

History of the Boy Scout Program

By: Dennis Laffin

How important is Scouting? Well, hopefully the information in the following paragraphs will help give you a better perspective of what Scouting and our troop is all about and how important the program is and has been to our youth. In 1975 General of the Army, Omar Bradley, who at that time was our last living 5 star general, was asked to participate in an Eagle presentation near his home in Pasadena, California for 3 Scouts who were to receive their Eagles. In addressing the group he said: "Scouting is something every boy should want to become a part of. It gives a boy independence, teaches him how to do things on his own. Above all, it helps develop leaders which our country always needs." Speaking of his service in World War II Bradley said: "All through the war I took it upon myself to fill the gap between un-preparedness and being prepared – a most important part of life itself." General Bradley's statements aptly describe several of the goals we try to achieve in the lives of our Scouts. Our Scouting heritage is something we can be proud of. Having knowledge of it makes the program more meaningful, and helps Scouts and adults understand why we do things the way we do. Troop 555 is a traditional Scout troop. The program we operate, the way we camp, the way we are organized, and every aspect of our troop has its origins in the ideas and methods established by Scouting's founders. The following is a brief history of the program and the contributions and lives of the men who played significant roles in the founding and development of the Scouting program. I have also included information about our troop, its leaders, and local Scout history. You are welcome to send me any questions or comments to me at: dennis@michiana.org.

The Boy Scout program was founded by Lord Robert Baden-Powell in England in 1907. He was generally just called Baden-Powell or B-P for short. Baden-Powell became a war hero after successfully leading the defense of the South African town of Mafeking during the Boer war in a siege lasting 217 days. At that time Baden-Powell was a British Army Colonel in command of a force of 1019 men defending Mafeking. The Boer invading forces were estimated to number 9,000 men. While commanding the 5th Dragoon Guards in India in 1898 Baden-Powell had written a small military training manual titled Aids to Scouting. During the siege of Mafeking his book was published in England and became popular with British civilians including youth. That was just one in a series of providential events that would lead Baden-Powell to founding the Scouting program. While still serving in the South African Constabulary he began to receive dozens of letters from youth and youth organizations asking for advice. He replied to each of those letters in long hand trying to answer their questions and provide inspiration. To one boy he wrote: "One thing you must learn before you can be a good soldier, and that is to be obedient to your superior officer, preparedness, and devotion to duty (Be prepared to take such a place as duty directs), cheerfulness (Be happy – for "cheeriness is next Godliness"), helpfulness ("Make up your mind to do at least one "good turn" to somebody every day')." The ideas he expressed in that letter eventually became parts of the Scout Oath, Law, Motto and Slogan.

On April 30, 1904 Baden-Powell who was then the Inspector General of the British Army acted as Inspecting Officer for the Annual Drill Inspection and Review for a British youth organization known as the Boys Brigade. William Smith was the founder and leader of the Boys Brigade. After Baden-Powell's inspection he turned to William Smith and congratulated him but stated he believed the Boys Brigade would have ten times more members with more variety and attraction

in its training. Smith challenged Baden-Powell to develop such a program and that is how the idea of the Boy Scout program began to take shape in Baden-Powell's mind. He began researching and formulating plans for his new program. A United States citizen, naturalist, and author: Earnest Thompson Seton had some influence on Baden-Powell's ideas. Seton was founder of a youth organization in the United States called the Woodcraft Indians. He sent Baden-Powell a copy of his book The Birch-bark Roll of the Woodcraft Indians in 1906.

Baden-Powell was ready to test his Boy Scout program idea in 1907. He gathered 22 boys from varied backgrounds in England and held the first Boy Scout encampment on Brownsea Island off the coast of England from July 29th through August 8th, 1907. He divided the boys into 4 smaller groups which he called patrols. This was the beginning of what is still called the Patrol Method of operation in Scouting. Baden-Powell deemed his Brownsea Island test of the Scouting program very successful. The program began to spread throughout Great Britain and eventually to other countries. Throughout his Scouting service Baden-Powell always emphasized that the patrol method is the best system to use in operating a Scout troop. He stated: "The formation of the boys into permanent Patrols of from six to eight and treating them as separate units each under its own responsible leader is the key to a good Troop. The Patrol is the unit of Scouting always, whether for work or for play, for discipline or for duty."

William D. Boyce is credited with bringing the Boy Scout program to the United States. He was born on June 16, 1850. Mr. Boyce was a Chicago publisher and adventurer. He was also a multi-millionaire and a philanthropist. He was in London on a business trip in the autumn of 1909. One evening he was trying to find an address in a dense London fog when a uniformed boy came up to him and asked if he could help him. The boy helped Mr. Boyce find the address he was looking for and when Mr. Boyce offered to pay the lad for helping him the boy refused to accept any money. Mr. Boyce asked the lad why he wouldn't accept his tip and the boy explained he was a Boy Scout and Boy Scouts were not allowed to accept any payment for a good turn. The boy's answer intrigued Mr. Boyce to find out more about the Boy Scouts. The boy told him General Baden-Powell was the founder of the Boy Scouts and that he had an office there in London. Later Mr. Boyce went to the Boy Scout Association office in London and obtained the information he was seeking on the Boy Scout program. There is some disagreement as to whether or not Mr. Boyce actually met with Baden-Powell. Mr. Boyce never got the name of the young Scout who helped him on that foggy night and the identity of that Scout remains a mystery to this day.

