

***HAZARDS TO AVOID WITH "BIG TRIPS"***

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I am submitting herewith a Dissertation written by author name, entitled Hazards to Avoid with "Big Trips". I have examined the final copy of this report for format and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Commissioner Science.

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My former Scouting colleague, Ray Dyke, who showed me that a group of boys with a common purpose could accomplish much more than they or most adults imagined.

All those who made time to share their “Big Trip” experiences.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The anticipation of a “big trip” to any of the BSA High Adventure camps and bases is almost boundless. Such a trip can serve as a venue for galvanizing a crew into a team that epitomizes the goals of Scouting for all. However, the intensity of the experience can result in various problems after the trip that can threaten the future of the unit if the leaders are unaware and unprepared to deal with them before they happen.

## HAZARDS TO AVOID WITH “BIG TRIPS”

Nothing conjures up dreams in a young scouts' mind like the thought of far away places filled with fun and adventure. Couple that with the prospect of experiencing it all with a group of good friends and you have the makings of a “big trip”. But the excitement and enthusiasm of a big trip can occasionally be replaced with unexciting developments if leaders are caught unaware. By looking at the evolution of a big trip and then compiling and analyzing examples from actual trips, it is hoped potential pitfalls for high adventure scouting can be avoided.



Philmont crew with the Tooth of Time in the background.

*Let's go!*

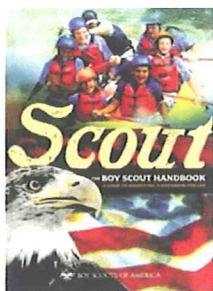
## THE START

### So how does the concept of a high adventure trip begin?

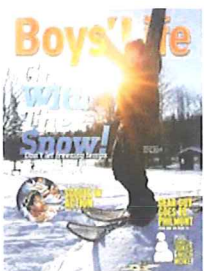
Let's start with the *dream*.

The scouts' dream often begins with a scoutmaster's dream. A scoutmaster may have a high adventure bent from the beginning of service but it may also grow from seeing great potential in the scouts and the scouts' families. This could be based on the interest of the scouts and the willingness of their families to make opportunities happen.

Interest from the scout is not normally too hard to generate.



The Boy Scout Handbook has a lot of factual information in it, but it also has a lot to fire up a scout's imagination. The pervasive theme of outdoor oriented skills and knowledge prompts young minds to wonder what it would be like to actually use those skills and apply that knowledge.



The same is true for Boys Life Magazine. Pages displaying full color pictures showing scouts rushing down a raging river of rapids or topping a peak with oversized backpacks and nature's finest tapestry as a backdrop have stirred the fancy of innumerable scouts.

Moving one step higher, promotional videos are readily available from several sources to show scouts in action in a sail boat or on a rifle/archery range.

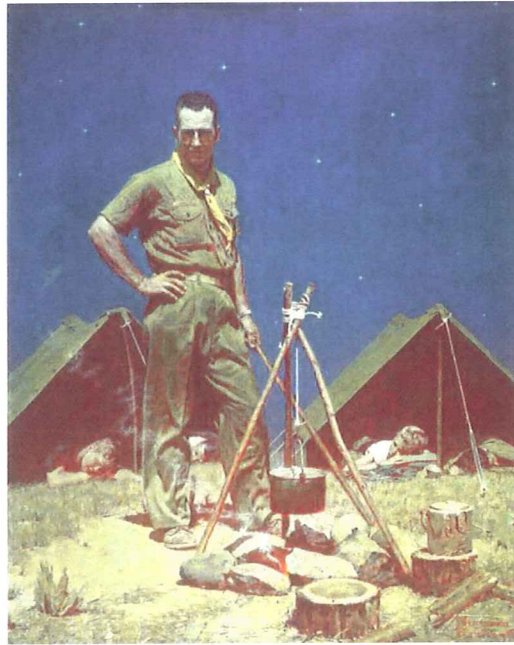


And lastly, but certainly not least, are the camping trips that units take in their local areas. Camping trips are wonderful opportunities to allow a scout to get away from routine and challenge the scouts' self-reliance. And when these situations happen, they are frequently accompanied by an increased level of introspection or inward thought. (This may be a product of no television or computers!) But the realization that the scout can put enough gear, food and shelter on his/her back and free themselves from the constraints of urban living for at least a couple of days conjures up thoughts about doing the same thing for a longer time and in a more adventurous places. It is a natural segue to a high adventure experience.

So, don't worry about interest from the scouts. That's the easy part.



