

**THE TIES THAT BIND**

Dr. Manyak, Distinguished Guests, Scouts and Scouters, Dearest Scouting Families and Friends

Good evening. My wife Debby and I have been honored to share this evening with you. What a celebration it has been about some of the best that Scouting has to offer. Congratulations to all of our award recipients.

Everything we have celebrated this evening is tied to the BSA Mission and Vision – to prepare each of you Scouts to make ethical choices over your lifetime based on the values of the Scout Oath and Law. Before we say goodbye, I'd like to reflect with you for a moment on those ties – the ties that bind.

In Scouting, the word “ties” often means rope and knots. Rope and knots are ubiquitous in Scouting. The international emblem on your uniform is bordered by a rope that represents the world brother and sisterhood of Scouting. The knot below the scroll in each of the Scout badges is a reminder to do a good turn daily. Your Eagle, Quartermaster and Venturing Summit badge each comes with a knot that you place on your uniform when you become an adult volunteer. Why?, because Scouting doesn't end here. All of these ropes and knots signify personal achievement in the past, but also a commitment to the service of others in the future, and unity all the time - unity. You and we are one - bound to one another through the ties of the Scout Oath and Law.

At one time or another, each one of you had to demonstrate your ability to work with rope, whether for rank advancement, to earn a merit badge, or perhaps compete in a skills rally. There are all kinds of knots – some require rope, others represent commitment, like a marriage knot, the Scout Oath and the Declaration of Independence. Knowing how and

when to tie knots empowers you to unite disparate things or people, build lasting relationships, and when necessary, to save lives.

In 2003, we were on a trek in Philmont, climbing the western slope of the Tooth of Time. It's a narrow trail across a steep slippery gravel laden slope. One of our Scouts developed a severe nose bleed that wouldn't stop. We stopped and waited over half an hour while our Scouts' administered first aid. Nothing worked. The Scout was now too weak to walk alone. The Scouts huddled and the patrol leader said, "we got this, Mr. Schwab." And they did: they fashioned a knot-bound harness around the Scout's torso using a very long rope, and passed the ends through the line so that every one of us held that Scout. Then we all walked him up the mountain. We literally tied ourselves to someone in need.

Each of us is bound to one another through a shared belief in Scouting's ideals and through common life skill building experiences. Whether you are a Cub Scout learning a square knot, a Boy Scout tying in to repel down a mountain face, a Sea Scout binding up a sail, a Stem Scout uniting a compound or data set, a Law Enforcement Explorer stretching a perimeter safety tape, or a Venturer staking a young tree - each of you uses ties that bind.

Each of you has been and will continue to be bound to one another in life changing ways thanks to Scouting. Remember what you heard and saw tonight. The Scouts and adult Scouters we recognized tonight prove that each of you can grow up to be anything you want to be. You can accomplish anything you set your mind and sights on. Just don't forget your knots and how to keep your life, your family, your friends and your community tied together. And like we did with that Scout on the Philmont mountain slop, don't let go!

One last announcement: This coming May, at the National Annual Meeting, our own John Brown will receive the Silver Buffalo Award –

one of Scouting's highest national honors, it has been bestowed on 14 US Presidents. Congratulations, sir!

Please join me in thanking the University of Illinois at Chicago, our Staff and many volunteers for a wonderful evening.

Now, please rise if you are able and join me in the Scoutmaster's benediction – "And now may the great master of all Scouts be with us until we meet again."

Thank you and good night!