

Dirty Jobs: Mike Rowe Answers

November 12, 2008

Mike Offers a Potential Eagle Scout His Eagle Perspective

Still: Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean and Reverent...okay maybe not so clean!

Mike,

I'm not sure where I heard that you are an Eagle Scout, which brings me to my question. Could you PLEASE take a moment & post to my 13 year old son Kelby & encourage him to finish scouting (& anything else that'll help with this?) Reason I'm asking is that he only lacks 1 1/2 - 2 years in reaching Eagle, but some of his buddies have got him to thinking scouting isn't cool at his age.

Thanks much, Gary -- [scooterdave](#)

Kelby,

Your Dad asked me to drop you a line and say something inspirational that might persuade you to dig down deep and find the determination to make the rank of Eagle Scout. It's a reasonable request, from a father who obviously wants to see his son succeed. But here's the thing - The Eagle Award is not really meant for people who need to be dragged across the finish line. It's meant for a select few, and I have no idea if you have the guts to see it through.

Statistically, I suspect you do not. Only one out of a hundred Scouts make Eagle, so if you fail, there will be lots of other people with whom you can share excuses. Quitting now might disappoint your Dad, but I doubt that he or anyone else will be overly surprised. Anytime 99 out of 100 people do the same thing, it's not exactly a shock.

I'm not trying to be cute with a bunch of reverse psychology. When I was 15, there was nothing that anyone could have said to me that would have inspired me to do something I didn't want to do, especially a stranger with a TV show. So I'm not going to assume you're any different, or pretend that I have some influence or insight that you haven't already heard from a dozen other people who actually know and care about you. I'll just tell you straight up, that doing something extraordinary can be very lonely, and most people simply aren't cut out for it. Being an Eagle Scout requires you to be different than most everyone around you, and being different is really, really hard. That's why the award is called "an accomplishment."

Personally, and for whatever it's worth, the best decisions I've made in my own life, are those decisions that put me on the outside of being cool. Singing in the Opera, working in home shopping, starring in the school play when the entire football team laughed at me, and especially earning my Eagle, were all choices that required sacrifice, hard work, and delayed gratification. I have no idea if you possess those qualities, or even envy them. But I can tell you for certain, that NOT getting your Eagle, will be one of



the easiest things you've ever done.

Anyway, I have no idea if you would prefer an easy life of predictability and mediocrity, or if have the passion to follow the road less traveled. Only you get to decide that.

Good Luck,
Mike

Comments

Hey Mike,

I'm the lady that wrote to you saying that if we should ever meet it would be positively surreptitious. Well, apparently my new hobby of using big words should definitely be kept a hobby and not made into a profession because what I really wanted to say was that it would be "serendipitous". So, that clears that up. I feel better.

Thanks for humoring me. Literally and figuratively.

Brittany from the dirty dirty Northeast?!

Posted by: [Brittany White](#) | [November 12, 2008 at 01:57 PM](#)

exactly right mike. its hard to be unique and even harder to not give up.

Posted by: [Bethany Cox](#) | [November 12, 2008 at 02:23 PM](#)

Thanks Mike, from and Eagle Scout and the father of an Eagle Scout. I truly like your comments and your message. I think all potential Eagle Scouts should be required to read what you have expressed in real time.

Yours in Scouting,

Jay Stires

Posted by: [Jay Stires](#) | [November 12, 2008 at 08:36 PM](#)

Thanks Mike for a great blog today. I am going to put a copy on my Troops bulletin board. =)

Posted by: [Kay](#) | [November 13, 2008 at 01:01 AM](#)

My best friend's son is working his way through the Scouting ranks right now, and I am so impressed with the impact it is having on him. I'm going to send a copy of your post on to him, so that he can read the viewpoint of a guy who made it all the way to Eagle. He's an exceptional young man, and I would like to see him continue on that path. Thanks for the great post.

Posted by: [absepa](#) | [November 13, 2008 at 08:55 AM](#)

Great post, I'll remember this when my boys are old enough. I didn't earn Eagle, and I have some regrets, but I don't regret my scouting career, they had to kick me out when I turned 18, well, call me an assistant scoutmaster :) and I stuck with the OA and

an explorer post until I was 21. My son Alex has just started cub scouts and he is working on his Tiger badge. He looks forward to his requirements. I do hope he sticks with scouting and earns Eagle. I'm going to put him on the right path, but it will be up to him to stick with it. No dragging involved!

Posted by: [Joseph Durnal](#) | [November 13, 2008 at 01:51 PM](#)

I have worked in scouting for over a dozen years now (yikes!) Our eldest is an Eagle Scout. This was a great letter. Thanks for supporting scouting!