William D. Boyce was so impressed with the Scouting program that he brought it back to the United States and incorporated the program on February 8, 1910 in Washington D. C. The Boy Scout program flourished in the United States as it did in England. The program soon spread throughout the country and kept on growing. William D. Boyce served on the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America. He died on June 11, 1941.

Baden-Powell came to Culver Military Academy at Culver, Indiana in 1912 to promote the Boy Scout program. At that time the first National Scout Commissioner, Daniel Carter Beard was at Culver Military Academy in charge of their Woodcraft program. The first Boy Scout troop in Plymouth, Indiana was started on August 21, 1912 by Judge Alvin Marsh who had been trained

by Daniel Carter Beard. I do not have any information on when the earliest troop was founded in the South Bend or Mishawaka areas. The troop at Plymouth must have been one of the earliest troops founded in the area.

In 1910 President William Howard Taft invited representatives of the Boy Scouts of America to the White House to report on the status of the Boy Scout program. The tradition has continued since that date. On June 16, 1916 the United States Congress granted the Boy Scouts of America a federal charter. The National Chief of the Order of the Arrow and several other youth representing the various parts of the Scouting program are selected each year to present the annual report of the Boy Scouts of America to the President of the United States.

By 1920 the Scouting program had spread throughout the countries of the free world and the first World Scout Jamboree was held that year in London, England. The closing program of the World Jamboree was held on August 7, 1920. As Baden-Powell approached the speaker's stand one of the Scouts spontaneously proclaimed: "We, the Scouts of the World, salute you, Sir Robert Baden-Powell – Chief Scout of the World!" Then: "Suddenly, the standard bearers in front of the dais (speakers platform) dipped their nations' flags in his honor and from all sides, the cheering of the crowd, of his Scouts, engulfed him. Chief Scout of the World! B-P (Baden Powell) hesitated, taken completely aback. As he slowly raised his hand in the Scout sign, the cheering abruptly ceased. There were a few seconds of impressive silence before his voice rang out with its accustomed force to the farthest corners of the building." In his closing remarks he stated: "... If it be your will, let us go forth from here determined that we will develop among ourselves and our boys that comradeship, through the world-wide spirit of the Scout brotherhood, so that we may help develop peace and happiness in the world and good will among men. Brother Scouts, answer me – will you join me in this endeavor? A thundering shout answered him: 'Yes!'

In Troop 555 we want our Scouts to realize and appreciate that they are part of this world wide brotherhood of Scouting – that they are Scouting brothers to all Scouts whether they are in their own troop, Scouts from other local troops, other states, or other countries all Scouts and Scouters are part of the Brotherhood of Scouting and they are all committed to the same Scouting ideals. Just recognizing and accepting that fact will help to fulfill several points of the Scout law in the life of the individual Scout.

The Boy Scouts of America created the Silver Buffalo award which is the highest award the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America can bestow on an individual. The first two Silver Buffalo Awards were presented in 1926. The first award went to Baden-Powell and the second to the unknown Scout who guided William D. Boyce in the London fog in 1906. The inscription on the second award reads: "To the Unknown Scout Whose Faithfulness in the Performance of the Daily Good Turn Brought the Scout Movement to the United States of America."

Baden-Powell continued to actively serve as Chief Scout of the World for the rest of his life. He died on January 8, 1941 at his home in Nyeri, Kenya and is buried there in Kenya. His grave is marked by a simple Scout trail sign symbol meaning: "I have gone home."

When the Boy Scout program was organized in the United States the first Honorary President of the Boy Scouts of America was William H. Taft and the first Honorary Vice-President was Theodore Roosevelt. The first Chief Scout was Ernest Thompson Seton and the first National Scout Commissioners were: Daniel Carter Beard, Adjutant General William Verbeck, and Colonel Peter S. Bomous. The first chairman of the National Executive Board was Colin H. Livingstone. James E. West was the first Executive Secretary and James West also became the first Chief National Scout Executive.

Another man who fulfilled a very significant and vital role in Scouting for many years was William Hillcourt. Bill Hillcourt was from Denmark and became a Boy Scout in 1911 at ten years old. From the date he first became a Scout through the rest of his life he was very active in the Scouting program. At the age of 23 he authored his first novel. He came to the United States in 1926 as a roving reporter for a Danish newspaper. Through a chance meeting on an elevator with Chief Scout Executive James West he was asked to write a report on American Scouting. Although much of his report was complementary of American Scouting he criticized the American program for not using the patrol method more effectively. After Mr. West reviewed William Hillcourt's report he asked him if he would write a handbook for patrol leaders. William accepted the job and his book: Handbook for Patrol Leaders was published in 1929. From that time on until he retired on August 1, 1965 Bill Hillcourt worked on the National Staff of the Boy Scouts of America. He was responsible for developing program ideas and wrote several Scout Handbooks. Also, since 1932 he wrote many articles for Boys Life magazine under the pen name: Green Bar Bill. He retired from the National Staff on August 1, 1965 but in 1977 he came out of retirement to write a new Scout Handbook which was published on February 8, 1979. No other man besides Baden-Powell himself had such a great impact on the Scouting program. He was called the Scoutmaster to the world. William Hillcourt died on November 9, 1992 while on a Scouting tour in Europe. He never really retired from the program.

