

# Speech for Civil Air Patrol Squadron 121

Bakersfield, California

September 12, 2006

By: Joseph C. Barto, III

Thank you for having me with you tonight.

Congratulations to your Squadron Commander, Greg Williams and all the awardees this evening. Great accomplishments in a great organization doing some superb work for our country. My compliments.

At the end of the day the organization takes on the personality of its leader and while I do not know much about many things, mostly because of very limited intellectual capacity, I do know a lot about leadership. And I assure you that Greg Williams is one of those great leaders whom you will look back on when you are old like me and know you could not have had a better experience than having Greg as your Squadron Commander. I'd like to recognize him and all your leaders who commit so much of their personal time and effort to the success of this fine organization.

One of my rules in life is to never forget where you came from or the people who helped you along the way. Life is a team sport and without a whole lot of people around you coaching, mentoring, motivating you; your great accomplishment would not have been possible. I know it would not have been possible for me.

I'd like to recognize my comrade Karl "Buck" Buchanan who was and is a huge part of my life but more on that later.

I never talk to anyone without recognizing my core team shown here. My girlfriend of 29 years and wife Tricia, and my four sons Joe, Tom, Kevin and Danny. Without Tricia, I'm not sure what my life would be like today. We were just 2 young kids who met in the spring of 1977 and married in the summer of '78, me a brand new 2LT out of West Point and her, a James Madison University undergrad who quit



school so we could get married and start our lives together. In retrospect we had not much of a clue of what we wanted or how we were going to get there...just that we wanted to do it together. We were babies having babies, and as you can see from the picture, the Barto family name is not in much danger.

Our only hope for a girl child now is for one of our boys to produce...no pressure on them. Now after 27 years; we still wonder sometimes about where we are going or how we are going to get there but the ride is still full of adventure—some good and some bad—but always together. She thinks she knows me better than I know myself and if the truth be known she probably does...but I still fight it sometimes.

Tonight we (Buck and I) were getting ready to come over and I had gotten dressed in my best suit and was looking over the program and my bio. Thanks again to Greg for that great introduction. I picked up the phone to do my daily check in with Tricia. I told her about coming over tonight. I was feeling pretty good about myself, looking over a pretty impressive list of accomplishments;

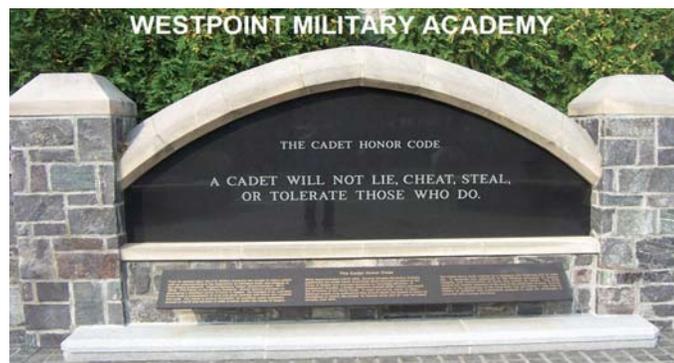
- soldier in peace and war,
- successful businessman,
- President and Chief Executive Officer of one of the best companies in Virginia

all great accomplishments, honored to speak at your meeting, and I was kind of throwing out my chest out and said kind of under my breath, “I wonder how many truly great men there are in the world?”... She said over the phone as if she was right next to me, looked at me with those adoring eyes that only your partner for 27 years can have and said “...one less than you think.” Got to love her... Thanks honey!

I am truly honored to be here and share a few life lessons and the effect teams have had on my life. Tonight I want to focus on 2 things... the “impact of Oaths” and “Life as a Team Sport”. I want to share some thoughts and some experiences of how those seemingly simple words can have a tremendous impact as we all continue to navigate the journey of life.

When I was a teenager my passion was the Boys Scouts, maybe like yours is the Civil Air Patrol. In my office at home there hangs in a very prominent place a framed copy of the Boy Scout oath as a visual reminder of a set of words that are often cited from memory without much thought about its meaning. As you grow older finding guideposts in your life are really important. You can not predict what life will throw at you but you can decide on a personal set of values and principles to help you decide how you are going to deal with life. For me, the Boy Scout Oath is a clear set of guidelines. I'd like to take a few minutes to talk about it and what it means to me.

