

Dedication of the Eldon Bargewell Delta Park  
Hoquiam, WA  
May 20th, 2023

(Opening ad hoc comments and thanks)

I add my thanks to that of the others to Jay Fry, Mike Vining and all of you who contributed so much of yourselves to this Memorial and this day.

And I offer my deep appreciation to Marian and all members of the Bargewell family for enabling Eldon to become so much in his life and career. Even Eldon Bargewell couldn't do it all by himself.

I am Eric Olson, a native of Tacoma and a retired Navy SEAL Admiral who was privileged to work with Eldon many times over the last half of my service.

Eldon was a little more than four years older than me, but we were commissioned as officers in the same year - 1973.

As General Magruder referenced, some might say that that made us military peers, but it's certainly not the case.

By the time I was graduating from the Naval Academy and beginning my career, Eldon had almost five years of Army service and had returned from Vietnam with both the Distinguished Service Cross and the deep respect of all who knew him or knew of him.

I had heard of the legendary Eldon Bargewell for a long time but when I started working closely with him about 20 years into my career, I felt not so much like a peer but like the proverbial grasshopper at the feet of the Shaolin Master. He knew that I still had much to learn in some specific areas of warfare where he was quite expert, and he taught me as much as he could. The standard that I was wanted to achieve was Eldon Bargewell's approval. And it was a high standard for sure.

I should also mention that when we Olsons moved as a Navy family to the big Army base at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, the first welcome gift we got was a bottle of wine delivered to our doorstep by one Eldon A. Bargewell.

A few years later, after much time together, we overlapped for more than a year in our respective Brigade-level command assignments, Eldon as a Colonel at the Army's most prestigious Special Mission Unit (Delta Force) and me as a Navy Captain at its Navy counterpart (sometimes referred to as SEAL Team SIX).

These two highly specialized units were often considered to be in some sort of competition with each other, and it's true that we each wanted every mission that we

could possibly get, but during that period when Eldon and I were both in command, we organized exchange training and mutually supported exercises at a level that I don't think was matched before or since. We occasionally conducted short-notice helicopter assaults on each others' compounds in the middle of the night - exposing our highly specialized equipment, tactics and techniques to each other.

It was just two guys from Washington State far away from home, doing what we thought was right for our teams and our country. I know for sure that my unit was better for having trained with and against Eldon's - and I think that Eldon would acknowledge that his force might have learned a thing or two from us.

Later, when I had the great opportunity to present the United States Special Operations Command's most prestigious recognition, the Bull Simons Award, to Eldon in 2010, I said at that time:

“Major General Eldon A. Bargewell's career of service is an amazing example of how one person, always learning and always leading, can profoundly impact both mission success and the people who are privileged to serve with him.

He is the man you want planning the mission, the one you want close by, on your right or left in a firefight, and the one you can trust to tell the truth when it's over.”

Another distinguished recipient of the Bull Simons Award, and one of Eldon Bargewell closest friends and mentors, General Pete Schoomaker, fiercely wanted to be here today but COVID forced a change of his plans.

He sent me this to share with you in his absence.

“It is with deep regret that I am unable to join you, Marian, and the Bargewell family on this special occasion to honor a great friend and battle buddy, MG Eldon Bargewell. For more than forty years, since our earliest days in the unit, I was privileged to both serve with Eldon and to know him as a close friend. He was one of the finest leaders of his generation, living all seven of the Army Values to the fullest: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage. Without a doubt, Eldon was a warrior ... the very epitome of the Warrior Ethos: Always place the mission first; Never Quit; Never Accept Defeat; and, Never Leave a Fallen Comrade. Eldon loved his country and his hometown of Hoquiam. He would be humbled by what you have done here today to honor his name and his extraordinary service. Thank you.

With respect,

Peter J. Schoomaker  
General, U.S. Army (Ret.)  
5th Commander in Chief

U.S. Special Operations Cmd  
35th Chief of Staff, Army“

I also received an email this morning from retired General David Petraeus, former commander of United States Central Command and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. He simply described Eldon Bargewell as “one of the great ones”.

I am a Washingtonian of Scandinavian descent - like some of you.

Norse lore is that a Viking dies twice. The first death is when his human heart stops beating and, if his warrior deeds merit it, he will be carried by a flight of Valkyries to the resplendent Hall at Valhalla to live as a celebrated hero. The Viking's second death is when his name is spoken for the last time on Earth.

As the legendary warrior, trainer and leader Eldon Bargewell surely looks down from his perch as a celebrated hero, I thank all of you for ensuring, by creating this everlasting memorial, that he will never experience his second death.

I'll finish with the traditional Navy SEAL tribute to a respected teammate.

Hooyah! Eldon Bargewell!

Thank you.