Another man who was very important to the Scouting program was Ernest Thompson Seton. He was born in Scotland on August 14, 1860 and immigrated to America as a youth in the 1880s. His fascination with the wilderness led him to become a naturalist, an artist, and prolific author. Through his talents he influenced both youth and adults. Seton established a youth organization known as the Woodcraft Indians. His background of outdoor skills and interest in youth made him a logical choice to be selected as the first Chief Scout of the BSA in 1910. He wrote many volumes on Scout-craft and became an integral part of the new Boy Scout program in the United States. Earnest Thompson Seton died on October 23, 1946 in New Mexico. The Earnest Thompson Seton museum is located on Philmont Scout Ranch at Cimarron, New Mexico.

Daniel Carter Beard was another very important man in the early days of Scouting in the United States. He was a woodsman, illustrator, and naturalist. He represented the pioneering spirit of the Boy Scouts of America. He was born on June 21, 1850 so he was already 60 years old when the Boy Scout program was founded in the United States. He was the founder of an organization he called the Sons of Daniel Boone but he merged that group with the Boy Scouts of America when Scouting was founded. As the first National Scout Commissioner he helped design the Boy Scout uniform, and introduced elements of the First Class Scout badge. He was known affectionately as "Uncle Dan" to Scouts and leaders. He is remembered as a colorful figure

dressed in buckskin and was instrumental in starting and perpetuating the program in the United States. Daniel Beard also founded Boy Scout Troop 1 of Flushing, New York which is believed to be the oldest continuously chartered Boy Scout troop in the United States. He also directed the Wood Craft program at Culver Military Academy at Culver, Indiana. Earnest Thompson Seton also helped with the Wood Craft program at Culver. Daniel Carter Beard died on June 11, 1941.

James E. West was another very noteworthy individual. He was born on May 16, 1876. He was appointed the first Chief Scout Executive of the Boy Scouts of America in 1911. He was orphaned as a youth and was physically handicapped but he had the perseverance to graduate from law school and became a successful attorney. That same determination gave him the impetus to help build Scouting into the largest and most effective youth organization in the world. He retired in 1943 and was recognized as the true architect of the Boy Scouts of America. He died on May 15, 1948.

Waite Phillips should be remembered for his great unparalleled contribution to Scouting. Waite Phillips was born on January 19, 1883. He founded the Phillips Petroleum Company and became very wealthy. Waite owned a large ranch near Cimarron, New Mexico which he called Philmont Ranch. He also owned an office building in Tulsa, Oklahoma. In 1941 he donated Philmont Ranch and his Tulsa, Oklahoma office building to the Boy Scouts of America. At the time of his donation the estimated value of those properties was over \$5,000,000. Also at the time of his donation Philmont Ranch covered 127,395 acres. With later land acquisitions Philmont Scout Ranch now covers 216 square miles and is the largest youth camp in the world. In speaking of the Boy Scout organization Waite Phillips said: "I am impressed with the responsibility of this generation to adequately train its youth – physically, mentally and morally – to meet the problems they must face in the future. In my opinion, there is nothing more valuable to this generation than the enlargement of the scouting program, which develops self-reliance and dependability. It always has been my belief that the best contribution to that kind of development is by living close to nature and through learning to live in the great out-of-doors." Waite Phillips died on January 27, 1964 and his legacy is best summed up by one of his most cherished epigraphs: "The only things we keep permanently are those we give away."

This discussion on the history of Scouting would not be complete without mentioning the Order of the Arrow and its two founders: E. Urner Goodman and Carroll A. Edson. In the early days of Scouting boys were so eager to become Scouts that they sometimes set out to recruit their own adult leaders themselves. That was how E. Urner Goodman became involved with Scouting. One day a young Scout named Gilson M. Talmadge and a friend came to Urner Goodman's house and asked him to join their troop as Scoutmaster. Urner Goodman accepted the Scout's offer and became the Scoutmaster of Boy Scout Troop 1 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on May 18, 1912 at the age of 21. E. Urner Goodman was born on May 15, 1891. When he accepted the Scoutmaster position he was a teacher at Potter school and was working on his graduate degree. He soon became more involved in the Scouting program and became a Scout Executive. Urner was asked to be the camp director of the Treasure Island Boy Scout camp for the summer of 1915. Carroll A. Edson was appointed his assistant camp director. Goodman and Edson were both 24 years old at the time of the founding of the Order of the Arrow.

Urner and Carroll began making plans for the coming summer camp season and decided they wanted to have some way of recognizing Scouts who were the most proficient campers and who best represented the ideals of Scouting. They also wanted to have a way to perpetuate the traditions of their camp. To accomplish those purposes they decided to form an honored campers society and decided the campers themselves would elect those who would be allowed to become members of the society. While they were making their plans they had no idea or intention that their honored campers society would spread from camp to camp and eventually all across the nation. Carroll Edson attended a meeting where Chief Scout Ernest Thompson Seton spoke about the success he had with boys using Indian ceremonies in his Woodcraft Indians program. Treasure Island is in the Delaware River. The island and surrounding area had been the land of the Lenni-Lenape Indians, also called the Delaware, Indians. They decided to use a Delaware Indian theme for their honored campers society and called the new society the Wimachtendienk which means brotherhood in the Lenni-Lenape language. Soon they added two more Indian words to the society's name making the full name: Wimachtendienk, Wingolauchsik, Witahemui meaning: Brotherhood of Cheerful Service. Those words still describe the guiding principles of the organization. Along with their Indian theme the arrow, which signifies leadership, was selected as a symbol for the society and the organization became known as the Order of the Arrow. Today the Order of the Arrow is also called Scouting's National Honor Society. Urner Goodman continued his career as a professional Scouter and in 1931 he was appointed National Director of Program. He held that position for more than 20 years. He retired from professional Scouting in 1951 but continued serving Scouting and the Order of the Arrow until his death on March 13, 1980.

