

Acceptance Speech

Thank you to all of our Veteran's for your service and selfless sacrifice. Without you, the course of history would surely have been altered, and we most certainly would not be assembled here today.

Thank you to the members of East Liverpool Lodge No. 258 gathered here today, many of you for the first time at a state convention, I am humbled by your unwavering support - you have my forever gratitude. And I hope I make you proud as the first nominated and elected State President in our lodge's 131-year history.

Thank you to the members of Southeast District your encouragement and reassurance gave me the fortitude and determination to be steadfast during some challenging and uncertain times. I am eternally grateful for your steadfast support.

Thank you to the members of the Ohio Elks Association, as I stand before you today, I want you to know I represent all of you. The friends that Kerry and I have made across the state, as well as the support you have shown, brightens our hearts and humbles are spirits. Because of you we are proud to be part of The Ohio Elks Association.

Thank you to the 33 State Chairman serving this organization, you are the backbone of this state association, do not take you responsibilities lightly, communities are depending on you, we are depending on you. It is the work that you do that makes me, and The Ohio Elks Association look good. You each have the opportunity to achieve greatness in your individual programs, as Winston Churchill once said, "The price of greatness is responsibility." For the first time in Ohio Elks history, not one State Chairman resigned, and not one was replaced, so with my utmost respect and admiration, I thank you for your CONTINUED service to this Great State Association.

Thanks to my very good friend, Jim Calkins, he convinced me to join the East Liverpool Elks Lodge in 1998, sadly he died three years ago at the age of 52 with brain cancer.

Thanks to Greg Frampton, PER, one of my mentors - incoming, and current Exalted Ruler's listen to this advice I receive from Greg, that I echo to you today - whenever posed with a question on what I should do regarding a decision in the Lodge, Greg always gave his opinion, sometimes he agreed with me, sometimes he didn't, but he always finished his comment with this statement, "Brad, this is your Lodge, you do what you think is best for your Lodge, and I will support you, no matter what my position is." And he always kept his word. I have carried this guidance with me as I advanced through the local, district, and State Officer chairs. Exalted rulers, district activities chairman, state chairman, and state officers this is my unremitting philosophy, know that I have your backs.

It's a great day to be an elk – ahhh who am I kidding, it is a great day to be me! I am the State President of The Ohio Elks Association, and what makes this occasion even more distinct: I get to preside during the 125 Anniversary of The Ohio Elks Association. I get to preside at the same time that the Endorsed Candidate for Grand Exalted Ruler for the upcoming year just happens to be from our State, Doug Sheifer, and his wife Julia. Let's all support them and hop a plane to Austin for his installation on July 2nd. And how many incoming State Presidents get to be installed by a Past Grand Exalted Ruler, Jim Nicholson, the Sergeant-at Arms; the Endorsed Candidate for Grand Exalted Ruler, Doug Sheifer, the Secretary; one of only two men to hold the office of State President twice, Dane Dysert, the Marshall; and Past State President, Jim Baylor, the Chaplain. Thanks gentlemen.

This hasn't been the smoothest of progressions for a state officer, in 2016 when I was selected to be the next candidate for State President from the Southeast District, my mentor and selector Past State President Dick Treacle, who I expected to collaborate with me over the next 7-years, unexpectedly passed away 7-days after being installed as State President, on May 5, 2017. My state pin and my state CP pin are replicas of Dick's pins, and are being given this year in his honor and memory. Then COVID hit in the Spring of 2020 delaying the progression of State Officers for a year, an uprising in 2022, and most recently the untimely passing of first lady Heather Martin, may she rest in peace. The flowers we are wearing today are in her memory, and so that her presence can be seen here today.

I don't talk much about my past accomplishments, and I have been criticized by my wife for not being more forthcoming about a particular achievement as a young man, so this is for my wife Kerry - I was a good high school football player, and people from my area will immediately recognize a prestigious trophy given out at our high school, named the Bill Booth Award. This award is given out each year to an East Liverpool Potter Senior who is chosen by a committee of neutral judges on the basis of ability, sportsmanship, scholastic standing, character, and leadership. I was the recipient of that award in the sport of football in 1978. Bill Booth was a graduate of East Liverpool High School, who was judged by outstanding collegiate mentors as the greatest freshman prospect since "Red Grange." Bill Booth was killed in a car accident on September 4, 1937 prior to starting his junior year at Ohio State.

