

Green Bar 4 Adults

Excerpts from the Green Bar Web Site

The aim of the Boy Scouts is to supplement the various existing educational agencies, and to promote the ability in boys to do things for themselves and others. It is not the aim to set up a new organization to parallel in its purposes others already established. The opportunity is afforded these organizations, however, to introduce into their programs unique features appealing to interests which are universal among boys. The method is summed up in the term Scoutcraft, and is a combination of observation, deduction, and handiness, or the ability to do things. Scoutcraft includes instruction in Safety First methods, First Aid, Life Saving, Tracking, Signaling, Cycling, Nature Study, Seamanship, Campcraft, Woodcraft, Chivalry, Patriotism, and other subjects. This is accomplished in games and team play, and is pleasure, not work for the boy. All that is needed is the out of doors, a group of boys, and a competent leader.

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This section of the Green Bar Web Site is designed to get adults involved in Scouting to think about what Scouting is, and concentrate their efforts on doing *real* Scouting instead of getting caught up in politics, social theory, or other distractions.

Scouting is not an experiment, and it doesn't take a degree in education to understand it. It is a simple concept. It is only difficult to understand when it is muted and distorted by psychobabble. Here you will find the bare bones truth about how Scouting works, what an adult leader is supposed to do, and all that other stuff.

The Aims of Scouting

Our Aim Is True

The aim of the Scouting movement is to build youth into quality citizens by:

- Building Character
- Fostering Citizenship
- Promoting Fitness

Each individual Scouting organization specifies these aims differently, but in general, these are the things Scouting wants to accomplish - regardless of the type of program, age group, or country of origin.

Lets look at each of these aims in turn for a little more explanation:

Building Character

Character is a pretty generic term. It means the combination of qualities or features that distinguish one person or group from another. So, what do we mean when we say Scouting aims to build character? Well, we're talking about the qualities of a person that makes him self-sufficient, motivated, charitable, concerned for others, and willing to accept the responsibilities placed before him.

Scouting aims to build self-confidence, problem solving, compassion, acceptance of personal responsibility, and leadership skills within each Scout. This allows the individual boy well prepared for life in an adult world. How Scouting does this relates to the methods of Scouting, so we won't go into that here.

Fostering Citizenship

Regardless of what country a Scout lives in, there are qualities and responsibilities expected of every citizen. In the United States, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship are clearly described in the Bill of Rights. Scouting aims to teach each Scout the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and provide him with real experience in citizenship.

The end result of such training should be individuals who know what it means to be a citizen, what is expected of them, and what they can expect in return. They are prepared to participate in society and in many cases become leaders in their community or profession.

Promote Fitness

Being fit means, of course, much more than being muscular or athletic. Scouting believes that quality citizens with good character should also maintain a good level of physical and mental fitness. That doesn't mean Scouting expects every Scout to

be athletic and scholarly. What it means is that a Scout learns to challenge himself physically and mentally, and to remain fit in order to meet that challenge.

Scouts experience a high level of activity, and are challenged to do many things that require physical and mental fitness. Through these experiences, the Scout learns to enjoy being fit. He learns the dangers of becoming sedentary and complacent, and of being tempted by lifestyles that lead to mental and physical weakness.

Your Aim Helps

Scouting's aims represent the ultimate goal of the organization for each Scout. The aims aren't the path we need to take, or the blueprint for our success. The aims are the end result, the destination of our journey. If we compare building a Scout with building a house, the aims represent the result we want from the building process. The aims, then, are the house. The aims aren't the steps we take to design and build the house. As we go through the steps of building a house, we keep an eye on our goal - the end result we seek - but most of our attention and effort is in the steps we are taking.

In Scouting, the aims represent the result we want from the process of Scouting. This is our ideal. We need to keep an eye on the aims, but most of our attention and effort should be on the steps we take toward that goal. That means it's important to know what the aims of Scouting are, but our main concern should be the methods of Scouting.

The Methods of Scouting

Methods To Our Madness

The methods of the Scouting movement are the means through which the aims are achieved:

- Scouting Ideals
- Patrols
- Outdoors
- Advancement
- Personal Growth
- Adult Association
- Leadership Development
- Uniform

The aims of the movement *can* be attained without these methods, but it wouldn't be Scouting. Likewise, these methods *can* produce quality individuals without the aims. But, again that wouldn't be Scouting. Scouting is in fact a combination of these aims and these methods.

Lets look at each of these methods in turn for a little more explanation:

Scouting Ideals

The ideals are those outlined in the Scout Oath and Law, the Scout Motto and Slogan, and the concept of "Scout Spirit". The ideals define what a Scout should strive to be: trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, reverent, mentally awake, morally straight, physically fit, always prepared.

This method permeates everything Scouts do, defining acceptable behavior, challenging the Scout to do his best, and even to do better than his best. Scout spirit describes the level of commitment a Scout has toward these ideals, and challenges him to do what needs to be done.

Patrols

The Patrol is the basic unit of Scouting. It is a perfectly sized group of Scouts with a common purpose. When properly formed, the Patrol is more than a group; it's a team and each member has a job to do. In a Patrol, the Scout first begins learning about citizenship, making decisions, and doing things for himself. He counts on the other members of his Patrol to do their part, just as they count on him to do his.

Membership in a Patrol leads to opportunities for leadership, so this method is also important to other methods in this list. Everything in Scouting can and should be done using the Patrol method, and Patrols should be more than just a list of names. The group should be real, and it should have real things to do. Its leaders should be real leaders, with real authority.

Outdoors

Doing things outdoors are what Scouting is all about. In the course of doing the things Scouts do, a boy cannot help but go into the outdoors. In fact, it's impossible to properly conduct a Scouting program without going outdoors. As much as possible, and as often as possible, Scouts should get out of buildings. They should follow the dirt trails, camp in the woods, swim in the lake, and all of the other things boys have done for millennia.

A Scout program that doesn't include going into the outdoors is not much of a program. It can't be much fun either. Scouting is not school. We don't learn things in Scouting by sitting in a classroom - we learn them by going out and doing them!

Advancement

The advancement method is nearly as pervasive as the ideals of Scouting. Advancement gives the Scout things to do when they go outdoors, and it gives Patrols something to work together on. Advancement also contributes to a Scout's personal growth, provides opportunities for leadership and adult associations, and a reason to go outside.

Advancement in Scouting is specifically designed to present every boy with a big challenge, broken up into smaller and smaller challenges. A Scout learns to set goals, develop plans for meeting those goals, to motivate himself to do what needs to be done, to always try his best and keep trying, and even that his perception of what he can do is often wrong. The Scout learns about his personal abilities and limitations, and ways to overcome those limitations and take advantage of those abilities.

Personal Growth

Much of what we do in Scouting involves boys facing unfamiliar territory and learning to cope with it. This is what we call personal growth. Every Scout develops greater confidence through experience and advancement. He learns to have confidence in himself; to challenge himself, and to learn from his failures.

Every step along the way, a Scout is faced with a challenge that has to be overcome. In the process, he learns to look at himself differently. He stops saying "I can't" and begins to look for ways to say, "I can." As his confidence grows he looks for greater responsibilities and challenges. He learns to make real decisions.

Adult Association

From time immemorial youth have looked to adults for guidance. Sons look to parents for an example to live by. Students look to teachers for knowledge. In Scouting, this tradition continues. Adults provide the living example to Scouts of the ideals of Scouting. More importantly, adults provide the impetus for a Scout's personal growth and self-confidence.

Adults also provide the safety net that allows Scouting to work. Through guidance and support adults in Scouting create the environment the Scouts need to take advantage of these methods. The Scout learns to work with other adults and develops the skills needed to navigate the adult world.

Leadership Development

Scouts learn to lead themselves. In Scouting, adults aren't there to lead the youth. They are there to guide the youth through the process of leading themselves. This process begins in the Patrol where Scouts have their first opportunity to choose their own leaders. As the Scout's experience grows, his opportunities for leadership increase.

Leadership in Scouting includes making decisions and guiding the troop and Patrol, planning the program, and conducting meetings. Scouts learn to lead by leading, and they develop leadership skills by learning to follow their chosen leaders.

Uniform

The uniform has always been an important part of being a Scout. In this day and age, many would have you believe that the uniform really isn't all that important; that a Scout is as much a Scout in T-shirt and jeans as he is in khaki and green. That's partly true, but the uniform is more than a set of clothes. It's more than simply a place to display achievements. It is a symbol of the boy's commitment to Scouting - his acceptance of Scouting's ideals and willingness to live by them.

Scouts who do not wear a uniform usually do not have a complete understanding of Scouting or the commitment they have been asked to make. Many Scouts will tell you that the uniform doesn't look good, it doesn't fit well, or it isn't very good for outdoor activities. In some respects, this is true, but they are superficial concerns. Perhaps they don't understand that the uniform is a symbol of their commitment and, not wearing the uniform is a sign that they lack that commitment.

The Right Method For The Job

Scouting's methods represent the tools we use, the path we take in reaching for our goals. In every Scouting activity, some element of each of these methods will be evident. Sometimes this will be obvious; often it will not. But the methods are where we concentrate our attention and effort. A balanced combination of these *will* lead us to the aims.

Some would say that the methods really aren't that important, that it doesn't matter what methods you use as long as you have the same aims and concentrate on those. That's not necessarily true. In any effort, if you concentrate all of your attention and effort on the goal you want to achieve, you can't be paying much attention to how you're getting there and whether the path you're taking will lead to success. Imagine trying to navigate a maze by maintaining your focus on the exit. No matter what you do, you'll soon find yourself lost in the maze.

Common Problems

The trick is not to make the same mistake twice...

Be Prepared

As with any large organization with high aims, there are problems implementing the aims and methods. These problems stem from the huge variety of people involved in putting the plan into action. Sometimes it's a lack of training, or a lack of understanding, or even a disagreement between the individual and his or her understanding of the organization.

Presented here are several essays that address some of the common sorts of problems found in Scouting. I have tried to stick to generalized problems to cover the widest variety and present solutions to varying degrees and combinations.

Too Many Rules

Baden-Powell intended for Scouting to be a relatively simple game. Of course, there are rules to this game, but he intended the rules to be easily understood from looking at the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

Self-Esteem Machine

Many things are done in the name of self-esteem that lead to odd results. Some psychologists tell you that self-esteem is a fragile thing easily broken, which leads to even greater problems for youth. It's time to de-myth the myths of self-esteem.

Check Your Attitude

An adult leader's attitude can often impact his or her Scout's attitudes. A smile on the face of the adult leader translates to a smile on the faces of the Scouts. Likewise, a frown or scowl on the face of the adult leader translates to a frown or scowl on the face of the Scouts.

Who's In Charge?

Who is running the show can sometimes be as important as what is happening in the show. There are many combinations of youth/adult leadership and just as many opinions about what the right combination is. Here's how it's supposed to work, according to Baden-Powell, Green Bar Bill, and current BSA publications.

For The Boys

In more than 30 years of Scouting, I've heard a lot of different things that different people do "for the boys." Presented here are just a few examples and the truth behind them.

Too Many Rules

Seeing The Forest For The Trees

Scouting is a game with pretty simple rules. A Scout does his best. He's always prepared. He's trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. Beyond those simple rules there are more complicated rules outlined in such documents as the *Guide to Safe Scouting*. The simple rules are for the players of the game. The more complicated rules are for the coaches and referees.

Scouting is an active game, and the complicated rules are there to ensure safety and fairness. The simple rules are there to direct the efforts of the players. As anyone knows, the more rules a game has, the less fun it is to play. So, some may ask, why do we have all these rule books?

We have rule books like *The Scoutmaster's Handbook*, *Troop Committee Guidebook*, *Health & Safety Guide*, *Guide to Safe Scouting*, *Uniform and Insignia Guide* and many more to help the coaches and referees administer Scouting. The players of the game don't deal with these rule books. *We* deal with those rule books because it's our job to make sure the players get a proper and safe playing field.

A growing trend, however, is to design systems of rules over and above the simple rules. These additional systems are intended to "level the playing field," solve problems, and strictly require certain behaviors. In reality, all they manage to do is increase the complexity of the game. As an example, let's take a look at one particular area where additional rules are implemented.

Changing Course In Mid-Stream

In Scouting, advancement is one of the activities in the game. Advancement entails levels of accomplishment known as ranks, and a set of requirements to qualify for each level. Some requirements involve vague concepts like "active participation" and "show Scout spirit" with little indication of what constitutes "active" or "Scout spirit." The trend, therefore, is to create a set of rules that define these vague terms concretely.