Carroll A. Edson was born on December 29, 1891. He was also a teacher and planned to work for the YMCA but he became a Scoutmaster and became interested in serving in professional Scouting. He was hired by the National Office of the Boy Scouts of America in 1916 and was given responsibility for the Nautical Scouting program which later became the Sea Scouts. Carroll served in the Army during World War I as a second lieutenant of infantry. In March, 1919 he was commissioned as a captain in the Infantry Reserve. In 1921 he became district executive for the South Shore District of the Chicago Council. Carroll eventually left professional Scouting and became a manager in the Social Security Administration. He was called to active duty in the Army in 1940 and served as an instructor at the Army's Command and General Staff school. He was released from the Army in 1945 at the rank of Colonel. He was very active in the Congregational Christian Church. He continued to serve Scouting and the Order of the Arrow throughout his life. He died on October 25, 1986 at the age of 94.

The Order of the Arrow was first recognized as part of the Boy Scout program in 1934. At that time the Order of the Arrow was approved for use by all the councils. However the Order of the Arrow administrative structure was not fully integrated into the national Boy Scout administration until 1948 when the National Council decided to make the program fully an official part of the Boy Scouts of America.

From its inception to the present the Order of the Arrow remains dedicated to its founding principles: recognizing Scouts who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives, promoting Scout camping, and fostering brotherhood and cheerful service both in and outside of Scouting. The Order of the Arrow provides many untold man hours of service to help improve

and maintain the council camps. It also provides leadership and program training to Scouts and adult leaders at all levels from local to national and provides a forum for fellowship and the sharing of ideas for Order of the Arrow members at district, council, state, and national levels.

In his speech at the 25th anniversary national conference Urner Goodman said: “The Order of the Arrow is a thing of the spirit. The things of the spirit count: Brotherhood – in a day when there is too much hatred at home and abroad. Cheerfulness – in a day when the pessimists have the floor. Service – in a day when millions are interested only in getting and grasping rather than giving.”

There are three levels of membership (also called honors) in the Order of the Arrow: Ordeal, Brotherhood, and Vigil. A Scout who is elected or an adult who is selected for membership in the Order of the Arrow (OA) must complete an ordeal to become an actual member of the OA so the first level of membership is the Ordeal level. After an Ordeal member has been in the OA for ten months he or she may meet certain requirements and become a Brotherhood member. After a Brotherhood member has served at least two years at the Brotherhood level he or she may be considered for the Vigil Honor. Our OA lodge (Sakima Lodge) may select only 7 members per year for the Vigil Honor. Generally 4 youth and 3 adults are selected. The Vigil Honor is awarded for outstanding and exemplary service and leadership to Scouting, the Order of the Arrow, and the community. The selection is made by a secret Vigil selection committee composed only of youth. The selections are reviewed and approved by the Council Scout Executive and then are submitted to the National Order of the Arrow Committee for final review and approval.

Three members of Troop 555 have been selected for the Vigil Honor. They include: Dennis Laffin, 2003(adult); Zack Dylewski, 2007 (youth) and Joe O'Rourke, 2008 (youth).

Local Council History and Council Camps

Prior to April 1, 1972 our council was known as Tri-Valley Council and our Order of the Arrow Lodge was called White Beaver Lodge 182. On April 1, 1972 Tri-Valley Council was merged with the Pottawattomi Council to our West and the Pioneer Trails Council to our East to form Northern Indiana Council. Carl Griffin of Michigan City was the first Council President and Robert Reuter of South Bend was the first Council Commissioner. In 1973 our council merged with the Southern part of the South West Michigan Council so the Michigan towns of Niles, Buchanan, Berrien Springs, and Dowagiac all became part of our council and our local district name was changed from White Beaver district to Algonquian district. The council name was changed to its present LaSalle Council name and our Order of the Arrow Lodge name was changed to Sakima Lodge 573. Prior to our merger in 1972 the Pottawattomi council's summer camp was camp Topenebee located South of Michigan City, Indiana and the Pioneer Trails Council summer camp was Camp Pioneer Trails which was located 5 miles South of Cromwell, Indiana on Gordy Lake. After the merger for the first year or so all three summer camps were operated. Camp Pioneer Trails was eventually sold and the council stopped operating summer

camp at Camp Topenebee but that camp still belongs to the council and is used for weekend camping, training, and other programs.

Our council summer camp is Camp Tamarack on Wood Lake Scout Reservation which is located South of Jones, Michigan. Camp Tamarack began operation as Tri-Valley Council's summer camp in 1956. I first camped there in 1957 as a Cub Scout. My first year there at summer camp as a Boy Scout was in 1959. Our council's summer camp prior to acquiring the 500 acre Wood Lake property was Camp Bryan which was located on Little Fish Lake about 10 miles East of Dowagiac, Michigan. Camp Bryan had been the council's summer camp since 1923. When camp Tamarack was first dedicated camp staff members carried a torch from the final campfire at camp Bryan to light the first campfire at Camp Tamarack. Jim Curtis was one of those torch bearers. Camp Tamarack's 50th anniversary celebration was held in 2006 the week my troop, Troop 555, was at summer camp. Our troop was in charge of the Friday night closing campfire. We asked Jim Curtis to carry a torch to light our closing campfire that night in commemoration of Camp Tamarack's 50 years of operation. He was proud and honored to do it. Jim has remained active in Scouting all those years.