## What about the dream of the Unit Leader?



Why would an adult leader (Scoutmaster, Crew Leader, etc) want to take on the formidable task of a high adventure trip? -A task that will require countless hours of planning and preparation. -A task that will require great patience and tolerance. -A task that will require a great deal of money. It could be that memories from the leader's own scouting experience are strong enough that he wants to relive them again. This is what is meant by living vicariously through others. A more likely reason is that the leader has an empathetic attitude and wants to do this for his scouts so they can generate their own memories. The leader who draws from his/her own memories may also remember the leader who had to take on such a task for them when they were scouts to give them the opportunity to form their memories.

Another possible motivation for the adult leader is that they missed the opportunity for high adventure as a scout. Less than 2% of scouts experience a high adventure camp. So most adult leaders are very likely to have no high adventure experience. This means that some adult leaders have been holding their boyhood dreams in their hearts and minds for decades! Getting to do what they could only dream about as youth can be a strong influence on a leader's willingness to make substantial investments of time and energy for scouts to finally realize a dream for all.

But regardless of where the leaders' motivation comes from, the high adventure trip is a strong attraction on all levels.

## SELLING THE IDEA

### Let the talk begin!

The importance of the scout families cannot be overstated. In fact, scout families may supply another reason for a scoutmaster to plan a big trip. The thought of such a large undertaking might remain just a thought until a scout parent(s) brings it up. Armed with “help”, the unit leader is more likely to pursue the possibility. Unless the leader is Superman, all of us need help with a task like this. The solid support of scout families is priceless. After all, you are proposing to travel to that far away place with their children and risk life and limb get through that foaming rapid or dodge that eye level thunderstorm from the height of Urraca Mesa. *You better have the backing of the parents!*

Moving past the dream stage brings about the progression to discussions. At this point, the ideas and opinions of many come into play. This can be a challenging time, since



some, if not all, may not share the same conviction of the scoutmaster/post advisor for a big trip or the same thoughts about a trip plan. So the original ideas that made up a dream may be subject to a lot of criticism or affirmation.

The general concept of a big trip should be discreetly presented to a few “key” people to test the waters. Presenting to a larger meeting is dangerous simply because of group dynamics. If you are dealing with families who are not accustomed to anything other than simple local scouting, it is almost guaranteed that someone will raise the issue that a lot

of time, effort and money could be saved if you just went to the local council camp for a week. Others will say “great” and propose chartering a plane for a trip overseas! Every item will be up for discussion and debate and egos can be easily bruised.

Once you feel that the few people you have talked are on board, you should plan a presentation to the families as a group. The preparation for this event is your trip plan. Not all the details, but certainly the ultimate objective. If your scouts are in North Carolina and your proposal is to go to Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico, you should prepare a cursory plan for transportation, meals, lodging possibilities, and a rough estimate of cost. Fund raising will always be a topic as well. Rattling off such a list in a matter-of-fact manner doesn't begin to approach what is likely to happen with most parent groups. In fact, if you are not peppered with questions, you should probably get worried about the overall support for the trip. Too many parents will politely listen while forming their opinions in silence. While they may never speak up in a meeting, as soon as the parents are alone with their scout at home, they may be very vocal that the scout should not get excited about such an ambitious and expensive venture. That is why you should welcome an onslaught of questions. Questions usually mean interest. Silence often means disagreement.

## The Parents' Patrol



In a best case scenario, the parents are so cranked up about the trip that they organize themselves into a committee and parcel out all the tasks that have to be investigated, discussed, decided, and booked. A more realistic scenario is that the scoutmaster will have to get them organized and show them what needs to be done. Doing this is worth the time and effort. The scoutmaster needs to keep involved in all the arrangements, but more so from an over-seeing position rather than a micro-managing position. But delegating to a capable parent group relieves much of the load from the scoutmaster and promotes continued support from the involved parents.



Be acutely aware of conflicts that may undermine the positive attitude required for a big trip to be successful. Dissention among the parent group can come from resentment of those who assume control, jealousy over who gets to do what, bruised egos if someone doesn't get their way, i.e., *just like Scouts!*

But if you have progressed to this stage, one more step and you can put the plan on the downhill run to realization. That next step is trip staffing. Who is actually going on the trip with the scouts?

### **Staffing the big trip**

Who will make the trip as adult staff is a big deal. It also depends on several factors. So, don't take this decision lightly. It can be a critical choice that can affect the success of the trip positively or negatively.

It is naturally assumed that the scoutmaster/crew leader who is fueling the fire for the trip will go on the trip. Indeed, that is the case in the vast majority of high adventure trips. But not always.

Some leaders take great satisfaction from planning and arranging big trips but have no intention or capability of being a trip participant. Incapacitating medical conditions or merely advanced age can take some fine scouters out of the mix. But what a testimony to the attraction of a high adventure trip and the compassionate heart of leaders who will invest the time, effort and money to make such a trip happen for others, but not themselves. More than a few have done this at Philmont Scout Ranch. Crews will arrive at Philmont and complete a full itinerary while the scoutmaster/crew advisor spends a week or more at Villa Philmonte. More about the Philmont Scout Ranch later. But the point is that trip planners are not always trek participants.

