

Keynote Address, June 28, 2012
of Robert Beresford Williams' Distinguished Eagle Scout Award dinner by
Eagle Scout (1988) and Navy Seal Commander, Commander Christian A. Dunbar

-Thank You-

-Excitement over video -

Every time I see the videos, I get reminded that my job is still pretty exciting and it gets my heart pumping and makes me want to jump out of something or onto something or blow something up!!

-Relate and Translate-

You know, for the longest time, my Mom and Dad would ask me “why do you do what you do?” And for the longest time, I didn’t know how to answer. One year it would be “cuz its fun to run around and jump out of airplanes”, that would always creep my mom out. The next year it would be “cuz its fun to run around and shoot guns”, that would always creep my dad out.



Then one year it turned into something more – In 1999 I was part of an operation that thwarted a takeover of a country, and in September of 2001 I was on deployment in the United Arab Emirates and I was the Platoon Commander of one of only two SEAL Platoons in the Middle East. Now it was extremely personal – it was about the land of the free and the home of the brave.

So, now my sarcastic answer is, “you raised me this way.” You, and that small organization called the Boy Scouts of America.

I’ve loved my job from day one, which I suspect started at age 10 when my dad took me to my first meeting in the basement of Dundee Presbyterian Church, in Omaha Nebraska with Troop 42. There is no question that I started my career as a Navy SEAL way back then. I just didn’t know that’s what was happening.

-Personal Story-

My first campout was far from a cinch. My dad had just dusted off his old tent and the old sleeping bags from when HE was an Eagle Scout. We went out into the Nebraska wilderness in October and it not only rained but sleeted and hailed on us all weekend long. My Dad’s proud moments unveiling his equipment now turned into tragedy as now we had created our own freshwater reservoir inside the tent. Needless to say, that weekend could have gone the completely wrong way and sent me spiraling away from my path, but I loved it! Freezing, having fun with friends, like a pack of wet dogs we went from event to event together at the Campor-All and with everyone else bowing out of many of the contests my squad (the Ravens) won almost every event and I was doomed to be a Frogman from that day forward, impervious to cold and wetness, focused on the task at hand and not just focused but driven to compete at every turn.

I am certain that each skill I learned, each experience I had, each mentor and each adult leader had a direct impact on my growth and ultimately my success in the SEAL Teams.



No question about it, the early days, the “tadpole days” of me being a Navy Frogman started back then. I still get the question, “Have you ever been more miserable, cold and wet and tired, than you were in BUD/S?” My answer is, “Heck yeah. You must not have ever gone camping with the Boy Scouts in the Midwest.”

-Time Dependent-

The SEALs get their roots from the Underwater Demolition Teams for World War II, the historically difficult basic underwater and demolition and SEAL training got its start preparing the Navy Frogmen of the 1940’s for the arduous conditions of the North Atlantic on the shores of Norman-

dy. The core principles of teamwork, mental and physical resiliency are still today drilled into candidates in the same manner as they were some 60 years ago. Mimicking the actual job requirements of tying detonation cord together underwater to blow up obstacles in the surf zone to prepare the beach for landing craft, we still use the mentally stressful test of underwater knot tying to build mental focus under duress. I tell you, if you ever thought that in your life you'd need to know, the square knot, the becket bend, the short-cut to the clove hitch and the one-handed bowline all on one breath hold when you were at Camp Oljato Summer camp– that was the time to reach back to those skills from the tadpole days!



-Core Topic, Navy SEALs-

But it's not just about learning self-reliance, goal setting and teamwork – all traits you must have to succeed in the SEAL Teams - but it is about learning to live the Scouting culture. Just as we learn about the Scout symbol to get our first badge as a Scout, we start to live the meaning of three

plumes of the fleur-de-lis – Service to Others, Duty to God and Obedience to the Scout Law (although my mom and probably my wife might debate my adherence to the second to last law).

Success in the SEAL Teams is also tied directly to being physically fit, of course, being mentally awake at all times to be in tuned with each other and the mission, and morally straight with the courage to make very tough decisions under a lot of stress and under immediate threat.

In the SEAL Teams we embrace the constant pursuit of knowledge and truth in our development as SEALs. Our training is never over, once you finish the basic and qualification course, you are thrown into a SEAL Platoon that mimics a Boy Scout patrol, with mentors and leaders that help advise you and teach you. But you are on your own to ensure you develop your skills and expertise by attending advanced schools such as Sniper School, Explosive Breacher, Communications or Medical Schools. Each person has a role, but must be able to exchange roles with others since you never know what will happen on a mission.

All of us in the SEAL Teams are motivated not by our personal sense of accomplishment, but by a higher calling. Service. Service to others and to our country. We share a bond that cannot be broken, first and foremost we serve each other like brothers. But as a group we are motivated, just as the Eagle and Shield represent, by our duty to our country, the freedom we enjoy and our readiness to defend that freedom.

We are driven to succeed by the same culture that exists in the Boy Scouts.

Like many of us, we went down the path to Eagle, not knowing what an impact it was going to have on our life and how it would build us into the sons, husbands, fathers, grandfathers we are today. But for many of us looking back in time, there is no question on its impact.

-Conclusion-

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak today. 2012 not only marks the centennial of the Eagle Scout but also marks the 50th anniversary of the SEAL Teams. To the new Eagle Scouts of 2012, and to all of us - I'd like to leave you with some words from the founder of world Scouting Robert Baden-Powell as something to aspire to – “Try and leave this world a little better than you have found it and, when your turn comes to die, you can die happy in feeling that at any rate you have not wasted your time but have done your best.”

Thank you.



