

THE SCOUTMASTER'S MINUTE

The Scoutmaster's Minute is brief in duration but one of the most important parts of a troop meeting. Occurring at the closing of the meeting, it is the thought that will go home with the boys. It is the time to teach one of the ideals of Scouting. The Scoutmaster's Minute is a special time when you have the attention of all the boys in the troop, and it is your opportunity to convey a special message of inspiration. Many of the Scoutmaster's Minutes listed below are *parables*, short stories about everyday people and occurrences that illustrate a moral attitude or religious principle.

Boys are "visual" thinkers; they relate well to stories that are accompanied by props. Using a postage stamp as a prop, you can suggest that a stamp sticks to its job to get a letter to its destination. The moral is that Scouts should be as determined as a postage stamp to stick to a task until it is completed.

On the following pages are some examples of Scoutmaster's Minutes for you to use in inspiring the Scouts entrusted in your care, but don't hesitate to begin a collection of your own inspirational messages to use in the future.

SCOUTMASTER'S MINUTES

THE SLIM MARGIN OF SUCCESS

The difference between winning and losing is sometimes very slight. There were eight finalists in the men's 100-meter dash at the 1976 Olympics. The Gold Medal winner beat the eighth man by less than half a second. There are five million people engaged in selling in America. Can you imagine what our gross national product would be if each of them had made just one more sale last year? In sports, business, politics, or Scouting, winning isn't everything, but it sure beats losing.

THIS WILL MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER

If you sometimes get discouraged, consider this fellow: He dropped out of grade school, ran a country store, went broke, spent 15 years paying off his bills, married, became unhappy in his marriage, ran for the House of Representatives and lost twice, ran for the Senate and lost twice, delivered a speech that left his audience indifferent but later became a classic, was attacked daily by the press and despised by half the country. Despite all this, imagine how many people all over the world have been inspired by this awkward, rumped, brooding man who signed his name simply A. Lincoln.

ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In 1645, one vote gave Oliver Cromwell control of England.

In 1649, one vote caused Charles I of England to be executed.

In 1845, one vote brought Texas into the Union.

In 1868, one vote saved President Andrew Johnson from impeachment.

In 1876, one vote gave Rutherford B. Hayes the presidency of the United States.

In 1923, one vote gave Adolf Hitler the leadership of the Nazi Party.

And in 1776, one vote gave America the English language instead of German.

Each of us in our own way can make a difference.

FOOTPRINTS

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along a beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: one belonging to the Lord and one belonging to him.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him, and he questioned the Lord about it. "Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you would walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there was only one set of footprints. I don't understand why, when I needed you the most, you would leave me."

The Lord replied, "My son, my precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, where you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

DON'T BE AFRAID TO FAIL

You've failed many times, although you might not remember. You fell down the first time you tried to walk. You almost drowned the first time you tried to swim, didn't you? Did you hit the ball the first time you swung a bat? Heavy hitters, the ones who hit the most home runs, also strike out a lot. R. H. Macy failed seven times before his store in New York caught on. English novelist John Creasey received more than 700 rejection slips before he published over 600 books. Babe Ruth struck out 1,330 times, but he also hit 714 home runs.

Don't worry about failure. Worry about the chances you miss when you don't even try.

AIM SO HIGH YOU'LL NEVER BE BORED

The greatest waste of our natural resources is the number of people who never achieve their potential. Get out of that slow lane. Shift into the fast lane. If you think you can't, you won't. If you think you can, there's a good chance you will. Just making the effort will make you feel like a new person. Reputations are made by searching for things that can't be done and doing them. Aim low: boring. Aim high: soaring.

WATER WORLD

Challenge each of your patrols to huddle and try this exercise in problem solving.

Problem: You must measure exactly 1 gallon of water out of a 20-gallon barrel. You have only a 5-gallon bucket and a 3-gallon bucket. How can you measure exactly 1 gallon?

Solution: Fill the 3-gallon bucket and pour it into the 5-gallon bucket. Refill the 3-gallon bucket and pour it into the 5-gallon bucket until it is full. The remainder in the 3-gallon bucket will be exactly 1 gallon. A simple solution to a problem that appeared complex!

REACH HIGHER

Tape a large piece of paper on a wall at your eye level. Ask two or three Scouts to come up and make a mark on the paper with a marker as high as they can reach. Thank them for their effort and allow them to return to their seats. Tell the troop that we can all usually do better than our first effort. Remind them that you asked the Scouts to reach as high as they could.

Ask the same Scouts to come back up and see if they can do better than their first effort. (It never fails that they will always reach two to three inches higher on the second try.)

This is a good opportunity to emphasize doing one's very best, and to give every project one's "second effort" on the first try.

CAN'T TO CAN!

Every now and then we hear a Scout use the word *can't*: "I can't hike 15 miles" or "I can't tie that knot," etc. It's at that point I'll stop the meeting and ask the Scouts to give the Scout sign and repeat after me, "On my honor I will do my best!" Then I step up to our chalkboard, write out the word *can't* in big letters, and ask the boys if that word appears anywhere in the Scout

Oath or Law. At that point, I erase the "t" and explain to the Scouts that their trail to the Eagle rank will be much easier if they start telling themselves they *can* do it instead of using that other word. Before I walk away from the chalkboard, I write a big "I" in front of the *can* and leave it there until the next meeting. The first thing they see the next time they walk in is the words "I can!"

A BICYCLE

Have you ever thought about how a bicycle works? Most of us just hop on and let it take us where we want to go without giving it a second thought. A closer look shows it takes a lot of different pieces doing their part and working together to make transportation happen.

When you push the pedal with your foot, a lot happens to make the wheels turn. The pedal turns a crank that turns a gear, which pulls a chain that turns another gear, which turns a hub, which pulls the spokes, which turns the wheel, which pulls the tire that pushes against the road to make the bike go.

When you want to stop, you pull a lever that pulls a cable against a housing, which causes another lever to move, which pushes a pad against the wheel. Changing gears involves levers, cables, housing, springs, and pulleys working together. If any one part fails to work when it is supposed to, the whole system fails to work. When one system fails, the bike can still be ridden, but not in top form.

You are the parts, just like on the bicycle. Our patrols are like the pedaling, braking, and gear-changing systems. The senior patrol leader is like the rider. He directs a pedal or a lever—your patrol leaders—to do their part and they in turn ask you to do yours. If you choose not to do your part, your patrol suffers and the troop doesn't work well. The troop is our vehicle to adventure, fellowship, and good times. And each of you is a very important part.

SYMBOLS

There are a lot of symbols that we recognize. Let's take some time to name or draw a few that we know: the Coca-Cola logo, a poison warning label, a stop or yield sign, the Kmart logo, the Scout badge, a heart symbol, cross, etc.

When you see these symbols, you know what they mean—what they stand for, what some of them instruct you to do.

You, too, are a symbol. You represent the Boy Scouts of America. People see you and know that you stand for something good. You stand for being trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. Be a good symbol!

APTITUDE AND ATTITUDE

We are all different. We have different aptitudes and attitudes. *Aptitude* is a natural ability or talent, one's capacity to learn. *Attitude* is a mood or a state of mind shown by actions and words.

As Scouts we must respect each other's aptitudes. We must be patient, whether we are teaching or being taught. Our attitude toward what we are doing reflects what we are. If you have a good attitude, your aptitude will improve.

A GAME OF CARDS

Christopher Reeve was a movie actor who played the part of Superman. Everything was going right for him. He had a successful acting career and a nice family; he was seemingly all set for a wonderful life. Then he had a horse-riding accident that left him paralyzed from the shoulders down. All he could move was his neck a little bit—he couldn't even breathe on his own. It looked like everything had changed for Chris, and that the rest of his life would be very dismal.

It was true that nearly everything had changed for Chris. Two things that hadn't changed were his positive attitude and the people around him who really cared. Chris fought the desperate feeling of being paralyzed, the fear of his breathing machine shutting off and no one being there to help him, the fear of anything happening and not being able to do anything about it, not even yelling for help. He worked hard to get some "feeling" (if that is what it could be called) and learned to breathe somewhat on his own—he learned to talk by drawing in a mouthful of air and slowly letting it out past his voice box. This took hours and hours of painful, scary work, but with his positive attitude and other people helping, he improved his situation.

