

# VENTURING MAGAZINE

## Exploring Changed My Life

July 2013

### Explorer Scouting in the Forties

*This letter was forwarded from [www.sageventure.com](http://www.sageventure.com) and is used with permission. It is from a Scouter who joined Explorer Scouts in the years right after World War II.*



Viewing the [sageventure.com](http://sageventure.com) website reminded me, and I'm sure every former Explorer Scout, of the exceptional training and experiences that program offered. I joined the Explorers back in 1946 as a high school junior. Still working to earn Eagle Scout, the Explorer awards seemed a distant objective. Then one of my high school classmates, Dick Thomas, earned both awards, which at the time was a rare accomplishment. Spurred on by his achievement, I did likewise earning Eagle in 1947 and Ranger in '49, making my home town of Aberdeen, South Dakota, somewhat notable since there were only about 600 Rangers in the nation at that time and few double award recipients. But, of course, all credit is really due our leaders without whom none of this would have been accomplished.

My personal venture as a Scout leader began at age 18 when I became Assistant Scoutmaster of a regular troop in Aberdeen. Nothing unusual occurred that first year until we were almost ready to go to summer camp when I was informed that the Scoutmaster had just undergone an emergency appendectomy and would be unable to attend. Needless to say, the parents were substantially concerned about this downturn of events, and so was I. Our arrival at Big Stone Lake on the South Dakota-Minnesota border offered a second surprise. Looking around for permanent buildings, tent platforms, etc., I found nothing but a large steel storage locker operated by a gasoline powered refrigeration unit. This locker, I was informed, was where we were to pick up our food; the rest of the time we were on our own- no program, no lifeguards, no cooks, no nothing except a few latrines. Well, the boys found this to their liking and had a grand time carrying on far into the night while the candy bars lasted. Then hunger and fatigue worked their magic and we quickly got down to some serious business, planning the menus and assigning cooks, fire crew, dishwashers, etc. I learned a great lesson here, one that every Scout leader knows, and that is "A tired, hungry boy is a good boy." I like to think the boys learned something too.

Later, I was Scoutmaster while in the service at Fort Bliss, Texas, which proved interesting only in the fact that it was fun as a second lieutenant to tell the troop committee of Colonels what I needed in the way of equipment and transportation. But all this is simply to suggest that Scouting is a tremendous amount of fun for everyone-boys and leaders-as well as a great educational experience. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Kent

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## More on the Original Explorer Ranger Award

*This is a reply from one of the above Scouter's friends from their youth.*

Your posting by Kent and a call from him after too many years prompt me to add a few great memories to his collection. We were scouts together in the same troop and Explorer Post in Aberdeen, S.D. in the mid 1940's and both won the Eagle and Ranger awards. We were part of a very active troop and all passed through the ranks together to take leadership positions but also wanted more of a challenge in the great outdoors. When the Explorer program was announced we all jumped at the opportunities. One of our respected scoutmasters agreed to be our adult leader and we were active in both the troop and the Post.



During the summer of 1944, I was able to spend two weeks at the Region Ten Canoe Camp on the Boundary Waters in northern Minnesota. It turned out I was the only scout to arrive at the appointed time. Rather than return home one of the guides agreed to take me with him on a great adventure deep into the Quetico Park in Canada. It was a life changing experience for me and I came back to the Great Plains of South Dakota a real woodsman. The next year I worked for the Pheasant Council camps teaching canoeing and water skills as I finished my Eagle award. My friends were fascinated with my tales of the deep woods on Canada and the next summer the beginnings of our Explorer Post arranged for a two week adventure with Region Ten. With my Eagle award in hand in 1945 I went to the Ranger Award and was the first scout in the region to win both awards -- Kent was not far behind and we encouraged each other along the way. I continued to work camps for many years and directed canoe operations in Northern Wisconsin and Michigan while finishing graduate school. With Kent I happily praise the scouting movement as it was a very important part of sharing my life and my development as a responsible man.

Just another comment -- the years fly by and recently I was working with a group of potential Eagle Scouts on their large service project. I spoke at a district meeting about the opportunity and to introduce my presentation I took along my Ranger Badge and asked if any of the leaders had ever seen one -- not a single hand went up! Scouting has changed and that is important as the needs of young persons have changed. What is an antique now is the symbol of a rich part of growing up that forever prompts warm memories of fellow scouts and leaders who made the program a wonderful adventure and have passed the torch for another generation. BE PREPARED!

Richard

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## How Sea Scouting Changed My Life

*This is a recent posting on [groups.yahoo.com/group/venturinglist](https://groups.yahoo.com/group/venturinglist) and reflects the memories of a younger man who came up through Sea Scouting.*

I grew up in a semi-tough neighborhood in Chicago. Among my circle of friends, high school was a place that you had to show up at until you turned 16. I was a freshman and a few weeks after school started, a girl I didn't know turned to me and asked if I'd go to some kind of meeting with her that evening. I think the reason I said yes is because I was intrigued that someone I didn't even know would

ask me to do this. It was a Sea Scout meeting, her first meeting actually, and she never went back to another one. I rarely ever saw her again except passing in the halls occasionally at school.

