

28th Annual Peace Officers' Memorial Service

May 15, 2009

National President Chuck Canterbury's Memorial Speech

Good afternoon. It is my honor and privilege to welcome our honored guests, family members, and my brothers and sisters in Law Enforcement to this, the 28th Annual National Peace Officers' Memorial Service. My name is Chuck Canterbury I am President of the National Fraternal Order of Police.

On October 1st 1962 President John F. Kennedy signed a joint resolution offered by Congress that established May 15th of every year as Police Officers Memorial Day. This resolution formalized and provided a date for the law enforcement family in our Nation to do what we have always done and that is to honor those among our ranks who have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Our recognition of fellow officers is filled with ritual, tradition and heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for their sacrifices.

The Law Enforcement community works very hard to recognize, support and protect the families of our fallen heroes.

Although not perfect, we like no others have fought to protect our families and preserve the memory of our fallen brothers and sisters. That is why 28 years ago we worked for the establishment of this service. From that humble beginning where 125 gathered to honor our heroes, today thousands gather and our entire nation has a day to show that support. I recently traveled to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania after that all too recent tragedy where three of our brothers were taken from us.

I witnessed an entire community mourn, grieve and vow to assist each other in a healing process. The outpouring of support renewed my belief in the goodness of our American cities and in my belief that our law enforcement community has no rival when it comes to supporting each other during a tragedy.

We vow to you, the families of our fallen heroes, that we will continue to be vigilant and diligent in our efforts to support the families of our comrades and to support the co-workers who suffer when we lose our friends and partners.

In 1985, Ronald Reagan in his annual message in honor of Police Week said:

“Let us resolve to do all in our power as citizens of these United States to support our Law enforcement officers in their work and pray that no more of them are taken from their families and those they so ably serve. In this way, those who have laid down their lives for their fellow man will not have died in vain.”

It is obviously our hope that one day there will be no need to honor current year law enforcement officers but I can assure you that if such a year was to pass, we would still stand proud on May 15th to honor the thousands that have defended this great country, and we will always remember their dedication to duty.

The support of the Thin Blue Line is a bendable but unbreakable tie that binds the law enforcement community together.