are all the same. We are proud Americans working together to honor our country and the principles and freedoms built and sustained over two hundred and forty two years... and **beyond**. Ronald Reagan once said, "Some people wonder all their lives if they've made a difference. The Marines don't have that problem." I am here to tell you.... **neither do any of you**.

A lot has evolved over the past two hundred and forty two years and the evolution of the US Marine Corps has been extraordinary as well. On November 10, 1775, a resolution to form the Continental Marines was approved by the Continental Congress for the purpose of defending and safeguarding the rights and freedoms of a new nation as it was in its formative stages fighting for independence. There was no looking back after that. Over the course of our country's history, conditions may have changed, lifestyles may have evolved, threats have arisen and opportunities have been created, but one thing that has not changed is the constant allegiance and sense of brotherhood and community demonstrated by the Marines and in turn the Marine Corps League. Every era and every generation faces its own unique set of details and challenges.... but inherent in the eternal Marine Corps spirit, each challenge becomes an **opportunity**... and each opportunity offers the chance to express gratitude, appreciation and support. Sometimes.... many times... that sounds easier than it actually is. And though the wonderful work accomplished by this League may seem to go unnoticed or unrecognized, rest assured that the great work you do for the communities of Greeley, CO and Weld County is valued, honored, and tremendously appreciated.

We are living in an era of rapid change and great divisiveness. Sometimes it seems that the freedoms our ancestors so passionately fought for are desperately at risk. We witness incidents of disrespect that threaten our hard fought values and rights. We see a dilution of regard for traditions that have taken over two centuries to build and we all seem to be caught in an endless spiral of working harder just to tread water .... just to survive. Sometimes it feels as though we lose sight of who we are as **Americans**, the value of the lives we've built, the cherished meaning behind the symbols and heroic gestures we revere, and the principles established so that we might continue to follow the mission of, "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Through the outreach of this League, we have established a common ground.... a community to show honor and respect, and a chance to celebrate... not just to come to a wonderful ball such as this, but to roll up our sleeves together, as a **United** force, and channel our energies in acknowledgement of those brave enough to place themselves on the front lines for US. For those of us that have endured the worst possible conditions and crises, a sense of isolation can take hold. The thought of coming back to "normal" life and yet still have to deal with more negativity can be daunting. Anything and everything accomplished by this League offers a means to resolution and connection. For those of you that may not be able to relate... congratulations. For those of you that understand what I am saying... we're here.... you're not alone. You're **home**.

A marine's work is never done.... and neither is the work of the marine's family, friends, or community. I don't know if you've heard this, but if you haven't, you'll hear it now... and you'll keep it with you... "On the seventh day God rested- and Marines filled sandbags." (**Do you want to say this in such a way as to get a laugh?**) ... Our work... YOUR work.... is NEVER done.... thank goodness!! And for that we are so grateful.

There is a rare Marine Corps credo that teaches us, "To catch us you have to be fast. To find us you have to be smart. To beat us, you have to be **kidding**." I will now take that one step further... to serve and support us, you have to be **extraordinary**.

It's been said, "Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow." For me, being here with you, tonight is about acknowledgement and gratitude... for all of the reasons in that quote. Gratitude has seen me through hell, brought me home, done it's best to help heal wounds in all its forms, and it teaches our children to respect and honor our cause. (**Do you want to acknowledge your family? You can do that here**) I want to express my love and gratitude to my family and friends that have supported me throughout my tenure of service to our great nation. I want to acknowledge all of you for your dedication to our country and our Servicemen. And I want to truly thank all of you for the opportunity to serve this country, our **UNITED** home.... one that I know we all love **equally**. We must never lose sight of that. Thank you!