Let's assume that the trip planner is indeed a trek participant. BSA policy requires "two deep" leadership for all activities and certainly for national tour type activities. So right there is the first numerical dictate. The scoutmaster/crew advisor MUST have at least one other adult on the trip and that adult must be Youth Protection trained. Thinking along the lines of policy and legalities, if you have to have two adults and one of your adults get sick or hurt on the trek and has to leave the trail, you no longer conform to policy. So do you need three adults to have one backup? Something to think about.

## ASSEMBLING THE CREW

### Who Gets To Go?

Setting criteria such as rank and/or age requirements for scout participation in a high adventure trip is usually desirable from several standpoints. Sometimes it is not an issue at all depending on the nature of the unit. But let's first look at why a criterion is desirable.

- 1) It says that the trip will require an investment from the scouts to meet standards.
- 2) It can head off "joiners" who want to make the trip, but have no interest in the unit.
- 3) It prevents false hopes of scouts who do not qualify by age.
- 4) It can motivate scouts to attain rank.

The four items above will be revisited later since some of them lead directly into the hazards to be cautious about when a big trip happens. For now, take them at face value.

Attaching the nomenclature of "high adventure" to any activity seems to imply that the more accomplished scouts and older scouts would be the target group for the trip. Not too many tenderfoot scouts are suited for high adventure activity because of their young age and minimal scouting experience. Generally, criterion for big trips falls along the lines of First Class rank and fourteen years of age. Current Philmont Scout Ranch and Northern Tier Canoe Base guidelines require scouts to be 14 years of age or completion of the eighth grade and be 13 years old. Less lengthy and physically taxing activities allow scouts as young as 11 years old.



The comment above about the age/rank not always being an issue stems from a unit that is a venture crew or explorer post. These units are comprised of scouts that are at least 13 years of age. Age/rank criteria for a big trip with a Venture Crew would likely be limited to rank requirements.

However the scoutmaster/crew advisor delineates the trip eligibility regulations, the result will identify the likely trekkers. Along with the trekkers will be parents that will make up your parent patrol.

So now the ball is rolling. You have “sold” the trip to the parents, established the participant criteria, and pretty well determined who will make up the crew. Things will begin to happen simultaneously now.

## **ITENERARY AND TRIP PLANNING**

### **Efficiency versus Group Involvement**

At this point, the scoutmaster/crew advisor makes a decision. The efficient way to plan the trip is for the adult leader to grab the bull by the horns and get it done. But an opportunity exists here to do some serious character building with the scouts.

The adult leader stages several work nights where trip scouts are assigned various research tasks involving finding information on every trip stop expected. If the trip will be driving over land, stops will be numerous. Trips by train are limited in stops. Flying will normally involve airport layovers only. But at the very least, the destination site must be thoroughly researched to evaluate itinerary choices. Letting the scouts do this provides an exercise that gets them believing in their ownership of the trip rather than just tagging along on a neat expedition planned and led by adults. Granted, this requires considerable advanced planning, but the dividends are considerable.

This same process can be applied to issues about transportation, cost research, route planning, gear requirements, and training schedules. Getting scouts involved like this quickly molds the group into a cohesive unit with a clearly defined purpose. Yes it does require extra effort for the adults since you must allow the scouts to “flesh out” a lot of questions that you could easily decipher, but consider how this could alter behavior during the trip when long stretches of driving are planned by the scouts – not the adults.

## PREPARATION AND TRAINING

A big trip with a crew composed of members from a single unit offers the easiest way to prepare and train. The unit activity schedule is geared towards events providing training that will be useful on the trip. If the crew is made up of scouts from various units, preparation and training gets a little more complicated, but doable.

Whatever the nature of the crew may be, preparation and training before the departure gives the crew the best opportunity to participate in the activities unique to the destination site rather than learning skills that decrease time for fun and adventure. Scouts would rather paddle to a new campsite rather than learning the “J” stroke. They prefer boulder climbing rather than learning how to pitch a tent.

Certainly, activities will be tailored to the kind of trip planned. If the expedition is Philmont Scout Ranch, backpacking and camping is the emphasis. Northern Tier Canoe Base needs well prepared canoe paddlers. Sea Base in Florida is a sailor’s paradise.

Plan prep events to progress from simple agendas with maximum teaching to difficult agendas with maximum application of learned skills. Make the final prep event more difficult than anything at the destination site. If any of the scouts harbor doubts about their ability to complete the proposed itinerary of the trip, a difficult final prep event gives the leader an opportunity to tell all the scouts that they have done more than

anything to be encountered on the upcoming expedition. Hence, no scout who completes the preparation should hesitate to make the trip.

