



DISTINGUISHED EAGLE SCOUT AWARD PROFILE

Averting Armageddon

How Two Eagle Scouts May Well Have Saved the World

by Mark Ray

The year was 1991, and the end of the Cold War was at hand. The Berlin Wall had crumbled, the Soviet Union was disintegrating, and the United States was assuming its new role as the world's only superpower. Some scholars were even speculating that the end of history had arrived.

But not everyone was convinced that the Cold War would automatically give way to a lasting peace. In particular, U.S. Sens. Richard Lugar, R-Ind., and Sam Nunn, D-Ga., saw the potential for greater peril, not less, when the Soviet Union broke up.

The reason? Many of the crumbling Soviet Union's 13,300 nuclear warheads, 1,473 intercontinental ballistic missiles, hundreds of long-range bombers, and untold stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons were located in breakaway republics like Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, where the political situation was tenuous. And they were guarded by men whose employment prospects were uncertain at best.

"The Soviet military was going to be dramatically reduced, and there were going to be hundreds of thousands of people in the security sector who no longer had jobs," Nunn said in a recent interview. "All that spelled grave danger to me."

It also spelled grave danger to Soviet officials who had worked with Nunn and Lugar on arms-control issues. Late in 1991, some of those officials told the two senators that the Soviet Union—and, by extension, the rest of the world—faced a severe problem. "Elements of the Red Army were rapidly disintegrating," Lugar said recently. "It wasn't that the nuclear weapons were unguarded, but the security situation was deteriorating."



Richard Lugar

Became an Eagle Scout:

1946 in Indianapolis, Indiana

Became a Distinguished Eagle Scout:

1971 in Indianapolis, Indiana

Lives in:

Indianapolis, Indiana

Occupation:

United States Senator

Family:

Wife, Charlene; four children
(son Mark is an Eagle Scout);

11 grandchildren;

two great-grandchildren

Those officials' cries for help led Nunn and Lugar to form a unique partnership and to create an innovative program that might just have averted worldwide calamity. Not bad for a couple of Eagle Scouts.

Growing Up in the Crucible of War

Born in 1932, Richard Green Lugar came of age during World War II, and his memories of Scouting are entwined with memories of war. Lugar's troop often camped at Camp Chank-Tun-Un-Gi, not far from the POW camp at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana.

The war had another serious connection for Lugar. When he and his fellow Scouts lined up at troop meetings each week, Lugar looked directly at a photo of Reiman Steeg, an Eagle Scout from the troop who was then fighting in the war. Steeg later died in combat, teaching the young Lugar a sobering lesson about the local impact of faraway conflicts.

After graduating from college, Lugar served in the U.S. Navy before returning to Indianapolis to join the family's food machinery business. He ran successfully for the school board in 1963 and for mayor four years later, and was first elected to the U.S. Senate as a Republican in 1976. *Time* magazine named him one of America's 10 best senators in April 2006.

Born to a Life of Service

In 1951, Samuel Augustus Nunn of Perry, Ga., became an Eagle Scout. Scouting was "very meaningful to me in terms of the kind of values system that is so necessary in any phase of life—particularly I think in the political world, where there are so many challenges to your values and your overall character," Nunn said.

Nunn served briefly in the U.S. Coast Guard, then earned a law degree from Emory University. He practiced law for six years before entering the Georgia House of Representatives as a

Democrat in 1968. (Unlike Lugar, Nunn had been born into politics. His granduncle, Carl Vinson, was a 26-term U.S. Representative from Georgia.)

In 1972, Nunn won a special election to the U.S. Senate, where he served until 1997. From 1987 to 1995, he chaired the Senate Committee on Armed Services, a role that put him at the center of discussions about arms control and nuclear proliferation. He was also a prime mover behind the Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, which sought to prepare America's military to deal with future conflicts.

Nunn chose to return to private law practice rather than run for re-election in 1996, but in 2001, he returned to the public arena as cochairman of the Nuclear Threat Initiative. The new position allowed him to continue the vital work he had begun with his colleague across the aisle a decade earlier.

