

## **Scouting**

Rev. 5/11/98

Belonging to a group is probably one of the most important thing that a young person can do to show that he is somebody and there is some recognition in belonging to a group. The neighborhood gang of kids was something quite different than an organization recognized by Congress and started in 1910 by someone with as formidable a name as Sir Robert Baden- Powell. Punahou School had an active Cub Scout Pack, Pack 9, whose Packmaster was one Dr. Crooker, who was also the principal of the elementary school. As principal, he had superseded Mary Winne, a rather dour woman who had no sense of humor when it came to the behavior of young boys. (She looked much like the teacher depicted in the comic strip, Calvin and Hobbes.) One had to be nine years of age to join and I, like many others, joined the throng. ( The age of joining later changed to eight, for what ever reason. Probably to catch the kids before they left the primary grades.) The first thing to do, of course was to purchase the all important blue uniform with cap to match and the familiar yellow neckerchief. That year I worked on my Wolf badge, the first rank after joining as a "Bobcat." Subsequent silver and gold arrow heads could be displayed under the badge if one chose to do the various tasks required. The Bear and Lion ranks were never accomplished, as the school year and hence the activities that were associated with it came to a screeching halt with the advent of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. My Cub Scout days are rather foggy in my memory because of so many other things that happened at that time. I do remember selling Makahiki tickets. The word means yearly, and it is the equivalent to the Scout Circus or whatever the display of Scouting activities may be called. It was held in the Honolulu Stadium and the main task of the Cubs, as I recall was to be seen. The other skill events were pretty much the domain of the older Scouts. It was the only event in which I participated that my Dad ever came to so far as I can recall.

Things started to become more routine in 1942. We were going to Punahou School in borrowed buildings on the University of Hawaii campus, and as my twelfth birthday was just a year away, I was becoming more interested in the Boy Scouts. (Again, the entry age went from twelve at that time to the current eleven.) Bob Martin, who lived next door was in Troop 1, and his father Joe was very active too. At the bottom of the hill in the pasture next to Monoa Road a barrack like building had been built, as the Army had taken over the Punahou Schoold campus, and a place for meetings and activities had to be found.

It took me about two or three times before I could remember all of the necessary requirements for the rank of Tenderfoot. I was quite anxious to get it, because my teacher Mrs. Gail had arranged for several of us to be color guards at some event downtown. I made it in time and was very

proud of my new uniform with Troop One's characteristic black and white neckerchief. Before the current skimpy neckerchiefs became popular, the ones purchased at the Liberty House department store, or as mine was, hand made, they were to be one yard square. Ours were folded in a triangle such that the white side was on the left, the side of your heart, to indicate purity. (The intention was good, but often the black may as well have been on that side.) The triangle tips were adjusted so that it came to a single point down the back and the second point from the other half was out of sight. The slide was pushed up smartly and one end had a single overhand knot tied in it so the other end could be put through it and hold them in place. The knot would allow the other end to slip loose should one's neckerchief become caught in something. All deemed to be sharp looking and practical, with some of the military ritualism held over from the early days of Baden-Powell. The large square was designed to have many uses as each boy was to learn in order to pass the requirements for rank. From arm sling to bandage and signal flag to protection from the sun ... the possibilities were endless.

Leadership is key to any organization and it is particularly true in youth groups. For the life of me, I couldn't remember the name of the Scoutmaster for Troop One when I first started writing this account, but later it came to me--- Ralph Marlow. From my recollection, he had no sons, but enjoyed working with youth. He was a beekeeper by avocation and just behind the Scout cabin were a series of hives that we used to make money for the troop. We would take the supers, (part of the hive) down to the H.S.P.A. (Honolulu Sugar Planters Assn.) experimental station to use the extractor to remove the honey from the combs and bottle it for sale. We used mayonnaise jars including the old angular faceted jars, and always asked for an empty one when we sold one. We pulled a wagon around the neighborhood and had no trouble selling the fresh kiawe honey with its rich dark color. Our other money maker was growing soy beans on that same hillside behind the cabin. Living just over the hill made me one of the appointed to keep the beans watered.