In general, this isn't a bad thing as long as there's room for individual circumstances and the rules are fair and openly communicated. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. The rules are usually implemented not so much to clarify vague terms, but to penalize a particular practice or punish a certain behavior. The most common rule of this time involves "active participation."

The idea is to set some sort of attendance percentage that becomes the expected level of participation for advancement. Say, 75% of all meetings and activities. This doesn't sound too troublesome on the surface, but immediately several unintended consequences result. Imagine a Patrol of Scouts. The average age of these Scouts is 14 years old. Some are good scholars, some are good athletes,

and some are average in both. From this Patrol, let's take a look at three individuals.

Too Busy To Be Active

First, there's Mark. Mark is a good student who is active in Scouting and participates in many extracurricular activities in school. Perhaps he's on the school newspaper staff, yearbook staff, and maybe the marching band. He's very motivated in both school and Scouting, and his experience in Scouting has helped him take on leadership responsibilities in his school activities at a relatively young age.

Mark, unfortunately has spread himself pretty thin and can't always make troop meetings. Being in the marching band, he rarely travels to campouts with the troop, and sometimes simply can't make the campout at all. Still, he manages to be an effective troop leader and does a good job making sure his duties are covered when he isn't around.

Mark, of course is nearly ready to advance to Life rank, but over the last couple months since his Star board of review he's been very busy with school and band activities. As he prepares for his Life board of review he looks at his attendance and suddenly realizes he's only at 70%. He won't be able to advance because the troop has a 75% attendance rule.

Strictly enforced, the rule will keep a good Scout from advancing. Make no mistake; Mark is a good Scout. He's an effective leader in the troop and he does the best he can to accommodate everything he wants to do in his schedule. If the attendance rule didn't exist, he would be able to advance.

Too Active To Be Busy

Now, we turn to John. John is a good athlete who is active in Scouting and participates in three sports in school. Perhaps he plays football, baseball, and soccer. He, too, is a motivated Scout and works hard to maintain a good average in school. He also works hard to excel in his three sports. John's experiences as a leader in his troop have helped him earn the respect of his teammates and he has leadership responsibilities on each team.

John painstakingly watches his schedule for conflicts between sports and Scouting. He knows that he doesn't need 100% attendance in Scouting, but his sports activities require 100% attendance. As a result, John is often late for meetings, is sometimes out of uniform, and occasionally forgets to make sure his responsibilities in the troop are taken care of. Sometimes, when he makes it to a Scouting meeting or activity, he's just there and not very interested in what's going on.

John, too, is preparing for his Life board of review. It has taken him a long time to complete the requirements. He has been working at it for more than a year and has had many conferences with his Scoutmaster about his leadership responsibilities and the troop's expectations. Fortunately, John boasts an

attendance of 80%, even though he wasn't always there on time or actively participating in the activity. Technically, he has met the troop's attendance rule.

Unfortunately, John has simply been there. If the rule is strictly enforced, he will be advanced because his attendance percentage is high enough. The rule doesn't specify actively participating in 75% of the meetings and activities because that would be too vague. If the rule didn't exist, however, John would likely still advance because he did his best - didn't he?

What Is Perfect Attendance?

Finally, we turn to Frank. Outside of Scouting, Frank has no life at all. He's not a bad student, but he doesn't get involved in extracurricular activities. He loves Scouting and misses no opportunity to participate. In fact, he has been known to invite himself to other Patrol's activities because they sound cool and exciting.

Frank lobbied for a position as a Den Chief so he could be more involved in Scouting. He attends every troop meeting, every campout, every fundraiser, and in his role as a Den Chief he attends every den meeting and activity, and every Pack meeting and activity. Unfortunately, Frank loves the fun of Scouting and doesn't pay much attention to his responsibilities.

On any given campout or at any given meeting, if there's a disruption you won't find Frank far from the source. He's not a troublemaker, he's just easily distracted in his search for fun. On several occasions he's had conferences with his Scoutmaster about disrupting meetings and activities. His Den Leader has talked to him about disrupting den meetings as well, but hasn't talked to the Scoutmaster about the problem because the Cub Scouts love Frank.

Frank, of course, is just about ready to advance to Star. He's managed to complete enough of the dozens of merit badges he's started to advance, and he's completed his tenure as a Den Leader without a bad report. Frank has no problem with the troop's attendance rule because his attendance is 100%. Under the rule, Frank will advance because he has the right attendance level. His leaders haven't truly dealt with his disruptive behavior because the troop has rules to prevent advancement by troublemakers.

Would Frank advance if the rule didn't exist? Well, his leaders would have been much more inclined to deal with his disruptions and work with him to correct the problem if the rule didn't exist. The rule, openly communicated, has the effect of actually tying the hands of the leaders. It works both ways. If you state concretely that "active participation" means attending 75% of the meetings and activities, you can't further define the term without changing the rule.

Pleading For Common Sense

In reality the rule should be unnecessary. Mark *should* be advanced because he's done his best to attend activities, he's done his job effectively when he was there, and made sure his job got done when he wasn't there. John should be advanced as well. He too has done his best to attend meetings, although he may not have

done his best to be an effective leader. That could have been addressed long before he was ready to advance. Frank, however, shouldn't be advanced unless of course he has also been working hard to correct his disruptive behavior.

In these scenarios, of course, it's not necessarily the rule that has caused the problems. The rule contributed to the problem, though, by deluding the adults into believing that the rules would solve any advancement problems that cropped up. In reality, the leaders should have been working to solve the problems *before* the Scout was ready to advance.

Adding these rules appears initially to solve certain problems. Unfortunately, they also add to the complexity of the game. They remove the judgment of troop leaders, the evaluation of each individual Scout's circumstances, and promotes the tendency to treat every Scout the same. That is one of the things that sets Scouting apart from many other youth organizations. Scouts are *supposed* to be treated individually. The whole concept of advancement in Scouting is based on each Scout advancing at his own pace.

Self-Esteem Machine

Character is not built by protecting people from failure...

The Anti-Hazing Movement

If one more person tells me we can't do a thing because it might "negatively impact a Scout's self-esteem" I'm going to go postal. The trend, of course, began with the anti-hazing movement that hit Scouting in the early 1980's. Don't get me wrong, that movement was important and long overdue. Like the French Revolution, though, once it got started it quickly grew out of control.

The anti-hazing movement was started to address a real problem that had existed in Scouting for many years. Many troops had long traditions of elaborate initiation ceremonies. Some of these ceremonies had the potential to be physically and emotionally harmful. None of them reached the proportion of idiocy associated with fraternity or military initiations, but they were still pretty intense.

To give you an idea what I mean, let me describe for you the initiation ceremony endured by a friend of mine many years before the anti-hazing movement began. The initiation began on the boy's first campout where he was given all of the jobs the older Scouts didn't want. First time campers spent most of their time collecting firewood, washing dishes, fetching water, and in some cases acting like a personal servant for the Senior Patrol Leader.

This sounds pretty tame, but it was only the beginning. The real initiation began at dusk after all the work was done. I want to warn you, this is *not* your typical snipe-hunt sort of initiation. A couple older Scouts assembled all of the new Scouts in the center of the campsite. Their hands were bound and the trailing end of that line was tied to the belt of the Scout in front of them. Once the Scouts were secured, they were blindfolded and lead on a long hike. Their "guide" held the line tying the first Scout's hands and there was usually a lot of stumbling, frequent turns, and low branches slapping them in the face. Apparently, the more difficult the trail, the greater the Scouts would "appreciate" their "ordeal."

After traveling this way for long enough to be hopelessly confused about their location, the Scouts were brought to a clearing where a ceremonial campfire was lit. One by one, the new Scouts were taken from the group to a place near the fire where they were told tales of deep traditions and dire consequences. Following that, the Scout was told he would now be given a special mark to "bind him to the brotherhood of the troop."

At this point the Scout was forced into a kneeling position and his shirt was removed. While still blindfolded, the Scouts were "branded" with a "secret symbol." The branding often resulted in screams and tears. It was accomplished through the use of a piece of ice and a piece of raw meat. In perfect synchronization one older Scout would place the ice against the skin of the new Scout while another older Scout would place the raw meat in the fire. The meat produced the sound and smell of burning flesh, while the ice produced the feel of a "hot" branding iron. The new Scout, of course, was held fast by one or more other Scouts.

I probably don't need to tell you what kind of effect such an ordeal has on an eleven-year-old boy. It's just this sort of thing that brought about the anti-hazing movement. The movement, however, served its purpose and in many ways kept going. Now, it is concerned with purging anything that may "potentially cause emotional harm." The problem is that the definition of "emotional harm" is such that nearly everything Scouts do qualifies.

No Hazing, No Failure

In my days as a staff member at my local council camp, we encountered a great deal of this. At Cub Day camp the staff was often admonished for handing out awards and having competitions. We were told that doing these things singles out the Cubs who aren't good at a particular activity and makes them feel bad. We could have competitions, we were told, as long as we gave *everyone* an award.

At summer camp, we were told many of the dining hall games we played after meals should be stopped because they often involved laughter and other things that could make a boy feel bad and therefore caused emotional harm. We could still play some of the games, but the games that usually resulted in laughter could only be played if a member of the staff was the target of the laughter.

As a Scoutmaster, I encountered an even more troubling target of the new anti-hazing movement. They had turned their attention toward the advancement requirements. Now, instead of actually completing a requirement, a Scout need only make the attempt. He should be passed even if his attempt failed because failure would make him feel bad and could lead to ridicule by other Scouts. I was told the Scout's self-esteem was much more important than whether or not he successfully passed a test.

Challenging Personal Growth

Self-esteem is pretty important. It's our sense of self; our pride in our abilities; our respect for our worth as individuals. So, you may be wondering why it's a bad thing to be concerned with a Scout's self-esteem. In actuality, it's not a bad thing. Unfortunately, what the anti-hazing movement would have us believe is completely backwards from reality.

A good example of this is the Second and First Class swimming requirements. These requirements are hard, require a great deal of confidence to complete, and are the requirements Scouts spend the most time worrying about. The anti-hazing movement would have us believe that expecting a Scout to actually succeed in passing the Beginner swim test can "negatively impact his self-esteem." Let's go with that for a moment.

If the Scout is an average Scout not a particularly great swimmer, he'll worry about the requirement for some time. When he finally steels up the courage to attempt the requirement he'll be nervous. Suppose he jumps feet first into the water, splashes a few times, and then starts to panic. That, of course, in no way meets the requirement, but according to the self-esteem folks we should pass him anyway so he won't feel bad about his attempt.

Staying away from the psychological consequences of this, suppose we go ahead and pass him. We pat him on the back, tell him he did a good job, and reward his effort with a badge. He has been deluded into believing he can swim, and we've told everyone else that he can swim. He and we move on.

Now, it's time for the Scout to attempt the First Class swimming requirements. Despite our pat on the back and our reward, the Scout knows deep inside that he can't swim. He can read the requirements and he can see that these requirements are at least twice as hard. Now, instead of having the confidence to do his best, he's twice as scared as he was the first time. The panic starts long before he jumps into the water. In fact, if he even manages to jump into the water, he doesn't bother even splashing. He *knows* he can't swim.

Once again, the attempt is all that's important, so the self-esteem folks tell us we need to pass him on this requirement as well. And, after we drag him coughing and sputtering from the pool after he tries to inflate his clothes, we should pass him on that requirement as well. So, we pat him on the back, tell him he did a great job, and reward him with a badge.

Now, we wonder what we've accomplished. The Scout has been awarded First Class, and the only trauma he suffered is the few moments of panic he experienced before being pulled out of the water three times. We are told that the Scout's self-esteem is in great condition because he hasn't suffered from any failure. But, he hasn't learned how to swim either. In fact, if he's a normal Scout, he's already started to think there's something wrong with him. Some of his friends managed to make it all the way to the other side of the pool, why can't he? Deep inside he knows he still can't swim. Every summer, just before he decides not to take the swim test, he thinks about it.

The more he thinks about the swimming, the more he thinks there's something wrong with him. He has no confidence around the water, even though he's been awarded First Class, because he *knows* he can't swim. He's not concerned with whether or not his friends will laugh at him if they find out. He's more concerned about the fact that going into deep water and not being able to swim is extremely dangerous - he could drown!

