

ADVANCE TEXT OF THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS
AT THE
SCOUTER OF THE YEAR DINNER

They say "Once a Scout, always a Scout" -- and I can tell you from my own experience, that's true. After all these years, I still love the outdoors. I still know how to cook for myself -- at least breakfast. And as anyone who saw those pictures of me in Japan will know -- on occasion, I still go around in short pants!

I am particularly grateful for your invitation to be here tonight for a very personal reason. It has recently been said that I am too much of a Boy Scout in the way I have conducted myself as President. And so, I reviewed the Boy Scout Laws and the Boy Scout Oath. They say that a Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent. And the Boy Scout Oath is: On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country, to obey the Scout laws, to help other people at all times, to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight.

Well, if these are not goals the people of the United States want their President to live up to -- then I must draw this conclusion: Either you have the wrong man -- or I have the wrong country And I don't believe either is so.

I truly believe that the ideals and aspirations of all Americans and all Boy Scouts are as one. And I will continue to use these ideals as a guide and as a compass in all of my official duties. I think our goal should be -- more Boy Scouts in government, not less.

Coming here this evening to receive this coveted award takes me back a lot of years to one of the proudest moments of my youth -- the day I was awarded the Eagle Scout Badge more than 40 years ago. I remember the pride I felt then, in the Court of Honor, and the pledge I made to myself never to dishonor that badge. I still have that badge, by the way. It is a very treasured possession and, over the years, it has also been a good reminder to me. It is a reminder of some of the basic, good things about our country, and a reminder of some of the simple but vital values that can make life productive and rewarding.

A very great American, Dwight Eisenhower, once said that his faith in our young people was as unbounded as his faith in America. I share that faith. I share that faith. I believe that youth and America go hand in hand.

For it is America's youthful spirit, strength and idealism that are the keys to our greatness.

Even today, as we approach our 200th anniversary as a Nation, we are still a young country, a young people, compared to most other nations on this earth.

The early explorers understood better than they realized the significance of calling the American continent the "New World." For it was here on these shores that millions of people from every branch of the human family were to come and make a new beginning, were to launch one of the greatest, noblest adventures in human history.

From the start, even the humblest of those early settlers seemed to understand. As they landed in this new world they knew that they, too, were beginning a new life, leaving behind the oppressions and the injustices that had darkened old countries and old civilizations.

Of course this new promised land was not delivered up to them on a silver platter. Each new wave of pioneers and immigrants had to build a place for themselves and add their individual contributions to the new life.

It was hard work. It was long work. And it never ended. It still goes on today as we tackle new problems and new challenges.

This is where Scouting comes in. The teamwork, the self discipline and -- just as important -- the sense of adventure that grows out of the scouting experience are the very things we need today to build a better America.

So often, the deepest, most profound emotions and ideas are best expressed in short, simple words. Today, when some people are casting about for new values, new answers and new outlooks on life, the key to many of our problems lies in the basic values of the Scout Laws -- in trust, in loyalty, courtesy, thrift, bravery and reverence.

One of the wisest judges our country ever produced was Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis. Like all great jurists he understood more than just the law. He knew the human mind and the human heart and he saw a great deal of them in his many years on the bench -- both their good sides and their bad.

It was an experience that might have made a cynic of him, but it did not. The more Justice Brandeis saw of the American people, the more he became convinced of their basic goodness.

In most Americans, he once said, there is a spark of idealism which can be fanned into a flame.

Scouting is one of the things that keeps that spark of idealism alive -- that plants it in the hearts of young Americans while preparing them for manhood and citizenship.

And that is why, as an old Scout who still tries to live by the Scout Laws and the Scout Oath, I am proud and honored to accept this award tonight.

Thank you so very much.

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