I would like to give some recognition for the first ranger of Wood Lake Scout Reservation. His name was Rene Vanderheyden. He was a real woodsman type of guy and was always willing to help troops with whatever they needed. He used to drive around camp in his red jeep. He had a dog named Gilbert who was a cross between an Irish Setter and a St. Bernard. Gilbert was a very large but gentle dog. He loved the kids and the kids loved to play with him. Gilbert was also a very smart dog. He used to set in the drivers seat of Rene's jeep with his front paws on the steering wheel like he was ready to drive away. One time I recall seeing Gilbert trying to unscrew the top off of a large water jug presumably so he could get a drink of water. It was said Gilbert was killed when a hunter mistook him for a deer. When Rene used to greet the troops arriving to camp at Wood Lake he would always say to the Scouts "This camp belongs to you Scouts" and because it belongs to the Scouts he encouraged them to take good care of it and appreciate it.

History of Granger, Indiana Troop 555

Troop 555 was first chartered in 1989 to Harris Civil Township and met at the Harris Township Volunteer Fire Department on Bittersweet Road. After the new fire station was built on the corner of Elm Road and Indiana 23 the troop moved to that location. In 2006 the sponsorship was changed to St. Pius X Catholic Church however the troop currently meets at Timberland Bible Church just south of the intersection of Cleveland Road and Indiana 23. Troop 555 evolved from Troop 515 which was chartered to St. Monica's Catholic Church in Mishawaka. Our troop has never been very large. We have generally operated with three patrols. The names of Troop 515's three patrols were: Bear, Snake, and Raccoon patrols. However, toward the time we transferred the troop we were down to about five Scouts and basically only had one patrol which I believe was the Raccoon patrol. It had become hard to recruit new members in the St. Monica's area and we learned of an opportunity to move the troop to Granger so we decided to transfer the troop there. Troop 515 had existed for many years at St. Monica's. I remember knowing Scouts

from Troop 515 when I was a Boy Scout in the early 1960s. Troop 515 had a two color neckerchief which was sky blue and white. The white part was in front of the Scout and the blue part was against his back. When we transferred the troop to Troop 555 we changed the neckerchief but we decided to keep the sky blue color from the 515 neckerchief. We decided on a single color sky or turquoise blue neckerchief. We also have a T shirt of the same color which we use for our class B uniform. Tim Richardson created the signal tower design on the front of the T shirt in 1993. Soon after we began wearing those T shirts at summer camp the camp staff began calling our troop members smurfs and the name has stuck so we are affectionately known as the smurf troop.

When we first moved the troop to Granger we started out only with the Raccoon patrol but we soon recruited enough new members to form a second patrol. The name Bob Cat was chosen for that patrol. About 1991 the Bob Cat patrol name was changed to the Bat patrol. It appears that Joe Smith was the first Patrol Leader of the Bat Patrol but he soon became Senior Patrol Leader and Bryce Cone then became Patrol Leader of the Bats. Bryce is credited with having written the Bat's patrol call which is still in use today. The Raccoon patrol was started when we were Troop 515 and Ora Lane was the first Patrol Leader. By September of 1993 we had enough Scouts to form a third patrol so Paul Richardson told the kids they had to pick an animal name for their patrol. The Scouts of the new third patrol chose Hell Benders as their patrol's name. At first there was some objection to the Hell Benders name but the Scouts showed us a Hell Bender is a type of lizard, shown in the Scout Handbook so the name was accepted. Nick Austin was the first Patrol Leader of the Hell Bender patrol. A Troop roster from May, 1995 shows we had a Weasels patrol. The Raccoon patrol name was apparently changed to Weasels but I could not find a record of the date. The Weasels patrol name was changed to the Fighting Ferrets patrol by January, 1997. That is the earliest date of the roster I have listing the Ferrets patrol name. C. T. Ewald was the first Patrol Leader of the Fighting Ferrets.

Our South Side Summer Camp Operation

For several years when we were still troop 515 we used to operate a self-reliant camp on the South side of Wood Lake for our troop's summer camp. The South side of Wood Lake is almost entirely undeveloped woods. We did all of our own cooking there instead of eating in the dining hall on the North side of the lake. There was an artesian well near the lake and that was our water source. The water from the well was always cold and pure. We had our own waterfront on the South side and made a pioneering pier out into the lake. We also made canoe and paddle racks and we had a large wooden flag pole close to the lake which was probably at least 50 feet tall. We ran our own troop swims over there. We also worked on a lot of basic Scouting skills in our campsites. Our Scouts would canoe across the lake to participate in program and campfires on the North side of the camp. We had developed a number of small patrol sites back in the woods and we had a separate leader's site for the adult leaders. Our Scouts really liked that style of camping. Eventually the council declared the South side of Wood Lake a "wilderness area" and would not allow on the ground wood fires to be built there so we stopped camping on the South side of Wood Lake and went back to the North side for summer camp where we eat in the dining hall with the other troops.

