

# Troop 480 - 50 years - The Early Years

February 4, 2018

Thank you for inviting me to speak to the Scouts and their families a little about the early years of Troop 480.

Fifty years ago a group of men wanted to start a Boy Scout troop here at St. Paul. I am not sure, but since Clint Rohrbacker worked for the Boy Scouts and was a member of St. Paul parish, I am sure he worked hard to start this troop. During the first nine years there were four Scoutmasters. This meant there was a lot of building and re-building of the scouting program. The troop was struggling to become the troop that it could be. This was a low point in the troop's history. Mr. Rohrbacker was trying to keep the troop alive during the year preceding my moving to Greensburg by acting as Scoutmaster.

During this time I was completing 12 years as Scoutmaster of Troop 155 in my home town of Scottsdale. There I had been Sr. Patrol Leader, Eagle Scout and active in the Order of the Arrow. As a young leader I spent five years as an Assistant Scoutmaster. My family had moved to Greensburg and my mother was teaching here in the grade school at St. Paul. The summer of 1977, I built a new home and was joining St. Paul parish. In August we moved from Scottsdale and came to St. Paul for Mass. As we entered the church we were met with well know St. Paul scouter, Tom Adams. He asked who we were, saying he had not seen us before. I introduced us to him and very quickly he stated "You're the new Scoutmaster". Carole and I just looked at each other. We did not know what he was talking about. It seems my mother had volunteered me. A few days later a committee from the troop called on us explaining the troop really needed an experienced Scoutmaster.

Joe Brecht, Committee Chairman, and I went to work setting up an active scout program. There were only eight active scouts at that time, and two of them were my sons. The troop had very little equipment. Tents and cooking utensils were at a minimum. I was able to have donated to us tents and cooking equipment from another troop who no longer needed them. After 40 years there are still a few of the green boxes here being used. To grow the troop we needed many things. **Leaders, equipment and training.** After a few years John Beck became Committee Chairman and we continued to grow. We had many activities, such as traveling to the Air Force Museum, Pittsburgh Pirates, Mason-Dixon Line camping, Gettysburg, exploring caves and so many other travels.

We felt there had to be an active program. I started and continued to have a campout at least once a month. In the spring we would have an indoor training program for boy leaders. We would hold this at a camp near Camp Conestoga.

I was able to secure this large camp facility for a very low cost. Our program was to develop leadership skills using the outdoors and merit badge programs. We also pushed for attaining religious awards. At that time the troop was largely Catholic. On Scout Sunday our small troop had about as many attending Scout Sunday Mass as you do now, a lot larger troop. During the early years, many of our scouts obtained religious awards.

About four years after I came on board, Chuck Galvin became our latest Committee Chairman. He knew little about how to run a troop, but Chuck quickly became trained, learned how to run a scouting program. I give him a lot of credit for the success of Troop 480. We developed many trained leaders who were willing to work with scouts as they had fun and learned many skills. Dan Skarja was one Assistant Scoutmaster whose energy was contagious. He called the scouts "Johnson's Rangers". One project you all can see is outside the trading post at Camp Conestoga. The Conestoga wagon, that has been there for many years, has a plaque on it. If you check the list of persons who worked on the project to build the wagon, you will see most of them were connected with Troop 480.

During the first ten years there were only four Eagle scouts. This was a time of development, putting in place a program to draw boys to want to be scouts. At that rate the troop would only have had 20/25 Eagle scouts, not the nearly 100 the troop has had to date. Both of my sons, Glenn and Gene, joined me in attaining the rank of Eagle.

Another way to judge the success of our troop is to look at Council leaders. Over the years when I attended District or Council meetings, I looked around the table and would see up to half of those in attendance as persons with a connection to Troop or Pack 480. Over the years I watched to see those Scouts and Scouters who were active leaders in the Order of the Arrow, as also having been involved with our troop. Over the years, Troop 480 has provided leadership to many district and council activities, such as Winter and Spring Camporees, Klondike Derby, First Aid meets, Swimming programs, among them.

Jim Sherin continued to build the troop after I stepped down as Scoutmaster, nearly 17 years between Troop 105 and 480, I was pleased to see our troop having nearly 40 scouts, a troop with an ambitious program, with twenty or more trained leaders. By the time the boys who were in the troop at that time and later graduated from scouting, nearly 20 of them would have attained the rank of Eagle. I believe the present troop leaders have taken our program development and enhanced it to make Troop 480 the fine run troop that it is today.

Troop 480 leadership has continued to this day to provide a quality program. Many scouts have gone on to become great citizens. Continued to use their skills in furthering their education. Some have joined the military and enjoyed great advancement. I am sure their scouting background has played a part in their success.

While the international tragedy that took my daughter's life has consumed much of my time during the nearly past 30 years, I still have great feeling for the Scouting movement, and in particular, Troop 480. Even though I could no longer give the time being Scoutmaster requires, for 40 years I have been proud to have had a small part in the troop celebrating 50 years of continuous scouting here at St. Paul.

I sincerely believe that Troop 480 will continue to be a program that many families will join to develop and grow their children to be the best that they can be.

Thank you,

**Note:** I took over as Scoutmaster in August, 1977. But I was still registered with T-155 in Scottsdale. Never transfer over until January of 1978;