This honor bestowed upon me today doesn't just belong to me. I wouldn't be up here if it weren't for some very important people in my life. Beginning with my Mother and Father, my brothers and sister. I have been encouraged, sustained, inspired, and tolerated not only by my wife Kerry, but by my many family, friends, and acquaintances that are gathered here today to support me.

I had great parents that taught me right from wrong and how to be a productive member of society. As the youngest of four siblings I was spoiled, not just by my parents but by my older siblings too, all of which are here this evening – but they were also instrumental in my up-bringing and in creating the person that stands before you today – Bruce, Barry, and Brenda you have my sincere appreciation for that - I hope I have made you as proud of me as I am to be called your brother. My brother Barry is also an Elk in Encinitas Lodge No. 2243 in California. I believe he and his wife Linda get the award for Farthest Traveled - that is if there was such an award.

My father Wayne, who passed away 11-years ago, was a true inspiration. I can remember vividly him returned home from work after a demanding 12-hour day, he was a Project Supervisor for ODOT, yet unselfishly stopping to take the time to catch football with me before even stepping inside the house. These seemingly simple acts speaks volumes about his character; he was a true role model. Every morning my dad would prepare breakfast for us kids before we left for school and he set out for work. I thought this was a normal activity for all families, but my schoolmates swiftly enlightened me that this simple act was nothing short of extraordinary. His patience, kindness, understanding, and most of all his support left a lasting impression on me. I am grateful for the valuable lessons he taught me. Thanks Dad. My Dad was also an Elk in East Liverpool Lodge No. 258.

My mother Barbara, who is here today, at the age of 91, made the 3 ½ hour trip to see her youngest son's installation this evening. She taught invaluable lessons to me. On this momentous occasion, Mom, I want you to know what a profound impact you have had on my life. You've been an incredible mother and I consider myself fortunate to have you. From teaching me the more refined nuances of life, like how to dress appropriately for every occasion to instilling etiquette, politeness, and respect for women; you've shaped me into someone I hope you can be proud of. I appreciate your love and sacrifices, and your kindness and compassion. Thanks Mom.

My step-daughter Chelsey, whose boundless love and compassion knows no limits, fills me with appreciation. I do not have the time here this evening to tell you the magnitude of the sacrifices that this young lady has made for others. While I know she doesn't mind if I call her daughter, I have to confess, I am a little jealous that I am not her real father. Chelsey is an also an Elk in East Liverpool Lodge No. 258.

And then there is Lilly, my granddaughter whose unique individuality and strength of character make my heart swell with pride. Just the thought of her brings a smile to my face. Now I fully understand why the word grand precedes daughter - it's a testament to the endless joy she brings into my life. Footnote, Lilly will be become a teenage in about two short months on July 6th.

To my wife, Kerry there are barely enough nouns and adjectives to describe the sentiments and emotions that I feel for you. Having you by my side brings out the best qualities in me. When it comes to the Elks, having a supportive wife like you is truly a blessing. Thank you for your resilience and your willingness to engage; your steadfast support, encouragement, dedication and patience to both myself and the Elks. You have left an everlasting mark, not only on me but also on the lives of those you've touched. Your selflessness and compassion serve as a powerful reminder to what the Ohio Elks stand for. Kerry, thank you for being by my side though this never-ending journey. This year instead of pins, the state president's wife Kerry, will be giving out spatulas with the phrase "Spread Elkdom."

When I started through the progression as a state officer, one of my initial thoughts is what will my theme, my catchphrase be? Early on I had thoughts of using my first name as the acronym for my theme, but never put much more thought into it. It wasn't until Past State President Thomas Pavlik (how does that sound) came up with Promote All Volunteers - PAV -- I thought, "how great is this, every time I say PAV or I hear PAV I think Promote All Volunteers;" it might be the greatest theme ever – well, until today.

People may say that creating a theme around your name is a little self-centered, but that's enough about them, tonight is about me. So to create my theme I thought I would enlist the help of today's technology, AI, artificial intelligence. So I ask copilot, I need words for an acronym that spells BRAD that conveys benevolence, charity, fraternalism, etc.