Paul Richardson's Service as Scoutmaster

Paul Richardson was the first Scoutmaster of Troop 555. He became the Scoutmaster of Troop 515 in October, 1970 when his son Lee Richardson became old enough to join Boy Scouts. Prior to that Paul had been active as a committee member in Cub Scout Pack 515. Paul retired as Scoutmaster in 2006 after 35 years of service as Scoutmaster. Paul continues to serve the troop on the troop committee and still uses his pickup truck and trailer to help us haul the troop's camping gear. Paul decided before becoming Scoutmaster that he needed to learn exactly how a troop should be ran and organized so he took all the basic leader training and even took Wood Badge training in August, 1970. Wood Badge is the most advanced adult leader training and when Paul took the course back in 1970 it was a week long outdoor training experience. The course provided good training for him in outdoor camping skills, scout-craft, patrol method, troop organization, and leadership skills. Robert Reuter was the Course Director of Paul Richardson's Wood Badge course. Bob Reuter was a highly knowledgeable and respected Scouter in this area for many years. He served as director of several Wood Badge courses and served as Council Commissioner. Paul's Wood Badge training had a great amount of influence on his service as Scoutmaster.

Aside from serving as Scoutmaster Paul served Scouting in several other capacities. After completing Wood Badge he and his fellow course members were challenged to use their newly gained knowledge for the benefit of the Scouts of the council. They decided to do that by forming a youth leader training committee and run a youth leader training program to train patrol leaders and senior patrol leaders for all the troops in the council. They called the new training program the Brownsea Adventure. Irv Olsen a professor from Valparaiso University wrote the first training manual for the course. The manual was revised several times and eventually the course used a National Council issued training manual. The first Brownsea Adventure training course was held at Wood Lake in 1971 with 49 training participants. The course was run for a total of 13 years and Paul Richardson served actively on the Brownsea Committee for all those years. He was the chairman of the committee for several years. During the years the Brownsea Adventure course ran approximately 680 Scouts were trained in leadership and outdoor camping skills. Paul also served as the Scout Roundtable Commissioner. He has also done unit leader training and has served either on committees to plan camporees, or as the chairman of camporee planning committees. Paul is a World War II Army infantry veteran who was in combat in Germany. For his distinguished service to Scouting he has received the District Award of Merit, the St. George Award and the Silver Beaver Award. He is also a member of the Order of the Arrow.

Throughout his service as Scoutmaster he was always and still is committed to the principles of boy leadership, and the patrol method in the operation of the troop. He believed the troop should be a year around all weather self-reliant camping troop. He believes our troop's patrols should camp in distinctive patrol sites in the woods separate from the other patrols and the adult leaders. He also believed the patrols should cook their meals on wood fires in their patrol sites. All of that is part of the Patrol Method of operation which was so strongly advocated by Scouting's founders. We have always camped where there is plenty of firewood and where wood fires are permitted. Paul always set high standards for the troop. He has been an inspiration to many

Scouts and other adult leaders over the years and is highly respected by other Scout leaders all over the council.

Pioneering in the Troop

Pioneering skills have become almost a lost art with many troops these days but pioneering has always been one of our Scouts favorite activities and our troop is known for its high level of skill in pioneering. Pioneering is basically making things by lashing poles together. We use pioneering skills to build things such as signal towers, bridges, monkey bridges, gate ways, tables, Chippewa kitchens, and catapults just to give a few examples of some of the things our Scouts have built. Pioneering was one of Paul Richardson's favorite activities for the troop and it has been mine as well. When I was on the camp staff back in the early 70s at Camp Tamarack I was responsible for much of the scout-craft and pioneering programs of the camp. We have always felt pioneering has many benefits for the Scouts. It requires a coordinated group effort to accomplish a large pioneering project. This gives our boy leaders a good opportunity to exercise their leadership and planning skills. Also, the Scouts learn how to work together during the project. They are able to make use of many basic skills they have learned in order to construct something impressive, useful, and that they can enjoy. If we just teach Scouts, knots, lashings, and how to use woods tools but don't give them opportunities to use those skills they will soon become bored and disinterested but when you give them the opportunity to build something big and real they have a sense of accomplishment and pride and their interest remains high. Doing things such as pioneering projects has been one of the reasons for our success. We are basically following a method taught by Bade-Powell at the first Brownsea Island Scout camp. He would tell the Scouts a story and demonstrate a skill to them. The Scouts were then given the opportunity to practice the skill and to use it in some competition or activity that required proficient use of the skill.

While Paul Richardson was Scoutmaster we used to build signal towers, monkey bridges and other pioneering projects at camporees and Scout Shows. After seeing another troop try unsuccessfully to run a zip-line off a tower they built we decided to try it ourselves. Our zip-line worked well and the kids had a lot of fun with it. Once we even built a zip line which extended out into Wood Lake when we used to camp on the South Side of Wood Lake for summer camp. Later we attached plywood to the side of our tower and used it as a rappelling wall and that worked well too. We heard the council was considering building a climbing wall at camp Tamarack. That got me thinking about building a climbing wall and attaching it to the side of one of our signal towers. Gene Dylewski was a Scout at that time and was very handy with wood working. I told Gene about my idea and asked him if he thought he could build a climbing wall with hand hold blocks made out of wood. Gene took up the challenge and built a climbing wall 24 feet tall and 8 feet wide. He also made the hand and foothold blocks and attached them to the wall. He and his Dad, Gene senior, designed the wall so it could be attached to our pioneering signal tower. We ordered climbing helmets, mountain ropes, carabiners and other equipment to be able to safely operate a climbing wall. We tried out the climbing wall and it worked very well.