The Nunn-Lugar Program

After hearing from their contacts in the Soviet government late in 1991, Nunn and Lugar began devising a plan to safeguard weapons of mass destruction and help weapons scientists shift to peaceful research. Their plan evolved into the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, but its creation was far from assured. The 1991 Congressional session was nearing its end, and lawmakers who had come of age during the Cold War were hesitant to assist America's biggest adversary—even if doing so would also help America.

"At first, we had to pull the bill down because there was so much opposition," Nunn recalled. "We spent about three months working together and got the legislation passed in December."



Sam Nunn

Became an EagleScout:

1951 in Perry, Georgia

Became a Distinguished Eagle Scout:

1979 in Macon, Georgia

Lives in:

Bethesda, Maryland

Occupation:

Cochairman and Chief Executive Officer,
Nuclear Threat Initiative

Family:

Wife, Colleen; two children;
two grandchildren

Their success stemmed in part from their bipartisan approach, Lugar said. "As a Democratic leader and a Republican leader, we pulled together 15 or 16 senators for a breakfast, just to explain what we were about and what we felt was the importance of action," he explained. "We got pretty good support in a bipartisan way."

Nunn acknowledged that the two partners didn't agree on everything.

However, he said, they were always honest with each other and worked through differences. "We still have that approach," he said. "I think that's connected to the values and integrity and character that are taught in Scouting. We both had those values ourselves, and we had full trust that the other one had those values."

So what has the Nunn-Lugar program accomplished? When the Soviet Union broke up, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus instantly became the world's fifth, seventh, and eighth leading nuclear powers, respectively. Today, they are free of nuclear weapons. "We've even pulled up cables and blown up the silos that had the missiles," Lugar said. "In terms of nonproliferation, that's been a remarkable victory."

Tomorrow's Challenges

In the past decade, the Nunn-Lugar program has been expanded three times and now deals with all sorts of weapons—nuclear, chemical, biological, and chemical—both in former Soviet republics and other countries. At the same time, the rise of terrorist groups like Al Qaeda has made weapons control more important than ever.

Despite past successes, Nunn worries about the future. "We're in a race between cooperation and catastrophe," he said. "Right now, it's not clear which is ahead."

If cooperation wins, it will be because people of different backgrounds, ideologies, nations, and parties put aside their differences for the sake of humanity. It also will be, in large measure, because two Eagle Scouts took seriously their promise to do their best to do their duty to God and their country.

Submission Guidelines

All submissions to the *Eagletter* are published at the discretion of the staff and may be edited for content and space. Please include a telephone number and e-mail address with each submission. We cannot publish previously copyrighted material, **including newspaper articles and professional photographs. Note: Many studio-type portraits, including school photos, are copyrighted and may not be reproduced without express written permission from the photography studio.**

Here are a few guidelines for submitting your items. Submissions that do not follow these guidelines or that are not verifiable might not be published.

Feature Stories. Your ideas are always welcome. Send a synopsis of your story idea to Eagletter@netbsa.org, and include a telephone number where you may be reached for more information.

Awards and Recognitions. The Eagle Scout Award is an elite Scouting accomplishment, and the *Eagletter* is written by and for Eagle Scouts. Please submit only nationally recognized awards

and extraordinary accomplishments for consideration, and remember to include any information that could help us verify the award, including the Eagle's full name, birth date, unit number, and city and state where the award was earned. For Eagles who receive four-year university and college degrees, please include the full name and city of the institution, as well as the degree and major.

We will not publish such items as high school graduations and scholarships.

Eagle Scouting Is a Family Affair. Family photos must show two or more generations of Eagle Scouts or an extraordinary number of siblings who are all Eagles. *Uniformed Scouts must be properly attired.* For verification, include each Eagle's full name and year of Eagle Award, as well as a principal city and state for the family. Where the Eagle Scouts pictured have multiple surnames, please provide the family relation.

We regret that we cannot run photos of a troop's Eagle class.

Send your submissions to: *Eagletter*, S220, Boy Scouts of America 1325 W. Walnut Hill Lane, P.O. Box 152079, Irving, TX 75015-2079
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