So it returned the following three, now some of these are a little quirky, but here they are:

Benevolent Robot Always Dancing – but no one dances sober, unless they're insane, and robots don't drink.

The next one,

Bananas Roaming Aimlessly Downtown – this was a consideration, because I like bananas, they have A-PEEL

And the last one this really sounded promising,

Bacon Really Adds Delight – who doesn't like bacon, Right? But I thought I might be bacon all the rules. And I'm not about bacon all the rules!

Once I put my mind to it and enlisted the help of BI, Brad Intelligence, it didn't take long to create the nouns to the letters of my first name that would convey the ideologies that will hopefully foster and inspire a new generation of Elks to evolve, and the older generation of Elks to support and embrace the evolution. My theme for this year, signified by the acronym BRAD: Benevolence, Respect, Attitude and Determination. In lieu of the state pin this year, I will be passing out decks of playing cards with my theme printed on them.

Benevolence - is the morally valuable character trait to do good, characterized by acts of kindness and generosity. It reflects a genuine desire to benefit others, whether through charitable deeds, selfless acts, or compassionate gestures. The novels of Charles Dickens often feature benevolent figures who play pivotal roles in rescuing main characters—individuals like Mr. Brownlow in *Oliver Twist* and Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*. To be benevolent doesn't necessarily require wealth; even non-financial acts of kindness can have a profound impact on someone's life.

Respect - is the cornerstone of harmonious human interactions. It involves recognizing the inherent worth and dignity of others regardless of their background, beliefs, or status. When we treat people with respect, we honor their independence, listen to their perspectives, and value their contributions. In a world where differences abound, practicing respect fosters understanding and a sense of shared benevolence.

Attitude – is a learned way of thinking or feeling about someone or something. It can significantly impact our beliefs and actions. It is formed through experience and social factors. It is important to remember that our attitudes influence how we perceive and interact with other people. A positive attitude acts as a driving force that determines the way we approach challenges and opportunities. A positive attitudes enables us to overcome obstacles and embrace change while a negative attitude hinders progress.

Determination - is the unwavering resolve to pursue a goal, even in the face of obstacles, setbacks, or adversity. It fuels our persistence, propels us forward, and transforms challenges into stepping stones toward achievement. With determination ordinary individuals can accomplish extraordinary feats, turning dreams into reality.

For those who know me, I have always been open, honest, and forthcoming about my desire for transformation and change at the local, district and state levels; change not to be different, but change to make a difference. I believe applying these four ideologies whether you're on the end of opposing change or pushing for change will allow the Elks to prosper and evolve. I believe we have all heard many times over recent years that without change the Elks is destined to stagnation, then failure. Perhaps the true obstacle lies not in change itself but in the refusal to embrace it.

Since I started attending Grand lodge conventions and state conventions in 2009 the following quote has resonated with me, "When you return home you may hear, "You can't do that," or "That won't work here." Practice saying, "Let's try it and see." Do not be afraid to change old habits to try something new to keep your lodge and this Order evolving into something better." Anyone want to guess who said this??? Mr. Nicholson would you like to take a guess?

These insightful words were taken from the acceptance speech of James L. Nicholson as presented at the Grand Lodge Convention in Portland, Oregon, following his election as Grand Exalted Ruler on Monday, July 6, 2009. I was listening. As I said earlier, Exalted rulers, district activities chairman, state chairman, and state officers, I have your backs, and it sounds like maybe Past Grand Exalted Ruler James L. Nicholson may also have your back.

One last thought, remember, as elks it is our job to create desire – someone created the desire in you, that is why you are here this evening.

And finally, following the close of this business meeting, Kerry and I would like to invite all members and guests to join us in the celebration of the installation of the new state officer's for the 2024-2025 year, which will take place right here in this room. The band Direct Energy will begin at approximately 8:30 and will play until 11:30. All the food, drinks and entertainment are being provide free of charge by the Southeast District. Kerry and I will be greeting our guests at the door and passing out our swag as you enter for this evening's festivities. I hope all of your will join us this evening for one big Ohio Elks Association hospitality room.

Thank you for the gift of your time this evening.