

When Did Venturing Begin?

Officially Venturing was created by the Boy Scouts of America's executive board on February 9, 1998. However if you ask Bill Evans, Associate Director, Venturing, who was there that day and helped create Venturing, he would expand a little.

In 1995, the Outdoor Exploring Committee chaired by Dr. Dick Miller of Waynesboro, Virginia, met in Long Key, Florida. The primary purpose of the meeting was to address the issue of how to support and sustain the amazing growth that outdoor Exploring was enjoying. During a five year period in the early 90s, Outdoor Exploring had grown 94% to almost a hundred thousand members. What resulted from that committee meeting was what is now known as the Ranger Award, the Silver Award, and Bronze Awards. Evans said that when the committee would come up with an idea, it would sound familiar. Then they would refer to a 1950 edition of the Explorer Handbook and find their idea had already been applied years ago. So, if you are a history buff and have an early edition Explorer Handbook, you can see the many similarities between early days Exploring and today's Venturing.

If you really want to trace the roots of Venturing, according to Evans, you have to go way back. Evans says the need for a senior Boy Scout program probably surface the second day after Scouting started in the United States in 1910. Actually in the very first national executive board meeting report, it is stated that there was a discussion about losing older boys. It was no surprise to our founders that older boys needed an age specific program with challenges appropriate for them. Older boy programs cropped up across the country during those early years causing the need for national action.

In 1935, the BSA created Senior Scouting, publishing the *Guide to Senior Scouting*. There were several options including Explorers, Sea Scouts and Air Scouts. In 1949 the BSA consolidated the senior programs, with the exception of Sea Scouts, into just Exploring. At that time a boy could be an Explorer in the troop or in a stand alone unit called the Explorer Post. The Explorer advancement program included the Bronze Award, the Gold Award, and the Silver Award. Sound familiar? The last Silver awards were earned in 1966 as Exploring began to turn more toward career emphasis. That is until the new Venturing Silver Award was re-introduced in August 1998. The new Venturing advancement award medals are very similar in design to their predecessors of the 1940s and 1950s.

According to Evans, what was true in 1920 is true today, older teens need a program specific to their needs and abilities. How old are our Venturers anyway? Evans points out that our age chart is almost a perfect bell curve with 17 being the highest point. The second highest age is 18, followed by 16. There are actually more 19 year olds than 14 year olds. Because Venturing is very challenging and usually involves ambitious travel, it lends itself more to older teens.