**On my honor...** I went to school at a place and spent over 25 years of my life where your honor is not an abstract ideal but a compelling daily standard. “I will not lie, cheat, or steal nor tolerate those who do” does not require any more definition. It is what it is... Honor is doing the right thing even when no-one is looking.



**I will do my best...** this year I turned 50 years old and I still have no idea what my best is... every daily activity is an opportunity to grow, develop, and get better. I believe that we are always learning, growing, improving, and our potential is unlimited. My 92 year old Godfather who is a retired surgeon told me a couple of weeks ago...that every day is a success for him if he learned something new that day. That said we must also recognize that sometimes your best is simply not good enough... when you fail do you quit or do you re-commit yourself to getting better so the next time you have a chance you do get it done. Life is about getting it done...not trying harder...trying is part of the journey...getting it done is a commitment to excellence.

As you go through life you will see that doing your best is often just not good enough... so you look yourself in the mirror and know that you could have done better, you could have taken that one extra step, you could have been more careful, you could have been more aggressive, and that while you may not have been successful on that day, the fight is not over, you are coming back the next day, and the next day, and the next day, and you will get it done.

**To do my duty...** to me means "showing up". In fact, I believe the 99% of life is showing up. Life is a big rock but showing up, working hard, and coming back the next day means that some days will be better than others but overall you will be proud of your accomplishments. Your Civil Air Patrol experience like my Scouting experience was not that hard taken one bite at a time but over time those little accomplishments add up to something great. After all, earning the ultimate goal, you realize that you had to take them one step at a time. The only thing you do know for sure is that if you did not meet that first requirement you could have never stood at the end of the day to receive your reward.

**To God ...**is about knowing that you are a part of some much larger scheme that is greater than you.

**And my country...**I'm not sure how you can call yourself an American without exercising your responsibility to vote. My best days are the days when I get to walk into the Emmaus Baptist Church gym in Poquoson and see that not only me but all my family is accounted for on the polling list. It is also about having a job so that you can provide for yourself and your family... and if your calling is in the service of your nations as you and I are then we are better people because of our commitment to our country.

**And to obey the Scout Law...** and laws of the officers appointed over me. Society requires rules to govern the chaos that would exist if no law was present. Sometimes we just have to accept that the rule is the rule.

**To help other people at all times...** your first instinct should be to reach out to those around you and anticipate their needs and do everything you can to help others even when they do not ask. Live your life with your hand and heart reaching out to others; then when you need help, someone will be there for you.

**To keep myself physically strong...** in the gym everyday and to see your doctor regularly. You can't take care of anyone else unless you take care of yourself.

**Mentally awake...** read and explore, be an expert in something, anything, read the paper and understand the issues of the day. Have an opinion about the issues affecting you.

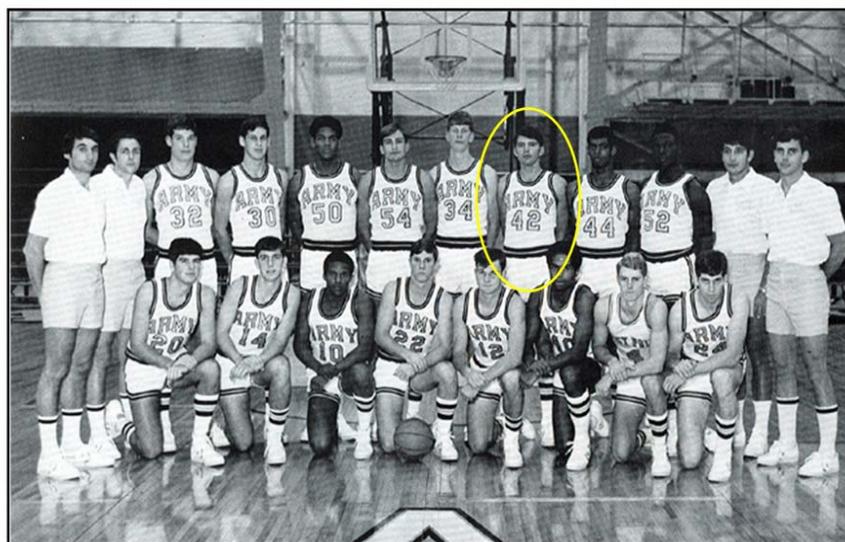
**And morally straight...** we know what the right thing is...Don't get me wrong, we all make mistakes but when you make a mistake take responsibility for it and correct it. I worry when people spend a lot of energy trying to convince themselves that the wrong thing is really right. Making a mistake by doing the wrong thing once does not change the fact that it was the wrong thing. You would not be here today if you did not have some moral compass embedded deep inside you that tells you when you are "out of bounds." Another mentor of mine was fond of saying, "If you don't live what you believe, you will soon believe what you live."