He said in an interview that life is like a game of cards. If you enjoy the game and you want a chance at winning, you will keep playing cards. Sometimes you get a good hand with a lot of face cards and sometimes not. You have to play with the cards you are dealt. There is always a chance that you will win. If the game is worth playing, you will keep playing. The game of life is worth playing. Do your best to fight off the fear of losing and encourage others to keep playing "the game."

LOYALTY

Don considered himself a musician. He played the tambourine in junior high school, but he wasn't very good. He also thought of himself as a singer, but he couldn't have carried a tune in a bucket.

Years passed, and when all of his school friends were going to college and pursuing careers, Don nurtured his

dream of becoming a singer-songwriter by moving to Nashville, Tennessee.

Once there, Don made the most of his limited resources. He bought a used car and slept in it. He took a job working nights so he could visit record companies during the day. He learned to play the guitar. As years passed, he kept writing songs, practicing, and knocking on doors.

After many years, Don finally got a song on the radio and it made the country hit charts. More time passed and Kenny Rogers recorded one of his songs. "The Gambler" was the title song for one of the best-selling country-music albums of that time.

Since then, Don Schlitz has had 23 number one songs on the charts. As a result of his focused determination, the teenage dreamer had become a success. Don had done five things essential to success, without even knowing it. They are the following:

1. **Define your goals.** Set a goal and picture yourself accomplishing that goal.
2. **Seek out those who know more than you do.** Model your efforts on theirs, adjusting and improving as you go.
3. **Pursue your vision with determination.** Successful people don't quit. The biggest difference between those who are successful and those who aren't is usually not talent, but persistence.
4. **Make an emotional commitment.** You will sometimes want to quit after too many losses, but you have to pull yourself together with enthusiasm and commitment.
5. **Review and renew your goals.** As you reach your goals, set new ones. Go to the next level.

THANKSGIVING

At Thanksgiving we always think of everything we are thankful for—things like friends, family, freedom, churches, schools, plenty of food, activities we can do, places we have been. It's great that we can have things that we can be thankful for. Not everyone gets everything they want, but everyone should be thankful for what they have. Thankfulness is not having what you want, but wanting what you have.

Another part of Thanksgiving is the giving part. Not everyone can give money, but everyone can give time. You can give by doing a Good Turn every day. To do a Good Turn, you can't expect to be rewarded (or paid). Maybe you can help shovel a neighbor's sidewalk, offer to get groceries for an elderly person, or just do a favor for someone. It can be as simple as holding a door for

someone. Whatever kind of Good Turn you do, don't take more than a thank-you for doing it. Now is a good time for you to begin being a good Scout and follow the Scout slogan, "Do a Good Turn Daily."

TRICK OR TREAT

A young university student was walking along with one of his professors when they came across a pair of shoes that belonged to an old man working in a field nearby. Our young friend suggested hiding the old man's shoes, but the professor objected. "We must never amuse ourselves at the expense of others," he said. "Why not put a dollar in each shoe and see what he will do?"

Together they did this, then hid themselves behind a bush. Soon the old man returned for his shoes. He put one foot into a shoe, then quickly removed it to see what was causing the discomfort. Finding the dollar, he examined it closely, then looked about to see who might have put it in his shoe. There was no one around, so he started to put on his other shoe and, to his amazement, found a dollar in it, too. Overwhelmed, he looked up toward Heaven and thanked God aloud for meeting the need of his distressed family.

The student was deeply moved by what he had witnessed. "Now," said the professor, "is not the treat better than the trick?"

BRAVERY

Actor and martial arts expert Chuck Norris knows that *might* does not always mean *right*. He explains:

Not long ago, after a day of filming my television series, I went alone to a small Texas cafe. As I sat in a corner booth, a large man towered over me and said with an edge to his voice that I was sitting in his booth. I didn't like his tone or his implicit threat, but I said nothing and moved to another booth. A few minutes later, though, the big fellow was headed back in my direction. Here he comes, I thought, a local tough out to make a name for himself by taking on Chuck Norris in a fight.

When he arrived at my new booth, he looked directly at me. "You're Chuck Norris," he said. I nodded.

"You could have whipped me good back there a few minutes ago," he said. "Why didn't you?"

"What would it have proved?" I asked.

He thought that over for a moment and then offered me his hand. "No hard feelings?" he said.

"None," I said, and shook his hand. I had avoided a confrontation and made a friend.

I had won by losing.

A SCOUT IS CLEAN

(You will need one clean, opaque cup filled with very dirty water and one opaque cup, dirty on the outside and filled with clean water. The soiling of the outside of the dirty cup and the murkiness of the water in the clean cup must be exaggerated.)

(Hold up both cups so that the Scouts can see the outsides clearly but not what is inside.) Which of these cups of water do you think I should drink from? You probably think that I should drink from the clean cup. But, you see, the cup that appears clean really contains very dirty water. (Walk around the room and show the dirty water to the Scouts.) It's the other cup, the one that looks dirty on the outside, that is really clean. (Show the clean water.)

It doesn't really matter if Scouts play hard and get dirty doing the many fun activities we do in our troop. We can always take a shower and get clean again. But, it is a little harder to keep our insides clean. When the Scout Law says "A Scout is clean," it is also referring to our inside selves. A Scout has clean language, clean manners, and clean thinking.

TRIM YOUR SAIL

One merit badge that I really enjoyed earning as a Scout was Small-Boat Sailing. And the thing that most impressed me was learning how to tack. In a sailboat, you can't get upwind by steering straight into the wind. You have to move into it at an angle, with the mainsail close-hauled, and the centerboard down. By putting together a series of tacks, which looks like a big zigzag pattern as you go through the water, you can actually get yourself upwind of your starting point.

Sailors have a saying for this: They'll tell you to "trim your sail so as to gain an advantage, even in an adverse wind." A good sailor knows how to take the very wind that is trying to blow him backward from his intended course, and use it instead to move his boat forward. His forward progress might not be fast with all those tacks, but it's steady.

There'll be times in your life—there'll be times in your Scouting career—when you'll encounter an "adverse wind." Everything seems to be moving against your intended course. Well, maybe you can't steer straight into the opposing "wind," but by trying a different "tack," you can find a way to move forward. That's one of the secrets of success in Small-Boat Sailing, and it works in real life, too.

HAPPINESS

Here's a quote attributed to Benjamin Franklin:

"Happiness is produced not so much by great pieces of good fortune that seldom happen, as by little advantages that occur every day."

I know some adults who are wasting away their lives, and their money, waiting for the day when they'll "hit it big" in the state lottery. All they think they need is to win a million bucks, and then they'll be happy. The problem is, of course, that day is highly unlikely ever to happen for them.

Ben Franklin suggests a much surer thing: Grab onto those little advantages that come your way every day. Perhaps it's your patrol leader offering to teach you some knots you'll need for Second Class; on the surface it's not a big thing, but take advantage of the offer—it'll make you a little bit better Scout than you were before. By steadily improving your Scoutcraft skills, by working toward the next rank, one requirement at a time, you'll gradually work yourself into a position in which you're prepared to go for some of the *big* things in Scouting—like Philmont or a high-adventure trek.

AIM AT SOMETHING HIGH

"In the long run, men hit only what they aim at. Therefore, though they might fail immediately, they had better aim at something high."

That quote is from *Walden*, by Henry David Thoreau. Remember the troop shoot at the rifle range this past summer? You hit the target only if you aimed at it. Well, Thoreau realized that this is true in life, also. Whatever your goals are, you won't achieve them unless you aim for them. You might completely miss the mark on your first few shots, but as you practice and gain knowledge, and experience, and control, you'll become a better marksman, able to consistently hit your target.

And set a *high* goal for yourself. Those who have reached the rank of Eagle Scout in this troop will tell you that they decided early to aim for Scouting's highest rank, and then they kept that target in their sights until they hit it.

PERSISTENCE

I'd like to share a quote from Calvin Coolidge, who was our thirtieth president, serving from 1923 to 1929. He was known as a man of few words—one of his nicknames was "Silent Cal," but here's one thing he said that I really like:

"Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts.