As he thinks about this and questions his abilities, he starts down the path of questioning his abilities in other areas. "If I can't swim," he thinks. "What other important thing can't I do?" After a while, he starts to question his ability in everything. Since he "passed" the swimming requirements and can't swim, he has no frame of reference to judge his abilities in other areas. Passing the requirement is no longer a guarantee that he knows the skill.

Ultimately, this leads to hesitation before taking an action. He starts to question everything he does; every decision he makes. The more he questions, the more he wonders about himself. He starts to lose confidence in himself. As his self-confidence slips, his sense of self diminishes. His pride in his abilities disappears; and his sense of self-worth dwindles to nothingness. In short, his self-esteem goes away.

Learning From Failure

For those who believe that this is an exaggeration let me assure you it is not. I cannot show you hard scientific evidence. I cannot cite psychological case histories. All I can tell you is that I am very familiar with this process. There is usually one of two possible results to this scenario. Worst case, the boy enters a period of depression. He begins to become preoccupied with death and mortality. He will likely quit Scouting and stop hanging out with his friends. His grades will drop. He'll spend most of his time alone; or in a group he will be silently detached.

Hopefully, you understand where that is going. If you don't I suggest you look into learning the signs of suicidal tendencies. Like I said, that is the worst case. The best case eventually leads to a confident, well-adjusted individual; but not without some emotional pain and suffering along the way.

While we as Scouters should be concerned with protecting Scouts from emotional harm, we should not go as far as I've described. Failure is as important to Scouting as success. In Scouting, the system is designed to make the environment safe for failure. In other words, failure in Scouting is not catastrophic. A Scout's failure, combined with the safe environment and the compassion of adult leaders leads to *greater* confidence and a motivation to succeed.

We all know that life is hard, especially in the adult world. We also know that two of our greatest weapons in the fight to survive that world are our sense of self-worth, and our confidence in our own ability to survive. These are elements of self-esteem, which is an element of our character. In Scouting we are in the business of building character and we do that by presenting challenges for youth and helping them develop the confidence to meet those challenges. As each challenge is met, the Scout's confidence grows, as does his self-esteem. It is the process of trying and failing then trying and succeeding that does that.

Check Your Attitude

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

You've heard it before. An adult leader is supposed to set the example. The Scouts will learn more from what you do than what you say. We know that Scouts won't wear the uniform properly if their leaders don't. No matter what method or part of Scouting we're talking about, the leader sets the example. But there's one aspect of Scouting that many adults forget to set the example in. That's attitude.

Sure, we do our best to be positive, cheerful, show our Scouting spirit. We work hard to treat every Scout fairly and build them up rather than tear them down. We have gone through the training, attended Roundtables, poured through the manuals, and even counted on our own experience and expertise to provide the best possible program for the boys. In the course of doing that, though, we've come across a few things in Scouting we don't particularly agree with or know of a better way of doing.

It doesn't really matter what those things are, or how we feel about them. In most cases, our feelings don't even show up in our work with the boys. A few things, however, *do* crop up from time to time. Our attitudes about these things, when they are evident, have an impact on the Scouts. They see how our attitude effects our actions, and they learn from our example. It happens even with things outside Scouting. Our politics, our religion, our philosophy of life; all of these things have an impact on our attitudes, and *can* have an impact on our Scouts.

The Attitude Loop

Think of your attitude toward adult leader training. If you don't really believe in the need for it, that's an attitude that can creep into your work with Scouts. A Scoutmaster who has never taken training, and refuses to do so, may not understand that his attitude toward training is being broadcast to the Scouts, but it is. He may find his Scouts uninterested in junior leader training, never realizing that his own attitude is the cause.

An excellent example of this can be found in the Webelos To Scout Transition program. The Webelos program in a Cub Scout Pack is supposed to be very different than the Wolf or Bear program. The Webelos in the den are supposed to make some of the decisions, and start becoming more independent from their adult leaders. The Den Leader, of course, is still in charge, but the Scouts certainly have more responsibilities than they had in the Bear Den. If the Den Leader doesn't believe they're old enough to make those decisions, or doesn't believe they should - the boys in the Den see that and take it as an example. They won't take the responsibilities offered them, or won't think they have the ability to decide things for themselves.

It becomes a sort of self-fulfilling prophesy. The Den Leader doesn't believe 9 or 10-year-old boys are capable of making decisions properly and therefore doesn't *teach* them to make those decisions. With no training or practice, the Scouts can't effectively make decisions and, when given the chance to, fail miserably. Their

failure becomes evidence supporting the Den Leader's attitude, and the cycle continues.

At the other end of the transition, if the Scoutmaster believes that these Scouts do not know enough to be *real* Scouts, he'll put them into a New Scout Patrol where they are treated more like Webelos than Scouts. The Scoutmaster's attitude will rub off on the older Scouts, and the new Scouts will be treated as *almost* Scouts. The new Scouts, of course, will see this attitude and *believe* they aren't really Scouts. The cycle will continue as long as the example still exists.

Believe, And Make It Work

As a district trainer, I've encountered plenty of adult leaders who complain about how this aspect of Scouting doesn't work, or that aspect of Scouting isn't effective. In most cases, it doesn't work because the adult leaders *believe* it doesn't work. The district chairman looks at an ineffective Roundtable program and comes to the conclusion that Roundtables do not work. This becomes his attitude, and it has an impact on the Roundtable program. Since the program doesn't work, there's no point trying to fix it. The unit leaders see this example in the quality of Roundtables, and accept it. Since Roundtables do not work, there's no reason to go, so the Roundtable program remains ineffective - all because of an attitude.

As adult leaders, our attitudes have a big impact on what we do and how we do it. We can't help it. We're passionate about our jobs and the work we do. But, our attitudes can have a negative effect as well. We know that our attitude about a particular person drives the way we treat that person. This is human nature, but in Scouting we are trying to teach our Scouts to treat everyone with respect; to do the right thing instead of the easy thing; to act according to the Scout Oath and Law. If we aren't willing to examine our attitudes and how they affect our Scouts, we can't expect our Scouts to do the same.

Who's In Charge?

Who's The Leader?

Who is in charge? From the very beginning, Scouting has had a simple answer to that question. The man who developed Scouting believed that the Scouts should choose their own leaders, and have the opportunity to actually lead. This is an important aspect of Scouting. Many other youth organizations were based on the student/pupil concept. The adults did the leading, teaching, and guiding while the youth were simply members. Scouting was unique in insisting that the adult's purpose was merely to guide the youth and look after their safety. The real leadership - the teaching, directing, planning, and deciding - was to be done by the Scouts themselves.

Every year in the Boy Scouts of America, troops are supposed to spend some time planning their annual program, providing training to youth leaders, and welcoming new Scouts to their unit. Traditionally, this is also the time for the adult leaders in the troop to review the way things are done, what they've accomplished, and what they need to do to stay on course. It is a time to set goals and make plans, review, and evaluate. One thing that every unit should be looking at is the state of youth leadership in the troop.

Ask yourself who is in charge of your troop? Is the Senior Patrol Leader *really* the guy in charge, or does he just implement the orders of adult leaders? Is the program planned and conducted by the Patrol Leaders' Council, or do they simply "go by the book" without altering the pre-formatted meeting plan to fit their needs and interests? Do the Patrol Leaders have real authority in their Patrols, or are they more like a team captain with no real authority? When there's a discipline problem in the troop, do adult leaders step in and take charge, or are the youth leaders given the chance to solve the problem first?

Managing The Group

Probably the most common reason youth leadership in a troop gets out of wack is because the adults lack confidence in the youth. They can't make the leap of faith required to let the youth lead. There are basically four types of troops when it comes to youth leadership:

1. **The Sports Team:** The SM "coach" runs the troop. Youth leadership positions are filled, but there are no responsibilities beyond "setting an example." In this troop, adult leaders direct the Scouts and the "coach" sets the program. The "coach" sends in the plays, and it's up to the SPL and PLC to execute the "play" the way they were taught.
2. **The Corporation:** The SM "chairman" heads the troop. He delegates responsibilities and authority to "sub-chairmen" in the form of youth leaders. Youth leaders *do* exhibit real authority and responsibility, but the "chairman" strictly controls them. The "chairman" who provides strict rules and guidelines for "production" and directs everything the troop does. It's

up to the SPL and PLC to implement the plan, with some discretion in how, but always answerable to the "chairman."

3. **The Scout Troop:** The troop follows the Boy Scout leadership concept. Youth leaders are elected or chosen by the youth and are given real authority and responsibility. The adults guide and advise the youth leaders, giving the youth a great deal of control within the limits of health and safety. The SPL and PLC are taught the skills to plan and conduct the program, and are given guidance and a pretty free hand to make decisions and implement the program.
4. **The Gang:** The troop is completely run by the youth. No limits are placed on their authority or responsibilities. The youth learn to lead by trial and error, receiving no guidance from the adults. The adults act as "supervisors" filling a required role without "limiting" the youth's freedom. The SPL and PLC are in charge, but with no real guidance or training. Nothing is planned, no goals set, and usually nothing is accomplished.

Where is your troop in this list? Chances are pretty good you're in between a couple of the basic types above. Now, ask yourself what direction you're going. If you're between **The Corporation** and **The Scout Troop** is the trend toward or away from the Boy Scout concept? The Scoutmaster should know where his troop is on this list, and he should have a plan for developing leadership according to the Boy Scout model. If his troop is something else on the above list, he should know why it doesn't follow the Boy Scout model, and have a plan for working toward the Boy Scout model.

Planning Leadership

We know that every troop is different, and there are occasionally reasons for having a different leadership model. When that is the case, the adult leaders *should* be working to develop the skills of the youth so the troop can follow the Boy Scout model. For instance, many new troops simply don't have Scouts with enough experience to effectively lead the troop according to the Boy Scout model. In such a case, the troop may be following the Corporation model. But, the adult leaders should have a plan for moving toward the Boy Scout model. Such a plan needs to be reviewed, evaluated, and changed according to the realities of the troop.

Occasionally, we run into a troop that is in decline. The adult leaders agreed to fill in until replacements could be found, never realizing that no one is looking. Some of the adults have been to training, and most of them remember the "good old days" when they had a strong, effective group of youth leaders. They're simply following the lead of previous adult leaders who seemed to just sit back and let the boys take care of things. Such a troop is dangerously close to **The Gang** model above. More often than not, this sort of thing comes from a lack of understanding, or a lack of training. The leaders will tell you "the book says the troop should be run by the boys." Of course, they seem to have skipped over the part that explains about their responsibility to *train* the youth leaders to do the job effectively.

Regardless of the individual circumstances, though, every troop should be doing their best to follow the Boy Scout model. Adult leaders should not be concerned

about the leadership capabilities of the youth - they should be *developing* those capabilities. As Green Bar Bill used to say: ***"Train 'em, Trust 'em, Let 'em lead!"***

For The Boys Of Ruts And Graves

As adult leaders, we occasionally need to step back and look at what we are doing; to evaluate our way of doing things and refresh our passion for Scouting. This is as important to an adult leader as the Scoutmaster's Conference is to a Scout about to advance. The conference gives the Scout a chance to look at what he has accomplished, evaluate his performance as a Scout, and to redefine his self-confidence.

Without this occasional step back, we tend to get entrenched. Stuck in a rut and unable to see where we are going. It happens to the best of us at times. You have most likely met a Scouter like this without realizing it. It could have been the old Scoutmaster who insists on personally testing his Scouts on every advancement requirement and expects near perfection. Perhaps it was the troop advancement chair that insists on turning every board of review into a proficiency examination because "most Scouts simply don't know the skills they're supposed to." Maybe it was the district guy who required a specific number of man-hours of work for an Eagle project, and seemed particularly hard on younger candidates.

Each of these folks has something in common. They are passionate about Scouting, believe they are helping the boys do their best, and need to take a step back. Each of these Scouters developed their particular attitude through experience and an effort to improve Scouting. They may have chosen the wrong corrective action, or were forced into it from a lack of support, or even simply told "that's how we do things." Each of these people firmly believes that they do what they do "for the boys".

Taking A Step Back

You see, when a Scouter gets in a rut, he can see the problem - it's at the far end of the rut, but he can't see the cause of the problem or the real solution to it. That's because he's focused on the problem and his job. That committee member knows that Scouts should know their skills to advance, and that the program should be providing the opportunity to learn the skills and complete the requirements. Perhaps she talked to one too many Scouts who got to a BOR without doing their best. That's a problem.

