

Democratic Scouting – 22nd Memorial Boy Scout Troop

Growing up in a family with five siblings was always somewhat of a democratic learning environment. Although our comandante en jefe had final authority, her closest adviser, co-commander **Dad** was in ultimate charge of disciplinary matters. With a small tribe at the dinner table it was necessary to go round-table for input about the day and schooling. Work detail was pretty much a cooperative effort, dish-washing was worked into night schedules for scouting, swim lessons, etc. Scouts was ironically where I really discovered democracy.

Though quite military in model, Scouting was where I learned how democracy could work. **Martin Reeve** surprised me on my return from permanent banishment by making me a patrol leader; my challenge - reign in the “**Messenger boys**” - six energetic, angry foster kids who would be my entire patrol. I had been an elementary school Traffic Safety Patrol captain, but that was easy compared to what this would turn out to be.

That same night we were all told this would be the largest **Onalistik** (Kitsilano) Camporee ever and the leaders of the 22nd very much wanted to bring home the pennant home from Mamquam, beating out St. Chad's, St. David's, St. Etcetera from our district. It was January and the camp would be in May. “You have four months to prepare, here's the list of skills and activities... break to patrols!”

My bored six were already punching shoulders and chasing around after each other – a mere reflection of my own behaviour.

I never once yelled at these kids one and two years younger than me but my first “command” was “Okay you losers get over here in this corner, 'cuz you have to pick a Secunder who can help lead us to win this Camporee. You know they expect me and us to mess up 'cuz we're all losers don't ya! Lets' just win the stupid thing to piss them off. When you decide, he's to come and get me. I'll be talking to Martin”. Of course they all wanted to be Secunder because they would have power over others the way each of them had run into difficulties as neglected or abused kid.

I went to parade circle centre to thank **Martin** and **David Podmore** (**Barry Holmes** was up North) for letting me come back to Scouts. Mom had convinced him once again. The first two times I was kicked out, he allowed it as a few week banishment. This time it had been permanent. Mom had worked her charms for one last chance. Martin had obviously decided perhaps some authority over my brat peers would be a good lesson.

I told Martin we would bring the pennant home if that was okay. “He smiled through his new braces and said, “Oh I know YOU can do it. How much do they want it is the question?” **Dylan**, (not his real name) arrived, interrupted as typical and announced “I'm the new Secunder, wadda'ya want me to do now?”

“Why don't you take them for a lap around the park across the street”, I suggested, “... and Dylan! bring them all back to our patrol corner alive!”

“Okay! Anything else?” he asked.

I said, “Yah! Help us win this thing! You're in charge of fire skills!” He ran off with an excited smile.

Martin said “Good idea!”

“What?” I asked.

“The not getting killed part”, he said.

As I turned to leave Podmore said, “You know, Dylan's a pyromaniac. He's being treated by a psychologist!”

“Yah!” I said, “He tried to burn down the Herring's garage across from us! Guess it's not working too good”.

The Messenger boys won everything- Ship Shape Campsite, campfire food, knots and lashings, orienteering, and almost every fire skill challenge. Although I had been their Patrol Leader, we had worked out everything together, delegating areas of responsibility by skill and strength. They walked away with that little felt Onalistik Camporee pennant hands down. All of those brats turned out well in the end.

A decade later I met **Dylan** by accident in our back lane. We stood staring at the Herring's old place. He was well dressed and coiffed. “Fuc& I was an angry kid!” he said.

“Ya turned out good though”, I replied, “What ya gonna do with yourself?”

“Dunno! Law maybe.” Dylan said. He turned out to be a Family Court Judge who specializes in troubled youth.

Dylan was a year ahead of sister **Heath's** grad class – she always liked him “He's a good looking boy” she used to say. I believe the pennant Martin passed on to me a few years later is still in the old suite case at 44b Ladner with my old Queen Scout uniform.