The troop went on a limited number of camping trips in spite of the admonition, "keep the outing in scouting." Leadership was waning. I had served as patrol leader, quartermaster, librarian, and senior patrol leader. I was a First Class Scout and had earned about five merit badges in the time I was in Troop One. Not a very impressive record for about three years in the troop. The Army had given the campus back to Punahou by that time, and there was an interest by the school to pick up on the lost time of sponsorship of the troop. When I left Honolulu in 1946 there was effort afoot to organize the troop and get the meeting place back on campus "where it belonged." Forget all of the hard work of clearing, building, making the bench storage, the rugged meeting table, and outside grill, the memories, etc. It was time for progress.

Moving to South Pasadena was a real culture shock for me. Everything was quite different. Distances were great, the trees and grass

looked different, the weather was strange, I didn't know anyone-- even my relatives who were more than open and sympathetic to my plight. The school band and Scouting were the only things that had real meaning and belonging for me. I hated school, as I was a poor student and had difficulty because of study habits never learned. For all of the good things about Punahou, learning how to study and accommodating my style of learning never meshed. I sought out Scouting as something I liked and was good at. The Scoutmaster of Troop 342 was John D. "J.D." Burnham. I never forgot his name. He came by the house to become acquainted with Mom and Dad. The troop was sponsored by the Dad's Club, and no doubt was particularly interested in meeting Dad. J.D. always spent a lot of time with all of the boys, so it was difficult to tell whether he was spending time with me because of Dad's illness, or if it was just normal behavior. Fred Burnham, his son, was a little older than I, and was also in the troop. Both Mr. & Mrs. Burnham often were served dinner in their back yard as the boys struggled to meet the requirements of cooking merit badge.

I quickly got into the organized scheme of things. There were four patrols with a full complement of eight boys each. I joined the Wolf Patrol and soon became patrol leader. I was encouraged to start passing more merit badges. Many of the dads were merit badge counselors, so it was easy to get help and make appointments to pass the set requirements. Star, Life, and Eagle ranks came my way. I received my Eagle rank the same year I graduated from high school, about a year or two after the typical scout makes that rank. It is interesting to reflect on the fact that the other scout getting his Eagle rank at that Court of Honor was deaf. How did I know then that I was to go on to graduate school and become an audiologist and work with the hearing impaired.

Troop 342 did not skimp on outings. There was a camp out every month as outlined by the Los Angeles Area Council. One could never pass the required camping merit badge without frequent outings. One of my first camping trips was out to the high desert. It was quite hot during the day, but it dropped forty or fifty degrees to below freezing at night. Quite a rude awakening for this kid from Hawaii who had never experienced snow or freezing weather. There were many trips over those three years. The summer camp at Lake Hume in the Sierras about an eight hour drive from the Pasadena area was one that we all looked forward to. This was the time to pass all of the merit badges that required you to be in the out of doors. It was a time for the older boys to help the younger boys. Also it was a time to exercise our leadership skills with fairness if not mixed with some devilment. The adult leaders went along with what the boys decided for the most part. If discipline was to be administered, it was by "Kangaroo Court." Guilt had been pretty much determined by the time the "court" convened, and punishment was determined by the majority, the loudest voice or the leader with the most appropriate verdict. One boy who had demonstrated at inspection that

little had been washed above his wrists for some time was summarily taken down to the stream, stripped and scrubbed with a brush. Other errant souls were obliged to crawl on their hands and knees through the legs of a line of peers all of whom whacked his rear end on the way through. The dastardliness of the deed determined the length of the line and just how hard the whacks were. Loss of privilege, as I recall was way down on the list of verdicts.

Lest I sound as if Scouts were a bunch of heathens, let me say that the fellowship, the friends, and the lessons of working together as a group far outweigh any negative aspects of the organization. I looked forward to the meetings every Monday night at the cabin in South Pasadena. It was a part of what I did and what I was loyal to. My friendships were developed there. I grew up with this as my “life ring.” Mother’s concern was devotion to Dad and the needs his illness brought on. I had to find something for myself.

