

# Planning Your Court of Honor

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*This is an outline used for a Roundtable presentation. There are hundreds of resources online that are very helpful in planning the actual ceremony. Based on my experience attending many ceremonies and planning that of my own Eagle Scout, this is a reference for some of the details that are often forgotten or not thought of. Hope you find it helpful. - Trish*

## I. Why Make Such a Big Deal?

- A. "The Eagle ceremony is the young man's equivalent to a young woman's wedding."
- B. Once in a lifetime opportunity to celebrate the worth of your son – ALL young people should be so blessed!
- C. Your son will stand taller and walk with more confidence because of this one thing
- D. It will help his friends understand why he has participated in Scouting and why it has been an enviable, valuable experience.
- E. "Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble..." – Balance the "glory". Your son knows, along with everyone else, that he doesn't always live up to the Oath and Law. Let that confession be a part of his Eagle Address. Living by the Oath and Law is a journey not a destination. It is an on-going challenge that a Scout chooses to accept, much like a Christian's walk with God.
- F. One Eagle Scout or a double ceremony with a friend?  
Positives: They can enjoy it together as friends. It splits any expenses. It takes the pressure off one boy being the center of attention.  
Negatives: The boys have to split the attention. It can be crowded and somewhat awkward on stage as awards are presented. It robs a boy of his singular moment of glory.

## II. Start planning right after successful Board of Review

- A. Select date as soon as the Eagle kit arrives from National.
- B. Reserve location (church, outdoor setting, campout, other gathering place)
- C. Request letters of recognition (at least 6 wks – celebrity/National ones take much longer)
- D. Ask primary speakers to attend (choose carefully!)
- E. Send invitations (4 wks)
- F. Bring together those who actually plan COH (differs by troop)
- G. DO ask for your son's input and value his opinions and feelings.

### **III. Features of a Good Eagle Ceremony**

- A. Pre-opening: Show a video of majestic eagle photos (the birds) set to mood setting music.
- B. Provide a crisp, definitive opening – Welcome, Invocation, Presentation of Colors, Scout Oath and Law (The long version of the Law which uses definitions of what each point of the Law means helps non-scout people understand the values.)
- C. Begin with a personal introduction of Eagle being honored. Seat him on stage.
- D. Remember your audience – EXPLAIN the significance of Scouting and of the Eagle – Path to Eagle.
- E. Presentation regarding Eagle Project – possibly by project recipient. Include a PhotoStory (video and photos set to music).
- F. Eagle Obligation and Charge (presented by an Eagle Scout; includes other Eagles who are present.)
- G. Presentation of Eagle Award, Parent and Mentor Pins by Eagle Scout
- H. PhotoStory of the Eagle’s Scouting journey
- I. Eagle Address – a short speech by the Eagle giving appropriate thanks, recounting special memories, inspiring younger scouts to stay on the trail.
- J. Closing of ceremony – Benediction, Retire Colors, Invitation to reception
- K. Reception

### **IV. Think it through – It’s all about details**

- A. Script every bit of it. Plan segues so that there are no “awkward silent moments.” Script speeches and movements - it forces you to think it through. Know exactly who introduces who and how it is to be done. Write it out for the emcee.
- B. Have people you trust be in charge of the logistics of the day so you can relax and enjoy it. 1) A “stage manager” who gets people seated correctly, cues entrances in the ceremony, ensures the audio/visual aspects are working and that props are in place; 2) A hostess who will ensure that everything is ready for the reception, and is in charge of serving and replenishing at the reception.
- C. Make a drawing of the locations you will be using and literally map out where you want people to stand and sit, enter from, place things, etc. Consider traffic flow so there are no bottle necks – especially during the ceremony when many people may be on stage at once. Include your “stage manager” in this.
- D. Consider candle and candle wax concerns. Provide a drop cloth or rug, pre-light candles, seat them in the holders early so you can whittle them down or beef up the holders as necessary. Be sure you have a good lighter!
- E. Stage Props! Candle logs, fleur de leis, rank badges, Eagle award kit – pre- roll neckerchief tightly so the slide will work correctly after it is put on.

- F. Be sure to place the Eagle Scout so that he has a seat on the stage; but be sure that he is in a position where the speaker can speak to him without turning his back AND that the audience can see his face at all times.

## V. Pitfall Prevention

- A. Pre-light candles; Use another candle representing the “Spirit of Scouting” as a lighter instead of using a butane lighter to light the Oath and Law Candles – this eliminates lighter issues and is much more graceful. Oath candles should be red, white and blue.
- B. Have a qualified person running the audio/visual equipment. Check DAYS ahead to be sure your audio/video files will play. Format it all in the way that is familiar and functional to the way the facility/person is used to. Check it, Check It, CHECK IT.
- C. Select a small group of older scouts to handle the program and REHEARSE with them several times a week ahead of time.
- D. Have your troop enter and sit together with the leaders just before the parents are escorted to their seats. This keeps them quieter and helps them feel a part of it.
- E. Don’t pre-show your Scouting Journey PhotoStory before the ceremony and then again during the ceremony. If you want to run it again, do so during the reception.
- F. Walk and talk your way through the ceremony to be sure that it is not too long. One hour is the absolute maximum for one scout.

## VI. Promotion -

- A. Be sure those people that are important to YOUR SON attend
- B. Invitations (one month out)
- C. E-Invitations
- D. Facebook Event
- E. Band room or locker room poster/flyer
- F. Church newsletter

## VII. More Ideas

- A. Create a memorabilia display for the reception. Start from Cubs all the way through. Uniforms, photos, patches, awards, pinewood derby cars, neckerchiefs and slides, special t-shirts, event memorabilia, high adventure base souvenirs, etc.
- B. Escape the cake! If you want an alternative to the expensive cake, serve cookies in bandana-lined Dutch ovens and serve “bug juice” for a camping theme.
- C. Save it ALL! Save all the responses you get from your facebook announcements – gather in a Word file. Save all the cards, notes, email responses and put it in a scrapbook for your son. What a wonderful feeling that so many care so much!