"Persistence and determination are omnipotent. The slogan 'press on' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race."

GIVING

In Israel, there are two major bodies of water. Both of these bodies of water are fed by the waters of the River Jordan. One is the Sea of Galilee, which is full of fish and is surrounded by lush vegetation and trees. It is a living body in every sense. The other is the Dead Sea. There is nothing green there, there are no fish, and the sea is stagnant and dead.

The difference is that the Sea of Galilee overflows. For every gallon of water that flows into the sea, a gallon is given up and is passed on downstream. It is constantly renewing itself. It gives as much as it takes.

The Dead Sea, on the other hand, because of its geography, only takes. It gives up nothing. The water there is never cleansed; it stagnates and dies. And everything depending on it dies also.

Some people say that there are two kinds of people in the world—those who constantly give of themselves (who help other people at all times), and those who only take.

Which kind are you?

BE PREPARED FOR WHAT?

Scouts, every one of you can tell me, without thinking, what the two words on the Second Class pin are. That's right, "Be prepared."

There is a story of a Scout in Oklahoma. His younger sister went too near a gas heater and instantly her clothes were in flames. The father and his 13-year-old Scout-trained son rushed up the stairs to try to help. Remembering his first-aid work, the Scout knew what to do and he did it immediately. He grabbed a small rug and rolled the screaming child in it. He had been prepared.

In a moment he had smothered the flames and prevented serious injury to the child.

"Thank God my son is a Scout," the boy's father told the Scoutmaster. "He knew what to do while I stood confused."

That's what it means to *be prepared*.

Once someone asked Baden-Powell, "Be prepared—for what?" "Why, for any old thing!" he replied.

WHY ARE YOU IN SCOUTING?

You know, there are more than a million Scouts in our country. I wonder how many of them will stay in Scouting and climb to the top, don't you?

Tell me, why are you in Scouting? (Pause for answers.) So many boys enter Scouting for just one reason—to have fun. If you think that's the only reason you're in Scouting, believe me, there are other good reasons, too.

Sure Scouting is fun. But a lot of other things are fun, too. If you're just looking for fun, you can play all kinds of indoor and outdoor games, go to the movies, watch television—or a thousand other things.

Scouting must be more than just fun for you. It must be a way of life, a law and an oath to which you are loyal. Unless you try to *live* Scouting, you'll find that other kinds of fun are easier and you'll quit. The loyal Scout is dedicated to the Scout Oath and the 12 points of the Scout Law. He has a deeper reason for sticking than just having fun. He sees the importance of learning the Scout skills, of developing himself so that he can *be prepared* to face anything that comes. He wants to grow to be a real man. That's why he's loyal. That's why he sticks.

I hope you won't ever quit until you're up before a court of honor some day to get your Eagle Scout badge. That will be one of the biggest days of your whole life—and mine, too.

A GOOD TURN

Why does Scouting encourage a boy to do Good Turns? Here is what Lord Baden-Powell, Scouting's founder, had to say about it:

"The Scouting practices tend in a practical way to educate the boy out of the groove of selfishness. Once he becomes charitable, he is well on the way to overcome or to eradicate the danger of this habit."

The promise that a Scout makes on joining has as its first point, "To do my duty to God." Note that it does not say, "To be loyal to God," since that would merely be a state of mind. It clearly says to *do* something, which is the positive, active attitude.

Baden-Powell went on to say, "The main method of the Boy Scouts movement is to give some form of positive training rather than merely to inculcate negative precepts, since the boy is always ready to do rather than to digest. Therefore, we put into his activities the practice of Good Turns in his daily life as a foundation of future goodwill and helpfulness to others. The religious basis underlying this is common to all denominations, and we, therefore, interface with the form of none.

"Thus we teach him that to do his duty to God means, not merely to lean on his kindness, but to do his will by practicing love toward one's neighbor."

THE NEW SCOUT

There was a boy named Jim who moved into town just after his 11th birthday. For a long time he had dreamed about becoming a Scout. Jim was a bit timid, perhaps too much so. He didn't push himself into things but usually waited for an invitation.

Well, one night Jim came down to visit our troop meeting. He looked in through the window and saw us playing and heard our voices. But he couldn't quite force himself to come down those steps. Now don't smile too broadly. It wasn't so very long ago that you might have been in Jim's place. Maybe you were inclined to be timid, too.

Jim waited around awhile and went home, without getting his nerve up to the coming-in point. He was pretty miserable about his failure, but he came back a week later.

He waited outside the door again. He just couldn't force himself to come in uninvited. Finally he saw a Scout coming down the street, heading for the meeting. That Scout was you. Now, that's all of the story I'm going to tell you tonight. What happened? Did you brush by him or did you invite him to come in?

HOT COCOA

At a jamboree trading post a Scout had spread out his collection of trinkets, including some fine beadwork, neckerchief slides, and badges. At a snack bar nearby, a lady picked up her cup of hot cocoa, but instantly found it too hot to handle. She juggled it for several seconds, and then lost control. The cocoa drenched the Scout's prize collection of beautiful souvenirs.

But there was no burst of angry protest—not even a rueful glance at the thoroughly ruined display. Instead, this real Scout was instantly on his feet inquiring anxiously of the startled and dismayed lady, "Did you burn yourself, ma'am?"

See what we mean when we speak of Scout spirit helping us to think of other people before we think of ourselves?

THE HIGH COST OF GETTING EVEN

One night years ago, I was traveling through Yellowstone Park. I sat with some other people on a stand of bleachers facing a dense growth of pine and spruce. Eventually a grizzly bear, the terror of the forest, strode out into the glare of the lights and began devouring the garbage that had been dumped there from the kitchen of one of the park's hotels. Now, a grizzly bear can whip any other animal in the Western world, with the possible exceptions of the buffalo and the Kodiak bear; yet I noticed that night that there was

one animal, and only one, that the grizzly permitted to come out of the forest and eat with him under the glare of the lights—a skunk. The grizzly knew that he could kill the skunk with one swipe of his mighty paw. Why didn't he do it? Because he had found from experience that it didn't pay.

I have also found that to be true. I have encountered both four- and two-legged skunks during my life and found from sad experience that it doesn't pay to stir up either variety.

When we hate our enemies, we are giving them power over us—power over our sleep, our appetite, our blood pressure, our health, and our happiness. Our enemies would dance with joy if they knew how they were worrying us, exasperating us, or simply getting even with us. Our hate is not hurting them at all. But our hate is turning our own days and nights into an agonizing turmoil.

Try to cultivate a mental attitude that will bring you peace and happiness.

THE TWO KNAPSACKS

We are told that life is like a hike from the cradle to the grave. For some, it is a long trip of many moons; for others, it is a short excursion that ends unexpectedly. But all are equipped with two knapsacks—one to be carried on the back and the other on the chest.

The average hiker along the trail of life puts the faults of others in the sack on his chest so that he can always see them. His own faults he puts in the bag on his back so that he can't see them without some effort. And so, he hikes through life constantly seeing the errors of others, but overlooking his own mistakes. Guys, this pack arrangement is bad, because nobody has a successful hike through life finding fault with the other guy. The person who can see his own faults, then strive to correct them is the one who enjoys the trip and enters the happy hunting ground with thanksgiving.

So place your bag of faults upon your chest and put the bag of other people's faults and mistakes behind you, and have happy hiking.

WHICH PATH?

It was a cold spring morning. A light snow had fallen during the night. You know, the kind that just covers the grass. I was visiting my grandmother and grandfather on their farm.

It was still very early when Pap Pap and I started across a field to check a fence. Being the curious type, I first had to run down to the creek to see if it had frozen during the night. Then, as I started back across the field, I noticed a spot where a deer had bedded down

for the night, and I just had to check that out, too. When I'd satisfied my curiosity, I headed back toward Pap Pap. I could see that he hadn't reached the fence yet, so I still had time to look for more arrowheads to add to my collection before sprinting to the fence just before Pap Pap got there.