After I had been Senior Patrol Leader and Junior Assistant Scoutmaster and done all of the typical scout troop things, I realized that my close friends had joined Explorer Scout Post 567X. Now here is a perfect example of what leadership can do to an organization. Fire Chief Lavenbarg was the leader of the Post. The membership consisted of the core of senior Scouts that had gone through Troop 342 as I had, and there were a few who had no Scouting background. Senior Scouting had its origins with the Sea Scouts (later Sea Explorers), the only option after the regular troop. The highest rank one could achieve was that of Quartermaster an esteemed rank that few held. The Explorers could achieve the rank of Explorer Ranger (not to be confused with a Ford vehicle.) The medal consisted of a compass with a powder horn on top hanging from a green ribbon. One or two from 567X held that rank. Air Scouts with their light blue uniform could achieve the rank of Ace. The local Air Scout unit was led by a former German pilot who had his two blond Aryan sons in the Squadron. Chief Lavenbarg could only be there at meetings periodically and left the running of the Post pretty much up to us. As a consequence it became a club of good friends who liked to get together to play cards and go camping when the spirit hit us. My ‘49 Chevy always had a sleeping bag and camping gear in the trunk. One job we did have was to handle the first aid needs at the local camporees, those periodic competitive campouts where several troops get together for various activities for the weekend. The South Pasadena Fire Department had a first aid emergency trailer that we hauled to the campsite. The connection with Fire Chief Lavenbarg allowed us that privilege. I think the trailer was a veteran of the civil defense days. Because we did not have to compete in the camporee activities, we used Coleman stoves and prepared rather elegant meals for ourselves. Younger Scouts with dubious culinary skills would often come around like so many hungry pups looking for a handout.

I don't know if it was just the times, the particular group of fellows or just what, but none of our group was dating at the time. All of us enjoyed the group and did many things together, whether as the Post or not. The cabin where we met was our meeting place, for formal meetings or just to get together for a game of hearts. Drinking was not part of what we did, although often someone would light up a cigarette or a nasty cigar, just to show off when we were playing cards. Sometimes we would sleep at the cabin and then get up early to visit one of the boy's dad, who was a baker and would get us some pastry for breakfast. We never got into any trouble, even without the leadership that such a group should really have.

My last opportunity to wear the dark forest green of an Explorer came in 1950. The first national Scout Jamboree since 1939 was to take place in Valley Forge. It is interesting to note that I remember seeing my brother Bob off aboard an old freighter in Honolulu to go to that Jamboree in 1939, held in Washington D.C. Scouts from all over the Los Angeles Area Council who had been selected to go to Valley Forge were assigned to troops to train and organize themselves. At eighteen I was chosen to be the Senior Patrol Leader. A fellow student at John Muir Junior College was the same age and was a Junior Assistant Scoutmaster in a Pasadena area troop, but we had fewer in each troop. In pre-jamboree training camps, we got so that we could put up and tear down our campground in record time. Our stoves were coffee can size cylinders between two grates and filled with briquettes to serve as "stove burners". Coleman stoves were out because of safety and firewood was out because of practicality. A special train left L.A. with all of the local troops. In all, there were to be forty thousand Scouts at Valley Forge.

It was exciting to go down to the train station with the anticipation that we were really on our way after months of preparation. We had Pullman cars with the bunks that folded down from above, and the facing seats that made into the lower bunks. A baggage car was converted into a field kitchen, and the adult leaders took turns at mess duty. We had the military type stainless steel trays, and each troop took its turn filing through to be served and then back to its own car to eat. Our first stop was in Salt Lake City. The local amusement park was not yet open, but it was opened just for our group. In the middle of nowhere in one of the plains states, we made about a twenty minute stop. At a little train station looking like something out of a Lionel layout with nothing for miles, a set of grandparents were waiting to see their grandson who was in our troop. After a few hugs and conversation all being watched by the entire trainload of Scouts, we were again on our way.

