

Scoutmaster Minute – November 9, 2003

As parents, perhaps the greatest thrill in our lives is the birth of our children. We wait nine anxious months for the moment we can hold that squiggling, crying ball of Crisco-covered baby for the first time. As they begin to grow, we completely control everything they do and when they do it for the first several years of their lives. We feed them, change their diapers, read them stories, play ball in the yard, monitor what and when they watch TV, tell them when to get up and when to go to bed, and watch them start to develop wings of their own.

As soon as they are old enough to walk, they begin “tugging on the leash.” Ever so slightly they begin to attempt to discover the boundaries of what they can and cannot do. Sometimes we give them a little slack to see how well they handle it; sometimes we reel them in when they get a little wild; and sometimes we take the leash off to see how they respond to being on their own. In the process, we become their confidant for those secrets they just have to tell someone; a shoulder to cry on when things are not going well; a sounding board for their ideas; are there to celebrate their accomplishments and achievements; and get them over bumps they encounter along the way.

Then amidst the flashing cameras, with tears running down our face, the time has come when we send them off to school for the first time. Eventually we get used to it because we know in a few hours they will be back home with stories to tell and experiences to share. However, a strange thing starts to happen as they get older – they meet new friends and our kids begin to spend more time with them and less time with us. As soon as they get home from school, they are out the door or on the phone until it is time for dinner or to go to bed. Many parents are not comfortable with this and tighten the leash to try and hold on to their kids just a little bit longer. We want them to have freedom, yet we are reluctant to let them out of our sight. We rationalize our behavior by saying “they are not ready yet” for the challenges they face in every day life. In reality, it may be us who are not ready to admit they ARE ready to face what lies ahead and we are not! At a time when we should be encouraging them to try new things, we are trying to shield them, and ourselves, even more from the sometimes cruel world in which we live.

The tears start to flow again as the big day finally arrives when they graduate from high school and leave for college. This time, they will not be home for dinner tonight or tomorrow for that matter. Your emotions run the gauntlet as you think back over the past 18 years and are amazed at how fast it has flown by. Before your very eyes, they have gone from kindergarten to college – in the blink of an eye. Whether we were ready for it or not, our dirty-faced little kids with frogs in their pockets are now young adults with higher learning on their minds. You convince yourself that it will get easier with the next ones, but I can tell you for a fact it does not!

Scoutmaster Minute – November 9, 2003

As parents, our primary job is to nurture and protect our children, but we also need to make sure we are preparing them for life on their own. As they are growing up, loosen up on that leash every once in a while and challenge them to take on something new. It could be a new sport, better managing their time, an outing at church, a school dance, an honors course in school, a High Adventure trip, or a part in the school play. But just as important, challenge yourself to let go just a little more. It will not make it any easier when they go off to college, but it may help make them better prepared for that day. While we would love to have them around forever, the day will come when they flap their wings and leave the nest – even if you are NOT ready for it. It may seem one of the saddest days of our lives as we watch them take flight, but it should be one of our proudest - as we know we have done all we can to get them ready!

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. For the parents in the audience, 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. We already have at least three Scouts who are on track to receive their Eagle Scout awards at the Eagle Court of Honor in April!

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.