

Dedication Speech



Good afternoon everyone, and thank you very much for joining us today for the dedication of the Pikes Peak Region Peace Officers' Memorial. This site is dedicated to the men and women of the region's law enforcement agencies who gave their lives in defense of their community and also to their families as a place of remembrance and pride.

I have had a quote from former president Theodore Roosevelt hanging in my office for several years. It constantly reminds me of the hard work and devotion to a cause that it takes to successfully complete a project. It also reminds me that it is through great followership, not leadership, that great things are achieved.

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.¹

For the last 4 ½ years, I have stood with the most dedicated and devoted group of people I ever have had the pleasure of working with. They have been marred by dust, sweat, and blood and kept right on going. They strived valiantly with great enthusiasm toward a common goal and now know the triumph of high achievement. Would the members of the Pikes Peak Region Peace Officers' Memorial Committee please stand and be recognized.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to take a moment to tell you about this memorial. The vision began in 2005 with the goal of constructing a memorial honoring



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the sacrifices of the region's law enforcement officers who gave their lives defending it. There have been three renditions, or concepts, for the construction over the past 13 years. The third is what you stand on today.

It was designed with great intention. The region's geology, history, and landmarks all have been incorporated into its construction, from the alignment of the walk of honor with the top of Pikes Peak, to the 20,000-pound granite—similar to that from Pikes Peak itself—base the lion rests upon, to the recognition of 150 years of policing on the east wall. These things set the foundation of what the memorial represents. The foundation here is strong, like the men and women whose names are etched forever in it.

The Lion of Lucerne is the symbol of sacrifice chosen to honor the region's fallen officers. It was carved from the face of a sandstone cliff in Switzerland, commemorating the sacrifice made by the Swiss Guards in defense of King Louis XVI of France against Napoleon's revolution.²

Mark Twain said of the lion: “[It is] the most mournful and moving piece of stone in the world.... His size is colossal, his attitude is noble. His head is bowed, the broken spear is sticking in his shoulder, his protecting paw rests upon the lilies of France.”³

Our lion here, sculpted by a local artist, also represents sacrifice. He is noble, courageous, and strong. He too has his paw resting on the granite foundation in defense of the region. He is representative of all law enforcement in the region—federal, state, local, and military. His gaze is fixed on the eastern wall, where 22 bronze shields identify the region's law enforcement agencies. The two military law enforcement units, the U.S. Air Force Security Forces and U.S. Army Military Police Corps, are on either side of the vertical blue line. This symbolic gesture unites the veterans memorial in kinship just a few yards to our east.

The site is surrounded by the protection of the “thin blue line,” representing the position of law enforcement in society as the defensive wall between order and anarchy. It is unbroken from the entrance, extending to and surrounding the fallen lion and the officers etched in the base. The blue line itself is filled with blue glass and mirrors to reflect the natural sunlight during the day, and blue LED lights operate at night. It forever shines.

The walk of honor moves straight to the plaza here and is our formal walkway to the monument. It is paved with over 2,000 stones, some bearing the inscriptions of remembrance, pride, and love.

The curving walkway that slowly moves along the walls is meant to be a contemplative walk with landmarks along the way. At the entrance are Welcome and Thank You plaques. As you walk, you move through the walk of honor, then up to the agency plaques. The walk is lined with trees and vegetation of white and blue. As you continue, you pass the flags flown at perpetual half-mast in honor of the fallen.

Finally, you reach the podium, surrounded by the thin blue line. Within the circle, a granite base contains the names of the 32 fallen officers, their agency, and the date they made the ultimate sacrifice.

On the front, facing you, is a message to the community they served, protected, and loved.

I have been where you fear to be.
I have seen what you fear to see.
I have done what you fear to do.
All these things I have done for you.⁴

I truly believe this memorial meets and exceeds the goals and expectations of the original 2005 intentions as a place of remembrance to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice in defense of their community.

The completion of this memorial brings solace to me because I often have wondered how I managed the opportunity to lead it. I always have been a believer in “Things happen for a reason” and in daily signs that inspire us to continue the mission. Four years ago, almost to the day, I stood in front of a group of approximately 400 people and proclaimed a motto of “Let's get this thing done.” Well, as you can see, *we* got it done!

There have been a few signs over the past weeks that I have taken as approval from—let’s say—above. On Friday, April 27, we conducted a light test on the site. A large number of committee members had not seen the site up to that point, and I asked them to attend. Many did. As we milled about, the veterans memorial, our neighbor, began playing taps. It was very cool. Coincidence, maybe.