But, since she's focused on the problem, and her job, she can't see the root cause of the problem or the real solution. She only sees what *she* can do to fix it, and that means testing the Scouts to make sure they don't pass the BOR without knowing the skills.

The root problem, of course, is that the skills aren't being taught, and the Scouts aren't being challenged to do their best. If the Advancement Chair could see past the walls of the rut she's in, she would be able to see that the real problem is in how the advancement method is implemented in the troop. If she were conducting a BOR according to the way it's intended, she would see that. But, she's stuck in a rut.

She's become focused on fixing the problem from within her area of responsibility. Her solution, to turn BORs into proficiency examinations, does not fix the problem though. The problem still exists, and every Scout who comes before the Board not knowing how to tie a Square Knot adds fuel to her determination. She stays in the rut, determined as ever, where she'll stay until the root cause of the problem is fixed. She won't be contributing to the solution though, and that causes even more problems later on.

If she could take a step back and look at the whole advancement situation in the troop, she'd be able to see the cause of the problem. She'd be able to see that her solution isn't fixing the problem. And, very likely, she'd easily see the solution to the problem.

Get Out Of That Rut!

It doesn't matter how we get ourselves into these ruts. What matters is that we get out of them as quickly as possible, before the rut gets too deep. As my father used to tell me: "A rut is a grave with the ends kicked out!" We need to take a step back and look at things from a different point of view. We need to look at our attitudes and practices from a critical standpoint and make sure we are telling the truth when we say we're doing it "for the boys".

Ideally, we should make this a regular part of our life in and out of Scouting. To make sure the way we practice Scouting is in fact the way it *should* to be practiced. Because if we really are doing this "for the boys" we should want to make absolutely sure that what we do for them is the best thing we can do.

So, the next time you find yourself saying "it's not in the book, that's just the way we do things," or "I'm doing it for the boys," or you find yourself treating a Scout like the Scout who came before him *stop!* Take a step back. Try to look at the situation from a different point of view. Think about what you are about to do. If it's beneficial to the Scout and it doesn't conflict with the Scouting way, you're probably right. But at least you won't be stuck in the rut.

Something's Missing

Make sure you're not missing any of these...

The Long Hike

Imagine you are planning to take your Scouts on a long hike. We know from practice what needs to be done. First we decide where the hike will start, and where the hike will end. This is the aim of our hike. The starting place and the ending place are comparable to the aims of Scouting. When a boy joins Scouting, he's essentially the raw material. What we want him to become is suggested by the aims, and we can look at him and understand how far we have to go to get there.

The next step in planning our hike is to determine the route we will take, what equipment we will need, what type of clothing the Scouts need to have, where we will stop for lunch, and what if anything we will do along the way. This is the actual plan of our hike. It is comparable to the methods of Scouting. When a boy joins Scouting, we start him on that hike and use the methods as tools to keep him going in the right direction. Whatever the situation, we use different tools in different combinations.

Keeping the aims in mind as we journey along is important. If we don't pay attention to our destination or our progress toward it, we can easily get lost. The aims help us keep the big picture in view. But the aims should not obscure our path. Scouting works best when we utilize the methods, concentrating on that, with the aims always in the back of our minds.

As in any journey, though, obstacles will crop up or we'll be faced with what looks like a roadblock. This is when we have to be careful. The immediate route around the obstacle may not be the best route, and sometimes roadblocks don't really block the road.

Taking A Shortcut

In Scouting, these things usually manifest themselves as an individual Scout or a type of Scout who doesn't seem to be affected by our efforts. Faced with this, unfortunately, our first response tends to be to question the route we've chosen - the methods we are using. The first apparent solution to the problem is to change the route or take a shortcut. This translates in Scouting to ignoring an inconvenient method, or changing the method so it will work. The question is, what do we gain by this?

Scouting Ideals

The ideals of Scouting are the trail markers, landmarks, the stars we look to for guidance. They aren't our destination; they're the trail we follow to get to it.

The Patrol Method

The patrol method is a building block of Scouting. When it's used, the trail is easier to follow, when it's not used it's not hard to get lost.

The Outdoors

The outdoors is the belt of Scouting. It's what keeps Scouts in Scouting and moving forward on the trail.

Advancement

Advancement is the steps we take to get where we're going. Every step we take gets us closer to our destination.

Personal Growth

Personal growth is the joy we feel getting where we're going. Every step we take makes us happy to be here, impressed with where we've been, and determined to get where we're going.

Adult Association

Adult association is our compass, guiding us along the way, keeping us pointed in the right direction, and showing us the way to go.

Leadership Development

Leadership development is our walking stick. We use it to overcome obstacles, help our fellow hikers, and to help ourselves along when the trail gets tough.

The Uniform

The uniform is the shirt on our backs, the shoes on our feet, and the things we have in common that keep us together as we go.

Keep To The Path

Adult leaders are the guides on our little hike. To them falls the responsibility of keeping the hikers on the right path and not getting lost. That's a pretty big responsibility. *Our* commitment in Scouting is that we will set the example and do the best job we can for the boys in our charge. Therefore, it's important for us to be careful when making changes to our route. We need to make absolutely sure that a shortcut will have the effect we want without adversely affecting our environment or progress. We need to weigh each change and always keep the aims in mind. Otherwise, at the end of our journey, something may be missing.

Scouting's Ideals

The Rocky Path

There is probably no more controversial aspect of Scouting than its ideals. Since the mid-1970's the Boy Scouts of America have been in a battle to maintain its long-held ideals as described in the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Since that time, the BSA has also been criticized from within for *already* compromising those ideals. It seems no matter what the organization does, it's criticized.

The national organization has had the same Scout Oath and Law since they were first printed in the first handbook. To be sure, the words used to describe these ideals have changed from time to time over the years, but the actual words that constitute the promise each Scout and Scouter makes have not. Scouting's detractors often use this occasional change as evidence that the ideals are not as "set in stone" as the BSA and its supporters would have us believe.

Scouting, as a concept, *needs* these ideals as much, if not more, than anything else. That's why one of the eight methods of Scouting is the ideals of Scouting. But, how exactly are the ideals a method? Well, used properly the ideals give each individual a standard of conduct. They tell him or her how to act, what's expected of them, and how they can expect to be treated. Without these, Scouting is just another youth organization - one without much focus.

Maintaining Focus

There are times, however, when the ideals seem to be missing from a unit's program. It's not hard to imagine that this is not something done consciously. No, when the ideals are missing, it's usually because of some subconscious effort on the part of the adults involved. Recognizing when this has happened is a lot more difficult than fixing it though. There are lots of ways the ideals of Scouting can be missing from the program. In fact, they can be a part of every troop meeting and *still* be missing! Would you say the ideals were firmly in place if you saw a troop where the adults never trust the Scouts to do anything? Such a troop could open every meeting reciting the Scout Oath and Law, but never actually *live* them.

That's the key. Scouting's ideals are not meant to be memorized or given token attention. They are meant to be lived. It's one thing for a Scoutmaster to announce, "A Scout is trustworthy." It's another thing for a Scoutmaster to *believe* that a Scout is trustworthy. But the ideals are not a part of the program until both the Scoutmaster and the Scout *act as if* a Scout is trustworthy.

A Scout may learn the Scout Law, but he won't be motivated very much to live the Scout Law until he's shown how. This is one area where leadership skills have a huge impact. We know from our memories of our school days that it's not hard to memorize something. Memorizing something doesn't mean we've learned it, though. It simply means we are capable of reciting it, not that we understand it. The end result of Scouting is that each and every youth ends up with an understanding of the ideals of Scouting. They come away from Scouting knowing

that these ideals represent a good way to live, and at some level they will continue to live by those ideals.

Timeless Values

The ideals are missing from the program when we, as Scouters, fail to reinforce them. When we accept mere memorization of the Scout Oath and Law, and never challenge a Scout to understand or define them for himself. When we don't hold our Scouts to the commitment they make. When we ourselves don't show them how to live by those ideals.

A recurring example of this involves merit badges at summer camp. How many of us have complained about summer camp merit badge counselors? How many times have we heard about an counselor passing a Scout on Soil and Water Conservation after a two-hour gab session and a 400-word essay? This is the result of ignoring the ideals of Scouting. At some point in his life that counselor memorized the Scout Oath and Law. He may even have "understood and intended to live by" them. But at some other point in his life he learned that he wouldn't really be held to that standard. He quickly realized that Scouting was more about getting badges than it was about being trustworthy.

The end result is that the counselor sees nothing wrong with ignoring requirements. He believes he's a Scout because he continues to wear the uniform, but he's not really a Scout. He's lost his commitment to and understanding of the ideals. If he still had them, the thought of passing Scouts on a merit badge without actually completing the requirements would never have occurred to him. Of all the things to be missing from Scouting, the ideals are the ones with the direst consequences.

The Patrol Method

The Basic Unit

Take a look at your troop. Can you imagine what it would be like if there were no patrols? Now, take a closer look. Does your troop *really* have patrols? When the patrol method is missing from the program, that doesn't mean there are no patrols. The method is much more than grouping Scouts into patrols. For this method to work, those patrols must be living, breathing, entities that exist on their own. As one of my JLT Scoutmasters was fond of saying: "A troop is *not* divided into patrols; it's *made up* of patrols." That was his way of saying that the patrol comes first.

For the patrol method to function properly, the Scouts in a troop need to identify themselves first as a member of a patrol, and then as a member of a troop. A patrol is the most basic unit of Scouting. When properly functioning, the members of the patrol learn not just how to act like a Scout, but how to lead and accomplish things they never thought of before.

The old handbooks used to describe how a boy goes about joining Scouting by saying "First, find a patrol in your area." The idea was that a boy would join a patrol of Scouts whom he was already familiar with. This made it easier for the boy to get up to speed in Scouting. The patrol, you see, was his family in Scouting. When he joined it, it was his Patrol Leader who taught him everything he needed to know, and passed him on all of his tests.

Today, however, the troop has become recognized as the primary unit of Scouting. This comes from the fact that patrols are not chartered by the BSA, troops are. But remember, the troop is supposed to be made up of a group of patrols. That means the first task should be to organize patrols. Not to divide the troop into patrols, but to actually create patrols and let them form the troop.

A List Of Names

Many troops today tinker with the patrol method to such a point that it no longer resembles the original concept. Some have a policy of "reorganizing" the troop on a regular basis. If anything, this is a good illustration of a troop divided into patrols. Reforming patrols every six months or so effectively wipes out the feeling of ownership a Scout is supposed to have for his patrol.

When a patrol starts out, the Scouts who make up the patrol decide on a name, make a flag, and begin deciding what to do next. In a properly functioning patrol, the patrol name is not just a name. The flag is not just a flag. The patrol's name is its identity within the troop, and the flag is the physical symbol of that identity. If the Scouts have a feeling of ownership, they are proud of their name and their flag. But more than that, they take pride in what their patrol does, and they do their best to make their patrol the best in the troop. They'll not scoff at having patrol meetings outside troop meetings. They'll not complain about not being able to convince the PLC to plan a particular trip - they'll plan it themselves, go on the trip, and *show* the rest of the troop just how much fun they had.

Without that feeling of ownership, the patrol name is just a name. None of the Scouts care much about it, or their flag. There's no reason to have patrol meetings outside troop meetings because the patrol is just a group of Scouts in a troop. The real action is in the troop.

Without real patrols, the Scouts do not get real experience leading a group of Scouts. That makes it harder to train youth leaders who suddenly find themselves with real responsibilities. Without real patrols, Patrol Leaders have no incentive to represent their patrols and make decisions based on their own personal likes and dislikes. So, take a look around and make sure the patrol method is not missing in your troop.

The Outdoors

Scouting Without Outing

What is Scouting without outing? Nothing recognizable. Baden-Powell meant for Scouting to happen outdoors - not just on weekend campouts, but as often as possible. Troop meetings were not meant to be classroom affairs, they were meant to be active, hands-on, training sessions - outdoors.

I can show you a picture of a maple tree in a book. I can explain to you all of the different things to look for to identify it as a maple tree. I can even show you a real maple leaf. You won't really learn or appreciate a maple tree, however, until you actually go out and find one yourself. The same can be said pretty much for everything in Scouting.

Outing, of course, means a lot more than just getting outdoors. The keywords are "active" and "hand-on." Real understanding of Scouting skills, and even the ideals of Scouting, does not come from lectures. It comes from actually trying the skills, or practicing the ideals. That means Scouts must not sit around on their rear-ends most of the time. They need to be out doing things.

