

INSTALLATION SPEECH

Thank you and WOW!!! —No words can truly describe how VERY proud and honored I am to be standing before you today and be installed as "your" Department President.

I often think back and try to determine the major factors that charted this course for me. One of my first fond memories was when I was asked by the late PDP and our "then" Department Secretary-Treasurer Ann Harrington to serve as her personal page. At the time, I was just SO thrilled and proud to be wearing that red satin sash across my chest that read "Dept. Secretary's Personal Page". Let me tell you, I thought I was "HOT ____". (You fill in the blank) It just seemed like everyone "parted" when I arrived with Ann. (Of course, that was because of Ann and not me!!) It was then that I got my first real eye-opening taste of just how important the job of the Department President was.

I also remember a year or two later as a delegate to Department Convention hearing the newly elected Governor of Empire Girls State give her address to the convention body. I have to be honest, I do not really remember which administration it was, but she was a marvelous and inspiring speaker. The description of her experience at our "premier" program was one that I will never forget. After hearing her address, (and I have to admit--with a few tears rolling down my cheeks) I KNEW that I wanted to become more active in the American Legion Auxiliary. I knew that I wanted to be a part of something so powerful. Now, looking back, it is somewhat ironic that we try so hard to inspire the citizens of Empire Girls State each year, and it was an Empire Girls State citizen that truly inspired me!!!

I also vividly remember winning the Department President's Award for Children & Youth when PDP Priscilla Imburgia was Dept. President. I will never forget her encouraging words to me when she told me—"you have so much potential-I'm looking forward to many great things from you. I can see you going far in this organization." Priscilla, those words have stuck with me since that day. I guess that just goes to show us how crucially important "mentoring" is to our members and how just a few encouraging words can create a life-changing path for someone.

Many thanks to "MY" Department President-PDP Mary Anne Casadei. She too was instrumental in guiding me and assuring me all along the way that I had what it takes to be a Department President. It is wonderful to have (all of) Mary Anne's "Angels" here with me today. Can you all stand up and show everyone your halos and how well we flapped those angel wings?????

I would like to offer a special thank you to the Mahan Division of the Naval Sea Cadet Corps based in Albany, NY for their assistance as my Color Guard this morning. They are a wonderful group of young adults and it was an honor to have them as a part of my installation. Thank you.

There are a few I would like to personally thank for all of their support during my campaign efforts. Thank you to both Clarke White Unit and Post #589, the members of Albany County and the members of the Third District---the American Legion Auxiliary, The American Legion, and the Sons of The American Legion. Without your support, my goal of Department President would not have been possible. A special thank you to Silverstein Post #218 in Albany County for their extraordinarily generous support.

Thank you to all who helped in any way during this installation ceremony. They say it takes a village to raise a child, but it also takes a lot of PDP's to help carry out an installation. Thank you to every one of you.

To those who served on my campaign committee, my Campaign Manager Irene Tanner, my Campaign Treasurer, (and daughter) Lisa Chrysler, Eleanor Simmons, Peg Norton, & Kathy Martin-thank you for sharing your time to assist me with whatever needed to be done. I appreciate it greatly. And a very special thanks to Yolanda Comproski and Judy McRoberts for assisting with fund raising activities. Words cannot express how much I appreciate the continual support from each of you.

I am so lucky to have had a special woman and friend to not only serve as my Campaign Manager but to mentor me throughout the years. Irene, you have been there for me, shared your advice, slapped my hand when I needed it and kept me on track throughout this adventure. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for the countless hours of support and assistance you have given to me. For years as my family was young and growing up, I resisted getting fully involved in the Auxiliary because I felt my family needed to come first. I knew I would only have one chance to provide a nurturing home life for my two children. As they got older and more independent and involved with their own activities, I knew I was then ready to pursue my work with the Auxiliary. Irene was there to watch as I nurtured my family and was there to scoop me up and provide the mentoring I needed to be where I am today. Irene, Thank you for being patient and being there when "I" was ready.

I want to welcome each and every newly installed officer here today. I am thrilled that each of you is going to be a part of my administration this year. I look forward to a memorable and remarkable year with you all.

I am so pleased to have members of my family with me here today. My family is the most important thing in my life and without their encouragement and support; I would not be here in this capacity today.

My Mom and Dad have been my supporters since I was born. I do not think there was ever a time that they told me I could not do something if I put my mind to it. My Dad even let me participate in car “ice” racing as a teenager. If you are not familiar with this sport, it is where you race a tire-studded car around an icy track on a frozen lake. He cheered me on to be #3 in the ladies Powder Puff division in 1970 for all of NYS. With his racing advice, he always told me and I quote – “If you see daylight between two cars, go for it!!” Those words of wisdom have stuck with me ever since and when I saw my opportunity for “daylight” here in the Auxiliary; I knew it was my time to “go for it”. My Mom has been there for me each step of the way, not only as “MOM”, but also for the past 12 years, as my Unit President. She has kept me grounded and never let me lose track of the “most important” things in life. I thank her for instilling in me those core values. Thank you Mom and Dad for giving me such a solid foundation.

