

**GRAND EXALTED RULER
ACCEPTANCE SPEECH**

July 18, 2011

David R. Carr

Ticonderoga, New York Lodge No. 1494

**BENEVOLENT AND PROTECTIVE ORDER OF ELKS
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Grand Exalted Ruler Smith, Grand Chaplain Reverend Father Stephen McNally, Past Grand Exalted Rulers, Grand Lodge Officers, Grand Lodge Committeepersons, Members, friends, and family: Today marks one of the happiest and proudest days of my life, for it is with a sense of deep gratitude and humility that I accept the nomination for the high office of Grand Exalted Ruler/National President of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America for the Fraternal year 2011 – 2012. I assure you that I will strive diligently to be worthy of the trust and confidence you have placed in me and will extend every effort to conduct the affairs of this office to an honorable and successful conclusion.

Without the encouragement and assistance of those who believed in me, I would not have been able to succeed to this high office. I wish to thank them at this time for their outstanding support. The Past Grand Exalted Rulers have dedicated many years of their lives providing service and leadership to our Order and for that, they deserve a huge thank you from all of us. In addition, I want to thank them personally for assisting me on numerous occasions during my tenure on the Board of Grand Trustees. Special thanks go to my Area 1 sponsors, Past Grand Exalted Rulers Leonard J. Bristol, Peter T. Affatato, and Chairman of the Advisory Committee, Amos A. McCallum, for their ongoing encouragement and support. I also extend a very special thanks to the Chairman of the Programs Subcommittee, Past Grand Exalted Ruler James C. Varenhorst, for his patience, support and guidance.

I am truly honored to have been nominated by New York State Past President and Past District Deputy James Peace, who also serves as Chief Executive Officer of our NY State Major Projects Corporation. Jamie and his wife, Yvonne, have been very close friends of ours for many years. Jamie, thank you so much for your kind words.

I also want to thank our youngest daughter of our blended family, Claire Butterworth, for her kind words in seconding the Nomination. Claire and her husband, Charlie, a film editor for the Cimarron Group in Los Angeles, are members of Burbank, California Lodge No. 1497. Claire is an exceptional young lady who recently received her MBA degree and plans to enter the Non-Profit field. She has always made me very proud. She is a wonderful daughter, an outstanding wife, and a great mom to their daughter Willow. Claire, again, I thank you for your wonderful words of support. I love you!

We also have with us the oldest of our blended family, our son David, an aviation technician for American Airlines in Tulsa, Oklahoma, who is here with his wife Kim and their son, Branden; Our son John, a commercial carpenter, is unable to be here due to his work schedule and our other daughter, Lisa, is here with her husband Tim, a retired member of the Vermont National Guard. Lisa and Tim own

and operate the Vermont Green Meadows Farm in Addison, Vermont. They are here with their two sons, Timmy and Michael.

Also seated in the audience are Penny's two sisters: Anne Quoos and her husband Alan, a retired engineer from the General Electric Co., Kay Gunnison and her husband Hugh, owners of Gunnison Lake Shore Orchards. I want to give them all special thanks for their support not only of me, but also for the Ticonderoga Elks Lodge #1494.

Now I take pleasure in introducing my wife and very best friend, Penny. Her support and love have sustained me for more than thirty-five years. She is a retired high school English teacher and assisted as proofreader while I served as NY State Elks Association Editor. She also served the New York State Elks Association as my Assistant during the ten years I served as State Secretary. I am proud and honored to have her by my side as I take on this new responsibility as your National President. Thank you, Penny, for all of your love and support. I love you!

I also want to acknowledge the support of our Grand Secretary Bryan Klatt and his outstanding professional staff in Chicago. Each and every person we have contacted for help has assisted us in every way possible. I also want to acknowledge Jim O'Kelley of the Elks National Foundation and his staff as well as Editor Cheryl Stachura and the Elks Magazine staff for the excellent work they do. And Elks National Convention Director Tina Haran and Jessica Ruiz certainly deserve special credit for their outstanding attention to detail at this convention

I am also grateful for the support provided by the officers and members of my sponsoring Lodge, Ticonderoga #1494, and the Area 1 Past State Presidents, officers and members of New York, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island and Connecticut State Associations. In addition, that was a terrific Area 1 demonstration under the able leadership of PSP Jamie Peace and PDDGER Howie Osborne. Thank you so much!

Very special thanks go to the dedicated and hard working members of the Endorsed Candidate Committee. Chairman PSP Bruce Hidley and members: Past State Presidents Paul Galarneau, Ron Olson, James Peace, Jay Amodeo, Michael Bloss, Past District Deputy Howard Osborne, Jr., Past District Deputy John Murphy, NYS Editor Jack McClurken and his assistant Paul Sponable. I also wish to thank our committee Treasurer Jeff Nowc of Ticonderoga. Also, I thank Past State President Bill Smith and his wife Carolee for their support and help. All of you are to be commended for your hard work and effort. I just wish time permitted me to thank all those behind the scenes. You know who you are...thank you!!

In addition, I wish to thank my Administrative Assistant Stella Kolysko as well as my Executive Secretary Paul Erkinen for their outstanding assistance and support. They have already been hard at work to say the least, and I look forward to working with them throughout the coming year. And whatever would we have done without the able assistance of Jim and Sonja Coggins as well as Jeff and Rose Durant. Thank you so much for your patience and your help.

And finally, Grand Exalted Ruler Smith and First Lady Sandra, you are to be commended for your outstanding leadership this past year. Penny and I thank you not only for your support, and your guidance, but above all, your friendship.