A troop that doesn't do things isn't much of a troop. There's nothing to keep the Scouts' interest. How much fun can they be having at a two-hour meeting if it resembles the eight hours of school they just sat through? That's why it's important for Scouts to do things other than meet once a week.

Get Thee Outside!

I took a training course once that concerned building new units. The instructor was trying to explain the steps you take to get a new troop up and running as quickly as possible. Much of the class involved talk about organizational meetings, establishing regular troop meetings, and figuring out the administrative end of things. At the end of the class there was a question and answer period and one trainee asked, "What kind of program should the troop have in the very beginning?" The instructor, at great length, explained that the program should fit the resources of the unit, and concentrate on the basics. He suggested planning the first couple meetings around the Tenderfoot requirements.

When he was done answering the question I could hardly contain myself. My hand shot up like a Saturn V on the way to the moon. "You forgot the most important thing," I said when he called on me.

"What's that?" he asked after he'd mentally run through the lecture.

The first priority is to get the Scouts outside as quickly as possible. If all you do is a day hike at a local park, the important thing is the first outdoor activity. In fact it's the activity that's important, not what you do, where you go, or how you pay for it. Getting the Scouts outdoors as quickly as possible establishes the difference between Scouting and school. It plants the seeds of what to expect, and puts the

outing in the forefront of their thoughts. The longer you wait to have your first activity, the harder it will be to maintain their interest.

The next most important thing, however, is the second outing. The more active the program, the more appealing it will be to new Scouts, which will establish a pattern of growth. With that growth, the Scouts will gain experience and learn to lead themselves. The sooner you get to the point where you're having one major activity a month, the sooner the troop will have established its program. Then the Scout's experience will benefit the troop with annual planning conferences, monthly PLC meetings, and the like.

You see, the outdoors challenge the Scouts to use the skills they've learned, but it also challenges them to be creative in planning meetings and activities. A campout doesn't look like much on a piece of paper. The challenge comes from making that piece of paper come alive. That's where the Scouts will grow and gain confidence in their knowledge and leadership capabilities.

So, make sure your Scouting has outing. If it doesn't, it's not Scouting - it's just "sc."

Advancement

Madness In The Method

Of all of the methods of Scouting, advancement is the one least often missing from the program. In fact, it's more often over-emphasized than under-emphasized. As with everything else, though, there's more than one way to skin a cat. Advancement is what drives another method of Scouting, personal growth. To be sure, a Scout can still grow without advancement, but the process is considerably slower and not as effective.

For many, the advancement method defies understanding. It looks like some sort of caste-system, each rank having its own level of status, and its own set of privileges. It looks like a competitive system of achievement pitting one Scout against other Scouts for each rank. It looks like a power system adults use to enrich themselves at the expense of the Scouts. And yet, it looks like none of these things.

Unfortunately, the adults' understanding of the method most often influences how the advancement method is used in a troop. They develop standards and policies that reflect their personal view of what advancement in Scouting is, or what they think it *should be*. This results in the advancement method being used by a troop in one of three ways.

The Minimalist Method

A unit that uses the **Minimalist Method** pays only lip service to advancement. To them it is hardly worth an effort to understand or try to use. The Scouts are neither encouraged, nor discouraged to advance and the program does not involve advancement in any way. The focus of the program tends to be on having fun, or whatever the troop leaders believe is more important

Most of the proponents of the minimalist method have some problem or other with the whole idea of advancement in Scouting. This can manifest itself in adult leaders who believe the requirements are too difficult and therefore they either ignore advancement altogether or simply pass Scouts on ranks when they "think their ready." Minimalism provides no benefit to the Scouts. They do not learn to plan their advancement, set goals, or overcome obstacles. They are never challenged to improve themselves, and they never learn their true capabilities.

In some cases, Minimalists even go to the extreme of *discouraging* Scouts from advancing. Most often this grows out of the mistaken belief that advancement is a competition. They will often point out that the Scout Law doesn't say, "A Scout is a winner." They'll argue that advancement is too much of a distraction, and is actually *harmful* to the Scouts.

The Extremist Method

At the other extreme are the proponents of the ***Extremist Method***. With this viewpoint, advancement is the end-all and be-all of Scouting. Scouts are not only encouraged to advance; the unit's whole program is specifically geared toward constant advancement. With this extreme emphasis on advancement comes an equally extreme standard of advancement. Requirements are often adjusted to meet the adults' concept of what a Scout should be able to do, and how well he should be able to do it.

Extremists tend to come in two varieties. First, there are the Sympathizers, who see advancement as a competition with no rules. Pretty much anything goes. Advancement provides status to the Scout, so for the Sympathizer, requirements can be "fixed" or ignored entirely as long as the Scout gains the status he needs. The Scout gains little benefit from advancement in this way.

Then, there are the Drill Instructors, who see advancement as a special honor granted only to the Scouts who are worthy of that honor. To be worthy, a Scout must do more than merely pass the requirement. He must learn the skill absolutely, and retain that knowledge completely. He must meet the standard set by the Drill Instructor, and come as close to perfection as possible.

When requirements are made so difficult the Scout can't possibly pass them he learns nothing about himself. It has the opposite effect and actually causes him to question his abilities. He learns that setting goals doesn't matter because the task is impossible. If the requirements are "fixed" by adults seeking status for particular Scouts, the Scout learns only that challenges are something to be avoided any way possible. The only planning required is how to avoid doing what's expected of you. The only goal is that the Scout gets "what he deserves" any way he can.

The Proper Method

This brings us to the third way advancement can be used in a Scouting unit. In this method, advancement is a component of the unit program, but not the central focus of the program. Passing requirements is not so much the result of a concerted effort on the part of the Scout as it is a natural result of an effective program.

With this method, the Scout learns to meet challenges. He sets goals for himself, and helps his patrol and troop set goals for themselves. The unit program encourages him to overcome obstacles and learn new things. Not just skills, but new things about himself and his abilities. He learns the skills not by listening to a lecture or reading a book, but by doing them. In most cases he doesn't even realize he's learned a skill or passed a requirement until its over.

Using the proper method, a Scout would never think about trying to get away with doing less than the requirement. He learns to enjoy the challenges he faces, and looks forward to the feeling he'll get when the task is done. Cheating would only take away from that joy. In some cases, he'll even insist on doing *more* than the

requirement asks for because his confidence is high and he *believes* he can handle it.

So, what method does your unit use?

Personal Growth

The Joy Of Failure

So, you're sitting in the Scoutmaster's lounge at summer camp drinking a cup of coffee and trying not to worry about the crop of first year campers you've got spread out throughout camp. As you sit there wondering whether Jimmy made it to First Class Emphasis, or if Tim will ever learn to swim well enough to pass First Class you overhear a couple Scouters from another troop. You're not eavesdropping, it's just one of those Scouter conversations you can't help overhear.

Without looking at the two Scouters you're a bit confused as one Scouter excitedly tells his companion about how one of their Scouts failed his swim test. Something doesn't seem right to you as you definitely detect a hint of joy in the Scouter's voice. Curiosity, of course, gets the better of you so you get up and go for another cup of coffee - just so you can see if he has a smile on his face.

You're nearly horrified when you see the man sitting there having his conversation, and wearing the biggest smile you've ever seen in your life. Now you've *got* to find out what it is about a Scout failing a swim test that could put such a big smile on his face. So, you go back to your seat and try not to look too obvious as you continue to listen to the conversation.

What could it possibly be? Well, it should be pretty obvious from the title up there at the top of the page what I'm talking about. Yes, the thing that has this Scouter smiling is personal growth. Not his, but the Scout who failed the swim test. I've been that guy and I'm here to tell you why he's smiling.

The Look Of "I Got It!"

Most of us have had the pleasure of taking a group of Scouts to camp. Many times we return wondering if these boys will every get it, many times we return absolutely sure they won't. We've been there to hear that Scout dismiss all of our words of encouragement and continue to say "I can't!" We've seen the dark clouds form in a Scout's eyes when he starts to doubt his ability to do something. But we've also been there when the light comes back after he finally does it. That's usually what we think of when we talk about personal growth.

What I'm talking about is a much more subtle form of personal growth that many Scouters wait literally years to see in their Scouts. It comes when a Scout finally realizes that complaining and worrying is not going to get the job done and determination sets in. Probably every Scout has, at one time or another, failed a test. Most of the time we'll see the dejection in his eyes and have to jump to rescue his confidence. But there are those rare occasions when we're surprised.

That's what that Scouter was smiling about. One of his Scouts failed a swim test and instead of being dejected and running off to some other place in camp to cheer himself up, or crawling into his tent and hiding, he takes a step back and finds the determination to keep trying. That Scout has just taken a giant leap. He's

realized that failure is not the end of the world, and that he can probably learn something from it. He's now determined to do whatever he has to do to pass that test. If it means spending more time at the pool learning instead of playing, so be it. If it means taking one less merit badge, so be it. If it means no trips to the rifle range with his buddies, so be it.

No Challenge To Big

As a Scouter, when you see that look of determination in a Scout's eyes you instantly want to be his greatest cheerleader. It's no longer a question of *if* he'll be able to pass the test, but *when*, and you want so badly to help him that you're in danger of getting in his way. At the same time, you know he has to do it on his own - he *wants* to do it on his own.

That's what I call personal growth. Sure, personal growth happens all the time, with every requirement a Scout passes. But the best kind of personal growth comes when you least expect it. When that Scout has learned enough about himself that he can make that leap. It's at that moment that you know Scouting works, and will continue to work. You know that however joyful it is for you to see that determined look in his eye, this Scout will experience twice that when he finally succeeds. Your moment of joy comes before he succeeds because at that point you know he will - and after that there'll be no stopping him. His moment of joy comes after he succeeds - when he suddenly realizes he can do anything he puts his mind to.

My wish for you, and every Scouter or parent involved in Scouting is more smiles. Let's get out there and make people smile!

Adult Association

Mentoring Youth

For our Scouts to get *anything* from Scouting, they have to be shown the right way to do things. Someone has to teach them how to build a fire, set up a tent, tie a square knot, and all the other things a Scout needs to know. Along the way, that someone is also teaching them to be Scouts. It happens subtly, without a great deal of fanfare.

When all of the aims and methods are balanced properly, it will most often be a fellow Scout who does all of this. Perhaps the Troop Guide will teach him how to tie knots. The Quartermaster might teach him how to set up a tent. His Patrol Leader may teach him how to build a fire. And perhaps it will be the Senior Patrol Leader who teaches him to be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, etc. This is the ideal in Scouting.

We need not ask who taught those older Scouts, because it's supposed to be the boys who were older Scouts before them - and so on ad infinitum. The one person each and every one of those Scouts had, though, as an example to follow, was the adult who served as Scoutmaster. That's the method of adult association.

But the method is much more than the Scoutmaster. It's the committee members who serve on the Boards of Review. The representative from the chartering organization who makes Scouting possible; the merit badge counselor; all of them have a part to play in this method. The adult guides to help the youth find their way.

More Than An Example

Throughout his career as a Scout, a boy gets to know these adults, and learns to talk to them. He learns what they expect of him, what he should expect from himself, and in a very subtle way, he learns how to be an adult from them. He learns how to interact with adults, not to be afraid or scornful of them.

Through all of this interaction with adults, the Scout learns a lot more than how to deal with other people. He learns *how to be an adult*. The Scoutmaster sits down with him and helps him learn how to plan his advancement, set goals, and achieve the next rank. He takes that lesson and applies it to his job in the troop. When that succeeds, he sees the benefit of planning and setting goals, and uses that knowledge in his life. He begins planning for the future, setting goals outside of Scouting, and working to achieve those goals.

The merit badge counselors he meets teach him more than a set of skills. They teach him to investigate the world around him, and find out more about what interests him. He learns those lessons and applies them to the big decisions he has to make. He gains more confidence in deciding what his career will be, deciding what steps he will take toward that career, and weighing the different influences on those decisions.

In short, we're not just teaching Scouts how to be Scouts and do Scout things. We're teaching them how to be an adult in the adult world. We can't do that properly if we're disinterested, looking to just have fun, or act as if our example and attitudes have no effect.

Teach Them For Life

In some Scouting units today there is a severe lack of adult guidance. That does not mean there is a lack of adults - just that there is no guidance from them. Even in a troop where a Scout can hardly turn around without bumping into an adult, there can be a lack of guidance.