Preparation and training not only provides skills, it also gives opportunities to mesh the group. Most big trips last at least a week. There will be plenty of irritations in that time, but hopefully pre-trip prep and training will weed out any significant group conflicts and give scouts and leaders a chance to smooth them out before a nasty incident ruins a long awaited expedition.

There are simply too many upsides to thorough preparation and training to let this facet of a big trip slide.

### **Tasks and Details**

So far, a lot of foundation has been laid like the dream that began it all, the sensitive groundwork that was necessary to get the parents on board, the preparation and training schedule. Among all this, numerous other items need attention.

#### Transportation.

How are you going to get to your destination? Drive, ride (bus or train), or fly?

Whatever mode is chosen, reservations and arrangements must be made and periodically confirmed to be certain that all is well. After all, no transportation – no trip. This is important.

### Sleeping.

If travel will take more than one day, overnight facilities must be booked. Driving normally means the most nights on the road. Options for overnight accommodations are multiple and may be dictated by budget. We all know what is available if money is no object. So let's talk about some thrifty options to consider.

Scout camps – these can be very good options for low cost as well as friendly environs. Staffs at scout camps are normally glad to have a touring group and know what the group needs for an overnight stay.

Military bases – these can be a real treat for the scouts. The group is usually billeted in one of the base facilities and mess hall privileges granted for a very nominal fee.

Public group campgrounds – campgrounds associated or adjacent to amusement parks provide a built-in activity if the scouts can use the park.

### Eating.

Meals can be a major hassle and a major expense. The best option for quantity and cost is the military bases. Availability is spotty and must be reserved well in advance. Great when you can get it. (I'm Army, but the Air Force eats the best)

### Entertainment

It is the wise crew advisor who plans for something to prevent “idle hands”. Do the research to find out what campgrounds have an evening movie, etc. Something that they can get rowdy and loud is best if the scouts have been riding all day. Even a pick-up game of touch football or soccer can run off the restless legs, but you have to remember to pack the ball.

### Fund Raising

The last elephant in the room is fund raising. Like prep and training, you must start early and have a plan. This is an area where parents can be a huge help. If you can find a parent who is reliable, persistent and highly organized, make them the expedition fund raising chairman. The possible functions to raise money are endless and will vary from location to location depending on what plays to the local community. But the cost of most high adventure expeditions can be prohibitively expensive and may be the root for reluctance of scouts to sign up for the trip. Taking care of this task early by drafting a good plan and delegating it to a good parent removes a major headache from the trip leader.

Once fund raiser events are identified, get them on a calendar. Obviously, the dates will not be the same dates as your prep activities since it is likely that scouts and leaders will be needed at the fundraiser. Do everything you can to make this an enjoyable event for all so staffing the next one will be easier.

It goes without saying that accounting for all funds is essential. Parents may not know enough about scouting to question anything, but they can quickly see when the books don't match up with the bucks. Be forever thankful if you have an accountant in your ranks.

### **Let's Go!**

If you have gotten this far with everything accomplished, about the only thing left to do is

**GO!**



This is an exciting time when all the planning and preparation is done and the trip is at hand. It is normal to meet at some common location to gather the group and launch the trip. Unless you leave in the middle of the night, expect the scouts to be something akin to hyperactive. Most parents will who aren't going may be as well. If the parents are playing 20 questions with the scouts about whether they packed this or that, scout irritation levels can get pretty high in short order. So try to engage the parents in conversation to deflect their attention while the scouts get their gear loaded.

But once all the gear is packed, all the goodbyes are spoken and all the "home" stuff is moved aside in favor of what is to come, you're on the road!

## POST-TRIP PITFALLS

### Then?

Now we fast-forward to after the trip. Maybe months after the trip. But perhaps not so far forward that memories have faded much. It was a great trip. The group only had a few instances of conflict. All the things that scouts fretted about leaving behind proved to be minor irritations. The hitch in the transportation schedule became a much-repeated part of the trip lore. The more time that passes, the memories are only the good ones about spectacular scenery, group camaraderie, food (good or bad), and how high that peak was or how long the portage was, and how ferocious that skunk was. For the trip leader(s), it is also a time to assess the results.