Then we got the idea of running the zip-line off one side of the tower and attaching the climbing wall to another side and to set all those things up along with a few other pioneering things at the

Granger town festival. The other things included a swing set, rope climb, sea saw, cargo net climb, and a merry-go-round all lashed together and made with pioneering poles. We set up at the Granger town festival for several years and charged kids a nominal fee/donation to go on those things with our Scouts and several adults supervising and making sure they were doing everything safely. Eventually we moved to the Mishawaka town festival and set up there for several years. This was a big attraction for our Scouts. They enjoyed building the 30 foot tower and all the other pioneering things. They also enjoyed going on the zip-line and climbing wall themselves and helping other kids do those things. That was our main money earning project for several years. We almost always attracted media attention when we were setup at either the Granger or Mishawaka festivals. Our troop was either on TV, in the newspaper or interviewed on the radio or a combination of those things about every time we were setup. I went to Philmont in 2000 to take the COPE instructor and inspector course to gain more knowledge and a certification to run those kinds of things. Eventually insurance restrictions were tightened and we were not able to get liability insurance so we were no longer able to setup at the festivals like we had been doing.

In 1999 the council held a council wide camporee at Grissom Air Force Base near Peru, Indiana about 80 miles or so from our troop's location in Granger. They asked us to bring our signal tower and climbing wall to the camporee and run it as part of the program. We pre-built most of the tower in top and bottom sections so we could haul it to the camporee. Our Scouts had the tower assembled, set up and ready to operate in just a few hours time. We also set up several other smaller things for activities there. Our climbing wall tower was a big attraction at the camporee and about 500 Scouts climbed it there.

Troop Leadership After Paul Richardson's Retirement

After Paul Richardson retired as Scoutmaster in 2006 Greg Olson became Scoutmaster and served for several months. He had been an Assistant Scoutmaster prior to becoming Scoutmaster. Greg remains active on the troop committee and has always been very supportive of the troop. Greg works for A M General Corp. and was able to borrow a military training Hummer for use on our campouts. While serving as Scoutmaster he maintained the high standards the troop was accustomed to under Paul Richardson's leadership. Greg is also a member of the Order of the Arrow.

Gene Dylewski became the Troop's Scoutmaster in 2007. Gene had been in the Troop as a youth. During his time in the troop as a youth he served as Patrol Leader of the Bat patrol and he served as the troop's Senior Patrol Leader. Gene was an outstanding Scout and was awarded his Eagle Scout badge on October 21, 2001. Gene was well prepared to assume the Scoutmaster's duties and he is doing a great job. He has always been interested in Pioneering and scoutcraft skills. He is also very skilled in working with wood. After he turned 18 and left the troop he earned a degree from Purdue. Gene remains committed to the same ideas of self-reliant patrol method camping and boy leadership that has been the hallmark of our troop for many years. Gene is a Brotherhood member of the Order of the Arrow.

Our troop has been blessed with variety of talented people who use their talents to help the troop. One of those individuals is Tim Richardson. Tim is Paul Richardson's son. He was a Scout in Troop 515 and was still a Scout when we made the transition to Troop 555. Tim was Patrol Leader of the Snake Patrol in Troop 515 and became Senior Patrol Leader of Troop 555 after the transfer. Tim was awarded the Eagle Scout rank on September 7, 1991. Tim was always very artistic. After he graduated from high school he earned his degree in theater from Indiana University at South Bend. Tim serves the troop as an Assistant Scoutmaster. His avocation has been as an independent film maker. He serves as the troop's skit master helping the troop with the skits or more accurately, mini-plays that the troop performs at the Friday night closing campfire at summer camp or at camporees. He usually provides the scripts, props, costumes, and art work. He also coaches the Scouts as they practice for the skit. Our Troop has been asked several times to organize the campfire program at district and council camporees. Tim and several of his friends who help him with his movies have been very helpful in preparing for those campfires by helping to organize the campfire, preparing the stage area and operating the sound and lighting.

Finally, I'll tell about my own Scouting history and experience. In 1971 I was discharged from the Army and resumed work on completing my Psychology degree at Indiana University at South Bend. As summer was approaching I began looking for a summer job and saw an advertisement for a job with the Boy Scouts. I went over to the Scout office to see what the job was about and was told they were looking for someone to serve as a Camp Commissioner at summer camp. I interviewed for the job and was hired. The council sent me to National Camp School to learn the Camp Commissioner's job. I served on the camp staff that summer and in the summers of 1972 and 1973 as a Camp Commissioner. Since that time I have volunteered several times to serve on the camp staff for a week or two at a time. The Camp Commissioner's job has changed from what it was when I served as a Camp Commissioner. In the years that I served on the staff for the whole summer the Camp Commissioners were responsible for the Program Director's function, counseling all the scout-craft related merit badges, helping young Scouts with lower rank requirements, doing campsite inspections, and generally helping Scouts and adult leaders have a fun and successful summer camp experience. We also organized and lead outpost hiking, camping, and canoe trips. There were two other Camp Commissioners besides myself. We had a lot of work to do but it was the most enjoyable job I ever had.

I met Paul Richardson at summer camp in 1971. I was favorably impressed with Troop 515 and how well they ran and used boy leadership. Paul invited me to their court of honor after summer camp and later to go on campouts with the troop. That's how I got started working with Troop 515 which later became Troop 555. After summer camp in 1972 the council hired me as a Para-Professional. My responsibilities included organizing Cub Packs and Scout Troops in the inner city areas of South Bend. I also helped with training of newly recruited adult leaders. I recruited several of our camp staff members and Eagle Scouts to help me with running programs for the new units we organized. We were somewhat successful in organizing the units but the adult leaders didn't stay active very long so most of those units were short-lived.

