



CHAPTER 1

"MAY I BE OF SERVICE, SIR?"

It was in the fall of 1909 and a heavy fog swirled through the streets of London. William Boyce, a Chicago publisher, had lost his way and was already more than an hour late for his appointment when a small boy wearing some sort of uniform appeared out of the mist.

"May I be of service, sir?"

The boy led Boyce swiftly to his destination, and then, to the American's surprise, turned down a tip.

"A Scout does not take money for a good turn," he explained.

Boyce was so impressed that he wanted to find out more about this thing called "Scouting." He contacted Lieutenant-General Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scout Movement in England, and the more he learned about it, the more enthusiastic he became. By the time he returned home, Boyce had acquired a trunk full of Boy Scout literature, and a determination to bring the movement to the United States.

The love of adventure has always been apparent in boys. Few things seem to satisfy a boy's adventurous spirit like getting out into nature, camping hiking, cooking over an open fire. The life of a frontiersman, of an Indian, of an explorer, has a very real appeal to boys. The Scouting movement, as Boyce saw it in England, seemed to answer the craving for adventure which is so much a part of a boy. But Scouting was not simply camping out; it affected every part of a boy's life. It provided a sense of honor, of loyalty -it was a Scout's devotion to service which introduced Boyce to Scouting.

Upon return to the United States, Boyce immediately began work on a Scouting movement in America. He discovered several organizations, already in existence, which were working along the general lines of what he had seen in England. There was Daniel Carter Beard's organization, the Loyal Sons of Daniel Boone. Ernest Thompson Seton had organized a group known as the Woodcraft Indians. There were the National Scouts of America, the Peace Scouts in California, The Knights of King Arthur, the United States Boy Scouts. But for the most part, these groups lacked efficient organization, and for one reason or another were inadequate.

Working with the Young Men's Christian Association and other organizations, Boyce tried to unite the

various groups into one strong movement. Edgar Robinson of the Y.M.C.A. was very enthusiastic about the idea and did much to put Scouting on its feet nationally. They worked swiftly, and on February 8, 1910, a new corporation was officially founded - the Boy Scouts of America.

The new movement soon spread to every part of the country. The national headquarters was deluged with letters asking for information, wanting to know how to become a Boy Scout, and how to form a Troop. Orders for the new Handbook for Boys began to pile up, and printers were hard-pressed to keep up with the demand. Wherever a Handbook was sent, it inevitably introduced a number of people to Scouting. Newspapers gave much publicity to this new organization sweeping through the country.

Through those newspaper articles the people of Dayton began to learn of the Boy Scouts. It was a newspaper article that introduced members of the first Dayton Troop to the Boy Scouts. In 1908, a small group of boys, all members of Sunday School classes at the Central Church of Christ, joined the Loyal Sons of Daniel Boone. But the Sons of Daniel Boone was very loosely organized and required the boys to play roles of specific pioneers, so it did not give them what they really wanted.

In 1910 they read about the new organization, the Boy Scouts of America, and since they had the required number of boys, and a sponsor, the Central Church of Christ, they applied to join the National Council as a Troop. The National Council acted quickly upon their application and soon they were officially named Troop 3.

Lionel Keppler, Charlie Martin, Harry Wertz, Howard White, Ted McConnon, Willard Kidd, Harold Janney, and Everett Hamm were the boys who made up that first Troop. Organizing the group was not without its problems. The first of these was the difficulty of finding a Scoutmaster. Finally, the boys talked Jesse Keppler, father of Lionel Keppler, into taking on the job. Even though his time was occupied with business matters, Mr. Keppler proved to be a fine Scoutmaster always managing to find time for the boys. The Troop was divided into two Patrols, with Harry Wertz as leader of one and Lionel Keppler leader of the other.

In the summer of 1911, the boys received their first taste of camping as a Troop. They took some rowboats a few miles up the Stillwater River and set up camp on a small island. For three weeks they slept under shelter halves, cooked over small open fires and learned the skills of Scouting.

During the same year another Troop was being formed through the Dayton Y.M.C.A.. Samuel Finn, active in the Y.M.C.A., became its first Scoutmaster. The new Troop started out with about fifteen members, but soon the list grew to almost twice that number. They managed to find a good camping spot not far from Dayton, known officially as Harshmanville Camp, but called "Don't Worry" camp by the boys.

The traction lines took them to within a few miles of the camp, then they hiked the rest of the way. Approaching the camp, they shouted "Don't Worry," and so the tradition grew.

Members of Troop 3 were anxious to share with other boys what they had found in Scouting. They set up an exhibition in Memorial Hall to promote the idea. The display included many projects the boys had been working on, as well as demonstrations of first aid, safety, knot-tying, and other skills. They showed the wireless they had built and how they had made their first canoes of barrel staves and canvas.

