



DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS

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This has been an exciting time for many of our detachments that have active Eagle Scout Committees at work. I've seen many Boy Scout Troops holding Courts of Honor for many new Eagles. It is always a pleasure to address these young men, and the first thing I notice is that they are all attentive. They listen, and remarkably, so do their parents and friends.

One of my first questions I ask when I am called upon to make a presentation is "Are there any Marine veterans with us today?"

If there are, I acknowledge them with a hearty "Semper Fi," and then try to include them into the program. If there are not any present, I'll say, "That's why they call us the Few and the Proud"

After appearing at over 50 of these Courts of Honor over a period of years, I've also noticed a commonality that all have, and that is the respect that both these Scouts and their parents have shown me as a veteran. Many will come up after the ceremony and thank me for my service to our country. I'll tell you, the first few times were a surprise. I had never had that experience before. It was eerie, and I do not think I will ever get used to it.

While I am saying a few words to the new Eagle Scout, I scan those sitting out before me. The parents are always sitting close by in the first row, and maybe their brothers and sisters. Rarely are there any other adults besides us. We stand out wearing our red blazers. I can count on one hand the number of others representing our sister services that I have encountered at a Court of Honor. Occasionally, there will be a delegation from a local American Legion or VFW Post, but all not that often, only us Marines.

Since I attend many Courts of Honor, I am always thinking of different things to say, for many of these Troops will raise another Scout to Eagle perhaps a month later. I don't want to be saying the same thing to the same troop. While I might form these words differently, they carry the same theme. Responsibility. Determination. Dedication. Leadership.

All Courts of Honor are structured alike, but yet they are different. Close to the end of the ceremony, the new Eagle is called upon to say a few words about the path he took in becoming an Eagle Scout. Although these Scouts are 15 –16, or 17 years old, I am constantly impressed with their maturity. These are not your average teeny boppers, but young men growing into manhood. Some are a little bit wobbly, but even those show they have a good grasp on reality.

If your detachment is looking for something to assist your community, think carefully about forming an Eagle Scout Committee. Should you go forward with it, I've got all the stuff you need to get it off the ground.

I know you can do it. You're Marines, aren't you?

Semper fi,

Mel Ellingsen