Pap Pap stood there for a few minutes, then told me to look back across the field at our two paths, which were very visible in the new snow. There was his, straight as an arrow from the barn to the fence. My path was scattered here and there—going first to the stream, then to where the deer had bedded down, then all across the field looking for those arrowheads. He asked me, "Which path was the correct one?" When I said, "I don't know," he replied, "Both are. Mine is surely faster and easier, but I didn't get to see the things that you saw. Remember, you always have a goal, just as we did in getting to the fence today, but sometimes, if you can, take the time to explore the wonders of life."

THE GOOSE STORY

Next fall, when you see geese heading south for the winter, flying along in a V formation, you might consider that science has discovered why they fly that way:

As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in V formation, the whole flock creates at least 71 percent greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own.

People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going faster and easier because they are traveling on the trust of one another.

When a goose falls out of formation it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power from the bird in front. If we had as much sense as a goose we would stay in formation with those who are headed in the same direction that we are.

When the head goose gets tired, it rotates back and another goose flies point. It is sensible to take turns doing demanding jobs whether it's with people or with geese flying south.

Geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. What do we say when we honk from behind?

Finally, and this is important, when a goose gets sick, or is wounded by gunshots, and falls out of formation, two other geese fall out with that goose and follow it down to lend help and protection. They stay with the fallen goose until it is able to fly or it dies; and only then do they launch out on their own, or with another formation to catch up with their group.

If we had the sense of a goose, we would stand by each other like that.

MATCHES

(You will need a small bundle of wooden matches and a rubber band. Gather up the matches and neatly bundle them together so that they will stand when you set them down.)

Our troop is much like these matches. (Stand the matches on end for everyone to see.) You might have noticed that we all stick together. It is the trust, friendship, and knowledge of everyone here that makes us feel this way. We know that when the going gets tough, like on our last campout, if we stick together we will come out on top. On our campout, everyone did their job. The tents were set up, the cooks prepared a fine meal, and the wood crew brought in enough firewood to last a week. We stuck together.

But what happens if we don't stick together? (Pick up the bundle of matches and take the rubber band off. Then set the bundle back on the floor. Let the matches fall and scatter.) If we don't stick together, we will all fall apart just as these matches did. When this happens we cannot accomplish as much as we can as a team. Thanks for sticking together.

THE CARNIVAL

I must have been only 5 or 6 when my grandfather took me to see the carnival that had come to town. It was really great. First we went to see the parade. It came right down the middle of Main Street. Then we went into the big top tent to see the acrobats and the lions. Afterward, as we were leaving, I saw where the elephants were tied and I just had to go over and see them.

I was very surprised when I noticed that the smallest elephant, just a baby really, was tied up with a very heavy chain, but its mother was tied with what seemed to be only a piece of old clothesline. I asked my grandfather why the elephants were tied so differently. He replied, "The older elephant has learned that she can't break free and run away. Her baby hasn't learned that yet, so the people in the circus have to chain her to one place. Learn from this. The older elephant could easily break free from that old rope and run away, but she has long since stopped trying. Don't *you* ever be like that and stop trying."

THE GOLDEN WINDOWS

It was getting toward the end of summer and I was about to enter the second grade. Each morning all summer long I had noticed a particular house up on a hill about a mile away. This house, I thought, must be spectacular because every morning when I got up, it looked like it had golden windows.

On this particular morning, I decided to go see the house with golden windows. I packed a lunch and started out on my big journey. Not long after I started, I came to a fence and couldn't resist the temptation to see how far I could walk along the top rail. Then, I continued on my way until I came to a stream, where I stopped for a long while to catch crayfish and minnows. By that time I was hungry and I ate my lunch. Starting up the hill to the house with the golden windows, I happened to see a porcupine. We stared at each other for what seemed to be an eternity. Finally, I gave up and returned to my quest.

When I did reach the house with the golden windows, I was very disappointed. There was the house, but instead of being majestic, it was a deserted, run-down shambles. The railings were falling off the porch, the screen door was off its hinges, the yard needed mowing, and the flower garden was overgrown with weeds. I was crushed. Sadly, I sat down on the front steps and just happened to gaze back toward my own home. There, in the late afternoon sun, was *my* house with golden windows!

Often in life we think that someone else has it far better than we do, or maybe that we should have a position much better than the one we have. But, we really should stop and think about all that we have and be thankful.

THE SCOUT SALUTE AND HANDSHAKE

Our Scout salute and handshake are ancient signs of bravery and respect. Back in the days when George Washington was general of the Continental Army, men carried weapons for their protection. When they met one another there was an uneasy moment as each watched the other's right hand. If it went toward his sword or gun, there was a battle, but if it went to his hat it was a salute of friendship or respect.

The left-handed shake comes to us from the Ashanti warriors whom Baden-Powell knew over a hundred years ago in South Africa. He saluted them with his right hand, but the Ashanti chieftains offered their left hands and said: "In our land only the bravest of the brave shake hands with the left hand, because to do so we must drop our shields and protection."

The Ashanti knew of General Baden-Powell's bravery, for they had fought both against him and with him, and they were proud to offer him the left-handed shake of bravery.

During February, we will honor the birthday of two brave men: General Washington, founder of our nation, and General Baden-Powell, founder of our Scouting movement. As you use the Scout salute and handshake, remember these two great men.

EVERYBODY'S CANOE

A young Indian brave was busy at work carving a canoe out of a log. As he worked, members of his tribe passed by. They all had a piece of advice to offer the young man.

"I think you are making your canoe too wide," one of them said. The young brave, wishing to show respect for the advice of an elder, narrowed the canoe.

A little later, another warrior stopped and said, "I'm afraid that you are cutting your stern too full," he said. Again the young brave listened to the advice of the elder and cut down the stern.

Very soon, yet another member of the tribe stopped, watched for a while, then commented, "The bow is too sheer." The young brave accepted this advice as well and changed the line of the bow.

Finally, the canoe was complete and the young brave launched it. As soon as it hit the water, it capsized. Laboriously he hauled it back onto the beach. Then he found another log and began his work anew.

Very soon, a member of his tribe stopped by to offer some advice, but this time the young brave was ready.

"See that canoe over there?" he asked, pointing to the useless craft on the beach. "That is everybody's canoe." Then he nodded at his work in progress. "This one," he said, "is my canoe."

LOOK AT THE TURTLE

What can we learn from the turtle? First we see his shell, his armor, his means of defense. We are like the turtle in that we have many ways to protect ourselves—our instinct to draw away from danger, to shelter ourselves from it, for example.

Secondly, we see the turtle's persistence. He's slow, he's plodding, but he always gets where he's going. His persistence is memorialized in the age-old story of the tortoise and the hare. The persistent tortoise outlasted the showy, flashy, and very fast hare. We can learn from the turtle that our greatest accomplishments do not come from skill alone, but require our persistence in striving for the goal, such as in our journey to the rank of Eagle.

Finally, we see that the turtle can go nowhere unless he first sticks out his neck. Again we are like the turtle in that we accomplish nothing until we dare to stick out our necks once in a while.

A SCOUT IS CONSIDERATE

A person is considerate if he is concerned about the feelings of other people. With this basic idea in mind, what characteristics would make you considerate?

BEING RESPECTFUL AND POLITE.

BEING HELPFUL AND COURTEOUS.

RESPECTING THE PRIVACY OF OTHERS.

RESPECTING OTHER PEOPLE'S PROPERTY.

RESPECTING THE RIGHT OF OTHERS TO HAVE

DIFFERENT BELIEFS AND IDEAS.

Have you heard the story about an old man who went to the Olympic Games in ancient Greece? He arrived late and not a single seat was left. A Spartan youth noticed the old man's problem and gave him his seat. A group of Athenian boys saw this act of courtesy and began to applaud. The old man turned to them saying, "Yes, you Athenians know what is right to do—but it takes a Spartan to do it."

Knowing what you should do to be courteous is not enough; you must put it into practice every day.

The courtesy you practice as a boy will make you a better man.

OUR FLAG

Our flag stands for freedom and equality. It is the banner of a people who are still willing to lay down their lives in defense of right, justice, and freedom. It is the emblem by which we proclaim to the world that this is "the home of the brave and the land of the free."

Our flag is an emblem of true patriotism—the patriotism of deeds; the patriotism of courage, of loyalty, of devotion to freedom, justice, and humanity; the patriotism of men who have lived and died, not for themselves but for their country.

