

Scoutmaster Minute

Grandpa's Hands

Grandpa sat feebly on the patio bench. He didn't move, just sat with his head down staring at his hands. My grandfather was a plumber by trade and he had the biggest hands. When I sat down beside him he didn't acknowledge my presence and the longer I sat I wondered if he was OK. Finally, not really wanting to disturb him but wanting to check on him at the same time, I asked him if he was OK.

He raised his head and looked at me and smiled. "Yes, I'm fine, thank you for asking," he said in a clear strong voice. I didn't mean to disturb you, grandpa, but you were just sitting here staring at your hands and I wanted to make sure you were OK, I explained to him. Have you ever looked at your hands he asked? I mean really looked at your hands? I slowly opened my hands and stared down at them. I turned them over, palms up and then palms down No, I guess I had never really looked at my hands as I tried to figure out the point he was making.

Stop and think for a moment about the hands you have, how they have served you well throughout the years. These hands, though possibly wrinkled or shriveled; large or small; weak or strong; have been the tools you have used all your life to reach out, grab and embrace life to the fullest.

Mine braced and caught my fall when as a toddler I crashed upon the floor. As a child, my mother first taught me to fold them in prayer. They tied my shoes and pulled on my boots. They put food in my mouth and clothes on my back as I was growing up. They helped pick me up when I stumbled in life.

They wrote the letters home from all over the world while I was in the service; trembled and shook when I asked that special person to be my wife; and again many years later when I buried my father. No doubt it will happen yet again in a few years when I walk each of my daughters down the aisle. I know I am already dreaming about the day I get to congratulate my grandson when he gets his Eagle Scout award.

They were uneasy and clumsy when I tried to hold my newborn children. They dried the tears of my kids; patted them on the back when they did something great; played catch with them in the yard; and held them when things did not go as planned. Now, they are getting to do it all over again with my grandson. They have consoled neighbors and shook in fists of anger when I didn't understand. They have covered my face, combed my hair, washed and cleansed the rest of my body.

They have welcomed hundreds of boys into the Scouting program and congratulated them on their achievements. They have been there on days like today to celebrate great things; but also there to support these same kids when things were not going so well. Mine have touched the tops of mountains; pulled me out of rapids when I fell in; picked me up when I fell down; and shared fellowship with Scouters of all ages.

And to this day there are times when not much of anything else of me is working real well, but these hands still hold me up, lay me down, and again allow me to reach out to others. These hands are the mark of where I've been, the person I have become, and the ruggedness of my life. We may never know just how many people we have "touched" in our life or the impact that simple touch might have had on their life. But, I know I will never look at my hands the same again. When my hands are hurt or sore; when I hold my grandson or other loved one; congratulate a Scout or Scouter on a job well done; I still think about my grandfather.

That concludes this Eagle Court of Honor. I would like to thank you for attending and supporting our troop, its programs, and most importantly – your sons. I would like to thank our special guests for taking their time to attend this ceremony and help us recognize these young men and what they have accomplished. These boys truly are what this program is all about. For the parents in the audience, especially the ones here for the first time, I hope someday you will get the thrill of standing up here and crying in front of an auditorium full of people, when you get to put that Eagle Scout neckerchief around your son's neck. But remember, while the crowning jewel in Scouting is becoming an Eagle Scout, that alone does not define all that your son learns along the Scouting Trail.

To our newest Eagle Scouts, congratulations on your tremendous achievements! After we have retired the colors, you and your families are requested to remain in the foyer to meet those in attendance today as they leave. Once the troop has filed out, everyone is invited to a reception in the cafeteria to congratulate these outstanding young men on their accomplishments. Thank you for coming!

Senior Patrol Leader, you may retire the colors and dismiss the troop.