**RETIREMENT SPEECH**

**FOR**

**BRIEN BLAKELY**

Hello everyone... today is a special day for many of you here... you’ve reached a milestone that so many of us only aspire to achieve.... or to paraphrase the sentiments of someone who’s done such a great job of retiring, we can’t even find him in Google... let’s call him **Anonymous**... “I’m not just retiring from the work force... I’m retiring from my stress, from my commute, from my alarm clock, and from my (**Name a well known fast food snack or quick meal that police officers in the area are known to usually eat quickly while on patrol**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. (**Wait for the laugh**).... Okay, that may be a little harsh.... retirement really is a beginning of a great new phase of life, filled with time for all of the opportunities and adventures you’ve spent a lifetime imagining... so let’s not abandon **EVERYTHING**... and **especially** the (**Name the fast food again and wait for the laugh**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ so fast!!!!

Over the past \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years of my professional career, I have been privileged to learn about and work with, so many of you, now newly retired police officers. While the technical term for the stories I’ve researched and shared fall under the umbrella of “human interest,” it is thanks to the courage, humanity, and valor of each one of you that **MY** interest and passion has been sparked while telling the stories of people who **REALLY** inspire.

There have been many times that I’ve been asked to shadow one of your colleagues or introduce a piece on a unique event, a generous act, or gestures that provoke lasting good will throughout the communities you have so bravely and selflessly served. While it’s no secret that times are challenging for all of us, especially police officers, it is probably the kindest and most enduring gesture when a member of the police force does something to unite and engage people.... and especially young folks.... I will never forget one sunny day a few years ago, hearing the sound of the ice cream truck... only it wasn’t Mr. Softee... it was two officers with a clever sound system handing out ice pops and ice cream on a hot day.... doing their part for “Popsicle Patrol.” throughout our neighborhoods. It is through the generosity and creativity of police officers that we realize how rewarding it is to “**break the ice**” with our neighbors.... yes folks, that line was so good I thought I’d use it again!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

When you signed up to wear the uniform of your community’s law enforcement agencies, you did so out of the love of your family, your sense of justice, and your commitment to keeping people safe and able to live their lives without fear or worry... it has been your mandate to absorb that challenge... and now you’ve made it!!!! You’ve reached the **finish line**... of this phase of your life. You’ve shown your compassion and dedication and professionalism throughout your entire career. You’ve been on top of issues, present when necessary, and willing to protect and defend for what probably amounts to most of your lives. You’ve been conditioned to be hyper aware. You’ve been trained to read the signs and signals that warn you of unusual activity or danger. You've managed to keep your wits about you in the most stressful of times, and you’ve placed yourselves in harm’s way and survived with valor and grace. If anyone has earned the title of “**well deserving retiree**,” it’s each one of you that are being honored here tonight. Coach Vince Lombardi said, “The harder you work, the harder it is to surrender.” You’ve given your all, twenty four/seven to your careers and now it’s time for you to “surrender...” to live the life you’ve been thinking of... anticipating... wondering about... all these years.

You have served honorably and as you followed in the footsteps of those that inspired and mentored you, so have you left a trail upon which others will gauge their effectiveness as they attempt to fill your very able shoes. I am privileged to have the platform I have in my career. I get to meet people from all walks of life with endless talents and compelling stories, and so many of these stories tie back to the compassion and connection so enthusiastically fostered by our law enforcement agents. Thanks to the prevalence of social media, we are able to remember and share... not just the shocking difficult moments that may tend to “scare us straight...” we also can bear witness to the... thankfully... innumerable acts of kindness, generosity, involvement, and respect that really act to hold our communities together. The stories we broadcast and the posts we share provide a chronicle of the goodness of our neighbors.... and especially our police officers, and serve as a valuable tool in remembering and referencing the positive gestures we all appreciate so much.

(**If appropriate, please mention two or three of the retiring officers that you’ve worked with and give a sentence or two about how their actions impacted you**). Over the years, through my reporting, I have had the privilege to get to know several of you that are “graduating” into retirement tonight. For Officer \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I will always remember how you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. When I met \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I learned lessons that have stayed with me. There is a poem... centuries old, that contains a line that transcends time.... “I am part of all that I have met.” When I think back on the police officers I’ve met, when I replay the stories of involvement, engagement, encouragement, and mutual support, I am proud to be a part of the lives of all of the law enforcement professionals that I have met, and I am even prouder to have the memories of your generosity and humanity that stay with me. It is that treasured human connection that will remind us of our similarities and that will act as common threads that hold us together.

George Orwell reminds us, “ Good people sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because men and women stand ready to defend on their behalf.” To all of tonight’s honorees, you’ve earned your retirement. You’ve worked long and hard for the chance to be the one who gets to sleep peacefully at night, surrounded by your families, and to spend time with friends and loved ones. You’ve done admirably and have acquitted yourselves impeccably. It’s time to walk into your future and live the lives you planned.... or just rest, do nothing... or very little.. it’s time to take a good, long, deep breath... or, as Will Rogers put it... “Half our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we have rushed through life trying to save...” ....

 **THAT** should take you a few minutes to untangle!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

What is left to say after it’s all been said? Congratulations on a job well done. Thank you for keeping us safe... thank you for inspiring community engagement and trust. Thank you for instilling civic pride within all of us. We wish you all the best for a bright, happy, fulfilling future. Congratulations!!

Thank you all!!