My eligibility is through my husband Donald who served during the Vietnam era in the United States Navy. He served aboard the communications ship-the USS Georgetown. I am so very grateful to him for providing me with the eligibility to be able to serve each of you in this capacity. Don, thank you for your service to our nation-veterans are special indeed—but you will always be my “favorite” veteran.

I am so very proud of both of our children-Our daughter Lisa and son Donald Jr. have brought many years of smiles, laughter, and pride to our lives. They are both now married and supplying us with more “grandsons” than we ever could have imagined (5 so far). Our family unit is growing in size and strength and I could not be more proud of all of them.

I am missing one member of my family that I truly miss being with us today. My Uncle Bob was a veteran who also served in the US Navy. I know he would be very proud of me today. I also am greatly missing a PDP from my own Albany County-Helen Klimek. Helen was a valuable veteran's advocate and she worked tirelessly to promote the VA&R program not only on the Department level but also on the National level. Its funny-within the past few years, as I was coming up through the chairs, several PDP's had mentioned to me that I reminded them of Helen Klimek. Somewhat surprised at this-they told me that I kind of talked like her, kind of laughed like her, and had many of the same mannerisms. Well, those were some of the nicest compliments I could have ever received, but no one will ever fill the shoes of Helen Klimek. She was truly one of a kind. The echo of her work will be heard throughout our Department for many years to come. In memory of both my Uncle Bob and Helen Klimek, I dedicate my year of service.

Some of you are already aware of my theme for this year, which will be “Stars”, and my colors will be the traditional red, white, and blue. Every member of this great organization is a star and my motto this year is “The greatest stars are those who shine for the benefit of others”. This motto

seemed to so appropriately fit who we are, what we do, and what we invite others to do with us. For those of you who have already received my pin-you will notice that the ribbon colors of my red, white and blue are incorporated into the background of the pin. They represent the colors of our nation and the ribbon proudly shows stars along its curvy folds. In the center of the pin is a large navy blue star that signifies "you". You are the stars this year, you are the ones who can change a life by what you do, and you are the star that shines because you shine for the benefit of others, not yourself. In the very center of the pin, the American Legion Auxiliary official emblem rests snuggled within the star of each of you. Here the focus of our efforts is held deep in the heart of each of us. Wear this pin proudly because it encompasses all of the ideals of who we are and what we represent.

Our organization is making great strides to assist both our current and returning military troops. As you all know, each year the incoming Department President chooses a project that will directly benefit from the generous donations of our members from across NYS. I was very torn between choosing a project that would benefit our "veterans" and one that would benefit our "children". And then, one day, the choice became perfectly clear.

My special project this year will be "Operation Purple". For those of you who are not familiar with this program, it is sponsored through The National Military Family Association. (NMFA) In the spring 2008 issue of our Homefront magazine, this project was highlighted.

War takes its toll not only on the troops who fight in the field, but also on the families who wait and worry at home. More than 155,000 kids have at least one parent who is deployed in the war on terrorism; this staggering figure doesn't even include those experiencing routine, but often lengthy deployments and separations from loved ones. Many children are experiencing multiple deployments or have more than one parent or family member deployed.

NMFA realizes that these children and their families need resources and outlets to deal with the effects of their current situation. NMFA's *Operation Purple* free summer camp program gives children a unique experience where they can learn coping skills, build a support network of peers, and share in some carefree fun that they need and deserve. All donations will be used for resident children of NYS.

I am thrilled that my project choice is one that will help *both* the veteran *and* the child.

You will be hearing more during Fall Conference Tour about my project and I invite each of you to share with me the joy of giving to the children of those who are giving of themselves to keep our nation free and strong.

This year will be one of numerous changes for our organization. It is a wonderful honor for me to tell you that for the first time, the Department of New York will be sponsoring the American Legion Auxiliary College. This weekend instructional opportunity will allow our "grassroots" members to educate themselves on our foundation, our programs, and our goals. Pass the word to register early for this program, because this promises to be a very worthwhile learning experience and we anticipate a waiting list of enrollees.

I also would like to share with you--that providing all details come together, that we **will** be re-instituting the Junior Camp this year. For the past several years, we have not offered this program, but our Juniors have made it clear that they would like us to bring this event back. We are hoping to provide a centrally located facility and look forward to providing a quality program for the future leaders of our organization.

We also will be rolling out the new "Warrior's Family Assistance Program" WFA that was developed this past year. This program will allow us to assist with expenses for those in greatest need. Your Units will play a definitive role in the success of this program. Again, you will be hearing more about this program during our Fall Conference Tour and will be receiving all of the guidelines and applications in your Plans of Work.

IN CLOSING, as I serve this year as YOUR Department President, I can only hope to inspire you and encourage you to share your knowledge, your capabilities, and yourselves with the programs that make the American Legion Auxiliary what it is today.

I hope to make you proud and I humbly look forward to spending my year with every one of you.

God Bless-