

A Man with an Idea

by Susan Mackie

Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell, 1st Baron of Gilwell, was a man with an idea.

His military history speaks of bravery and ingenuity; during the Boer War, he defended a small African town called Mafeking; holding out for an uncanny 217 days with only eight hundred men against a force ten times that number. He did it by using his wits, and some techniques he had come up with for scouting and deceiving the enemy.

To the boys of that era, his courage and determination made him a hero – and they wrote to him asking for advice on this interesting new philosophy called “Scouting”.

With the boys’ enthusiasm spurring him on, B.-P. decided to test his idea and procedures. And, from a small experimental camp on Brownsea Island, England, in 1907, came a Movement that has spanned the globe to include over 216 countries and 25 million members today.

This month we celebrate the spirit of Scouting. You’ll see our youth everywhere during Scout-Guide week (Sunday, February 15 - Sunday, February 22, 2004); at parades, special events, and at malls where their proud displays are a testament to a Movement that has lasted nearly 100 years.



B.-P. and Lady Baden-Powell, 1912

It’s a Movement that involves kids in a lot of outdoor fun (combined with a great deal of education, but let’s just keep that quiet). They are out in the fresh air, in the cold, in the sun, on mountains, on the water...everywhere adventure can be had and long friendships begun.

It’s a Movement that teaches responsibility – whether kids learn to support their own activities by fundraising, or giving guidance as Sixers and Seconds or Keeos and Kims. They learn there’s no such thing as a free ride – you get out of life what you put into it. And they learn what a great feeling it is to help other people.

It’s a Movement that makes leaders. I wish I had the space to list how many successful, confident people have told me Scouting was, in many ways, responsible for helping them become the people they are; and that what they learned in Scouting has stayed with them all their lives. I know doctors, teachers, photographers, journalists, financial advisors, military leaders, biologists and even an astronaut or two who look back on their Scouting days with a lot of fond memories. I’m sure even the occasional editor got started writing letters home from camp.

But most of all, it’s a Movement founded on simple principles. Be true to yourself. Treat others as you would like to be treated. Respect and enjoy the natural world. Do a good turn. Do your best. Share.

Scouting sure has changed over the years. We’re fully co-ed, we’re available to all ages, and by golly, now we can wear bright orange t-shirts.

One thing hasn’t changed. B.-P.’s idea, and his vision of kids learning to respect themselves and others while enjoying camaraderie and all the outdoors has to offer has stood the test of time.

Scouting. A simple idea. A century of success. A great way of life.

It’s ours to celebrate! X



Scouting's Mission

The mission of Scouting is to contribute to the education of young people, through a value system based on the Scout Promise and Law, to help build a better world where people are self-fulfilled as individuals and play a constructive role in society.

Énoncé de Mission du scoutisme

La mission du scoutisme consiste à contribuer au développement des jeunes afin de leur permettre d’atteindre leur plein potentiel physique, intellectuel, social et spirituel en tant qu’individus, citoyens et membres de la collectivité sur les plans local, national et international par l’application de nos principes et pratiques.