When we look at our flag—its stars and stripes, its vivid red, white, and blue—and read its story and hear its message, when we contemplate what our flag means and what it stands for, and when we consider the sacrifices made and the lives given so that our flag could still be flying over us today, we are quietly reminded to cherish, to protect, and to defend it.

THE STATION

Tucked away in our subconscious is an idyllic vision. We see ourselves on a long trip spanning the continent. We are traveling by train. Through the windows we drink in the passing scene of cars on nearby highways; city skylines and village halls; children waving at a crossing; cattle grazing on a distant hillside; smoke pouring out of a power plant; row upon row of corn and wheat; expanses of flatland giving way to rolling hillsides, mountains, and valleys.

But uppermost in our minds is the final destination. On a certain day at a certain hour we will pull into “the station.” Bands will be playing and flags will be waving. Once we get there many wonderful things will come true and the pieces of our lives will fit together like a completed jigsaw puzzle. How restlessly we pace the aisles, cursing the minutes for loitering—waiting, waiting, waiting for the station.

“When we reach the station, that will be it!” we cry. “When I’m 18!” “When I can buy a new Mercedes!” “When I’ve put my last kid through college!” “When I’ve paid off the mortgage!” “When I reach the age of retirement, I shall live happily ever after!”

Sooner or later we must realize there is no station, no specific place to arrive at once and for all. The true joy of life is the trip. The station is only a dream. It constantly outdistances us.

“Relish the moment!” is a good motto, especially when coupled with Psalm 118:24: “This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.” It isn’t the burdens of today that drive men mad. It is the regrets over yesterday and the fear of tomorrow. Regret and fear are twin thieves who rob us of today.

So, stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles. Instead, climb the mountains, eat more ice cream, go barefoot more often, swim more rivers, watch more sunsets, laugh more, cry less. Life must be lived as long as we go along. The station comes soon enough.

BEING CLEAN

(Have three handkerchiefs—one crumpled and soiled, one clean but not ironed, and one clean and ironed.)

Being clean and unspoiled seems like a simple thing, doesn’t it? But it’s really one of the toughest assignments in our Scout Law.

Think of what a soiled handkerchief goes through in order to be clean. (Hold up the soiled handkerchief.) It gets scalded in hot water. It gets soaked in harsh soap suds and strong bleach. It gets scrubbed or tumbled around roughly in a washing machine. Then it gets thrown around in a hot clothes dryer until it’s dry. And then, the worst torture of all, it gets flattened out under a heavy, hot iron. But then when all that’s done, the handkerchief looks like this, clean and unspotted. (Hold up the clean, ironed handkerchief.)

We must be willing to go through something like that if we are to be clean and unspotted. Turning your back on everything dirty is not as simple as it sounds. It often means making yourself unpopular with some people. Not going along with the crowd can be mighty rough. Or, if you have done wrong, it’s extremely painful to admit what you’ve done and try to make it right again, to ask forgiveness. But these are the trials that

purify. You see, the tough treatment in the laundry of life can help you to be clean—if you can take it.

How about it? Will you settle for being unsoiled, like this? (Hold up the clean, but unironed, handkerchief.) Or would you like being clean, orderly, and unspotted, like this? (Hold up the clean, ironed handkerchief again.) A Scout is clean.

A QUIET HERO

Barry Bonds probably hit another home run last night. Now, I know I’m going to ruffle a few feathers when I say this, but, Big deal! Another run. Yawn, hooray, ho-hum. It will be in the papers and discussed on sports talk shows, I’m sure. The guy is a real hero, right?

A couple of years ago at summer camp, I met another hero. He was a very small 13-year-old. And he was a very homesick Scout.

“Big deal,” I hear someone out there echoing my comment, “a little wimp who can’t stand to leave his mommy.”

That’s a pretty insensitive thing to say to a kid whose feelings are tearing him up to the point of crying in front of his friends—a kid who probably hates himself for being weak and feeling homesick. To make things worse we were at the base camp for our annual canoe trip on the rain-swollen Kippewa River in Canada and more than one boy (and leader) was having second thoughts. The homesick Scout came to me as we were loading the canoes.

“Mr. Sterrett, I don’t think I want to go. I think I want to go home,” he said. When he had made similar comments the night before, the other Scouts and leaders had joked and tried to distract him. But there comes a time when a boy has to either go forward or back.

We walked away from the others and I put my hand on his shoulder. “In five minutes, we’ll be leaving,” I said, “You can be in the canoe with us or you can be in the truck going back.” And then, oh, how hard it was to do—I walked away and left him to his thoughts.

He came with us on the trip. A couple of his buddies gave him a friendly punch on his shoulder, but nobody cheered. His accomplishment wasn’t printed in the papers or discussed on talk shows. Now, Bonds—he’s okay. But to me, that Scout is a special kind of hero. The quiet kind.

PHILMONT

I remember my first Boy Scout meeting. One of the older Scouts gave us a slide presentation on his recent trip to Philmont. I went home so excited. I really wanted to go there. So I told Mom and Dad that when I was 14 I was going to Philmont Scout Ranch in New

Mexico. Dad asked how much it would cost. I told him only \$150, plus maybe another \$50 for expenses on the trip. (Things were a lot cheaper back when I was a kid.) Dad asked who was going to pay for the trip. I told him that I thought he would. Well, Dad set me straight right then. He reminded me that I had an allowance and I could save to go to Philmont.

I went up to my room and started figuring out how long it would take to save that much. Every week, Dad gave me 10¢ for each grade level I'd reached in school. In sixth grade I got 60¢ a week. In seventh grade I would get 70¢, and so on. That night I figured out that if I tithed my 10 percent to the church and spent nothing else I could afford to go to Philmont after my senior year in high school. I was crushed. I didn't think that I could go five years without spending anything. What was I going to do?

The next day Dad took me aside and suggested that I open a bank savings account and keep my money there so I wouldn't spend it. He added that Aunt Rae had heard about Philmont and she thought it would be a good idea if I started saving my money for a chance to go there. Well, Dad and I went to the bank and opened a savings account with the \$25 Aunt Rae had given me and the \$1.10 I had already saved. I got a job delivering newspapers and saved half of everything I earned. Then I found something out that I didn't know. The bank *paid* me to keep my money there. They called it *interest*, but to me, it was free money! That encouraged me to save even more.

Our neighbor, Mrs. Finney, asked if I could cut her grass during the summer, and I said, Sure! I put *all* of *that* money in the account.

It wasn't easy. I still remember having to deliver those newspapers in the pouring rain and the freezing snow. And then, cutting Mrs. Finney's grass when I wanted to be playing baseball. But by the time I turned 14 and was a First Class Scout I had enough money for my trip to Philmont. *I* had earned the money—no one else. I could pay my own way. That trip was all mine and it felt good going there. To this day, I'm still saving for things I want. Going to Philmont taught me how and it turned out to be a lifelong lesson.

THE TWINS

One day a set of twins decided to move to a new town because they felt like they'd seen everything there was to see in their hometown. They started out together, but somehow along the way one twin had gotten ahead of the other one.

This first twin came to an old man sitting by the road just outside a nearby town. The twin stopped and

asked the old man what the people were like in this town. The old man replied by asking the same question of him, "What were the people like in the town you came from?" The first twin said they were very unkind and harsh, not very friendly at all. The old man said, "I think you'll find that the people who live here are very much the same."

Not long after the first twin left, the second twin came across the same old man sitting by the same road. This twin stopped and asked the same question of the old man. The old man again replied by asking what the people were like in the town the twin had come from. The second twin said the people were all great. "I had a lot of friends and the people always tried to help others." The old man replied, "I think you'll find that the people who live here are very much the same."

The point here isn't about the people who lived in those towns, it is about how a person treats the people around him. If you treat others with kindness and understanding, they will treat you the same way.

OUR SPIRITUAL COMPASS

For Scouts on a hike or a canoe trip, a compass is an important tool. Because it gives you a stable reference point (magnetic north), you can set a course and follow it. As long as your compass is accurate and you don't damage it, it will serve you faithfully—if you trust it.