As Penny and I begin this Once-in-a-Lifetime opportunity, I want to share with all of you that I am a firm believer that Elkdom, like patriotism, is in the hearts and souls of our members. This is why my theme is, "Elks Give from the Heart." Time after time throughout our history, our proud members have proven how true this is.

Great organizations don't just happen. They evolve as a result of shared goals and objectives managed by outstanding leadership at every level throughout the organization. Thanks to 143 years of exemplary leadership at the Lodge, District, State and National levels, the Order of Elks has developed into one of the nation's greatest organizations providing service to our nation's youth, victims of disaster, veterans, children and adults with disabilities, and others in need in our communities.

What started out in 1868 as a group of actors and entertainers has developed into the largest fraternal organization in America with members from just about every walk of life. Throughout the history of our Order our members have shared a love for our country and unselfishly contributed time, talent and millions of dollars to help others in their communities.

While we have every right to be proud of our past, we cannot operate in it. Our future is dependant upon each and every lodge maintaining a high visibility within their communities in order to generate member and public confidence and support of our purposes and programs.

Throughout our history there have been many changes in our statutes, rules and regulations and membership requirements. Such changes have been made only with the approval of the delegates present at our national conventions. We will be asked again this year to seriously consider some recommended changes being presented to help our lodges be more involved at the community level while taking on a 21st century appearance. It is anticipated that many changes will be necessary if we expect to attract new members and retain them as well as retain those we now have.

During the past several years we have experienced a tremendous decline in membership. One reason for this is that the average member age in most lodges ranges from the mid to high sixties. Many lodges are losing twenty, thirty and more members each year to death. It is difficult to take in enough new members to overcome this loss. However, another reason is that we do not always retain those new members. It is this aspect which needs our strongest focus.

The Lodge bulletin is the primary link between the lodge and each member. It is very important that there is something in each lodge bulletin that will make those members who cannot frequent the lodge, because of age, or work, or family commitments, proud to be Elks. A photo speaks a thousand words, and a photo of a child holding a trophy or dictionary he or she received from the lodge, or a photo of an adult or child with a disability being assisted by the lodge, or a photo of a veteran or group of veterans being assisted by the lodge, can make a tremendous difference.

Our Elks National Foundation is referred to as, "**The Great Heart of Elkdom**". It is through this charitable branch of our organization, under the able leadership of Director Jim O'Kelley, that so many of our programs, including Scouting, Community Projects, Scholarships, Hoop Shoot, State Major Projects, Elks National Veterans

Commission, Drug Awareness and Dictionary Project, receive valuable funding. I intend to maintain the \$4.50 per capita level and hope that we can go "above and beyond the call of duty" as so many of you have helped us to do in the past. Please ***Give from the Heart*** whatever you can.

Freedom is not free! With the ongoing conflicts around the world, those men and women serving in our armed forces, protecting the many freedoms we take for granted, need our on-going support more than ever. Thanks to the leadership provided by Elks National Veterans Service Director Robert Hennings, and your ongoing support of our Veterans at the local and state level, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks is doing an outstanding job. Thank you!

The Elks National Home, often referred to as the "Crown Jewel of Elkdom," is located in the picturesque Blue Ridge Mountains of Bedford, Virginia. The Home, under the excellent direction of Dr. Ron Plamondon, is a retirement community for Elks members, both male and female, as well as married couples from all over the U.S.A. Recent focus by the Board of Grand Trustees, which serves as the Elks National Home Board of Directors, has been directed at making the Home self-sustaining in order to totally eliminate the need for member dues to financially support the operation of the Home. Renovations of Buildings H and I into viable, income-producing apartments is an approach that is being considered. In addition, one of the ways to help raise funds is through the "Buy-A-Brick" program which we introduced recently. Please consider Giving from the Heart for this valuable asset to Elkdom.

As Elks we are proud of our many programs that benefit the youth of our nation. Penny and I met Dictionary Project Founder and Director Mary French in 2003 and proceeded to introduce the program to New York State Elks that fall. The success in New York supported my introducing the Dictionary Project to Grand Lodge in 2004. The program received the full support of the Youth Activities, Public Relations and Advisory Committees. The goal of this program is to present a dictionary to every third grade student in the United States, and Elks lodges nationwide are working hard at making this a reality. Last year the Elks Magazine ran a special feature article on the Dictionary Project. Director Mary French requested and received Grand Lodge permission to feature this article on the Project Website which is visited by thousands of non-Elks. This resulted in outstanding public relations for our Order. I truly hope that your lodge members will give this program your utmost consideration if you are not already involved.

In conclusion, on many occasions I have been asked, "What is your favorite song?" and I have always answered, "God Bless America!" "God Bless America" was written by one of America's greatest songwriters, Irving Berlin, and was introduced on national radio by Kate Smith during her weekly Kate Smith Hour on November 10, 1938, to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Armistice that ended World War I. The song was heard by millions of radio listeners. What most people do not realize is that Irving Berlin was an Elk. He joined New York Lodge No. 1 when he was 40 years of age and remained a proud member until his death at age 104.

Like Elks members then and now, Irving Berlin had no desire to cash in on his patriotism. In 1940 he established the God Bless America Foundation, with all royalties from the song and its performance earned by either Berlin or Miss Smith going to the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America. That arrangement exists to this

day because, and I quote, “**The complete nonsectarian work of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts is calculated to best promote unity of mind and patriotism, two sentiments that are inherent in the song itself.**”

Irving Berlin, like all proud Elks, demonstrated even long ago that ***Elks Give from the Heart.*** Indeed, **ELKS CARE AND ELKS SHARE.**

Again, ...thank you all for your wonderful support and we look forward to visiting you soon.

God Bless you!

God Bless the men and women serving in our military forces and their families!

God Bless our Veterans!

And God Bless America!!!