I became active on the district commissioner staff and served in a number of positions. Eventually I served as the District Commissioner and I served part of a term as Acting District

Chairman for the White Beaver district because the elected District Chairman resigned after serving only for a few months. I served on the Browsea Adventure youth leader training committee for 12 years beginning in 1972. I think it was toward the mid to late 70s when I became an Assistant Scoutmaster in Troop 515 and I continue to serve as an Assistant Scoutmaster in Troop 555. For several years we ran high adventure programs almost every year for the troop and I was responsible for organizing and leading those trips. Most of those trips were canoe camping trips in Canada but we did one hiking trip in the North Cascades in Washington State. I have also served on camporee planning committees for district and council camporees and I served as committee chairman for a district camporee.

I completed Wood Badge training in 1977. I completed the COPE instructor and inspector's course at Philmont in 2000. I believe, it was in the year 2000 that I became more involved with the Order of the Arrow when I was appointed Chapter Advisor for White Beaver Chapter. I believe it was in 2001 that I was appointed as the Lodge Leadership Development Training Advisor. I attended the National Order of the Arrow Conferences held in 2002, 2004 and 2006 and have taken training courses at each of those conferences in subjects such as: train the trainers, advanced leadership seminars, and running shows. I served as our lodge's contingent leader for the National Order of the Arrow Conference in 2004. In 2003 I attended the National Order of the Arrow's Indian Summer program. In 2005 I attended the Carolina's Indian Seminar sponsored by Eswau Huppeday Lodge and I also attended the 90th Anniversary Celebration of the Order of the Arrow at Treasure Island Scout Camp. I was on the first boat that went over to the island with all the national youth officers on board.

I have received the following awards for my work in Scouting: God and Country (as a youth), District Award of Merit, the George Award from the Mishawka Enterprise-Record newspaper, Silver Beaver, the OA's Leadership in Service Award, the Vigil Honor in the Order of the Arrow, and the Order of the Arrow National Founders Award.

Resources and Benefactors for the Troop

Over the years our troop has benefited greatly from the good will and help from a number of sources. The parents and family members of our Scouts have always been very helpful providing transportation for the Scouts and helping with special projects from time to time. Several people who I believe wish to remain anonymous have helped the troop financially from time to time. Some of those people are former troop members and some are business owners or retired business owners who have been favorably impressed with our troop and the accomplishments of our Scouts. All of their support is greatly appreciated and encouraging to us as we try to bring the best and most meaningful program we can to our Scouts.

Our former Scouts who are in college or are working visit us occasionally and we some times ask them to help with certain activities or projects. They are always glad to help us out when they can and we are always glad to see them.

If we need a large trailer and truck to haul our pioneering tower or a load of pioneering wood there are people who will help us do it. We appreciate the help and cooperation of the many people who have helped make things possible for our Scouts.

The Sherwoods of Edwardsburg, Michigan have allowed the troop to camp in the woods on their farm property for many years. We are always grateful to them for the use of their property.

Z. B Falcons Conservation Club has been another great resource for the troop. Z. B. Falcons Conservation Club is a 180 acre property located at the corner of Roosevelt and Myrtle Roads, South of South Bend. The club has allowed our troop and all other Scouting groups to camp on their property free of charge for many years. We have also ran camporees, Cub Scout day camps, Klondike derbies, and training programs at Z. B. Falcons. Scout groups who want to inquire about camping at Z. B. Falcons can contact Mike Wegenka at 574-287-9580. Z. B. Falcons has allowed our troop to develop several patrol campsites on their property. Our troop also tries to keep the trails and access roads open at Z. B. Falcons. After bad storms there are sometimes fallen trees so some of us adults use our chain saws to cut the fallen trees out of the way. Our Scouts help by stacking wood and making brush piles. A couple of our Scouts have done their Eagle service projects at Z. B. Falcons. The club has honored Paul Richardson by naming a campsite after him. It is called Camp Richardson. Thank you, Mike and Z. B. Falcons, for all your support of Scouting and our troop for many years. You and the club have made it possible for hundreds of Scouts to have a lot of good and memorable camping experiences.

Over the years we have also used the council owned Rice Woods Camp property because it is a good place to do self-reliant camping using the patrol method. Rice Woods is located near Koontz Lake, Indiana. Clarence Shively has been the caretaker of that property for years and has always been very helpful and supportive of our style of camping. Clarence cuts a lot of fire wood at Rice Woods and has it disbursed around the property for the benefit of troops camping there. One of his big projects has been establishing the Boy Scout History display at the Marshal County Historical Museum. Clarence often visits us when we camp at Rice Woods and updates us on his progress with the Scout Museum display. He is very knowledgeable about Scouting history in this area and we always enjoy visiting with him. Unfortunately, another of Clarence's big concerns over the last year or so has been to keep Rice Woods from being sold since the council has proposed selling the property ostensibly for the purpose of establishing a camp maintenance fund for the remaining council owned camp properties. Troop 555 regards the Rice Woods property as a very desirable and an important camp resource for our troop's camping program. Scout groups may contact the local LaSalle Council Scout Service center at 574-289-0337 to arrange to camp at Rice Woods. For more information about Rice Woods or the Marshal County Museum Scout History display you may contact Clarence Shively at: 574-936-9495. Thank you, Clarence for all your efforts and hard work at Rice Woods and the Scout History display at the Museum.

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