**2013 Annual Memorial Speech**

Thank you all for being here to commemorate National Police Week. Today I’d like to recognize the current and retired members of our law enforcement community, the families of fallen officers, local elected officials, media, and distinguished guests as we gather to give honor to our fallen police officers. This has been an annual memorial for many years and will continue so that we may give proper respect to those men and women who have served in law enforcement and have given the ultimate sacrifice.

Society presents us with a variety of heroes both real and fictional but Sidney Sheldon spoke what is on my heart when he said, "My heroes are those who risk their lives every day to protect our world and make it a better place - police, firefighters and members of our armed forces."

Our police officers are a part of our community, not just someone hired to do a job. They have invested their lives and their families’ lives to our community. When they report to work each day they have agreed to risk their very existence to insure the safety of their neighbors, community and country. When they are faced with life and death situations they do not take the time, at that moment, to weigh the consequences of their chosen career. That choice was made before they ever donned their uniform.

Whether they died of a heart attack, in a traffic accident or were gunned down while in pursuit of a criminal their objective was the same, to keep the rest of us safe.

A total of 1,539 law enforcement officers died in the line of duty during the past 10 years, an average of one death every 57 hours or 154 officers lost each year. There were 120 law enforcement officers killed in 2012.

We gather today to honor three of our own – New Richmond Marshal Richard Mark Clapp, Waynetown Marshal Lesley Dale Oaks, and Crawfordsville Police Lt. Russell Baldwin.

Richard Mark Clapp was a wonderful husband to his wife Debbie and father to his son Aaron. Aaron was by his father’s side in 2003 when Marshal Clapp died, as a result of a fatal coronary episode while subduing a suspect at a domestic disturbance. Marshal Clapp served honorably and set a strong example for others in law enforcement to follow.

Marshal Lesley Oaks was killed in the line of duty on May 3rd, 1982 in a fatal auto accident while pursuing a suspect on a motorcycle. He had been with the police force for approximately one year but in that short time Marshal Oaks proved his commitment and his dedication.

Russell Baldwin was shot and killed on August 27, 1974, while attempting to apprehend a suspect wanted for armed robbery. Lt. Baldwin had proudly served the citizens of Crawfordsville for over a decade. Lt. Baldwin’s courage and bravery is undeniable.

Each of these men gave the ultimate sacrifice without thought for their own safety. They forged into their duties with an unquestioned bravery and dedication to the communities they serve. We owe each of them a debt of gratitude and we take this time each year to remind ourselves of their sacrifice. We shall never forget.

I want to personally thank the families of each of these men for being with us today so that we can give honor to you, the ones left behind.

This memorial was built to remember those who died, and make certain that their sacrifice will be honored forever. This memorial also symbolizes the families who had to rebuild their lives after the sacrifice of their loved one. There are three men whose names have been added to this wall of remembrance;

With every inscription, we honor their memory.

With every thought, we remember their sacrifice.

And with every prayer, we commend them to the loving arms of our Father in Heaven.

I also want to take this time to honor our current law enforcement officers. Thank you for not resting, for always being on call, and for placing the community’s well-being before your own. Our heartfelt thanks and gratitude seem small in comparison to your commitment but we offer it ……………. to let you know that your labors are neither unseen nor taken for granted.

Thank you