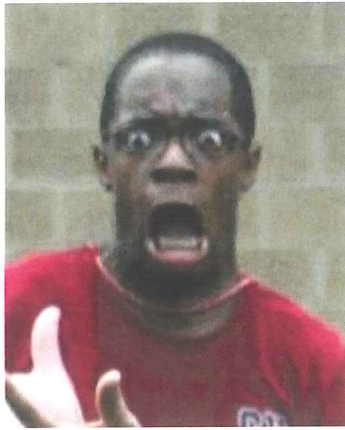
The writer is firmly convinced that the results of big trips are overwhelmingly positive. The upside comes largely from the trip itself, but a large portion comes from the preparation where skills are honed and group dynamics are revealed. The totality of the entire event provides a stage that is seldom seen otherwise.

But part of objective review assessment is examining what did not go well or how something can be improved. For the grizzled veteran of multiple big trips, this entire rant is likely worthless. The methodology of the master big trip leader is time tested and deeply rooted in success. This is written in an effort to aid the first timer with some sage wisdom about hazards that may not be realized until long after the trip is over.



Hang on for what comes next! In fact, let's just *whisper*.

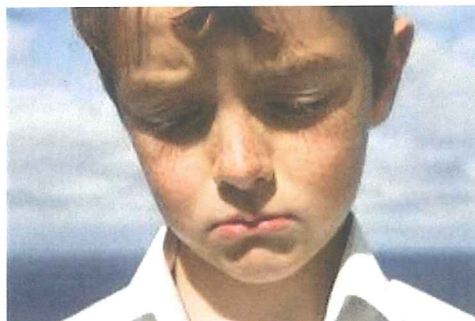
"Big trips have destroyed some units!"



Do you hear some of those grizzled veterans harrumphing in disgust? Perhaps. But there might be a few who are knowingly nodding their heads in agreement. Let's take a look at some actual results of some not-so-pleasant after-effects from big trips.

## Case Study 1

### The scouts that can't make the trip



A very strong and well established troop in east Tennessee was a regular “big trip” program. They did not go every year, but often enough that the scoutmaster could tell Tenderfoot scouts that they could look forward to the opportunity of taking a “big trip” at least once if they stayed in the troop for five years. The nature of the troop was truly a community troop drawing from the immediate surrounding neighborhood from the church that sponsored the troop. Further, the scoutmaster was a long time scouter and ultimately qualified to provide a scouting experience of the first order to all scouts who were willing to be a part. He was an Eagle Scout, Vigil Honor member of the Order of the Arrow and active on numerous committees on the district and council level. Given these qualifications and more that have not been listed, it is readily conceivable that his influence within the program was far-reaching and seldom challenged. But one thing about his commanding presence was when a big trip was in the offing, he could not be two places at one time! Consequently, he struggled with the dilemma of how to keep his younger scouts, who did not qualify for the big trip, active and interested while he prepared, trained and accompanied the older scouts who were making the trip.

The obvious answer is to delegate the bulk of the program responsibility to a worthy assistant who could sustain the troop in the absence of the scoutmaster.

Unfortunately, the scoutmaster's heavy involvement with every aspect of the program could not be adequately filled by any of the assistant scoutmasters, even though they tried their best. It is not unlike a longtime, highly successful football coach who must take a leave of absence. A high ranking assistant coach is typically named as an interim coach. But seldom does the team perform at the same level as it did with the head coach at the helm.

One advantage that may be realized is that most big trips are in the summer. Many troops have an abbreviated program schedule in the summer anyway. The major activity of many scout summers is summer camp. Maybe you just need a well staffed adult crew for a week at camp. This was the solution for our "super SM" above on more than one occasion. On other occasions, he simply re-doubled his efforts and did it all himself. Few of us can do that.

Crews and Posts rarely face this problem. By definition, these groups consist of older scouts. The younger contingent is not present.

So, if you are a scoutmaster contemplating a big trip for your troop, invest some serious thought to how you can provide the leadership and preparation for the trippers while not shorting the younger scouts who may feel left out if they see their activities abbreviated or eliminated in favor of the older guys.

## Case Study 2

### Joiners



The big trip or high adventure expedition can be a powerful magnet to a lot of scout age folks. For those who are part of the troop/crew/post, the planning and preparation can become a major part of their conversation with their friends outside of scouts.

Some may want to join because of the prospects of a trip. Having others join in such a manner may not be readily recognizable. After all, it is not likely that fourteen or fifteen year old youth will admit to you that he/she joined for no other reason than the trip. It is also conceivable that the scouts may be in favor of allowing one of their good friends to come along. You can probably guess what the outcome of this scenario is after the trip. Let's take a look at an actual occurrence.