On Saturday morning, April 28, I met with the memorial’s contractor and a few committee members to discuss the font size on the granite base for the fallen officers’ names. While here, a bald eagle appeared and literally flew directly over this site for over an hour. It was amazing. Many locals have indicated that they never have seen a bald eagle in Colorado Springs.

When the lion was set on its base on Thursday, May 3, it was a cold, overcast, and rainy day. Fitting for our lion and its purpose, don’t you think? However, when the trailer containing the lion arrived, the rain stopped, the clouds became a little less present, and the sun shone down. I would like to think that those we honor here today appreciate and approve of this place.

I also believe we are the product of our experiences, which shape us and the lives we choose to live. Our memories exist as moments in time and reveal themselves in mysterious ways, forcing us to relive or remember, but also fulfill a purpose.

There have been two memories, or moments, that have driven me during this endeavor. They always have been at the forefront of my commitment and passion to “Get this done.”

One is full of happiness and joy, the other sadness and tragedy. Until today, neither has been shared with anyone.

The first is from December 2002 in the home of a classmate and career-long friend; the occasion was an academy class graduation party for his brother Jared Jensen. Family and friends gathered to express pride and congratulations to one of the newest Colorado Springs Police Department officers. During the party, I had the opportunity to tell Jared a story about a moment in his brother Jeff’s professional career. It involved a rolling gun—we will save the story for another time—with the point of conveying what a wonderful career Jared was about to embark on and the importance of remembering all the good times. That was a great moment.

The second was in a local trauma ward on February 22, 2006. Jared was lying in a bed surrounded by family and friends saying their last goodbyes after he was fatally shot just a few hundred yards to the west of this location. That was not a good day.

These moments, surfacing when most needed, drove the commitment and passion to complete this beautiful, but hallowed, place for Jared and the 31 other heroes on this granite base. Their sacrifice will never be forgotten, not just by those who knew them but anyone from anywhere who visits this site and sees their name. They may ask how. They may ask what. But, there is no denying this place clearly conveys the why.

President Abraham Lincoln once said, “Be sure to put your feet in the right place, then stand firm.”⁵ These officers chose to stand firm. They put their feet in the right place at the right time, holding the line against evil, and their sacrifice never will be forgotten.

I would like to conclude today with a prayer entitled “Only a Moment,” dedicated to those who lost their lives in the line of duty. As I conclude, taps will play.

Dear Lord,

It was only a moment,
But in that moment of madness our world changed.
In that moment, countless lives were changed,
Hearts were broken, and names previously unknown
Are now spoken with reverence.

In only a moment, the Line of Blue stretching out across our nation
Was broken—that hard, fast, steady line was breached.
In moments like these, all citizens become part of the Line of Blue.
Momentarily, we feel defenseless—but only for a moment.

In only a moment, the Line of Blue reforms,
Drawing a circle around us to restore our hope.
Our tears dry, our broken hearts are comforted,
Weak knees strengthened, and sanity restored—
The Line of Blue, our shield of protection, still stands.

The moment passes, but in that moment
We mourn for the life that was taken and grieve for the survivors,
Remembering the sacrifice made to protect and serve.

It was only a moment, but they are gone,
A sacrifice made to give us a future.
We pause in our sorrow, reflecting what might have been...
But then we press on, for, by the grace of God,
The line of blue still stands!

Amen!⁶

Thank you all very much for attending today.

This speech, edited for content and length, was given by Commander David Edmondson of the Colorado Springs, Colorado, Police Department at the Pikes Peak Region Peace Officers' Memorial Dedication on May 15, 2018.

Endnotes

¹ Theodore Roosevelt, “The Man in the Arena,” excerpt from “Citizenship in a Republic” (speech, the Sorbonne, Paris, April 23, 1910), accessed September 27, 2018, <http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/trsorbonne-speech.html>.

² Wu Mingren, “Unravelling the Tragic Story Behind the Impressive Lion Monument of Lucerne,” Ancient Origins, April 29, 2016, accessed September 27, 2018, <https://www.ancient-origins.net/history-important-events/unravelling-tragic-story-behind-impressive-lion-monument-lucerne-005791>.

³ Mark Twain, *A Tramp Abroad* (New York, NY: Penguin Classics, 1997).

⁴ Author unknown, “I Am the Officer,” Police Poems, accessed September 27, 2018, <http://www.policepoems.com/IAmTheOfficer.htm>.

⁵ “Employees and Staff: Rebecca R. Pomroy (1817-1884),” Mr. Lincoln’s White House, accessed September 27, 2018, <http://www.mrlincolnwhitehouse.org/residents-visitors/employees-and-staff/employees-staff-rebecca-r-pomroy-1817-1884/>.

⁶ Chaplain Chuck Boman, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Police Department.