

Organization of Nation's First Official Cub Scout Unit Bared

By CHARLES E. CHAPPEL, Assemblyman

The first Cub Pack in the United States was organized in Iowa City, Iowa, in 1921. Actually, we had a group of boys of ages ranging from 8 to 12 who were sponsored by Roy Scout Troop No. 3 of Iowa City as early as 1920, but we were not officially recognized. In that year, I was sixteen years old, a first class Boy Scout, a patrol leader, and at the same time in the University ROTC and Troop A, 113th Iowa National Guard Cavalry, hence I was a busy boy, but not too busy to take an interest in organizing Cub Scouts.

A Boy Scout Executive named Kenny encouraged us somewhat but also said that without some kind of an official charter we would not get anywhere. Another Boy Scout, Alan Regal, also of Iowa City, formed his own Cub Troop. I went to a printer who had a son in one of our troops and had him print a very impressive letterhead titled "Cub Scouts of America" on a sheet of this letterhead.

In a few weeks, he sent me an official document with a big gold seal and ribbon on it, telling me that I was authorized to organize Cub Scouts in the United States, and granting us permission to carry the colors of the United States, conform to the military laws of the United States, and to be forever free and independent from the Cub Scouts of Canada or any other part of the British Empire. This may sound rather pompous now, but in those days a Governor General of the Dominion of Canada was supposed to be pompous. He was paid to be pompous.

When we received the charter, Alan Regal and I recruited two troops of Cub Scouts of about 100 boys each, each troop divided into two platoons and each platoon divided into squads of eight boys each. There was a boy platoon commander, boy company and platoon commanders, and, of course, all the ranks of the organization were manned by young boys. Regal and I were merely the ones who stayed on the sidelines and kept the show going.

We had the British and Canadian manuals for their cub scouts but we thought they were rather childish so we trained the boys in the regular army close order drill plus the requirements for the Tenderfoot Badge of the Boy Scouts of America, hence making it possible for each boy when he became twelve years of age and graduated from the Cub Scouts into the Boy Scouts to pass the Tenderfoot test without any trouble. Boys who were especially bright were given instruction in the requirements for becoming second and first class Boy Scouts.

We did not have den mothers. We had den fathers. A boy was not recruited unless he could bring an adult male, such as a father, uncle, older brother or interested neighbor to sponsor him. From these male sponsors we recruited our den fathers. Mothers were invited to watch us drill once a month, but fathers and other adult males could come any time.

We never had any trouble. When there were civic parades, and in those days parades were common, our boys marched, commanded by their own boy officers, and to the music of their own little band, mostly drums and cymbals, had a great delight to the young male ears.

Sometimes I hear from these boys of long ago. One is the vice president of one of the greatest railroads in the United States. Many became admirals and generals in World War II. One went to Congress. None of them went in a punitive. All of them when they write to me tell me that the close but friendly sponsorship of adult males and two boys scouts who were not much older than they were did much to bring them into the world of men and out of the playground of boyhood.

For many years I have discussed that original Cub Scout organization with experienced leaders of the Boy Scouts of America, with psychologists, and with den mothers. Many

of them tell me that we were wrong to have men instead of mothers for den leaders. I actually found sponsors, that those young boys needed a woman's loving care, but none of the graduates of our pioneer Cub Scout movement will agree with them.

You may wonder what this has to do with state government and why I discuss the subject in a column usually devoted to state affairs. The reason is that I am not convinced that passing laws is the one sure means of preventing juvenile delinquency. I believe we need positive thinking and positive action by parents. Whether we have men sponsoring dens or have den mothers, we need more adult leaders of both sexes.

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