It took me years to figure out why I returned for a second meeting, and then a third, and then many more. It was because of the way the adults treated me from the first moment that I stepped in the door. For the first time in my life I was not at all treated like a kid. I was respected as an individual whole person, appreciated and valued as a contributing member right from the start. There was a feeling that adults and youth members alike were equals. A feeling that we were all in this together trying to accomplish something. Each person was equally important and depended upon by every other person, adult and youth alike.

It was very hard to get my parents to sign the application for the second meeting. They were sure this endeavor would cost them money and they didn't feel they should be paying for my fun now that I was 14 and could find ways to earn my own spending money. I gave them extreme assurances that this would cost them nothing but in the end I can't say for sure whether the application I turned in was signed by them. Sea Scouts never did cost them money. The uniforms were owned by the ship and passed around as needed (like tents in a troop or a school's marching band uniforms). All trips were paid for by the ship as a whole, no individual "scout accounts" existed. If there wasn't enough in the general fund for everybody that wanted to go, nobody went. We were even reimbursed for baked goods supplies for bake sales!

That first year I divided my time between my friends that hung out in the alley smoking and ship activities. As I became more involved, I had less and less time to spend in the alley. The ship had this crazy idea that they could earn enough money for all of us to go on a 50 mile canoe trip. I thought it was nutty but I was just hanging around having fun, going with the flow.

That summer, on about the middle day of the canoe trip, I had a revelation. It was so different than anything else in my life up until then. A year ago, I had never even touched a canoe paddle. Here I was on a trip of a lifetime, something I never thought possible for a person like me. How did this happen? I thought over all of the fundraisers, "shakedowns", and planning. I spent that afternoon paddling and thinking about what I wanted to do with the rest of my life instead of just drifting through it.

I decided that I would go to college. My family would be against. They believed it was better to start earning money as soon as possible. I was going to have to work very hard since my grade point average after freshman year was D-. If a bunch of kids could pull off this trip with the right work and planning, I felt I could use the same strategy and apply it to anything I wanted to do. For the first time in my life I felt like there were no limits on my life. It took me 10 years to work my way through college and earn a Computer Science bachelor's degree while simultaneously working full time, but I did it. I changed the entire direction of my life due to my experience in Sea Scouts.



Scout's honor - my true story,

Reggie

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How Exploring Changed My Life

*This is the story of a young man who came of age during the Vietnam War.*



My Scouting career began in the 1950's when I joined a Cub Scout Pack at Ft. Lewis, WA. Life for an army brat is a mobile feast of experiences, and I later transferred to a Transatlantic Council Pack in Poitiers, France, and got my Arrow of Light at a Pack in nearby Ingrandes, France. I joined Troop 289 at Ingrandes right out of Webelos, earned my Tenderfoot Rank, and then our Troop fell apart due to personnel transfers. There were no other Boy Scout Troops within commuting range, so that appeared to be the end of Scouting for me.

Happily, when we moved back to the US, we were stationed at Ft. Rucker, AL where there was an active Scouting program sponsored by the US Army. As soon as I finished the eighth grade, I joined Explorer Post 50, which was advertising a 100 mile canoe trip that summer. I learned how to paddle a canoe, and then we were off to the Florida Panhandle! It was the grandest adventure of my life so far. We did that trip many times in the summers of my high school years. In my senior year, I applied and won an ROTC scholarship as a direct result of my leadership in the Explorer Post. My dad was a Master Sergeant with four kids who had recently retired from the army, so we would not have had the resources to send me to college without that scholarship. It was a life changing event for me and I was the first person in my family to attend college. Explorers had changed my life in many other ways, too. I had been canoeing, cave exploring, camping, worked on community service projects, washed a lot of cars, and helped raise a lot of money.

It took me eight years to complete my bachelor's degree at three different universities. The Vietnam War was winding down as I completed my sophomore year and it was clear that I wasn't going to get commissioned (in other words, get a job in the Army) at graduation, so I resigned my scholarship, got a job, and studied part time on the side. On my 21st birthday, I started my first Explorer Post as an adult leader and ran a very exciting high adventure program for a rewarding four years while I worked two jobs and studied part-time. Later, when I was able to afford to go back to school full time, I transferred to a larger university and got an internship in the Exploring Division of the local Scout Council. A year later, I graduated and enrolled in graduate school in a nearby state. Once there, I approached the local Scout Office about starting another Explorer Post and instead, they hired me as their Exploring Executive. With a full time job, and the flexibility to attend classes during the day, I was able to successfully complete my master's degree in a couple of years and build a solid Explorer Program in that Council. We had over 500 new Explorers, a Council-wide ski program, and a tradition of sponsoring big adventures for the Council.

That is how I got to attend college, and that is how I financed my graduate school experience, all thanks to Scouting and specifically Exploring. I have been a grateful adult volunteer ever since, and have enjoyed every single minute of my adventure. I raised three children in Scouting and am proud to have an Eagle Scout son and two Silver Award recipients, my daughter and my younger son.

Scouting changed the direction of my life, but more important, it enriched the lives of my family as a child and later as a parent. I will be forever grateful for all the adventures and wouldn't trade them for anything! All three of my children are grown, now, but they are adventurers themselves for which I will be forever grateful.

Joe