

Good Morning,

Past Grand Exalted Ruler Hon. Amos A. McCallum, Past Grand Lodge Inner Guards, Hon. Andy Constantine and Hon. Roger Sicard, Grand Lodge Committeeman Jim Ferland, Past State Presidents, Members and Guests. This is certainly a great honor you have bestowed upon me. I appreciate your confidence and your support.

Past State President Mike and Freddy you have done a wonderful job representing the State of Maine. We all thank you for your commitment and dedication to the Maine Elks Association. It has been a pleasure serving with you this year. Monique and I enjoyed our travels with you, even though some of them did not start off the way we planned. Do you know what you are doing next weekend? Whatever it is I hope it is a short drive. Let's show our appreciation for Mike and Freddy one more time!!!

I would like to thank all of you for making this day possible. Of course, I have several special thank you's, I need to mention:

To the Members and Officers of Sanford Lodge, thank you for the support you have given us, I am looking forward to seeing you compete in the National Ritual Contest, at least you know I will not be judging.

Phil, Claris and Roberta; our special friendship has grown since our time together in Kansas City. Learning how to be "one of the big boys" has been an enjoyable process. Monique and I appreciate everything you have taught us. Phil even though Marcie isn't with us today, her spirit will be with us always...

Andy and Irvin; you have been with me from the beginning always supporting me when I needed it. You have been great friends. I thankful for all the work you have done.

There are four past state presidents from the Sanford Lodge that I have known. These men had a great influence on me as a member and officer; they taught me what it is to be an ELK. George Milne and Eric Elliott are not with us, so I would like to thank their wives who still continue to support my lodge and our association, Loraine Milne and Phyllis Elliott.

Frank and Joanne; Monique and I are grateful for your friendship and guidance. Frank, there is a reason why we all call you "DAD" thanks for helping us grow then letting us leave the nest to be our own person. What do you think of your kids now?

Bruce and Lisa; we are extremely grateful for all the work you have done to make this a special week-end for us. Bruce, thank you for being the installing Officer today, you did a great job.

I have three friends from work, who came here today to be with us, they don't always understand what we do with the Elks or why we do it, maybe this will help them understand: Rob, Steve, Christina.

I would like to introduce the people who allow me to be an Elk.

Louise Christopher my Mother-in-law.

Our daughters: Amy and Rachel.

Our son: Ryan and his wife Emily.

Two reasons why life is good: our grandchildren, Addison and Ashlynn.

Just over 19 years ago on a warm March day while I was waiting for my bride to be when my brother told me “that his car had a full tank of gas and he would take care of the explanation” Obviously; I did not take him up on his suggestion. As all Elks know the most important person in our lives is our spouse, I am no different. Saying “I do” that day definitely changed my life. I have gotten the support and understanding of a loving woman. Our life together has been full of adventures, and the truth is I am the lucky one; she picked me. I am proud to present to you, the First Lady of the Maine Elks Association my wife; Monique.

Even though we have changed leadership our challenges remain the same: the need to promote the Elks as a community service leader, fundraising and membership levels. We think of these challenges as separate issues; but could they be related? Is it possible to solve membership and fundraising issues with community service?

Who will disagree that the Elks were founded to provide community service and to help those less fortunate. This is what we are all about! Our duty is to provide assistance whenever needed. We have great charitable programs but our communities have limited knowledge of our Order. Our Order has long been under appreciated. We need to increase the awareness of all our Grand Lodge programs, along with our local programs that each and every lodge provides to their community. Our communities need to see us and the good that our programs provide, so they will develop the real understanding of our commitment to community. We can help ourselves by utilizing the Diabetes and Hyper-tension van and Drug Awareness trailer at our community events. We even have two mascots: Elliot the Elk for MCCP and Elroy for Drug Awareness. We do not have to develop new tools to promote our Order, just use the tools we have. During the next year, I ask each Lodge to promote our Order or themselves one more time than they did last year. This could be through the media, a parade or a new event, basically get out and spread the word. BE PROUD.

Now, I would like to introduce my theme for the year “Bettering Lives through Community Service”. It certainly sounds like we are bragging but why shouldn’t we be proud of what we accomplish, who is better qualified to tell our communities of our programs. Remember how you felt the last time you heard from a new member that the reason they joined was “I like what the Elks did with this program or I wanted a way to serve the community”. Were you proud to be an Elk? Finding a way to better lives in your communities is the goal of all lodges. I am not going to ask you to create a new community service program but to find one that you have recently canceled or about to cancel and analyze why you started the program in the first place. Ask yourselves, does that need in the community still exist? Can the lodge assist the community with this problem? If your answer to these questions is “yes”, then I will ask you to recommit yourselves to these programs.

Free money to improve our communities, what a great idea! Yes it can happen. The Elks National Foundation has three programs that literally cost, only the time to fill out the application and the stamp to mail it. The first is the Impact Grant which is designed to assist the community with a need that has not yet been met. All you need is a great

idea. Wouldn't it be great to be the first lodge in Maine to receive an Impact Grant? Which lodge will it be? The Gratitude and Promise grants require the lodge to meet the Grand Exalted Ruler's goal and are cost reimbursable. You perform a community service and the Elks National Foundation will refund up to \$500.00 for each grant. Each and every lodge who meets the Grand Exalted Ruler's goal is entitled, just fill out the application and mail back the report with the receipts. Free money is great way to maximize your efforts in the community. Here are my Elks National Foundation challenges: first, meet the GER goal of \$4.50 which qualifies your lodge for the grant monies. Second, apply for a Gratitude or Promise grant or both, so the goal is each lodge receives at least one grant. My final ENF goal is to increase our statewide donation by 25% over last year. That goal may seem extremely difficult, but in actuality that would only bring us to just over a hundred thousand dollars statewide. Just a few years ago that was our standard; we can make that goal, remember "just give me a dollar".

State Trustees: if we had sold 10 more calendars per lodge last year, we would have essentially sold out. Your challenge is simple help your lodge sell 10 more calendars than you did last year.

I spent allot of time thinking about membership and what I should challenge you with. We all know we cannot rely just on the membership committee and secretaries to solve this issue. My challenge is that each lodge has a retention night. Exalted Rulers assembly all your officers, take your unpaid members list and divide it up. Commit to contacting each member and find out why he has not renewed his membership, could it be that even our members do not know what we do, explain to them what your lodge does for the community. Help them to remember why they became a member. I know, it is not practical to expect this to eradicate the lapsation list but it certainly will lower the number of Elks we will remove from our roles.

All the committees of the Maine Elks Association are hard working; goals and challenges are useful tools but at the end of the day if we all can honestly say "I worked as hard as I could" what more can anyone ask. So I ask that you keep up the good work.

Remember in the beginning I asked if community service, fundraising and membership were related and if community service could be used to help solve these issues. I stand before you as your President and I am a product of community service. I joined this Order because Sanford Lodge sponsored my son's Boy Scout Troop and I wanted to give back. So, my answer is I believe so, to what extend I am not sure, awareness of our community service will let our communities know that we are more than a social organization or a location to play Bingo. And, that they will chose to become members of the Best People on Earth because Elks Care and Elks Share.

Finally, Monique and I are looking forward to our travels to National Convention, and around New England as your representatives, but mostly we are looking forward to our travels through Maine, meeting new friends and catching up with old ones. May your drive home be safe and uneventful? May God Bless our Troops, the Elks and most importantly, May God Bless America.