The adult in Scouting is a teacher, but he doesn't teach. She's a coach, but she doesn't control. Our job is to guide the Scouts toward discovering things for themselves. We don't teach a Scout how to build a fire, we show him the right way to do it, and then let him do it. Many adults seem to forget that once in a while. Instead of helping the Scout discover how to build a fire, we take charge and build the fire. Instead of helping the Scout learn to lead, we take the reins from him and do it ourselves.

That's not the sort of adult association Scouting is supposed to have. When we do those sorts of things it sets a bad example - telling the Scout we don't trust him enough to let him do it himself. It's a lesson he learns all too quickly. We end up with Scouts who seem to not want to learn, won't take the initiative, or simply lounge around waiting for an adult to tell him what to do.

It's also a lesson a Scout can take with him into adulthood. He begins to expect someone else to do the things he's asked to do. He doesn't take charge of his life, preferring to wait until someone comes along and takes charge of it for him. Remember, the adult is the compass of Scouting. He or she not only points the right direction, but guides us on our trek by the example he or she sets. If we can't trust our compass it's all too easy to get lost.

Leadership Development

Scout Equals Leader

Why, you may ask, is leadership development a method of Scouting? On the surface it doesn't seem to have anything to do with citizenship, character, or fitness. Then I have to ask why, in the early days of WWII, were former Boy Scouts often given leadership responsibilities in the various military boot camps? Why were former Scouts often singled out, finding themselves on the fast track through the ranks - enlisted or commissioned? The answer is simple, most commanders knew they could count on these former Boy Scouts to get the job done even while learning the job themselves.

My own experience in the military tends to support that. Now, I wasn't called upon to lead my company, or even my section, but I *was* called upon often to assist. Most often I was asked to help a fellow recruit learn to tie knots or follow instructions.

Just the simple act of being a Scout is an act of leadership development. Think about it, the basic unit of Scouting is the patrol. Within the patrol Scouts learn to do things on their own, under leaders they have chosen themselves. As they rise through the ranks, they may be called upon to take on that challenge themselves and everything they've learned about being in a patrol prepares them for that moment.

Setting The Example

Scouting does not count leadership development as a method simply because it helps keep the program running though. Think about the leadership skills we teach our Scouts. They are some pretty good skills to have even if you're not a leader: communicating, knowing and using resources, understanding the characteristics and needs of the group, representing the group, setting the example, planning, controlling the group, evaluating, counseling, sharing leadership, effective teaching. All of these things are quite useful even if you're not the leader.

Very often, though, we forget to not only teach these skills to our Scouts, but we fail to use them ourselves, or we fail to encourage them in others. It's strange, but one of the biggest lessons of leadership development concerns setting the example. That is the one skill that neither takes practice, nor even skill to use. The example is set whether the leaders are trying or not.

So, if you don't teach your Scouts the leadership skills, or use them yourself, they won't learn them and use them. If you don't plan things, they won't plan things - and nothing you say to them about planning, or no matter how hard you try to get them to learn how to plan, will make any difference.

Keyword: Development

To develop leadership in Scouting, we not only must provide the skill knowledge, and the example to follow, we also must provide them with knowledge of the job. It's not enough to teach them *how* to be a leader, or *show* them how to be a leader. They must be given a chance to do it for themselves. We must make it clear to them what the expectations are; what responsibilities they have. It does no good to let a Scout take on the position of Senior Patrol Leader with no idea what the job entails, or what you expect him to do. Development means constantly guiding, evaluating, and reviewing. Sure, even armed with knowledge of the expectations and parameters of the job, the Scout can still fail. Without that knowledge, however, it is more likely that he *will* fail.

As I discussed elsewhere, failure is *not* a bad thing, but it can be if the individual has no way to succeed. To learn from failure, we have to have the capability of succeeding and not succeeding. If you have no chance to succeed, all the evaluation, reflection, and reviewing will lead you to that conclusion.

Ultimately, the youth leaders in Scouting look to us for guidance on what to do and how to do it. If we don't "***train 'em, trust 'em, and let 'em lead***" they won't. It's that simple. Notice, though, that the first part of that quote is to train them. Strong youth leaders are what keep Scouting going through thick and thin.

The Uniform

Symbol Of Commitment

It's not difficult to imagine Scouting without the uniform, many leaders not only *can* imagine it; they believe the uniform is unnecessary and should be done away with entirely. While they are certainly welcome to their opinion, I happen to believe that the uniform is kind of important to Scouting. Either way, though, the Boy Scouts of America has a uniform, which is counted among the methods of Scouting, and therefore deserves the support of every leader regardless of their opinion on the subject.

Like I said, many people can imagine Scouting without a uniform. Many more people are perfectly willing to modify the uniform, or drop it entirely for various reasons (some valid, some not). The uniform is easily the most discussed, abused, and quickly modified method in Scouting. Almost every one of us, including myself, are guilty of this. We should, however, stop to think what the uniform means, and how Scouting changes when we take the uniform out of it.

One aspect of the aim of building character in boys is changing their attitudes. We do this through many methods. Primarily, we present them with an ideal for behavior in the Scout Oath and Scout Law. These challenge the Scout to do his best on his honor. That's an important clue and a pretty high concept. Of course, the word "honor" was more widely known in the days when Scouting was first organized, but it remains a pretty important concept.

When a Scout recites the Scout Oath, he's pledging himself to the ideals of Scouting. He's taking on a powerful commitment that transcends his personal likes and dislikes. He may not like being helpful to other people at all times, but his pledge as a Scout is to do his best to do exactly that. He may not like being physically fit, but he is making a commitment to do his best to be physically fit.

More Than Just A Shirt

The uniform as a method is an outward symbol of that commitment. A Scout may not like wearing the uniform, but his commitment as a Scout means he should do his best to wear the uniform. It may be "geeky," "uncool", or hopelessly out of fashion, but a Scout's commitment to the ideals of Scouting doesn't turn on fashion. When we, as adult leaders - the example he follows - ignore or change the importance of the uniform method; or we change the uniform to better fit the likes and dislikes of our Scouts; we are in effect telling them that their commitment need not force them to do things they don't like to do. We're telling them that the commitment can be changed in favor of something more fashionable.

When a Scout learns that his Scouting commitment can be changed or ignored depending on what's "cool" or "popular" at the time, he can no longer do his best to live by the ideals of Scouting. We encourage him to do his best, but the commitment means nothing anymore. He's not held to that commitment *on his honor*. He acts however he wants to act, regardless of the Scout Law, because

we've shown him that "honor" means nothing, that he need only follow the Scout Law when it's convenient to do so.

The Uniform Method asks us, the adult leaders, to hold up the uniform as a symbol of the promise each Scout makes. The intention is that wearing the uniform reminds the Scout of that promise, providing the expectation that he act like a Scout. As he gains experience in Scouting, he should also gain experience acting like a Scout, and eventually he will no longer need the uniform as a reminder. *That* is the Uniform Method.

Be A Quality Unit

Your goal should be to be a quality unit...

One thing is for sure; I want every unit to be a quality unit. I'm don't mean I want every unit to earn the National Quality Unit Award; I want every unit to do much more than that. If your unit has already earned the NQUA, I want you to take a long, hard look at it and look for ways of making it better. If your unit has *not* earned the NQUA, I want you to sit down and develop a plan not just to earn the award, but to go beyond the award.

The award criteria represent minimum standards, not the ideal. Each unit should be looking at these requirements as a way of determining the progress they've made, identifying areas where improvement is needed, and a way of suggesting some goals for the coming year. Remember, your goal should not be: "Earn the National Quality Unit Award." Your goal should be to: "**Be a quality unit!**"

The Requirements

1. **Training***: The Scoutmaster will complete Boy Scout Leader Fast Start Training and Scoutmastership Fundamentals
2. **Two-Deep Leadership***: We will have one or more assistant Scoutmasters registered, trained, and active. One registered adult is assigned responsibility for Youth Protection training.
3. **Planned Program**: Our troop will conduct an annual program planning conference, publish an annual troop program calendar, and present it to parents at a family activity.
4. **Service Project**: Our troop will conduct a service project annually, preferably for the chartered organization or community.
5. **Advancement**: Sixty percent or more of our Boy Scouts will advance a rank, or we will have a ten percent increase in total rank advancement over a year ago.
6. **Boy's Life**: A subscription to *Boy's Life* will go into the homes of all our Boy Scout members, or we will have a ten percent increase over a year ago.
7. **Outdoor Activities***: The troop will conduct six highlight activities (such as hikes, cam pouts, trips, tours, etc.) and attend a Boy Scouts of America long-term camp.
8. **Membership**: We will renew our charter with an equal or greater number of youth registered over a year ago.
9. **Patrol Method**: We will conduct Troop Junior Leader Training as outlined in the *Scoutmaster Handbook* and hold monthly Patrol Leaders' Council meetings.
10. **On-Time Charter Renewal***: The troop will complete its charter renewal before its current charter expires.

Training

How good would you be at chess or checkers if no one had ever explained the rules or taught you how to play? This is essentially the reason the BSA lists this criteria as a required criteria for the National Quality Unit Award.

In order to meet this requirement, the troop's Scoutmaster must have taken Fast Start *and* Scoutmastership Fundamentals. With the changes to the adult leader training the wording of the requirement will change, but the concept behind the requirement will not. The one adult leader responsible for making Scouting happen in a troop *needs* to be properly trained.

Your goal, of course, should be for *every* adult leader to be trained to the same level. That includes the Committee Chair, all of the assistant Scoutmasters, and maybe even the entire troop committee. Realistically, that's not always possible. At the very least, the Scoutmaster and assistant Scoutmasters should have the Scoutmaster specific training this requirement asks for. Additionally, the Committee Chair should have the committee specific training offered as part of the new training cycle. Everyone else should have at least BSA Basic Training.

The reason is simple; in Little League we expect the coaches and umpires to know something about baseball, don't we? In youth soccer, we expect the coaches and referees to know a little something about soccer. How is Scouting any different? Parents should expect the adult leaders of their son's troop to know something about Scouting - and if they don't they should be expected to learn. If you won't trust your car to a mechanic who doesn't know how to fix it, why would you trust your son to a Scouter who doesn't know how run a Scout troop?

Two-Deep Leadership

Two-Deep Leadership is much more than a requirement for the NQUA. In order for a troop to actually be chartered in the first place, there must be at least five youth, and at least five adults. Two of those five adults must be registered as the Scoutmaster and an assistant Scoutmaster. But this criterion goes just a bit further than that.

The assistant Scoutmaster, according to the NQUA criteria, must not only be registered, he or she must also be trained *and* active. That means much more than just a name on the charter. If the SA is registered and active, it doesn't count until he or she has been trained. Likewise, if they're registered and trained, it doesn't count until they are active.

The reasoning for this is simple. Having such an SA means the troop can survive if something happens to the Scoutmaster. What if he's temporarily transferred to another city for several months? Is the troop supposed to just stop functioning until he comes back? If the answer is yes, then why are we even concerned about the Scouts? They obviously aren't the focus of the program. Of course, this two-deep leadership concept also comes in handy even when the Scoutmaster isn't temporarily missing from the picture. It also supports the concept of youth protection.

Speaking of youth protection, you'll notice that the additional element of this requirement is for one adult to be assigned responsibility of youth protection training. That element is just as important as the rest of the requirement because the BSA is committed to youth protection and a quality unit should share that commitment.

Now, once again, the requirement sets a pretty low standard, but your focus should be on providing a quality program, not on earning an award. Therefore, your goal should be to have as many adults involved as possible; perhaps one assistant Scoutmaster for every patrol of Scouts, plus committee members to handle the major concerns of the committee. As I discussed under training, your goal should also be to have every assistant Scoutmaster trained, including youth protection training.

Planned Program

This is one area where I don't completely agree with the BSA. A planned program is certainly an important quality for a troop, and it is a major factor when it comes to determining whether the troop is a quality troop. Where I differ from the BSA is on the status of this criterion. In my mind, this should be a required item.

Think about it, how much quality could you find in a program that wasn't planned? Unlike some of the other criteria for the NQUA, though, the planned program criterion actually sets a pretty high standard. In order to qualify, a troop's program must not only be planned at an annual program planning conference, but the troop has to publish a program calendar *and* present the program to parents at a family activity.

Much of my experience as a Scouter involves dealing with troops that, for one reason or another, are either in decline or never managed to ascend. If you could analyze these troops and figure out why they were in decline, the lack of a planned program would be in the top five reasons. If you look at the biggest, most active troops in your district, one of the things you'll find they have in common is an exciting, fun, and well-planned program.