The train headed up to Niagara Falls before turning south to Valley Forge. We did all of the tourist things except take the boat that ran up to the base of the falls. When we finally did arrive at Valley Forge it was dark. I was fascinated by the fire flies as they darted about. There were

other Scouts at the train station helping guide us to busses and trying to determine where we were from. We all had duffel bags and small decorated metal suitcases which proclaimed the troop number and "L.A. Area Council, B.S.A." Even in the dark we were able to set up our tents quickly thanks to the endless practice drills back at the campgrounds in L.A.

Those nine days went quickly, and were filled with trips to Boston, New York, and all of the nearby historical points of interest. We made friends with Scouts from all over. Some foreign Scouts desperately wanted to trade me for my coveted Eagle Scout medal. Trading was rampant. Local badges for camping activities, carved neckerchief slides, etc., etc. I was not a very good con man and didn't have the bargaining skills necessary to come home with some real loot. My one treasure is a Plumb Tool Company scout ax engraved with "National Jamboree 1950" in red that was presented to all of the senior patrol leaders. It still tucked away with my other less distinguished remembrances.

The train ride home was filled with conversations and remembrances about the trip. To fill part of the time there were various competitions among the troops for various activities. As I recall we were quite a musical group, and won the singing competition. When we finally did get back to the L.A. station, Art Clark and Jerry Dicks were there to meet me and help unload the baggage from the train which was covered with coal dust from the old steamer.

The return home also required me to speak to a couple of large Scouting groups. I appeared in my Jamboree uniform of green Explorer shirt, khaki shorts and long socks with a red garter tassel. Some Scouts later commented that such an act took "guts." One must remember that at the time men were not wearing shorts, and to do so suggested some question as to one's sexual orientation! (Generally, women were not wearing slacks or Levi's in public, and school campuses did not allow them.)

By the time the next January rolled around (1951), the war in Korea was well underway, and the draft was on my heels. School and Scouting was left behind for four years, as the U.S. Navy required my full time. I did help with swimming lessons at one of the San Diego Scout facilities a few times, but their schedule and mine did not match, so that experience was short lived. When it came time to learn how to tie knots in boot camp, the Chief Petty Officer asked for my help in teaching some of the other boots "the ropes" after seeing that I knew all the knots and then some.

I did spend some time with the Scouts after my discharge in December of 1954. I went on a couple of outings with them, but soon college and marriage took precedence. When I finished my Master's Degree at Purdue and we moved to Ferndale, California, I became active in the Lions Club which sponsored a troop. Our boys were too little to even be in school, but I did become a leader in Troop 8. Bob Strong was

the Scoutmaster and wanted me to take over because of my experience with troops, but instead I agreed to become Asst. Scoutmaster and both of us would run the troop as a joint venture. The rainy weather literally put a damper on many of the potential winter activities, but the boys got in quite a bit of camping for the three years I was with the troop. Bob liked to camp and looked forward to getting away from his family of six kids. We often took steaks for dinner, because he couldn't afford them at home!

The move to Seattle to graduate school again interrupted my participation in Scouting. Brian was now old enough for Cubs and the local Cub Pack had excellent leadership. Upon our move to Cheney, it was disappointing to find inadequate leadership. I had not yet finished my research for my Ph.D. and didn't want to take on any extra burdens at the time. Brian soon dropped out due to no fault of his own and so my connection with Scouting was at an end. In one instance when the boys were in high school, there was an Eagle Scout Court of Honor. One of Bruce's friends, John O'Donnell was getting his Eagle rank. His dad asked me as an old Eagle, if I would help out with the ceremony and speak about the obligation to the community as an Eagle. I did, and was proud to do so. I wore a miniature Eagle pin on my lapel, the very same one that I pinned on my Mom's dress after she had pinned my medal on me in a Court of Honor way back in 1949.

I never regretted the time that I spent in Scouting. It gave me the motivation to accomplish the things I started, it served as a tie to friends when I moved, and it resulted in personal satisfaction. It is hard to separate the memories of my youth from my experiences in Scouting. Our boys did not choose to join, but music, sports and good friends served as their tie and resulted in their accomplishments. They also could always rely on me and their mother being there for them. There was no need for a Scoutmaster.