

Never Give Up

On July 25, 1962 fourteen year old Monroe County Boy Scout Dennis Churchill was fishing on Lake Erie with four companions when a sudden severe storm capsized their boat six miles from shore. Dennis put on a life jacket then left the others clinging to the boat while he swam for help. With thunder and lightning crashing overhead, high winds gusting and waves six feet high washing over him, he swam four hours through the storm alone before finally reaching shore near the Dundee Cement loading docks. He summoned help then went back out on the lake with the Sheriffs Department to find the overturned boat. Dennis was credited with saving four lives that day including his own. On January 31, 1963 he was awarded the Gold Honor Medal by the National Council. Out of the more than 75,000 Monroe County residents that have been members of Scouting since October 16, 1911, he is the only one to ever receive the award. There were only 19 Honor Medals awarded in the nation during 1963 from a national membership of over 5,000,000 boys. While Dennis was swimming through the stormy waters alone but for God, the violence of the waves literally ripped most of the clothing off those that stayed with the boat. (They believed Dennis had drowned in the storm after he had been gone several hours and no help had come for them.) The wind and water took it's toll on Dennis as he struggled to get help. He weighed but 124 pounds that day. He was in a state of total exhaustion at the end but he couldn't give up. The lives of others were depending on him so somehow in those dark lonely moments he found the strength to keep going. Each of you will have times in your lives where you feel alone and you will want to give up on something but you must learn to press on and do your best even if what you are trying to do doesn't seem attainable.