Your goal should be to meet this criterion. It's as simple as that. The standard is high, and it's not required, but this item should be a part of what makes your troop a quality unit.

Service Project

The Scout Oath says that a Scout promises to do his best to "help other people at all times." The Scout Law expects a Scout to be helpful. And the Scout Slogan asks him to do a good turn daily. All this item asks is that a troop do a good turn for the community annually.

While the standard of one service project in a twelve-month period seems light, the concept of service to the community is a basic element of Scouting. Unfortunately, many troops rarely plan service projects unless they have a Scout

trying to earn his Eagle rank. A quality troop, with a quality program should at least repay their chartering organization with a bit of community service.

It is, of course, getting much easier for troops to plan and conduct service projects. Many middle schools require a set number of hours of community service for graduation, as do many high schools. With these requirements hanging over their head, and the comparatively light community service requirements for Star or Life, many Patrol Leaders and Senior Patrol Leaders jump at the chance to add a service project to their program. But, we want them to plan them because service to the community is good, and it makes them feel good, not because their school requires it.

Setting a goal for service projects is difficult. It depends on the members of the troop, the community they live in, and the resources available to them. Whether it's one a year, one every six months, one a quarter, or whenever the opportunity presents itself, the number of projects should be determined according to the makeup of the troop. Your goal, however, should be to make service projects something your Scouts enjoy and look forward to, rather than simply something they need to do to pass a requirement.

Advancement

Some would argue that advancement should be a required item for the National Quality Unit Award. I would argue otherwise. The primary reason for this is that advancement is supposed to be something that happens naturally as a part of the troop program. That does not mean the program should be consumed with advancement, but that advancement takes place because the program provided an opportunity. If your Scouts are advancing, it's should be because the program is working properly, not because the troop's focus is on advancement.

The standard presented in the NQUA is not a bad standard, and taken with the rest of the criteria for the award, advancement is in the right place. Making it a required item would shift the focus of advancement from the result of a quality program, to the *purpose* of the program. Too many people have that belief as it is.

Baden-Powell believed that advancement should be done on an individual basis; that the Scout would pass his tests when he was ready to pass them; that Patrol Leaders and Scoutmasters would teach him the skills not as a *part* of the program, but because those skills were needed *for* the program. For him, it all boiled down to one question: "Do we go camping because it's required, or because it's fun to do?" The answer to that question should be because it's fun to go camping.

Your goal for advancement as a quality unit should be to develop a quality program that provides opportunities for advancement. Variety and excitement are the key. You can say this months meetings are devoted to Camping merit badge, but meeting programs should not revolve around the requirements. Each Scout should be able to pass the requirements as a result of participating in troop meetings and campouts.

Boy's Life

There has been debate for many years over this one criterion for the National Quality Unit Award. Many Scouters see it as an attempt to turn them into some sort of magazine salesmen. Unfortunately, that's the wrong attitude. *Boy's Life* is a great way to get Scouts to read, but more than that, it's full of ideas they can use in Scouting and out of Scouting.

It must be noted that in my early years as a Scoutmaster the standard for *Boy's Life* subscriptions was quite high compared to today. Back then the criteria expected 100% of the Scouts receiving a subscription (or a 10% increase). In many troops this wasn't possible because many parents didn't want more than one subscription if they had more than one boy in the program. If one son was a Boy Scout, it was usual that a brother in Cub Scouts would not be subscribed. Thankfully, the standard now reflects this tendency.

The real reason the BSA includes *Boy's Life* in the NQUA is because they believe the magazine is good for the boys who receive and read it. It also supports the program and ideals of the Boy Scouts of America. So, is this a criteria placed on troops to increase subscriptions to a magazine? Yes, but so what? *Boy's Life* is a BSA publication and it can be helpful to the Scouts who read it. If the magazine were an independent publication I might have a concern.

Your goal should be to provide the opportunity for every Scout or Scouting family to subscribe to the magazine. You don't have to sell it, just give them the opportunity. If they want to subscribe they will. If they don't want to subscribe, you don't have to browbeat them until they do. Of course, in my troop they don't get a choice. Every Scout receives a subscription, period. The troop pays for it partly from dues, and partly from fundraisers.

Outdoor Activities

You've probably heard the statement "There's no Scouting without outing." If you haven't heard it in a training course, a roundtable, or some other place, you probably heard it right here on this web site. That statement not only explains why the outdoors are a criteria for the National Quality Unit Award, but it explains why this item is required for the award.

The standard this item represents, however is both low, and restrictive. It's a low standard because most of what we do in Scouting should take place outdoors, but this item only asks for six activities. For me, Scouting is a year-round activity, and my Scouting training expects that a troop have a highlight activity every month. There is, however, nothing wrong with the standard of six. If you add in the long-term camp, that takes care of seven months, leaving five months for the patrols to conduct their own activities.

Additionally, the criterion specifically mentions attending a Boy Scouts of America long-term camp. I would look for that to change in the future (if it hasn't already). Many troops with high quality programs do not attend BSA camps. Some of them plan long treks in the wilderness, canoe trips, or other "high adventure" activities

that take the place of summer camp. This, then, is the one complaint I have with this item.

Obviously you should set a goal to meet the criteria for this item as far as getting outdoors as much as possible. That does not mean you need to limit your troop program to Boy Scout summer camps. Your outdoor program should be fun, exciting, and above all else, reflect what the Scouts in your troop want to do.

Now, if I had been asked I would not have made this item required. I would have made "Planned Program" required simply because a quality unit plans its program, but the outdoor program needs to fit the interests and resources of the troop. In this item the specification of a Boy Scouts of America long-term camp puts too great a restriction on the program.

Membership

Most of us would agree that membership is pretty important to Scouting. Does that make you wonder why the membership criterion for the National Quality Unit Award is not one of the required ones? There's a reason for that, which I'll get to momentarily.

First let's address the standard represented by the criterion; at first glance it seems like a pretty low standard - equal to or greater than, some would say, is way too vague. You would think that a quality unit should be able to show some growth, but the quality of a unit is not the only thing that drives membership growth. There are a lot of things that come into play; some of them are completely beyond the control of the troop.

Some troops manage to present a quality program, and conduct quality activities; yet don't experience a growth in membership. Sometimes the troop even *plans* it that way. For instance, if the troop gets too big, the troop leaders may decide to slow its growth. They may even decide to split into two distinct units, complete with distinct charters. That of course results in a loss of membership, but it's a loss due to quality oddly enough. Whatever the dynamics involved, membership growth is not as reliable an indicator as other elements.

Growth in membership can be the direct result of a troop's program, but it could also be the direct result of a sudden growth in the community's population, a larger number of youth in a particular age group, or even a lack of a program in another troop. You'll notice that the other criteria for the award do not have such an outside influence.

This influence of outside factors is one reason the membership criteria is not a required one. The BSA does an incredible amount of statistical analysis in two primary areas. The first is advancement. The second is membership and retention. They study every number they can get to find out why boys join Scouting, why they join a particular troop, and what keeps them in Scouting or drives them away. All of that analysis tells them that there are many factors involved, and the BSA, the local council, or the units cannot control some of those factors. Trained leadership and an effective program certainly contribute to membership growth

and retention, but they don't have much of an effect if there are no boys to attract.

Your goal, obviously, should be to meet the criteria and renew your charter with an equal or greater number of Scouts. That should be your goal *if* that's the right thing for your troop. If the troop already has 75 and your meeting room is like a sardine can, you might set a different goal. If you're at 40 and you don't think you can handle many more, you'll probably set a different goal. You may even know about a community dynamic that will have an impact on whatever goal you set. The point is, whatever goal you set should reflect your unique situation - and be realistic.

The Patrol Method

Look carefully at this one. This is another of those non-required elements that I personally believe should be required. It goes hand-in-hand with the "Planned Program" item. If you have a planned program, someone must have planned it. Hopefully, it was your Patrol Leaders' Council. Hopefully, the Patrol Leaders that make up that body have been trained to do the job. Hopefully they represent *real* patrols, not just a group of names on a piece of paper.

As I've said elsewhere, the patrol is the basic unit of Scouting. Baden-Powell intended it as such. Many Scouters, though, have a tendency to divide their troops into patrols and not fully implement the Patrol Method. The National Quality Unit Award standard provides only for training junior leaders, and holding Patrol Leaders' Council meetings. That's not a bad standard because if both of those things are done, and done properly, you're a step closer to having *real* patrols than the troop that doesn't.

There's a whole section of this web site devoted to using the Patrol Method, so I won't go into it in detail here. Suffice it to say, a quality unit in the Boy Scouts of America uses the Patrol Method - even if they only have one patrol. Properly used, the Patrol Method creates opportunities to use many of the other methods of Scouting.

Now, by properly used I mean letting the Scouts form their patrols naturally, select their own leaders, and determine their own troop and patrol program. Leadership training is just a lot of hot air if the person being trained isn't given a chance to practice what he's learned. Holding monthly PLC meetings is wasted time if the members of the council can't make decisions or discuss anything important to them in Scouting.

If your goal is to have *real* patrols, then you'll set this criterion as a personal requirement for the award. If you already have *real* patrols, meeting this criterion should be a snap.

On-Time Charter Renewal

If any of the criteria for the National Quality Unit Award, required or otherwise, were specifically designed to meet standards set for the professionals, this one is

it. Still, there's one nagging thought that keeps bringing me back to how important this item is, and why it's required.

We, hopefully, can agree that a hallmark of a quality unit is that it's well organized, plans things well in advance, and sets high standards for its program, leaders, and Scouts. If that is indeed the case, then it seems unlikely that such a troop could *not* manage to complete its charter renewal on time.

To me, it seems natural that a quality unit would have a special meeting a month or two before the charter expires and take a quick look at the paperwork. I imagine they would divvy up the requirements among the adults, set deadlines, and make whatever plans they needed to complete the renewal.

Your goal should be to complete the charter renewal on time. If not for the professional responsible for your unit, for the youth and adults involved in the unit. Not completing the charter renewal on time creates gaps in tenure, delays magazine subscriptions and new member registrations, and unfortunately reflects the level of organization in the unit.

Conclusion

The National Quality Unit Award is not truly a mark of quality in a unit. Units at almost every end of the spectrum can earn it. It's true purpose is to provide an opportunity for the unit leaders to sit down and take a long hard look at their unit. It's meant to help those leaders identify areas that need improvement, and to facilitate the setting of real goals for the unit.

Bear in mind, however, that just checking all of the blocks for the "**(B) Coming Year**" is not enough. Whether or not you achieve a goal is determined by the amount of commitment and determination you have for that goal. Setting the goal is not enough, you have to actually work at achieving it - something our Scouts are supposed to learn when it comes to advancement.

So, when you sit down to complete the award sheet, remember the goals you set the previous year, compare them to your marks for "**(A) Past Year**", and determine what needs to be done to improve each area.

Ultimately, your goal should be to exceed each of the ten items in the NQUA, but that will only happen if you set your sights higher than the award. If you set your sights *on* the award, you'll probably miss.

The Game of Scouting

Scouting, it's not just a game, it's an adventure...

It's Not Winning Or Losing

Scouting is a game. At least that's what it's supposed to be. Some would even say it's supposed to be a game with a purpose, but it seems to me that there are an awful lot of people out there who tend to go to extremes. There are those who put all of their emphasis on the game, and there are those who put all of their emphasis on the purpose.

One thing we should all remember is that Scouting is supposed to be a game for the youth who are Scouts. That means for them it should be fun, exciting, and with relatively few rules. It should appear to them to be just a fun activity. Sure, we've got the Scout Oath and Law, which constitute the rules of the game. Some would say that these two elements make Scouting an impossible game. No other game requires a player to follow the rules even when he's not playing!

While that's generally true with games like football, or chess, it's not true of Scouting simply because the game NEVER ends. It starts when a boy first promises that he "understands and intends to live by the Scout Oath, Scout Law, Scout Motto, Scout Slogan, and the Outdoor Code;" or he first promises "to do my best to do my duty to God and my country, to help other people, and to obey the Law of the Pack." If the game is played properly, it lasts forever regardless of whether the individual still puts on a Scouting uniform.