Posted by: [Mel](#) | [November 13, 2008 at 01:55 PM](#)

Mike,

What a great statement. I can totally identify with it. I am an Eagle Scout ('72), and current Scoutmaster, and have 3 sons, 1 of which is an Eagle Scout, the other 2 choosing to take the easy road.

As another poster said, I, too am going to put a link to this letter on our Troop Website.

Thanks again for the inspiration.

Charles

Posted by: [Charles Hardee](#) | [November 13, 2008 at 01:59 PM](#)

Mike,

As a fellow Eagle Scout (1975), and father of an Eagle Scout (2004), my current position in Scouting allows me the privilege of serving on my council's Eagle Boards of Review.

I found your letter to be absolutely profound and have found it to be totally spot on!

I forwarded the link to my fellow EBOR members and intend to use it when talking with parents and fellow Scout leaders.

Thank you for this excellent post.

Lou

Posted by: [Lou](#) | [November 13, 2008 at 02:23 PM](#)

Thanks Mike. Your words are so "right on" and every young person could benefit from them. Yours in Brotherhood, Steve

Posted by: [Steven Powell](#) | [November 13, 2008 at 02:50 PM](#)

Mike,

I am 14 and just one merit badge away from eagle. a also lack my eagle project. When i think about what i want to do for my project i tend to draw complete blanks. I have yet to be struck with the metaphorical hammer of insperation. do you have any tips for selecting a project?

Matt

P.S. Stay Dirty!!

Posted by: [Matthew](#) | [November 13, 2008 at 05:03 PM](#)

I can say that obtaining my Eagle in scouts was the hardest things I have ever done in my life and I am only 20 years old. My father wanted me to finish since he never did, but I didn't have the inspiration to do it. Finally I was able to find some inspiration when I moved to Germany and joined a new troop. It was a small group of guys who liked to get things done and they were dedicated to finishing scouts; with the rank of Eagle.

I never would have made Eagle Scout if I didn't join that troop, otherwise I wouldn't be writing now saying that it is **TOTALLY WORTH IT!!!**

Why, because I stand out of the crowd; not literally though.

I had the feeling my dad wanted me to live his dream of obtaining Eagle Scout since he never got his. The case is that my father knew how distinguishing it makes you. When I was at my first year of college our group leader ask us "who has already accomplished something significant in their life besides being in a school organization" I raised my hand and proudly said **EAGLE SCOUT!** Let's just say that the rest of the group had nothing to say and I could tell people were jealous.

You know that saying "don't go through life having closed doors/opportunities" well Eagle Scout has opened doors to me. Without the Rank of Eagle I might not have gotten into college at all. Without Eagle my life would have been harder for me to

get accepted into college trying to prove to the colleges that I am better than that Joe Schmo who also applied and who also is trying to get in to the same school.

At age 13 one might be a little young for this, but Eagle Scout on a resume stands out to employers. They are not looking for people who just have played video games all through high school, or were in the "video club" that only watched movies after school; believe me I would know. Employers are looking for people who stand out!

Yes school organizations are good for getting into college, but it's Eagle Scout we're talking about here!

But it's all up to YOU. Only YOU can make it happen.

So, I say! Go challenge yourself! Try to be different! And have fun with it!

Sincerely from an Eagle Scout,
James Marple

Posted by: James Marple | [November 13, 2008 at 09:25 PM](#)

I am the father of an 18 yr old Scout who just *barely* finished his Eagle requirements. I wish I would have had your comments and inspiration 6 months ago! As a "Lifer" myself (I never completed my Eagle project), I've lived my life regretting never having completed Eagle myself. I didn't want my own son to have the same regrets. I have two more sons - one a Star Scout and one almost First Class - and would like them both to also be extraordinary, but that will have to be their decision.

Thanks Mike for the great show and for having the courage to stand out from the crowd!

Posted by: [SM Greg Hasse](#) | [November 13, 2008 at 09:59 PM](#)

Mike:

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you! My son is almost Eagle but has stalled out for the exact reasons mentioned by Gary. Its not cool according to his buddies. I'm in hopes when he sees this it clicks as its not his old man saying what he's heard before. I'm in hopes coming from one more person, especially of your stature, will be the kick in the pants he needs.

Thanks Again!

Al

Posted by: Alan Hemesath | [November 13, 2008 at 10:53 PM](#)

I like your advice to follow your passion, no matter whether down a road less-traveled. So my hubby and I are wondering if you think the leech-collectors (featured on one of your more recent shows) feel passionate about their life's work? More specifically, we wondered if this reverence for leech-gathering could somehow explain their need to sit on buckets the non-intuitive way.

We are still trying to make sense of this (which I wrote about on my blog Any insight, having spent more time with them? (I realize that the convo I conjured there was only from memory and not accurate, pls forgive...)).

