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CIVIL AIR PATROL
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CHANGE OF COMMAND ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

14 October 2017

Distinguished Visitors, Parents and family members, Cadets and Senior Officers,

Thank you for coming together this evening for Sq44's Annual Awards Dinner and this Change of Command ceremony. On behalf of Lt Col Opelski and myself, I want you to know how much we appreciate your presence tonight. We also appreciate your partnership and your support of this great organization.

Tonight our speakers have touched on three main themes:

Lt Col Richardson, USAF (retired), spoke of Civil Air Patrol's 76-year history of providing service to our communities, during the good time and the bad. Tonight we mentioned and acknowledged the service of some of our own members who have been a part of this organization for decades.

Lt Col Dolnick, CAP, spoke of Squadron 44's 66-year history of serving the East Bay communities. Whether it was under the moniker of the 80's and early 90's – the Billy G. Turner Composite Squadron, or even earlier as the Delta Composite Squadron, our unit has consistently fulfilled all three missions of the Civil Air Patrol.

Lt Col Carroll, USAF (retired), spoke of one of those missions as he touched on the importance of training young people in the art of leadership and the knowledge of aerospace. It is the Civil Air Patrol's Cadet Programs mission that brings those two elements together to enrich the lives of our Cadets and improve their understanding of the opportunities before them as they pursue their dreams.

I have just a few minutes to bring these thoughts together as I address the topic of "Building on the past...Growing toward the future."

My entire CAP career has been with Squadron 44 and so I speak from that perspective. Today we carry the title of the largest Squadron in the 6-state Pacific Region. Our Cadet unit is the largest in the Region. We are excited and honored to have that distinction but we must recognize that we got here by building on the past. And it wasn't always that way. In 2004 Squadron 44 began a 6-year recovery in our Cadet program, from 1 Cadet to a peak of 63 Cadets. And our current growth rate of 150% started just over 4 years ago.

Today, Squadron 44's Cadet Program success stands on the shoulders of people like Bill Geesey, Spatz Cadet #677; Martinez was his hometown and he has now spent the better part of 20 years as an Officer in the Army. People like Gordon O'Dell who grew up in Pleasant Hill, went to College Park HS, attended Sq44 as a Cadet, became a Senior Member and eventually went on to serve on staff at National Headquarters. Brigadier General Warren Barry, former Squadron 44 Commander, went on to serve as the CAWG Commander and then CAP's National Commander. People like Gerald and Laura McKeegan, who met at Sq44 and eventually married, but in the meantime volunteered thousands of hours to our Emergency Services and Cadet Programs missions.

Squadron 44 has a long and illustrious history of accomplishment. The trophies, plaques and other awards on your tables are indicative of our past success. But the real question facing us is not about the past, it is about the future. That is where our challenge lies. Let me share with you a brief glimpse of how I see Squadron 44 "Growing toward the future."

First, we will continue to strengthen our Cadet Program, focusing on the development of our Cadets as High Performing High Achieving (#HPHA) leaders, not just within CAP but in all areas of their lives. The reality is that we cannot do this without additional support. Parents, Grandparents, I'm speaking to you for a moment. I know your lives are busy but I want you to know that we NEED and we WANT more parent volunteers to partner with us in delivering the Cadet Program.

Second, Squadron 44 has a long history as a leader in our Emergency Services mission. 30 years ago our members were known and sought-out across the California Wing for their ES expertise. We will renew our pursuit of Excellence in the Emergency Services mission, not only for our adult members but also for our Cadets, teaching them the value of Volunteer Service and giving them life-skills that will serve them well in the future.

Third, many of our Cadets come to CAP with an interest in aerospace, aviation or flying. We will continue to enrich the Aerospace Educational opportunities that we can present to them both in our local meetings and in outside events and activities. And we will continue to improve our AE outreach into our local communities through programs like Aerospace Connections in Education (designed to support K-6 teachers with aerospace themed classroom resources), TOP Flights (also intended to support teachers by exposing them to the fun of General Aviation flying), CyberPatriot (preparing our Cadets to be wise and safe cyber-users in the 21st century), STEM kits and others.

As I close, I'd like to ask my Command staff to join me at the lectern: Maj Chris Suter, Deputy Commander for Seniors, and Capt Eric Meinbress, Deputy Commander for Cadets. These gentlemen will play a key role in helping Squadron 44 "Grow towards the future." I'd like to ask that you join me in thanking them for serving in their respective roles. We commit to provide leadership that helps Squadron 44 fulfill our mission but that also helps our members, Cadets and Seniors alike, get the most possible benefit from their participation in CAP.

Finally, parents/grandparents/families/former members...I'm not quite done explaining how you can help Squadron 44. Tonight we are unveiling the Squadron 44 Booster Club; any parent or adult family member and even spouses can become part of the Booster Club. The flyer you are receiving gives you some preliminary information and Beth Hockel, founder of the Club, will be reaching out with more information in the future. The Booster Club will serve as a key option for meeting future financial needs, enabling greater participation in the many training and service opportunities that CAP provides.

I look forward to serving as your Commander, following in the footsteps of those who have preceded me and helping us focus on our future opportunities and potential as we "Grow towards the future." Thank you.