

Things I have learned from my fellow Scoutmasters

Perry Flinn has kindly allowed me to give what the program labels “closing remarks”. The actual title of my essay is “Things I have learned from my Fellow Scoutmasters”. Let me start by saying I have learned from all my fellow scoutmasters, and, truly, it’s not fair to focus on only 3.

Somewhat more than a dozen years ago at Camp Rainey summer camp there was a scout who engaged in some rather egregious activity toward another scout. Without going into details, this activity required a conference among several adults to determine if the scout could remain in the troop. It was decided that he would be allowed to continue in the troop. I was not involved, but I might not have agreed with their conclusions. After about a year hiatus, the scout returned to troop activities. He came on the first campout of the fall. At Sunday morning thorns and roses, he was warmly and sincerely welcomed back to troop activities by Bill Eidson. As I listened to Bill’s kind remarks, I remember thinking to myself “Wow! I could learn a lot about forgiveness”.

Forgiveness: we’re all in need of that; probably not just from time-to-time, but daily.

In 2008, I was the lead adult for Double H, our high adventure trek in New Mexico; it’s a 1 week version of Philmont. In the evening there is a communal hot dinner prepared in a large pot. We all line up to receive our food; one evening Joe Cullen, one of the adults, was at the rear, and received very little food; but no complaints from Joe. During our evening reflections, Bruce Broecker, the other adult, chastised the boys about not properly dividing the food, then he added “Joe Cullen lives the Scout Oath every day”.

Look for the good in people and celebrate that. Try to overlook or ignore their faults.

One of our favorite troop campouts is the Jacks River crossing where we cross the river about a dozen times. Typically we have a group of day hikers and backpackers. The water is often up to the knees, swift flowing, and the rocks slippery; most everyone slips at least once. I remember the year John Campbell and his son were new to our troop. As we made our river crossings, I noticed that John had positioned himself downstream, ready to catch anyone who fell and needed help. No one asked John to do that; he simply saw the need, and stepped up.

Look around; see what needs to be done, and give help without being asked or expecting praise.

Thank you for allowing me to share some of my reflections.

John Cobb

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