Thx for the best show on TV EVER! And this is said from someone who does not watch tv. But I will, if your show is on.

Posted by: [spleeness](#) | [November 14, 2008 at 12:16 AM](#)

hey mike,

i am almost an eagle scout and i really wish the kids in our troop would read this blog because it would kinda serve as a boot camp for scouts since the point of boot camp in the military is to see if you can deal with the situations of real world duties of the military like being out in combat or being out in rough seas. It would be so cool if you could give a speech to my troop at my eagle ceremony.

ryan

Posted by: Ryan | [November 14, 2008 at 02:02 AM](#)

Mike,

WOW! Fantastic response. Definitely want to share with the boys in our troop.

Don't know if you ever had the chance to go to Philmont as a kid, but I am willing to bet there are a few Dirty Jobs out there that would make for interesting viewing. Would really boost the ranch and your show. Please consider it.

Posted by: Chris | [November 14, 2008 at 06:00 AM](#)

Mike,

As one of the 99, I've always regretted not taking the time or having the dedication to follow through and finish my project.

If I only knew now what I didn't know then.

My 11 year old step-son has just decided to quit scouting as it was too hard for him. A heart-break for me. Your words helped me see that my pushing him to continue will not help. I do have an enthusiastic 4 year old that can't wait to start in a few years.

Thanks

Michael

Posted by: Michael Miller | [November 14, 2008 at 09:30 AM](#)

Great message, Mike! I am an Eagle ('84), Scoutmaster, and father of a 12-year-old First Class Scout. I was sitting here at my desk looking for inspirational messages to use for Scoutmaster Minutes when someone sent me a link to this. Your message hit me like a hammer! All of the things that I wish I could convey to my own son and the boys in my troop, and you said it so much better than what I can seem to muster!

A million thanks from a fan and fellow Eagle!

BTW, I think Chris is right. Philmont probably does have a couple of good "dirty jobs"!

Thanks!

Jeff

Posted by: Jeff | [November 14, 2008 at 10:16 AM](#)

Mike,

Your right on!! Not every boy is meant to be an Eagle. He has to feel it deep inside and really want it for himself, not for his dad. It is enough for a boy to belong to scouting, he will take something away from the experience and have memories to savor for the rest of his life. We here at YOUR old troop would love to have you the next time your in town. Thanks Again!

Posted by: Don | [November 14, 2008 at 11:29 AM](#)

I am married to an Eagle Scout (forty years) and have four Eagle Scout Sons. Each one achieved their rank in a different way. One at twelve, one at 18 and two in between, with four very different projects. I sometimes forget how unique that is. Now each one is married and raising their own. For many years I could have competed for dirtiest laundry pile, especially after troop camp outs. Thank you so much for your words of encouragement for Scouts, and for your very original show. We look forward to watching each new one.

Thanks again

Kathy

Posted by: Kathy Burgess | [November 14, 2008 at 12:21 PM](#)

Mike,

I enjoy the show! Keep up the good "dirty" work.

Thanks for your words. The young Scouts look up to you and hearing these great thoughts may cause some of them to re-think their "you owe me" attitudes.

I will pass your words along to the Scouts who are nearing Eagle. Thanks!!

Tim-Eagle 1971

Posted by: Tim Shea | [November 14, 2008 at 02:41 PM](#)

Mike,

You are my hero, LOL! I'm a Girl Scout leader to two troops, and one of my biggest regrets is not staying in GS after Juniors. "Had I known then what I know now...." famous words, but oh, so true. That's why I am trying so hard now to support my kids' involvement in Scouts (Boy and Girl).

I've sent a copy of your letter to my son's Scoutmaster, and I will also be sharing it with my Cadette troop. Some of them are considering their Silver Awards right now, and I hope they will someday consider their Golds.

It is true it's hard to be different, and no one feels that pressure to conform more than our kids. Still, I hope they will find the

strength to be different and unique, and to realize that their uniqueness is a gift to themselves.

Thank you for your words and inspiration. Keep up the great work. We look forward to seeing what dirty mess you've gotten yourself into each week. I love your show because you celebrate the dignity of doing your best no matter what the job, and that hard work has an honor all its own. Thank you again.

Ranger,

Girl Scout Troops 1207 & 486

& (hopefully) future Eagle Scout Mom.

Posted by: Ranger 1207 | [November 14, 2008 at 02:56 PM](#)

Mike

Great message about life!

I shared it with the staff and key volunteers throughout southwest Michigan that help serve over 10,000 scouting families!

Keep doing the great things you do!

Dan-Eagle Scout '85.

Posted by: Dan | [November 14, 2008 at 03:17 PM](#)

Totoly Radical dude!!!

Posted by: Patrick | [November 14, 2008 at 05:09 PM](#)