What an exciting thing to look forward to: A trip to the Northern Tier Canoe Base for a small troop from Evansville, Indiana. One

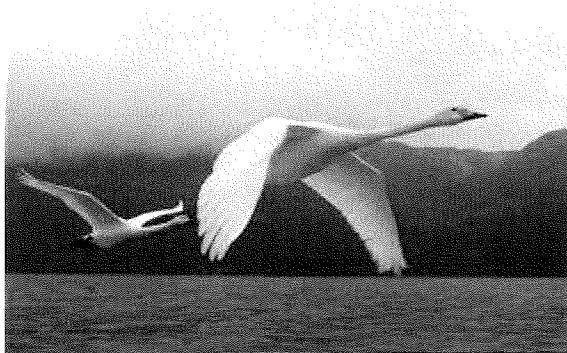
advantage Northern Tier has over some other high adventure camps is it has appropriate itineraries for younger scouts. So this small troop from Evansville could take all ten of its scouts on this trip. But one was a scout from another troop and two others joined the troop only a couple of months before the trip. (2 months before...hmmm...prep time). The trip happened, but upon returning to Evansville, two of the group disappeared from the troop never to be seen again. Want to guess which two they were?

Fortunately, these disappearances did not destroy the troop. But the scenario presents another cautionary point for novice trip leaders. Formulate a policy in your mind, if not in writing, about whether you will allow “Johnny-come-lately” folks to become part of the trip. There is not a clear cut right or wrong here. If you and your group are OK with the additions, great! Just be aware that those who join just before a trip likely won’t be around after the trip. Depending on how far out from the trip you allow joiners, it may complicate the group chemistry that the “seasoned” scouts have developed in your troop. On the other hand, many “provisional” crews have made many trips with little or no opportunity to train together in advance.

By the way, five out of the remaining scouts from our boys from Evansville made Eagle. And one of the younger guys just made Star and is tracking towards Eagle. Not bad, huh?

### Case study 3

#### Swan Songs



Back to east Tennessee for a look at a slightly different result of a big trip. And this one is really hard to counter.

Our subject troop from north Knoxville was blessed with an abundance of interested and very capable adult leaders. A trip to Northern Tier Canoe Base began as a troop activity, but morphed into a co-ed crew as the plans and fund raising progressed. This organization really had its act together. Leaders were experienced scouters, a strong parental contingent supplied adult female leadership to accommodate the female crew members, successful fund raising made the trip available to most scouts who truly wanted to make the trip and a “can do” attitude prevailed.

The unintentional marketing of the trip produced a group of approximately sixteen scouts and seven adults. How’s that for keeping two-deep leadership? The number exceeded the allowable crew size at Northern Tier so three different crews were formed.

Great group, great destination, great experience but shortly after the return, the crew shrank to one female and a couple of males from the trip crew. So what happened? Some of the attrition were likely “joiners” as discussed in the previous case study, but some were not. For some, the high adventure trip likely represented their last hurrah. The culmination of their scout tenure. It is important to understand that the planning, preparation and the trip itself is normally a very intense experience. Having done the high adventure trip, a lot of things will pale in comparison. Know that the attrition was not just scouts – it was also the adult leadership. More about that to follow. The reason this circumstance is hard to counter is that it largely speaks to the attitude of the individual. It is not uncommon for teenage scouts to be heavily focused on themselves. As they transition from child to adult, new experiences bombard them at every turn. Their drive to see what is behind door number 3 keeps them using tunnel vision for short bursts, then seeking another focus that is a new challenge. That is why so many of our member scouts fall prey to the “fumes” – gasoline and perfume. Powerful stuff.

That makes the three or four crew members who remained from the crew above an interesting contingent. What is their motivation to remain? Are their parents some of the leaders in the Crew/troop? Maybe. But maybe they are teenagers that see beyond the immediacy of their current situation and gain satisfaction from being an integral part of a troop/crew that will exist well past the end of a big trip. Maybe they truly are thinking of other scouts who will follow them that need the example of an older youth to show them that scouting is worth their time and effort. While this crew effectively

shut down from the attrition that followed the big trip, the strength of the troop was not impacted and probably gained some youth leaders that could share a great experience from Northern Tier.



## Case study 4

### Burn out



Another aspect that is real and common is burn out. This affliction can include both scouts and adults. There are some measures to take to either avoid or cure the disease. But sometimes they just don't work.

A young but experienced scouter from Shooks Gap, Tennessee had only dreamed of a high adventure trip. (Remember the dream mentioned at the start of this treatise?) As an assistant scoutmaster for a troop that had made several trips to Philmont Scout Ranch, the ASM had never done more than long weekend backpacking trips and summer camp. But opportunity came knocking when the ASM became a scoutmaster of a different troop and began laying the groundwork for a big trip. The merger of two troops produced multi-level adult leadership and a troop of more than fifty scouts. From that population, an Explorer Post was chartered with the singular purpose of forming a Philmont crew. And it happened.