Let's turn to life as a Team Sport and being "Ready to Play":

In 1973 I was a High School Senior who was a much bigger jock than student. I played every sport but basketball was my game and as my graduation date drew closer, there were several college scholarship offers I was considering. In March of my senior year I made a campus visit

and met a young Coach who was not much older than me but when you are 17, 25 is ancient. That Coach was named Mike Krzyzewski who many of you know has come to some success over the years and I became one of the recruits in his first recruiting class ever. I assure you that the Coach is a much nicer person when they are recruiting you than when you actually play for them.

## Army Basketball Team 1976-1977



Make no mistake, Coach K was a very hard man to play for... you do not achieve his level of excellence by accepting less than perfection. For those that do not know Coach K is a West Point graduate class of 1969 and played for Coach Bobby Knight at Army.

Now you need to understand that in those days Freshman rarely played on the Varsity. In fact, until 1972 the NCAA did not allow Freshman to play on the Varsity squads. The result was that every college had a JV team very similar to High Schools today. I had some success as a Freshman on the JV and in fact still hold the JV scoring record at Army with 44 points in one game. My sophomore year brought the Varsity and Division 1 basketball. I had three claims to fame as an Army basketball player; I knew every offense on the east coast but ours. I got a front row seat to every game, and got free snacks at half time.

When you are on a team you understand your role on the team and after a while become comfortable in that role. During my junior year we went to the University of Vermont to play in a Christmas tournament and in the Championship game we are playing Florida State who at that time was a very good team and we were a very good team that year. Being me I settled in on the end of the bench next to the cooler with the orange slices to watch a great game.

About ½ way through the first half, we were up 2 points when Coach K stood up and looked down to the end of the bench and yelled "Joe, go in for Gary." I was stunned. Looking around to see if he was really talking to me but being the only Joe on the team it was either me or he was talking to someone in the stands; so I guess he meant me. I stumbled around trying to get my warm up off and wipe my hands clean of the orange juice and got in the game. Needless to say I was not prepared that day and it showed in a big way by my play that still brings me out of a dead sleep in a cold sweat on some nights. For many years though, I blamed Coach K for being so unfair, didn't he understand, it was not my fault, he should have never but me in. As I got older I always knew that the bottom line was that I was not prepared and it took me a long time to accept personal responsibility that I was on the team and being on the team meant your duty was to be ready to play at any time if that was what the team needed.

Fast forward now to August 1990, I was a brand new Army major having just arrived at Fort Stewart, Georgia the home of the 24<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Infantry Division when Saddam Hussein decided to invade Kuwait. As the Chief of Operations, I received a message in the wee hours of Aug 8 that year from the XVIII Airborne Corps headquarters that I took immediately to the Division Commander General Barry McCaffrey. In his office the message which I still have was just 4 words "24ID(M) deploy to CENTCOM." Those 4 words launched a 25,000 person mechanized division on 15 ships to Saudi Arabia and Iraq as part of Operation Desert Shield and then Desert Storm 5 months later. I kissed my wife, 3 sons, and my Dad goodbye and deployed on August 23<sup>rd</sup>.

August 24<sup>th</sup> I arrived in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia greeted by 125 degree heat and absolutely convinced we were going to have to fight our way off the boats. Summer turned to Fall and January brought the start of the air war and the re-positioning of the division 300 miles to the west in preparation for the great "Left Hook". During this time I

was assigned to the Division Main Command Post so while there was always the fear and apprehension of being in a combat zone the division main command post was far to the rear.