Like most games, Scouting has an ultimate goal, a set of rules, and a well-defined playing field. Over the years many have developed strategies for playing the game; ways to make the game more exciting, but the overall goal of the game hasn't changed. For example, the goal of football is to score as many points as possible in 60 minutes while preventing your opponent from scoring. This has been a goal of the game from the moment it was first developed. Over the years many improvements have been made to football to make it safer, more exciting to play, or more exciting to watch. That's much like Scouting. The basic rules of football - the rules that define how football is played, scored, etc. haven't changed just like the Scout Oath and Law haven't changed. The other rules that protect the players, define what is allowed and what isn't, and such have changed to make the game safer and discourage cheating. Scouting has the same thing in the Guide To Safe Scouting, Youth Protection, Leave No Trace, Climb On Safely, as well as the rank requirements and merit badges.

It's How You Play The Game

Imagine what football would be like if all of the effort involved in the game was focused solely on the aims of the game, with no regard to how the rules expect the game to be played, or what is allowed or not allowed. Some would point to Australian Rules football, or Rugby. Both of these sports, however, still have rules that must be followed. No, football would resemble warfare if the only focus was on scoring points and keeping your opponent from scoring them. Now imagine what Scouting would be like if all of our focus was on building character, fostering

citizenship, and promoting fitness - with no regard for how that's done. It sounds impossible, but there are folks in Scouting who's sole focus is on the aims of Scouting. They don't care how Scouting is done as long as it achieves the three aims. It's what I call anarchy.

Imagine what football would be like if all of the effort involved in the game was focused completely on the excitement of the game. They don't care what the goal of the game is, or how it's played, as long as it's fun. Imagine what it would be like watching a game where any rule is seen to take away from the fun and excitement. Well, the first thing you'd notice is that it would be pretty hard to score any points. On the offensive side each player would be trying to do whatever he thought was fun instead of working together to move the ball down the field and score points. On the defensive side you'd have chaos. Assuming the quarterback managed to throw the ball, chances are pretty good the receivers would have been knocked unconscious shortly after the ball was snapped. Suffice it to say, there'd be a lot of turnovers. Now, imagine what Scouting would be like if all of our focus was on having fun. Aside from the chaos, you'd see a lot of kids running around doing whatever they like to do, and all of the things that need to be done wouldn't get done.

My point is that everything that goes into this game we call Scouting is there for a reason. The Boy Scouts of America is charged with the task of making sure the aims of the movement are met, but at the same time, it has to make sure Scouting is fun and exciting. Despite what some may think, every rule and requirement is strictly analyzed to ensure that it promotes the aims of Scouting, follows the established rules for how the game of Scouting is played, and keeps Scouting fun and exciting for those who play it. When the requirements for a merit badge are reviewed, every proposed change is weighed very carefully to maintain the balance between the aims, the methods, and the game itself. We as Scouters should do no less in running our units.

Evaluate, Review, Reflect

Looking back, looking forward, looking in...

Even as our Scouts are looking at what they need to do, what they have done, and what they think they can do, we should be doing the same thing. Evaluating our performance, reviewing our goals, and reflecting on the difference between the two are important aspects of leadership, and of Scouting in general. Through the advancement method, we teach Scouts to set goals, do their best, evaluate their performance, and learn from their experiences. To be effective unit leaders, we *must* do the same thing.

Looking Back

At every opportunity, a Scouter needs to evaluate what he or she is doing. The Scoutmaster needs to evaluate how effective his Scoutmaster Conferences and Scoutmaster Minutes are. The Committee Chair needs to evaluate how good a job the unit committee is doing. Evaluation is the only way we can see where we are, compared to where we've been and where we want to go. Like a Scout, we set a goal for ourselves, work toward that goal, and occasionally look back to see how much progress we've made.

If you've ever tried hiking in deep snow, you'll have a pretty good idea how important evaluating our progress can be. You see, if we just start hiking through the snow, pretty soon we start thinking about how far we've gone, and how far we have to go. If we don't look back, chances are we'll think we've progressed farther than we have. The longer we go without looking back at our progress, the more discouraged we'll be when we finally do.

That doesn't mean we need to look back at our progress every couple steps. That can be equally discouraging because we won't be able to see much progress. The trick is to look back just often enough to reassure ourselves that we're making progress, and that our progress is in the right direction. The rest of the time, we need to keep one eye on where we're going, and one eye on where we want to be.

So, when we evaluate the job we're doing, we're basically making sure we're going in the right direction, looking at what adjustments need to be made, and estimating how far we have traveled. Our evaluation helps us review and reflect on what we're doing, just like evaluation helps a Scout understand what he's learned, and figure out what he needs to do.

Looking Forward

In almost everything we do, we spend most of our time looking forward, so you may ask why it's so important to talk about it here. Well, think about the last time you drove to work. Most of the time you spent looking at the road in front of you. Occasionally you checked your mirrors, and looked around at the traffic around you, but most of the time you were looking at where you were going. So, ask yourself, how many times have you made that trip. How many times have you found yourself pulling into the parking lot with only a vague memory of how you

got there? That's what happens when we become too familiar with what we're doing or where we're going. We know the path so well, we hardly notice it as we travel.

In Scouting, and indeed in life, we need to review where we're going occasionally, just as a reminder. For many long-time Scouters, the job they do is very familiar. They've been there, and done that so many times they're hardly surprised. Reviewing the things we do helps us keep our eyes open. When we take the time to review our goals, if we're familiar with the path to our goal, like the route to our place of work, reviewing helps us look for detours that may crop up, or problems we may encounter. When we couple that with evaluating, we're better prepared to deal with sudden changes that need to be made. Reviewing is mentally going over the route or path, and helps us anticipate the things that might come up as we travel.

Looking In

Reflection is as important as, and sometimes more important than, evaluating and reviewing. Reflection is what helps a Scout learn to tie a bowline. Evaluation helps him see the mistakes he makes on his first couple tries. Reviewing helps him see what the end result of a bowline is supposed to be like. Reflection helps him make the leap between what he's done, and where he wants to go. The same is true in everything we do, including our jobs in Scouting.

Like that Tenderfoot, a Scouter is taught how to do his or her job, does the job for a while, and then reflects on the experience. That reflection helps the Scouter learn how to apply his or her knowledge of the job using his or her personal abilities. Through reflection, we learn what we're good at, and what we're not so good at. That helps us be better adult leaders, because it focuses our attention on the things we need to improve.

If we don't reflect on what we've done, or are doing, we can't learn from the experience until it's too late. Reflection should be a natural part of what we do as leaders, just as reviewing and evaluating should be. It's what we want our Scouts to do.

Tying It All Up In Knots

A normal program year in a Scouting unit provides plenty of opportunities for evaluation, review, and reflecting. We, as Scouters, should take full advantage of these opportunities to ensure we are doing the best we can for our Scouts. We also need to encourage our Scouts to evaluate, review, and reflect on not only their advancement goals, but also their jobs as leaders, and their life "outside" Scouting.

Teach your Scouts that complaining about a problem doesn't make it go away. We should evaluate the situation to figure out why the problem occurred. We should review the situation to see how the problem affected our goals. And, we should reflect on the situation to see what can be learned from the problem. But, remind them that problems are not the only things that should be evaluated, reviewed,

and reflected. The things we do that are successful, or go off without a hitch, can also teach us a thing or two.

A Scoutmaster's Creed

This creed was adapted from an article written by "Green Bar Bill" Hillcourt for Scoutmasters:

I will think of my Patrols in terms of the leaders

I will train my Patrol Leaders to do their job, trust them to do that job to the best of their ability, and let them do the job. I will support their efforts by showing them the confidence I have in their abilities, and expecting them to do their best.

I will adopt the answer "Ask your Patrol Leader; he knows!"

I will develop the belief in my Scouts that the Patrol Leader is the *only* one who knows what's going on. I want them to look to those leaders for vital facts and guidance because that's a sign of true youth leadership.

I will take my own advice and "Ask the Patrol Leader; he knows!"

I will instill in my Patrol Leaders a need to get to know the Scouts in their Patrols. I will count on them to know whatever information I need about a Scout. I know that a Patrol Leader can only lead effectively if he has a handle on the wants, needs, and concerns of each Scout in his Patrol, and I want each of my Patrol Leaders to be effective.

I will stick the youth leaders out in front at every opportunity

I know that leadership is much more than wearing a patch and that every youth leader needs to develop confidence in his abilities. I know the only way a Scout can develop leadership confidence is to *lead*, and I will give them every opportunity to do so.

I will commend my Patrol Leaders publicly whenever they show signs of taking responsibility

I know that public recognition of the "little things" a Patrol Leader does will build the leader's confidence in his abilities, and his Patrol's trust in his leadership.

I will refrain from criticizing them before their group

I know that mistakes will be made, and it is my job to turn failure into an opportunity for success. Criticizing a Patrol Leader in front of

his Patrol can easily reverse any progress that has been made, so I will criticize privately and constructively, helping the Patrol Leader learn from the experience.

I will count on my Patrol Leaders to lead

I will refrain from jumping in to solve every problem or hand out discipline. I will give my Patrol Leaders *real* responsibility for their Patrols, and trust them to take on that responsibility. In short, I will train them, trust them, and let them lead!

I will always be ready to give a helping hand, a word of advice, or a boost in confidence to my Patrol Leaders

I will remember that my job is to train the Patrol Leaders to lead, and give them the opportunity to lead. I will also remember that training is an ongoing effort since every possible scenario can *never* be covered in formal training. I will be a guide the Patrol Leader can count on for advice or just to talk about things without getting in his way or taking charge at every turn.

A Patrol Leader's Creed

This creed was written by a Patrol Leader named John Innes from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and was printed in the 1923 Handbook for Patrol Leaders:

I will develop spirit in my Patrol

I will be cheerful constantly. I will be the fast friend of all the Patrol Members and be ready at all times to serve them. They can count on me to have a new song, a fresh idea or a stunt at my finger's end and we will all be as thick as the Forty Thieves.

I will advance along the Scout ladder

I will steadily step up from Tenderfoot to Second Class, to First Class and through all the Merit Badges to the Eagle Rank, so that I may be a guide and perhaps the inspiration for the rest of my fellows to go and do likewise.

I will do a Good Turn daily

I will not let the Good Turn Idea be a thing like my best necktie, that I use only on special occasions. Neither will I automatically stop looking for and doing Good Turns after the first one of the day. Just because I have already done my Good Turn for the day is no reason at all why I should refuse to grab the opportunity to help grandmother find her specs or put ice in the refrigerator for mother.

I will live the Scout Oath and Law

I will remember always that I must be loyal and I will not misjudge Bill when he plays me what seems to be a dirty trick. And I will be exceedingly cheerful, even when it hurts, when it would do my old heart good to backbite and be sarcastic or even just plain grouchy. I will take time, once in a while, to sit down and think what it means to do my duty to my country ... and to other people and to God... I will remember that it is a part of the Scout Law and make good old soap my constant companion. I will remember that it works just as well on my uniform as on my hands and neck and behave accordingly. I will be thrifty, even though it hurts and my heart yearns for an extra tennis racquet and I have just about twelve dollars in the bank. The best thing I can do, then, is to sock another dollar in there to make a lucky thirteen and go whistling on my way. I will be trustworthy and absolutely reliable always and my Scoutmaster may count on me to be on time for every meeting and hike.

I will lead my Patrol

I will remember that I am the Patrol Leader and that I am responsible for what my fellows do and how they act and I will take steps to make sure that they respect my leadership. I will plan carefully all my Patrol Meetings and the parts of the Troop Meetings for which I am responsible. I will take an active interest in all my Patrol projects and stunts and contribute my fair share of all Patrol work. I will be fair to my Assistant and train him in Patrol management to the best of my ability. I will be alert to the possibilities of all my fellows in my Patrol and will call upon them frequently to add their share to the Troop and Patrol work.

I will plan my work

I know that there is only one way to be a successful director and leader and that is to know what I am trying to accomplish and how I want it done. I will not hold a Patrol meeting without first being very sure that I know just what I want Tom and John to do in connection with the song-fest and the games the Troop is to pull at the next meeting, and how I am going to get Frank to see that he ought to pass First Aid to clear up his work on the First Class tests.

I will be generous and give credit where it is due

I know that there is nothing that helps a fellow so much as a word of encouragement and to cheer when he has done a job well. I want to be on the lookout for fellows who do more than their share of the work and let them know that I appreciate their spirit. I will not take credit for their work and when Ed has a particularly fine First Class map I will be very sure that all the fellows in the Troop get a chance to look it over and congratulate him on his work.