Our faith or spirituality is something like that. We have a point of reference that does not change: God. And we have a compass, so to speak, in our relationship with God. It's something we have learned and continue to learn about, just as we learn to use a compass properly.

We use our spirituality and faith to get us through this grand journey we call life. If we are prepared to trust the things we have learned about God, our spirituality can guide us through the joys and the temptations of life. We can use it to show us what service we can give and what potential dangers to stay away from. We can use it to guide us in our friendships, in our work, in what we say *to* people and *about* people, and in how we treat our natural world.

ATTITUDE

Words could never adequately convey how great the impact our *attitude* can have on our lives.

The longer I live the more convinced I become that life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we respond to it.

I believe the single most significant decision I can make on a day-to-day basis is my choice of attitude. It is more important than my past, my education, my

bankroll, my successes or failures, fame or pain, what other people think of me or say about me, my circumstances, or my position.

Attitude keeps me going or cripples my progress. It alone fuels my fire or assaults my hope.

When my attitude is right, there's no barrier too wide, no valley too deep, no dream too extreme, no challenge too great for me.

WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

It was just about midweek during our annual canoe trip. Just as dinner was being served, an argument erupted between two of the older Scouts. After separating them and counseling with each of them, I went down to the lake for a little solitude. Somehow the group just wasn't coming together. I sat on a log with my feet propped up on two rocks resting in the water, trying to think of what I could do to make a difference.

Just about when I'd decided that the trouble was all due to some failing on my part, I looked up and noticed some huge thunderheads that had formed. How beautiful they were. Then something caught my eye across the lake. It looked as if diamonds were dancing toward me on the water! Closer and closer they came until they finally reached me. Hail! The hail started coming down harder and harder until I had to put my head down.

Still, the hail came down even harder. I pulled my jacket up over my head, but the hail was unrelenting in its force. There I was with my head between my legs, my eyes squeezed shut against the pain of the pounding hailstones, my nose only inches from the surface of the water, thinking, "Why me, God? Why me?" And the hail came down even harder. Finally, I opened my eyes and looked down below the surface of the lake. There, under the protection of my jacket, the underwater life continued as normal, while beyond the influence of my coat the lake churned with the fury of the hailstorm. It was only then that I realized what God was trying to tell me—I *did* make a difference.

We all make a difference to a Scout in life's storms. Just by being who we are, someone to come to with a problem, someone who can understand the differences of opinions, someone who stands for right and provides a good example. Just remember, we *do* make a difference.

WHOSE JOB IS IT?

This is a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it. But Nobody did it.

Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

SET OF THE SAIL

It's likely that several of you guys have done some sailing and found it to be a lot of fun. The amazing thing about sailing is that two sailboats in the same breeze can be going in different directions! I'm sure you've noticed that.

The same thing can be true of Scouts. Let me read you a very short play to show what I mean.

Act 1: Curtain! Two boys enter to join a Scout troop. The curtain closes. Time passes.

Act 2: The curtain opens again to show the same troop two or three years later. Where are those guys who joined in Act 1? Wait, there's one! Hey, he's an Eagle Scout now. And there's the other one! But look, he's wearing only a Second Class badge. Why?

Both had the same chances. One Scout sailed ahead, one limped along. Why? Must be the set of their sails!

As Ella Wheeler Wilcox said:

One ship drives east and another drives west
With the selfsame winds that blow.

'Tis the set of the sails and not the gales
Which tells us the way to go.

I WISH I WAS LIKE THAT BROTHER

Upon graduation from college a few years back, a young man received a gift from his older brother. It was a shiny brand-new car, the car of his dreams! One morning as he approached the car, he saw a boy of about 12 peering through the windows into the car. The young man recognized him as the boy his parents paid to mow their lawn and shovel their sidewalk. Obviously enthralled with the car, the boy hadn't heard the young man approaching. "Is this your car?" the boy asked when he finally noticed the man.

"Yes, it is," the man responded proudly.

"Wow! This is a nice car!" remarked the boy. "How much did it cost?"

"I don't know," the man answered.

"It's your car, but you don't know how much it cost?"

"No," admitted the man. "You see, my brother bought it for me."

"I wish . . . I wish . . . I wish. . .," stuttered the boy. The man thought, *He's going to say, I wish I had a car like this.* "I wish I was like that brother!" finished the boy.

Amazed at the boy's response, the young man offered to drive him around the block. The boy hopped in the car and soon asked if the man would drive him home. Thinking that the boy wanted to show off to his friends that he was riding in a new car, and since the boy and his own parents were such good friends, the man agreed. They drove more than a few blocks to where the boy lived and as he turned onto the street the man noticed that it wasn't the best-kept neighborhood. The houses were dirty and run down. He pulled up in front of the boy's house. "Please wait!" the boy yelled as he ran into the house.

Oh, he's probably going to get his family so he can show off the new car, the man thought.

The front door opened and out came the boy. In his arms he carried a smaller boy, his younger brother who had been crippled since birth. The older boy brought his brother out to the car, and exclaimed as he hugged him tightly, "See, just like I told you! It's a brand-new car! And someday, I'm going to buy you one just like it!"

How unselfish this boy was, to be the kind of brother who looked after the other one first.

What kind of Scout are you? Are you like the older brother?

TWO MONKS

Two monks on a pilgrimage came to the ford of a river. There they saw a girl dressed in all her finery, obviously not knowing what to do since the river was high and she did not want to spoil her clothes. Without a thought, one of the monks took her upon his back, carried her across the river, and put her down on dry ground on the other side.

Then the monks continued on their way. But after about an hour, the other monk started complaining, "Surely it wasn't right for you to touch that woman. It is against the commandments to have close contact with women. How could you go against the rules of monks?"

The monk who had carried the girl walked along silently, but finally he replied, "I set her down by the river an hour ago. Why are you still carrying her?"

AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?

Everyone, close your eyes for a minute and clear your minds. I am going to give you a question to ask yourselves, but I do not want you to answer it yet: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Scouting is, of course, a time in your lives to have fun. But it has a very serious side as well. It is a time when you will learn many things to help you grow physically as well as mentally. It is hoped that you will

learn to be responsible young men to your families, to other people, and to your fellow Scouts.

Caring about and helping others are a large part of being responsible, which forms the basis of all aspects of Scouting. For instance, you might know a skill and perform it very well while another Scout might be having a problem with it. Don't mock or belittle him. Take the time to show him the correct way to perform the skill. You might be wondering how that will help. Well, it will help in so many ways.

Naturally, it will benefit the boy you have stopped to help by building his confidence and enabling him to teach others. But, also, can't you see that you will be receiving the most benefit? You will have grown by showing others that you care. You will be looked up to as a leader. You will no longer be regarded as the student; you will now take your place as a role model and teacher, someone who is respected and admired.

So the next time I ask you to ask yourselves, "Am I my brother's keeper?" you can look at me and proudly say, "Yes, I am!" Just remember that the answer to this question is not just a commitment, it is a way of life.

GIVE IT YOUR ALL!

(You will need one baking potato and two plastic drinking straws.)

(Hold up the potato.) Scouts, think of this potato as your obstacle to a desired goal, whether it's your advancement to Eagle Scout or earning money for that new mountain bike you want.

(Hold up the first plastic straw in your other hand.) Now think of this straw as your desire to reach your goal on the other side of the obstacle—in this case, the potato. (Push the straw against the potato. The straw will bend over.) Notice that if you go at your obstacle halfheartedly, your will to reach your goal is easily bent. You are easily kept from your goal.

(Now take the second straw and hold it in your fist, placing your thumb over the open end of the straw.) But, if you are willing to give it your all, you can easily reach your goal on the other side! (Thrust the straw at the potato, keeping your thumb over the open end of the straw. The trapped air in the straw makes it rigid and the straw is easily thrust cleanly into the potato. Hold up the potato and straw to show the Scouts that indeed you have reached your goal.) This demonstration was meant to show you the value of not giving up, even if an obstacle seems too great to surpass!

TURK'S HEAD

(Make a large Turk's head knot about 4 to 6 inches around. Before your Minute begins, pass the Turk's head around for all of the boys to see.)

Who knows what this is? See how the strands of rope go in and around each other, and seem to never end? Working as a patrol, you boys are like the strands of this Turk's head knot, in that you must learn to work in and around other people to reach a common goal.