By and large, all the steps presented in this document were performed. The idea was hatched and floated to key parents. Group presentations were done to inform the scouts as well as their parents. Fund raising committees were formed and went to work. Training hikes were scheduled and gear inspections became routine to make sure everyone had what they and the group needed. Transportation was fleshed out and arranged. Itineraries were studied and analyzed. An elaborate phone blitz was organized to insure a reservation at Philmont. All this and more happened over the course of almost a year.

The training and preparation was so complete that the crew had the maximum opportunity to take full advantage of programming at Philmont without using precious time at Philmont for training. This made the Philmont ranger more than happy because he got to enjoy this group from Tennessee as a guide, not a trainer or teacher. The entire trip went remarkably well based on the positive feedback from scouts and their parents in post-trip reviews.

Shortly after returning, the post dissolved.

Some of the crew simply aged out. Others had activities that edged out scouting. But the biggest factor was leader burn out.

As well organized and prepared as this crew was, and despite the great experience of the trip itself, a glaring weakness was not apparent until years after the trip's end. The

post and crew advisor was the singular adult for the group. A second adult was on the trip, but was only peripherally involved in the trip administration. This fell almost entirely on the crew advisor. So for almost a year, the crew advisor shifted his free time away from everything but the expedition. It was the dominant factor for all his efforts. The organizational facet was enjoyable. The training and preparation hikes provided group chemistry that was palpable. The parents were nothing short of remarkable in their support and service. But after the trip was over, the crew advisor was spent!

The crew advisor had a deep sense of accomplishment and pride from the performance of the crew. But the burden of sustaining the group would take energy that the advisor no longer possessed. A break was imperative! The break was the end of the post. When the crew advisor stepped away to recoup, the program had no leader. A unit was lost. The people on the trip have life-long memories that are good, but the program did not survive beyond the trip. The question to be asked and answered here is "How can we avoid killing a unit because of burn out by the leadership after a big trip?"

The problem is that no back up leadership was in place. Too much was focused on the crew leader. No plans were made for a post-trip program.

So if you have any group that is organized and run by one individual, watch out! Even a mild case of burn out can destroy the group from lack of leadership. Make

every effort to have multiple leaders that are trained and dedicated. Share the burden.

And have a program plan in place for post-trip activity *before* the big trip is taken.

## **In Conclusion**

Much of the material presented above draws on the writers' personal experience. The case studies from others represent confirmation that the writer's experience is not unique. The reader is cautioned again not to think that this treatise is intended to discourage high adventure expeditions, but simply to make novice trip leaders aware of some of the hazards to anticipate and/or avoid.

The BSA sponsored high adventure camps (Philmont Scout Ranch, Northern Tier Canoe Base, and Florida Sea Base) offer a scout experiences that can be life changing for some and life-long memory makers for all. The challenges are physical and mental. But all of them are purposed to build up the character of the scout in a way that is beneficial to the individual and the group in the short term. And to our society in the long term.

The big trip provides a stage to inspire the scout without the distraction of electronic or mechanical devices or the confines of everyday routine. Big trips are merely concentrated applications of what the essence of scouting is overall. A self-centered scout on a high adventure expedition soon learns that no man is an island. The team takes precedent over self. Sacrifice for others means benefit to all. Don't we strive to instill that in our packs/troops/crews all the time? Put a group of scouts under the stress of a big trip and see the worth of every one of them blossom like the flowers of the high plateau of Urraca Mesa or along the Michigan shore of Northern Tier. So...

*DREAM!*



**REFERENCES**

Boy Scout Handbook, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition

Boys Life Magazine, Winter 2013

Philmont Scout Ranch web page

Northern Tier High Adventure Camp web page

Florida Sea Base High Adventure Camp web page

Pete Olson, Scoutmaster & Crew Advisor, Evansville, IN

Terry Lee, Assistant Scoutmaster & Crew Advisor, Knoxville, TN

Ray Dyke, Scoutmaster & Crew Advisor, Knoxville, TN (Deceased)

## APPENDIX A

### PHILMONT SCOUT RANCH



Born in 1938 as Philturn Rockymountain Scoutcamp, today's Philmont Scout Ranch is a bustling center for high adventure and training. Youth and adults take advantage of the Ranch's [camping](#), [training](#) and [work](#) programs. Most activity takes place during the summer, but Philmont also offers [Autumn Adventure](#) and [Winter Adventure](#) programs.

More than 950,000 Scouts, Venturers, and leaders have experienced the adventure of Philmont since the first camping season in 1939. Throughout its existence, conscientious attention to low-impact camping techniques has helped maintain the Ranch's wilderness.

The area surrounding the Ranch is rich with history, from the Native Americans who made this arid land their home to the land barons of the 19th century. The town of Cimarron boasts a number of historical buildings, including the St. James Hotel: the site of at least 26 killings during Cimarron's wilder days.

