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Scoutmaster's Minute

Impacting the Future - Can you make a difference? Will applying all this new knowledge really mean anything or have an impact. Perhaps the best way to learn this is from the horse's mouth, so to speak. Below are some excerpts from A letter to a Scoutmaster upon his retirement from one of the boys that became an Eagle during his tenure. He was about 19 1/2 years old as he wrote this, in his second year of college, and a little over 18 months since completing his Eagle requirements. This youth was not one of the outgoing boys that loved scouting and you knew had received a great deal from the program. He was one of the quiet ones. The ones that look uncomfortable in their uniforms, seem like they want to be somewhere else, and act like they wouldn't be there if Mom and Dad didn't make them come. Do you have one of these in your unit? Think of them as you read.

Dear Mr. _____,

Boy Scouts may have been one of the most important influences in my childhood. As Scoutmaster of my troop, you took a command role in this important activity. During these years, I went through some of the toughest times in my life thus far. While some good did come out of junior high, I shudder to think back on the torment and mockery that rocked my self-esteem. Luckily, I was blessed with strong foundations to fall back on in a loving family and friendly Scout troop. Even though sometimes I hated to put on my dorky scout uniform, (with unfashionable neckerchief) I knew that nobody in my troop would make fun of me for it because any Scout that did would face your wrath. While your wrath was often nothing more than a gruff look and perhaps a word or two, none could endure such a punishment for long.

While you could exert such a strong control, you always emphasized that the troop was run by scouts. I know that there are many Scoutmasters out there who manage every aspect of their troops, leaving the patrol leaders as mere figureheads. Such a troop can exist and run well, but this prevents Scouts from learning one of the most important aspects of Boy Scouts: leadership over peers. You knew that forcing us to meet at certain times and accomplish certain goals would be a negative effect' therefore you gave us free reign, doling out advice as was necessary. The troop flourished at times and floundered at others, depending on who was Senior Patrol Leader. At any time you could have stepped in and grabbed the reigns, but you didn't. Without a doubt, this instilled leadership values into boys that will help them for their entire lives..... I don't know what Troop ___ will be like without your comforting presence. For my entire tenure as A Boy Scout, you were the part of the troop that I could count on most. At the meetings you could not be present at, something was always missing. When you added the Scoutmaster minute to the end of meetings, you took the time to talk about something pertinent (and even *gasp* interesting) before we left for home. Of course you had always done the same thing before, but the Scoutmaster Minute made it both official and expected. If an issue was particularly important, you would stress it immensely. I will never forget your annual talks about the harms of child molestation during the troop screening of A Time to Tell, and the importance of reporting any such incident. Your strong morals were imparted to each one of us, and we are stronger because of it.

I could go on and on about the memories of Scouting and the stories of the shenanigans that nearly every Scout go into (some involving industrial-size dryers) but there are far too many to list. I will always remember talking to you after my Eagle Court party, possibly the best conversation we ever had. After that point, I realized the fatherly love that you had for all of your Scouts. I would like to leave you with this quote by Fred Manske, Jr., which I think applies well to you. "The ultimate leader is one who is willing to develop people to the point that they surpass him or her in knowledge and ability." ... Troop___ will go on without you, but it will never be the same.....

The answer is yes, we can make a huge difference. This leader was just like you. He worked to deliver the program to the boys and remembered that THEY are the reason we are in scouting. Often the biggest difference we make is where we least expect to or realize we have any impact.

Yours in Scouting

Tim Taylor - Scoutmaster

