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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
SCOUTER OF THE YEAR BANQUET

THE SHERATON PARK HOTEL

10:10 P.M. EST

Thank you very much, Bill, Mark, Rudy, Reid, all of you wonderful ladies and gentlemen, fine young Eagles, young boys, young girls as well. It is a great privilege and a very high honor to be here tonight. Thank you very much for the award. It is one of those things I don't want to forget.

I think they say once a Scout always a Scout, and I can tell you from my own experience that is true. After all these years I still love the outdoors. I still know how to cook for myself, at least at breakfast. (Laughter) And as anyone who saw those pictures of me in Japan will know, on occasion I still go around in short pants. (Laughter)

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 Boy Scout oath.

They say that a Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent. That is not bad for somebody who knew it 46 years ago.

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."

If these are not the goals of the people of the United States, what they want their President to live up to, 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.

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I happen to believe that the ideals and the aspirations of all Americans and all Boy Scouts are one and the same, and I will continue to use those ideals as a guide and as a compass in all of my official duties.

I think our goal ought to be, or should be, more Boy Scouts in Government, not less.

Coming here this evening, after an interesting press conference, to receive this coveted award, takes me back a good many years to one of the proudest moments of my youth, the day I was awarded the Eagle Scout Badge more than 46 years ago.

I remember the pride I felt then in the Code of Honor and the pledge that I made to myself never to dishonor that badge. As Betty knows, I still have that badge.

By the way, it is a very treasured possession, and over the years it has been, I think, 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 very rewarding.

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

Of course, America's youthful experience, strength, its idealism that are the keys to our country's greatness -- even today as we approach our 200th anniversary, our 200th anniversary as a nation, we are still a very young country, young people compared to most other nations of this earth.

The early explorers understand 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, where to launch one of the greatest, noblest adventurers in the history of mankind.

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 oppression and the injustices that had darkened old countries and old civilizations.

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Of course, this new promised land was not delivered 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 this new life. It was hard work, it was long work, it took long hours and it never ended. It still goes on today as we tackle new problems and new challenges.

And that 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 and most profound emotions and ideas are expressed in very 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 of our country, probably one of the wisest we ever produced, was Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis. Like all great jurors he understood more than just the law. He knew the human mind, the human heart, and he saw a great deal of each 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 many, but it did not. The more Justice Brandeis saw of the American people, the more he came to sense 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 these things that keeps that spark of idealism alive, that plants it in the hearts of young Americans while preparing them for manhood and for citizenship.

That is why, as an old Scout who still tries to live by the Scout laws, the Scout oath, with no apologies, I am proud and honored to accept this award tonight.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 10:20 P.M. EST)