(Next, pull two opposite strands apart so that the shape of the Turk's head is distorted.) This is what happens when the patrol members do not work together: The patrol becomes *all bent out of shape*. (Begin rolling the knot around your fingers or hands; this should put the shape back into the Turk's head.) This external "working" could be the senior patrol leader or his assistant or even the Scoutmaster working with the patrol to set the example on working together.

LOSING YOUR TEMPER

(Hold up a hand ax for all to see.)

Scouts, I have in my hand a tool that helped the pioneers blaze a trail across our country. Many lives depended upon this instrument to protect, shelter, and feed them. The care and handling of the ax, of course, was given only to a very responsible individual, one who was certain to keep it sharp and clean, one who would know that placing the ax too close to a fire would heat up the metal and cause it to lose its temper, thus rendering it useless.

Just as the group of pioneers depended upon the ax, so do the people in your life depend upon you as a Scout. When you joined Scouting, it was you who promised to be an individual sharp of mind and clean of body, someone who could be entrusted with many responsibilities, including fire.

During your time in Scouting, you will undoubtedly be involved in an argument or some fiery discussion while on a campout. When things get out of hand, always try to remain calm and in control of yourself. If you become overheated in those situations and lose your temper, you'll find yourself rendered as useless as that ax.

TWELFTH-POINT MINUTE

Many of you are members of a large, organized religion. You might be Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, Jewish, or any one of a number of others. As you know, part of being a Boy Scout is having a belief in God. Every time you repeat the Scout Oath or Law, you reconfirm that you will do your duty to God, and that you are reverent.

Keep in mind that some members of your patrol and troop might not belong to a regular church group. That doesn't mean they don't believe in a higher power. Native Americans believe that the Great Spirit is the life force that flows through all living things and controls the wind, fire, and the Earth. You might think of the Great Spirit as Mother Nature. Nature has created a world for its creatures that allows them to live and prosper, from the lowest insects to the mighty eagle. To me, that sounds like a higher power at work.

It doesn't matter to me how you believe in God—whether you attend church every week or simply respect the power of nature as the Native Americans do. But I can't imagine how this world could have come to exist without God, and I don't want to think about where it will go if he isn't there to guide us.

A GOOD TURN

Does anyone know when the Boy Scouts of America was started? It was the year 1910. Now for a tougher question: Who started the BSA? Not Baden-Powell. He started Scouting in England. It was an American businessman, William D. Boyce.

In 1909, William Boyce was wandering around London and got lost in a dense fog. A young boy found him and led him to his destination. The boy refused to accept a tip from Boyce, saying that he was a Boy Scout. That intrigued Boyce, and he later asked the boy to take him to meet Lord Baden-Powell.

Because of that meeting, Boy Scouts of America was officially organized in 1910, and there have been more than 93 million Americans involved in the BSA since then.

The Scout slogan is "Do a Good Turn Daily." That is what the Boy Scout in 1909 did for William Boyce, and that is what you should always try to do, every day—a Good Turn, without expecting reward.

THE X WORDS

There are two **X** words that we use frequently in Boy Scouting—**eX**perience and **eX**ample.

You learn Scout skills by **eX**perience. We know that the way to learn is by doing. When we go on camping trips, you get the **eX**perience you need to master your skills.

When you start to teach other Scouts what you know, you set the **eX**ample. But much more important than teaching Scout skills is the **eX**ample you set in your life. Do you always wear a clean uniform at Scout meetings? Are you careful with the language you use? Do you always finish your work before playing?

Remember to think about the two **X** words every day.

A SIMPLE CLOTH AND A COMMON THREAD

They are woven of simple cloth and common thread.
They are no more than an inch and a half in diameter,
and weight no more than a couple of ounces.
They are priceless, yet cost less than a dollar.
They have the power to turn struggle into courage.
Self-doubt into self-esteem
Indecision into leadership
The unknown into knowledge
And the most magical metamorphosis of all,
the transforming of a boy into a man.
What are these mysterious things: merit badges.

TWO KINDS OF BUCKETS

(You will need two buckets that are the same size to make this effective.)

Two buckets equal in size when filled to the rim will hold about the same amount of water. Neither bucket has a hole so, as long as they are not moved, they are equally effective holding water. However, one bucket has a bail, or a handle to carry it by, and the other does not. Have you ever tried to carry a bucket without a handle? The water will slosh out and you usually spill most of the contents. The bucket with a handle is easily movable, and the contents can be carried with little or no spillage. (You might have two Scouts demonstrate moving the two buckets.)

People are sometimes a lot like the buckets. Some are out of control; leaving splashes everywhere, they go for someone to clean up after. Others are like the bucket with a handle, leaving no mess or bother. Which kind of bucket are you?

PARABLE OF THE TOOTHPASTE

(You will need a small tube of toothpaste to make this effective.)

Have you ever squeezed too much toothpaste out of a tube of toothpaste and tried to put it back in the tube? It can't be done, can it? No matter how hard you try, the toothpaste is out of the tube forever.

Toothpaste is similar to unkind words. Once unkind words come out of your mouth, you cannot take them back. So when you are tempted to say something unkind, remember the parable of the toothpaste, and keep the unkind words to yourself.

THREE UNIFORMS

Tommy Lasorda, former manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers, says that he has worn three uniforms in his lifetime, and that all three were very important to him. The obvious one is that of Dodger blue, as he managed

the Dodgers to many pennants and World Series during his colorful baseball career. The second uniform was when he served his country and wore the uniform of the U.S. Army, and distinguished himself as a good soldier. The third uniform, of which he is equally proud, was when he was a young boy, and he wore the uniform of the Boy Scouts of America.

CORK IN A SODA BOTTLE

Hold up a soda bottle with a cork inside it and ask, "Does anyone know how to get the cork out of the soda bottle without breaking the bottle?" Allow Scouts to offer opinions of how this might be done, and allow several to try to get it out.

Ask, "Can you think of any items that would help get the cork out of the bottle?" Again you probably will get some more opinions. After hearing some ideas, pull a piece of heavy string out of your pocket, and ask if you believe that a piece of string will do the job. As you demonstrate, explain that the key to removing the cork with the string is a knot tied on the end of the string.

Run the knotted end into the bottle, turn the bottle upside down with the small end of the cork turned toward the crown of the bottle. Gently pull the string out, and as the knot slides against the cork, it will pop out. Explain that the knot is the key to the success of removing the cork. Add, "If something as small as a knot can serve such an important role, think how important each of you are to your patrol and troop."

DETERMINATION

Troop 3 in Youngstown, Ohio, recently had its first Eagle Scouts after being in existence for over 25 years. Troop 3 is a troop for Scouts who have mental and physical disabilities, and most of the Scouts are in their 30s and 40s. At the Eagle ceremony, five men received their coveted Eagle, after most of them had worked for the better part of 25 years earning the award, one small step at a time.

As you work on your advancement—I know you all get impatient and want to move along faster at times—remember Troop 3 and the Scouts who spent 25 years working toward their goal of becoming Eagles.

BULL'S-EYE

Many years ago a young man traveling through the countryside noticed that on many of the barns was a large bull's-eye painted on it with an arrow squarely in the center of the target. He thought he would like to meet the great archer, and asked around until he found out the name of the man, who lived in a nearby village.

He introduced himself, and asked the archer for a demonstration of his great skills. "Sure," said the archer, and they walked to the outskirts of town to a barn. He carried his bow and a quiver of arrows and several buckets of paint and some brushes. He selected a barn site, and carefully took aim at the barn, and hit it squarely in the middle. Then he walked up to the arrow, and carefully painted the bull's-eye around the arrow. He then proudly stood back and admired his work.

The moral of the story is to not be misled by things as they sometimes appear. Often, things are not as they seem.

THREE BRICK MASONS

Three brothers were all equally skilled at a craft taught to them by their father, that of a brick and stone mason. The work was hard, as it required lifting heavy bricks and cement, and they were exposed to the elements of severe weather on a daily basis. However, they viewed their work very differently:

When asked what he was doing, the first brother said, "I'm making a living for my family" as he toiled.

The second brother replied, when asked the same question, "Can't you see? I'm laying brick."