Philmont Scout Ranch is the Boy Scouts of America's largest national High Adventure Base. Its 34 staffed camps and 55 trail camps provide an unforgettable adventure in the high country along hundreds of miles of rugged, rocky trails.

Over the course of many years, Philmont has been a famous stop on the Santa Fe Trail, the home of Jicarilla Apache and Moache Ute Indians, a prospecting community and a working cattle ranch.

For information about hiking trek programs offered at Philmont Scout Ranch.

**Address:** Philmont Scout Ranch  
Attn: CHQ  
17 Deer Run Road  
Cimarron, NM 87714

**Phone:** (575) 376-2281

**Fax:** (575) 376-2636

**Email:** [camping@philmontscoutranch.org](mailto:camping@philmontscoutranch.org)



## APPENDIX B

### NORTHERN TIER



Northern Tier is the Boy Scouts of America's gateway to adventure in the Great Northwoods. In the Summer, scouts from Northern Tier's three wilderness canoe bases explore millions of acres of pristine lakes, meandering rivers, dense forests and wetlands in Northern Minnesota, Northwest Ontario and Northeast Manitoba. In the winter, Northern Tier is home to the Okpik Cold-Weather Camping program, the BSA's premier winter high adventure program. Fall programming is also available.

Whatever your plans, Northern Tier staff will outfit your crew with state-of-the-art camping equipment as well as a highly trained staff member called an "Interpreter."

Northern Tier is the BSA's oldest national High Adventure program, outfitting scouting groups for canoe trips since the summer of 1923. The Charles L Sommers Base has been home to the program since 1941.

North America's Canoe Country, a vast series of navigable lakes and rivers spanning thousands of square miles, is one of the last great wildernesses on the continent. This boreal forest of waterfalls and bogs, bears and wolves, granite crags and waist-deep mud remains nearly as much of a wilderness as it was for the first fur traders who explored the area in the 1600s. Two centuries after the fur trade's peak in the early 1800s, our participants still follow in the footsteps of the French-Canadian voyageurs, paddling the same waters and straining over the same portage trails.

If you have any questions, please call 218.365.4811 or send an email to [info@ntier.org](mailto:info@ntier.org).

## APPENDIX C

### FLORIDA SEA BASE



The Sea Base began in the early 1970's as a local program in the Florida Keys called the Florida Gateway to High Adventure under the guidance of Sam Wampler, a professional Scouter from the South Florida Council. It offered primarily sailing programs using local marinas and chartered boats sailing to the Bahamas and back. As the idea caught on and grew, it joined the high adventure offerings of the National Council of the BSA along with Philmont Scout Ranch and the Northern Tier High Adventure Base. In 1979 the Sea Base acquired a permanent facility on Lower Matecumbe Key and when this opened for Scouts in 1980 it was renamed the Florida National High Adventure Sea Base. As the popularity of this program grew, scuba diving was added and in 1984 the BSA received the gift of Big Munson Island from Homer Formsby. This undeveloped island offered tremendous program potential as an outpost for primitive camping, Robinson Crusoe style. During this time period the sailing program concentrated on sailing around the fabulous Florida Keys. New sailing programs were started that originated and ended in Marsh Harbour in the beautiful Abaco Islands of the Bahamas.

Sea Base now operates eleven different adventures out of three different locations: two in the Florida Keys, and one in Marsh Harbour, Bahamas. The adventures Coral Reef Sailing, Sea Exploring Adventure, Eco-Adventure, Scuba Adventure, Scuba Certification, and Live Aboard Scuba Adventure operate in the Florida Keys at Mile Marker 73.8 at Sea Base on Lower Matecumbe Key located 75 miles south of Miami (Lower Matecumbe Key - [MAP](#)). Out Island Adventure, Keys Adventure and Florida Fishing programs operate in the Florida Keys on Summerland Key at Mile Marker 23.8 at the Brinton Environmental Center located 125 miles south of Miami (Summerland Key - [MAP](#)). (Key West, the southernmost point in the Keys, Florida and the continental United States, is located at Mile Marker zero.) Bahamas Adventure and Bahamas Tall Ship Adventures operate out of the Bahamas Sea Base in Marsh Harbour, Abaco, Bahamas, located about 100 miles east of Fort Lauderdale.

Scouting's most complete aquatic facility offers a complete variety of water activities from scuba diving to sailing "Tall Ships". All of our participants have the opportunity to swim, snorkel, and fish among the most beautiful coral reefs in the northern hemisphere. In 2010, in conjunction with the Centennial Celebration of the Boy Scouts of America, the Florida Sea Base will celebrate 30 years of providing Scouts and Scouters from across America ocean adventures that make a lifetime difference.