

Memories of Scoutmaster Ed Walcott 1982 -1988

I began my association with Troop 442 in 1976 when I became the Cub master of Pack 442. I served as Cubmaster for 6 years. During the last three years I was also the Webelos Den Leader. In 1980 I became an Asst. Scoutmaster under Don Deeley and became the Scoutmaster in 1982 when Don stepped down.

I served as Scoutmaster from 1982 to 1988 during which time the Troop's membership grew from 18 registered Scouts to 65 with around 55 being active. My first two years I had Bruce Williams as my Asst. Scoutmaster and without his help I would not have been able to provide all of the activities that the Troop did. I have hiked, cycled, canoed and backpacked many miles with Bruce and each of us had way over 100 nights of camping. I owe him a lot.

In order to recruit new boys and retain the older Scouts, Bruce and I developed a program that we felt would attract the younger boys; while at the same time keep the interest of our older Scouts. We did tailgate campouts where we had the older Scouts teach and train the new Scouts. This provided the training for the young Scouts for advancement and leadership training for the older Scouts. We took the Troop to several different summer camps operated by other Boy Scout Councils. Then we started the high adventure activities that gave the older Scouts a challenge and new exciting experiences. In addition to the fun the Scouts were having they also received special High Adventure Patches. Several of these patches required several hours of hard work doing trail building and repairs. We were the first Troop to earn the Silver and the Gold Trail Savers patches and the Trail Savers medal which was offered by the Los Angeles Council.

We earned patches offer by the Inland Empire, San Diego, and Old Baldy Councils High Adventure Teams, in addition to several that were offered by our own Orange Country Council High Adventure.

We did the 50 mile Silver Moccasin backpack, canoed 50 miles from Hover Dam to Lake Havasu on the Colorado River. The Troop has backpacked in the desert, in the High Sierras, in the snow, and one very miserable backpack in the rain. The Troop dug for opals in Death Valley, did white water rafting, rock climbing and repelling, did the hiking and cycling merit badges and many other numerous high adventures.

I guess what Bruce and I started worked as the Troop steadily grew each year with more boys joining and fewer Scouts leaving. I found myself looking at 6 patrols with 8 to 10 Scouts and 18 Asst. Scoutmasters at most troop meetings and 45 to 50 Scouts and ID-12 ASMs on campouts. Thus the Rocking Chair patrol was created for the adult leaders and to this day, I think we had more fun on outings than the Scouts.

We set a precedent by having pizza delivered to the Troop during a camporee at Hunting Central Park because we found it took too much of the Scout's time to prepare lunch and get back out to the competition. We were the envy of several Troops as we snaked danced down the path to our camp site carrying the pizzas over our heads. Some of the Troop implied this was not fair and we should not be allowed to do it but the judges said it was very original thinking. The next year, several Troops had pizza for lunch.

Another precedent we set was to provide our Scouts with swap meet type shade covering at camporees because most of the time they were held where little shade existed. The Troop took a great deal of teasing the first time we did this; however, the next year those same Troops had coverings.

During my time as Scoutmaster, I introduced the Eagle Scout Neckerchief to the Troop so our Eagles could be readily recognized as Eagle Scouts at District and Council functions. I also made several of the props still being used by the Troop for our Court of Honors. I felt that if a Scout took the time and made the effort to earn a badge or rank, I should make sure he was properly honored so we held Courts of Honors that several District and Council Scouters said were the best in Pacifica District. Many Troops have adopted our Eagle Court of Honor ceremony.

As one of my hobbies was cooking, I made an extra effort to teach the Scouts how to cook on campouts. The troop provided the funds to buy the necessary equipment and the Scouts learned that you could eat something other than Pop Tarts and cold cereal for breakfast and boiled hot dogs and hamburgers for dinner. They learned to make up menus, figured the cost of the meals, collected the money, did the shopping and brought just the necessary equipment for the outing. I have eaten many wonderful and nourishing meals that the Scouts have cooked.

We had several campouts at Mission Bay in San Diego where we had cooking competition between the patrols. Moms, you would be amazed by what your sons cooked and the creative ways they did it. One of them was putting their dinner in a hole lined with coals and covering it with dirt only to come back three to four hours later to dig out a perfectly cooked and delicious dinner.

They also learned you could eat very well on a backpack outing without having to carry a lot of weight.

I have many other experiences I could talk about but I will end my talk with the following. It has been an honor and pleasure to have been the Scoutmaster of Troop 442 and to have walked along the trail to Eagle Scout completely or part way with 53 of the 64 Eagle Scouts of Troop 442. I enjoyed every step and I didn't believe it when my oldest son John told me it has been 20 years since he made Eagle. It feels like it has only been a short time since I stepped down from Scouting. While Scoutmaster I had as a guide the following saying, "No man stands as tall as when he bends to help a child". I believe that is still true today.