As a result of the exhibition, many more parents began to understand that Scouting was something more than a gang of boys who liked to camp out together. In Scouting, boys were learning skills which were valuable not only to themselves, but to the community.

Scouting was not confined to Dayton, and the idea gradually spread throughout the Miami Valley. Boys living on farms, who were not able to join an actual Troop, sent applications to National Headquarters and became "Lone" Scouts. They were pitching tents on their farms and learning about Scouting from the Handbook .

By 1912, there was a very active Troop in Lebanon, which participated in Dayton parades and went on frequent camping trips. The Lebanon Troop and Dayton Troop 3 marched in the parade honoring the Wright brothers.

Late in March 1913, it rained steadily in the Miami Valley for four days. By the time the deluge ended, the Miami River, fed by the Stillwater and Mad Rivers had become a raging torrent. It burst over its banks, swept away dams and levees and crashed through the streets of Dayton. A tide of swift brown water up to twelve feet deep swirled through the city.

People in their homes were forced to attics or rooftops as the houses filled with the rising flood. The swift current ripped houses from their foundations and sent them floating toward the south. Terrified horses swam through the streets. During the next few days, Dayton Boy Scouts had the first chance to prove their worth to the community in a time of emergency.

The boys were quick to make themselves available to help. They worked with the Red Cross as messengers. Those with boats rescued hundreds of people from second-story windows and rooftops. And when the waters finally receded, leaving a residue of thick brown mud, the Scouts pitched in to help with the enormous job of cleaning the city. Martial law was declared, militiamen patrolled the streets to keep order and prevent looting. The city administration issued printed cards to the boys of Samuel Finn 's Troop which authorized them to clean the downtown churches. It became increasingly clear- the Boy Scouts could be counted on when they were needed.

The year of the flood was a time of development for Scouting, nationally. Local Councils

were beginning to be formed. The number of Scouts in the nation grew to more than one hundred fifteen thousand. New emphasis was put on the training of adult leaders, and Scouting magazine was developed as a leader's magazine.

Also in that year, more development came to the Dayton area. The established Troops continued to grow. The first uniforms were purchased from the national supplier in New York. New Troops were formed. Troop 3 established its first permanent summer camp on the site of its first camping trip up the Stillwater River. There the boys spent much of their summer, some getting up at three o'clock every morning in order to get to Dayton in time to make deliveries on their paper routes. With the money they earned from those deliveries, most of the boys were able to pay the cost of living at camp.

In July of 1914, war suddenly exploded in Europe. The war seemed pretty far away to most people in Dayton and life went on much as usual. It was a good year for the city. The first local symphony concert proved to be a great success. Business and industry were on the increase, and Dayton was very fondly referred to as the "City of a Thousand Factories." Circuses were popular, and the boys of Troop 3 once played hookey from school to watch a circus being set up.

By 1914, Troop 3 had increased to about twenty members, and continued to be very active. They made a bicycle trip to Fort Ancient and camped at Lebanon with the Lebanon Troop. They made many canoe trips on the Stillwater River. Any time there was a parade in Dayton, the Scouts were sure to be strongly represented.

During the next few years, the people of Dayton became more aware of what was going on in Europe. Newspapers printed stories calculated to enflame American patriotism. Posters showed atrocities of war, appealing strongly to the emotions.

Finally in 1917 the United States entered the war and the people of Dayton swung into the enormous task of mobilization. Factories operated at their maximum production. Hundreds of men enlisted in the services and soon left for basic training.

During 1917 and 1918, the Scouts made themselves available for any sort of service. They worked with the Red Cross, assisted local draft boards, did guard duty at McCook Field and located thousands of black walnut trees for making gun stocks. They collected peach pits for gas masks, sold thrift stamps and participated in Liberty Bond sales. During the war years more boys became Scouts in Dayton than ever before and by the end of the war it became increasingly

obvious that some sort of local organization was necessary in order for the Dayton Scouts to continue to work efficiently. One of the best Troops in Dayton during this period was at Christ Episcopal Church, where the Reverend B. H. Reinheimer was Scoutmaster and Herb State his assistant. The Troop was active in all of the war support efforts of the Scouts and in addition, during 1917 and 1918, delivered half of all the phone books in Dayton, earning about \$200 each year for their Troop. They used this money to support a week's camp each year at Silver Lake.

One of the eager youngsters in Scout uniform who trudged through Dayton streets with a knapsack full of phone books on his back was tenderfoot Dave Rike, son of Frederick H. Rike, a local dry goods merchant who had summoned enough courage a few years before to expand the Rike-Kumler enterprise and move it to Second and Main at the far north end of Dayton's business section. Young Dave carried his enthusiasm for the Scouts home, and his admiration for the movement soon spread to his father.