Now explaining this to my wife was not easy so I had to come up with some way to explain to her that I really was not in any real danger. Every division has a band that plays at the various ceremonies and parades. Many do not know though that during war time these musicians lay down their instruments and take up their weapons and become the security force for you guessed it...the Main Command Post. So when I explained where I was to her and my family I could always say, "How much danger can I be in if we are being guarded by the band?"

The night of February 1, 1991' was a particularly difficult night in the division. Deployed along the Saudi Arabian – Iraq border was a 1500 soldier unit named the 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry whose job it was to provide security as the 25,000 soldier division drew itself up to attack into Iraq. These Scouts guarded a 60 mile stretch of the border by a security zone 8 miles deep protecting the main force prior to the start of the ground war. The unit was the first to deploy back the previous August and in January right after the air war started their Commander was relieved of his duties and evacuated as a combat stress casualty. The unit was struggling big time and we could sense it as we monitored several patrols that were operating inside Iraq on missions to destroy border posts along our main attack routes planned for once the ground war began. After several near misses, confusion, and just poor execution; the patrols returned to our lines and around 3 AM things had settled down and I went down to my tent for a few hours sleep.

At 6 AM, my driver woke me up out of a dead sleep saying, "Sir, get up... the "CG" Commanding General wants to see you RIGHT NOW!" Now as the Chief of Operations working for a bonafide war hero and tough as nails Commanding General named Barry McCaffrey I knew he was not looking for a breakfast partner or to ask me how the wife and kids were holding up. So I asked my driver, what's up and he said, "Sir, I don't know but I do know he is waiting for you at the entrance to the Command Post so you need to hurry!"

Task Force 2-4 Cavalry Tactical Operations Center Team  
Feb 21, 2006  
Northern Saudi Arabia



So I hustle up to the CP and there he is, right next to the tuba player...no coincidence. I reported to him and he looks at me and says, "I'm putting you in..." Not sure what that meant... he goes on, you know what happened last night down in the Cav. The division's senior leaders met after that and decided that you are the new Executive Officer." I felt like I had been hit in the chest with a baseball bat... his order literally took my breath away. My first thought was how am I going to tell my wife that I am not going to be guarded by the band anymore. General McCaffrey went on to say that he had relieved the entire squadron staff and that I could pick anyone in the division to go with me. Major, he said, you have done a spectacular job here and the entire leadership of the division agreed that you are exactly the right man for this job, you can not fail and when I call the Cav the only person I want to talk to is you. Then gathering my breath, I asked when might this event take place... he said, TODAY!

That day I picked my staff, my first pick is present today riding shotgun for me once again; Buck Buchanan. He along with Pete Utley, Rans Black, Jeff Bierl, Bernie Carbrerra, and Jim Gill and that night at my last battle update briefing at the Division Main Command Post; I told the assembled division staff that I was born to be a soldier and that I had prepared my entire adult life to lead men in combat... I said, You never know when your name is going to be called and when it is your time but when it is called know that it is often when you least expect it... what I did not say aloud but know deep inside is that sometimes you only get one chance and this was one of those times. This day was my day and I was ready to play.

A few hours later I arrived at another Command Post; only this one was positioned within 5 miles of the Iraqi border, to help lead a Cavalry Squadron in combat, and there was not one band person anywhere around. It was February 3<sup>rd</sup>-- my wife's birthday.

During these periods of life, time is compressed but every minute is vivid in my recollection. On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, I assembled the 70 soldiers of the Tactical Operations Center together, and gave the "speech" just prior to H-Hour and later that day we led the 24<sup>th</sup> Division into the Euphrates River Valley, hit the river, hung a right, and 100 hours later fell exhausted and Victorious on the out skirts of Basra as the war ended and all 70 of those warriors accounted for.

As August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1990 was the worst day of my life; March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1991 was the best when the Squadron marched across the field at Fort Stewart, GA with the colors streaming into the arms of our families. Not only were we home; we were home with our honor intact, and our heads held high for a job well done...we had showed up, hit it hard, and done our duty.