But the third brother, working next to the other brothers, replied, "I'm building a beautiful cathedral."

As you go about your daily tasks, don't lose sight of what you are really doing with your life. Build cathedrals.

ONE LIFE

Taken from *The Real Jesus and Other Sermons*, by James Allan Francis. Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1926.

A young man was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He worked in a carpenter shop until he was 30, and then he was an itinerant preacher for three years. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot in a big city. He never traveled more than 200 miles from the place he was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness.

While he was still a young man, the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends deserted him. He was turned over to his enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth, and that was his coat. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today his is still the central figure of the human race.

All the armies that have ever marched, all the navies that have ever sailed, all the parliaments that have ever sat, and all the kings that have ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man like the life of one man, Jesus Christ.

ASPENS

If you have ever seen a grove of aspens wave in a breeze, you have witnessed the strength and beauty of the trees. A grove of aspens can withstand the mighty forces of nature because they are tightly bound together, both in their trunks and limbs, and in their root systems, and each tree draws strength from the others. However, one aspen standing alone would soon split or break in the force of a big wind.

Your patrol is a lot like a grove of aspens. The strength and teamwork of a group of guys can accomplish tasks that would be impossible for individuals working independently. Each patrol member brings skills and talents that compliment the other members of the patrol.

THE LEAD STEER

In the early 1800s, before railroads, the only way to move cattle from the west to the big cities was to drive the huge herds of cattle across the planes to places like Kansas City and St. Louis. Trails like the Chisholm Trail were marked as the best routes that would provide water, food, river crossings, and safety from man and beast. Cowboys would be on the trail for weeks at a time moving the cattle before finally arriving at their destination.

Each herd had a lead steer, which was usually an older longhorn steer that led the way along the trail. The cowboys would get the lead steer moving each morning, and he would slowly start leading the way up the trail to the destination. The herd would fall into line behind the lead steer and follow him. Cowboys would ride on the flanks and the rear to keep the stragglers from wandering away from the herd.

The lead steer was trained to lead the herds. After completing a trail drive, the cowboys would drive the lead steer back home to lead another herd up the trail, and this would be repeated time and again. The story of the lead steer points out that leadership is a skill that can be taught, and as a Scout you will be given many opportunities to learn leadership skills and to be a leader.

WISDOM

Walt Disney was once asked what a person would need to do to be like him. Disney named four steps:

1. Think! Think about the values and principles that guide you in your business and personal life.
2. Believe! Believe in yourself.
3. Dream! Dream of something you want to do.
4. Dare! Dare to make your dream a reality.

TRADITIONAL IRISH BLESSING

May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind always be at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face, and the rain fall soft upon your fields, and unto we meet again, may God hold you in the hollow of his hand.

CHARACTER

A Scoutmaster asked his troop to define character. One Scout said character is “thinking good thoughts,” and another said it is “being a good citizen.” Another said character is having good morals, and another said it is “being honest and courageous.”

A young Scout held up his hand and when called upon said, “Character is what you do when nobody’s looking.”

THE ORIGINAL SCOUT LAW

At the BSA’s first annual meeting in 1911, a committee was charged with “Americanizing” Lord Baden-Powell’s Scout Law.

B-P’s Scout Law had nine points, covering the virtues of trustworthiness, loyalty, helpfulness, friendliness, courtesy, kindness, obedience, cheerfulness, and thriftiness. The BSA committee changed the wording to each point but retained their meaning. At the urging of James E. West, three points were added: brave, clean, and reverent. West was particularly adamant about adding “reverent” because, he said years later, “I felt then, as I feel now, that there is nothing more essential in the education of the youth of America than to give them religious instruction.”

A TURKEY EXPERIENCE

A flock of turkeys had a training meeting. All the turkeys went, and there, the head turkey taught them how to fly.

At first they were taught how to make short flights off the fence to the ground. This was certainly new to

them, and it was very fun. Then they’d glide from the top of the shed. Wow! That was exciting!

Eventually, they learned how to take off from a running start, glide and flap, and slowly lift. They learned how to catch thermal wind currents, soar up and fly high into the sky! And even do some fancy acrobatics.

They could look down and see the whole farm in great detail. They could see what was on the other side of hills and woods that had previously blocked their view. They could see vast horizons that they had never known.

It was a wonderful and exciting and exhilarating experience. And after the meeting, all the turkeys walked home.

Moral of the story: Put to practice the skills that you learn.

ACHIEVING A GOAL

Have you ever had an assignment or task that was so large that you were overwhelmed with the size of it and didn’t know where to begin? When you are faced with such a task, ask yourself this question: If you had to eat an elephant, how would you approach it? The answer: one bite at a time. You would do the big assignment just like eating an elephant, one bite at a time.

EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LIFE, I LEARNED FROM NOAH’S ARK

Everything I need to know about life, I learned from Noah’s ark. One: Don’t miss the boat. Two: Remember that we are all in the same boat. Three: Plan ahead. It wasn’t raining when Noah built the ark. Four: Stay fit. When you’re 600 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big. Five: Don’t listen to critics; just get on with the job that needs to be done. Six: Build your future on high ground. Seven: For safety’s sake, travel in pairs. Eight: Speed isn’t always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs. Nine: When you’re stressed, float a while. Ten: Remember, the ark was built by amateurs, the *Titanic* by professionals. Eleven: No matter the storm, when you are with God, there’s always a rainbow waiting.

PARABLE OF THE MULE

This parable is told of a farmer who owned an old mule.

The mule fell into the farmer’s well. The farmer heard the mule “praying”—or whatever mules do when they fall into wells.

After carefully assessing the situation, the farmer sympathized with the mule, but decided that neither the mule nor the well was worth the trouble of saving.

Instead, he called his neighbors together, told them what had happened and enlisted them to help haul dirt to bury the old mule in the well and put him out of his misery.

Initially, the old mule was hysterical! But as the farmer and his neighbors continued shoveling and the dirt hit his back, a thought struck him. It dawned on him that every time a shovel load of dirt landed on his back, he could shake it off and step up! This he did, blow after blow. “Shake it off and step up Shake it off and step up Shake it off and step up!” He repeated it to encourage himself.

No matter how painful the blows, or how distressing the situation seemed, the old mule fought panic and just kept right on shaking it off and stepping up!

It wasn’t long before the old mule, battered and exhausted, stepped triumphantly over the wall of that well! What seemingly would bury him actually helped him, all because of the manner in which he handled his adversity.

That’s life! If we face our problems and respond to them positively, and refuse to give in to panic, bitterness, or self-pity. The problems that come along to bury us usually have within them the very potential to benefit us . . . and benefit Scouting, too!

WALKING THE RAILS

Have you ever tried walking the rails? As a youngster growing up, I had to walk about a mile to school. The railroad track ran past both my house and the school. It was the shortest and quickest route.

I can remember many times while walking to and from school that I would try to walk the rails—seeing how far I could go without falling off. I usually didn’t get too far before a foot would slip and I would be off the rail and on the crosstie.

I read once of a group of Scouts who happened upon some abandoned railroad track. Each Scout took his turn trying to walk the entire length of the track without falling off. None of the boys was able to go the entire length without falling off.

Two of the boys got their heads together, and after some discussion came running to the group, smiling from ear to ear. They told the group that they were willing to bet that they could walk the entire length of the track without falling off.

The others in the group thought it was a good bet because they had already seen each of the boys fail in the attempt to accomplish the feat. So the bet was accepted and the two boys moved toward the track.

Each of the boys got on one rail and began their walk. Side by side they were walking down the track. Soon one of them became a little shaky, so the boys stopped. They then did something none of the other boys had thought of—they reached out and joined hands! After joining hands, they were able to walk the entire length of the track without falling off. Joining hands and supporting each other, they were able to accomplish what neither of them could accomplish alone.

When we help another, we help ourselves. When we lend a helping hand, we receive one in return. Neither of the boys could walk the length of that track separately. But by the boys joining hands, the task was made relatively easy.

There are many rails in life that have to be walked. Some of them are very difficult to master by ourselves. But if we are willing to extend a hand and receive a hand, we will find that walking the rails of life is much easier to accomplish.