

# YOU CAN TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS:

## *One Scouter's Journey*

by Garth Fitzner

**H**aving been involved with Scouting for over 20 years, twelve of them as a leader of various Cub, Scout and Venturer sections, I thought I was doing pretty well. The sections were active with a varied program, I'd taken groups to numerous provincial and national jamborees across the country, and many of the youth had earned their Chief Scout's and Queens Venturer Awards.

Oh sure, there were times when I felt burnt out and my leadership years weren't all continuous as I fulfilled oth-

er assignments but hey...I was a good Scouter and things were great! Or were they? Why then did I have the feeling of being on a plateau? What was holding me back? Over the years I had done some personal development and taken Woodbadge I for Scouts and Venturers as well as Woodbadge II for Venturers but the latest one had been a decade ago!

A couple of years ago I felt that I was stagnating and for the first time ever I began to make plans to leave Scouting. I had come to the realization, or so I thought, that I had done everything there was to do. I spoke to my Group Commissioner about things and he understood. 'It was just time for me to leave', I told him. Boy was I wrong! And am I ever glad I was!

### **A Revitalization**

My revitalization began when I was given some assistants, whose experience in leading Scouts ranged from almost nil to vast. Suddenly I had others to lean on and I was able to have some of the load removed from my shoulders. Almost immediately I began to enjoy things more and the program went from reasonably good to really good!

In March 2005, along with one of my assistants, I attended my first training course in over ten years, For Those Who Help Others, Basic level. I came out of that course completely turned around. I had learned new things, been able to associate with other leaders who shared my concerns and problems, and received excellent

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Photograph: Gordon Mann





Photograph: Dennis Power

## HAVING OTHERS TO LEAN ON MAKES EVERYTHING MORE FUN.

instruction. I was so motivated I was on fire!

My section programming continued to increase and I was leaving nearly every week being able to say what a great meeting that was! What had changed? My load was lighter and because of this I was able to at-

tend training that had inspired me. As I looked back, I discovered another aspect that the training provided. It allowed me to share some of the tricks, knowledge and experience I had gained over many years. I was hooked! I just knew that I had to get more.

Recently I had the opportunity to assist as a trainer for the first time. It was a thoroughly tremendous experience. I was again able to associate with numerous other leaders and even though I was there to train them, I learned a lot myself.

I have come to learn some things from my experience. No matter what you call it, training, personal development, continuing education or whatever, there are many reasons to take it. It keeps you fresh, it keeps you up to date, it allows you to learn and share. As it was with me, it can be inspiring and rejuvenating.

In Jim Collins' terrific book he describes how Good is the enemy of Great. In the past, my section had been quite good and I had allowed myself to believe that was good enough. I got stuck in a rut and didn't even realize that although my wheels were spinning I wasn't going anywhere. After going to training, the light bulb went on and I knew that I didn't want to be on the plateau anymore. I wanted a great section. Things aren't perfect and problems still happen but my section is doing better than ever. Recently one of my Scout Counsellors became Troop Scouter and so now I assist him. The change has been great! X

*— Garth Fitzner is still teaching Scouting tricks to leaders and youth with 170<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Park (AB) LDS Scout troop.*

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