The point is that being ready to play is not just a lesson you learn playing sports. After we got home I met with Coach K at West Point on the occasion of his induction into the Army Sports Hall of Fame. It was the first time we had met and really talked since the FSU game in 1975 and that conversation in 1975 was pretty one sided as I recall. I recounted my story from Operation Desert Storm and told him that my being ready then was a direct result of not being ready to play during the Florida State game.

That day when he called my name I was not ready and it was a great lesson...in 1991, when General McCaffrey looked down the bench and called my name I was ready to play and I thank god for it...because if I had not been ready to play that day the warriors of 2-4 CAV may have had to pay a much higher price.

Truly being ready to play is about living your life by a set of principles stated in things like the Boy Scout Oath. In my life I have made three solemn commitments that I am bound to every day; the Boy Scout Oath, my commission as an Officer in the United States Army, and my wedding vows. They all have a common ground; duty, honor, country, love, cherish, help others, do the right thing, so help me God. All the words are there; it is your choice on how to make them real to your lives and the lives of every person you touch.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Squadron Staff (& Flight Attendant) March 22, 1991



In closing, last year I turned 50 and being an emotional Pollock; my life is about dates, places and events...some good some not so good. I mark them on my calendar and when they pop up I take a few minutes to reflect on them and try to apply those feelings and lessons to a better future.

- June 23, 1973: Atlanta, Georgia: The day I joined the Army.
- December 28, 1975: The Florida State Game
- June 7, 1978: West Point Graduation and the day my Father, a World War II warrior, commissioned me on the plain.
- June 24, 1978: Our wedding day in Annandale, Va.
- January 28, 1980: Fort Knox, KY our first son arrives
- September 15, 1982: Frankfurt, Germany; our second son in born
- May 10, 1988: My wife and I graduate from JMU together.
- October 16, 1988: Our third son is born. We are recognizing a pattern here.
- August 8, 1990: I hand Barry McCaffrey the deployment order

- August 23, 1990: Deploy to Saudi Arabia
- February 2, 1991: Assigned to 2-4 Cavalry
- February 23, 1991: Gave the “speech” and attacked into Iraq.
- March 23, 1991: Homecoming Day
- April 10, 1992: Our fourth son, Danny arrives thus officially ending our quest for a girl child.
- May 31, 1997: Retired from the Army
- September 11, 2001: Saw the fireball of plane 1 hitting the south tower in New York City in the sun roof of the car I was sitting in.
- And finally, September 12, 2006 when I got a chance to share what being ready to play means to me with such a great group of the future leaders of America.

Life is a Team sport and many of your future team mates are sitting in this room. Just as my brothers from West Point share a common bond that will never be broken you have a common bond with every other Civil Air Patrol member... past, present, and future.

Coach K taught me that being successful in anything is about being part of a team and successful teams do three things very well. THINKING HARD First... then once you have a good plan and the Team knows who is doing what, every individual knows what to do and when to do it...then WORKING HARD or execute the plays and do your job on the team. After all being on a team is all about individual responsibility... you have to do your job for the team to be successful... and TALK...constantly communicate with everyone because the only thing you know for sure is that the plan rarely survives the first shot of battle. One of my other mentors General Fred Franks used to say; never forget that combat is a 2 sided event; the enemy is authorized to shot back and usually does. Life is like that as well. The only thing you know with absolute certainty is that everything changes—some days are truly better than others. The key is to not get too high on the good ones or too low on the bad ones just know that if you keep moving forward every day... success will be yours.

I often say that I would rather be lucky than good. The truth is that Luck happens when hard work and opportunity cross paths... many call that a coincidence. I do not believe in coincidences. We are here together tonight not by coincidence but by some greater plan that we have little insight into; I know that God has some plan for me and I have faith in that... often I just wish he would share it little more if it. Our faith says to be open to the opportunities presented to us everyday and pursue them. If my sharing of a few experiences and disjointed ramblings of an over 50 year old soldier helps someone in this room be a better person then my work is done. You never know when someone is going to look down to the end of the bench and say “get in there and make us proud.”

I thank you for the opportunity and I hope I did not let you down.

Good luck to each and every one of you—I can only tell you to hang on because you are in for a great ride and be ready to play. God bless you all and God Bless America.