

GIVING THANKS EDITION

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From *The Boy Scout Yearbook, 1929*

The Thanksgiving holidays are a time to be grateful for all we have, and to think about how we can give back to our families, communities, and the world around us. The BSA emphasizes that commitment in the Scout Oath promise *to help other people at all times* and by encouraging every member to *Do a Good Turn Daily*.

HELPING LITTLE OLD LADIES CROSS STREETS

Often with gentle humor, Scouts have long been known for the Good Turn of "helping a little old lady cross the street."

It's a bit of lore sparked by Robert Baden-Powell. In a letter sent to a young English Scout, the founder of the Scouting movement advised the boy to do at least one good deed each day.

"It does not matter how small the 'good turn' may be," Baden-Powell explained, "even if it is only to help an old woman across the street.... The great thing is to do something."

A sketch in the first edition of the Boy Scout Handbook showed a Scout performing that very act of kindness.



The 1911 Handbook did not limit helpfulness to assisting traffic-challenged elderly females. "The good turn may not be a very big thing," the book explained, then listed representative good turns this way:

"Help an old lady across the street; remove a banana skin from the pavement so that people may not fall; remove from streets or roads broken glass, dangerous to automobile or bicycle tires; give water to a thirsty horse; or deeds similar to these."

Another drawing in that manual showed a Scout assisting an elderly man.



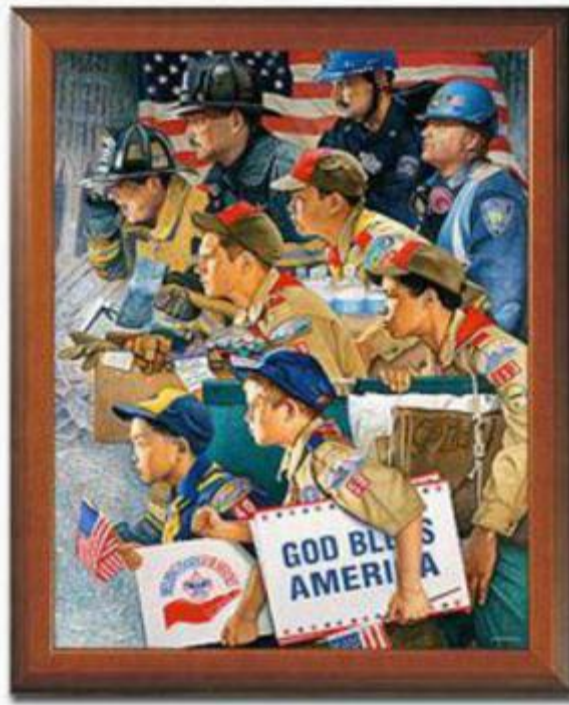
Seven years later, Norman Rockwell put brush to canvas to depict a similar scene in a painting titled *The Good Turn*. It was one of his first depictions of Scouting values.



Through the decades, BSA literature has continued to show examples of Good Turns. Early Handbooks showed Scouts enacting good turns ranging from being polite to protecting others from danger.



In 2002, soon after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, Artist Joseph Csatari brought a serious note to Scouting's daily ritual with his painting *We Are Prepared To Do A Good Turn*. It featured Scouts joining other Americans ready to help out in any way they could.



Many Scouts through the years have carried Good Turn coins in their left pockets. Etched on the back is this message:

**SECRETLY TRANSFER ME TO YOUR RIGHT POCKET EACH DAY
AFTER YOUR GOOD TURN HAS BEEN DONE**



Good Turn Coin

(Good Turn Coins and framed prints of many Scout paintings by Norman Rockwell and Joseph Csatsari are available from www.scoutstuff.org)

And the little old lady crossing the street? She became the heroine of a joke that has appeared in a thousand campfire skits and in the pages of *Boys' Lifemagazine's* "Think n' Grin":

Scoutmaster: "Why aren't you boys on time for the meeting?"
Scouts: "We were helping an old lady cross the street, sir."
Scoutmaster: "But why did that make you late?"
Scouts: "Because she didn't want to go!"

GIVING THANKS BY GIVING BACK

The impact of Good Turns is multiplied many times over by the united efforts of Cub Scout packs, Boy Scout troops, and Venturing posts. Great examples are the annual Scouting for Food Good Turns that deliver millions of cans of food to organizations providing groceries for less fortunate Americans.



Good Turns help care for the environment, too, with recycling and conservation projects that have lasting impact on the quality of the land.



Scouts of all ages can pitch in to do their part

A hallmark of the Good Turn is that a Scout does it with no expectation of anything in return. Even so, certain Good Turns through the years have been acknowledged with emblems of their own. Among them are these:



A partnership between the BSA and service groups led to many community Good Turns.



Scouts can work alongside conservation organizations and agencies to protect the Earth.

SIGNS OF SERVICE

Those who have been members of the Boy Scouts of America for more than twelve months can wear service pins showing how many years they've held membership. The pin is a metal star embossed with the number of years.



In Scouting's early days, tenure was indicated with narrow bands of cloth sewn above the uniform's right cuff. A green bar stood for one year in Scouting. Each red band indicated three more years.



1910s Uniform with Tenure Bars on the Sleeve

The bands soon evolved into stars, and the meaning of the colors changed, too. Service stars worn by James E. West, the BSA's first Chief Scout, included four with red backing (signifying five years' each) and four with green backing (each indicating an additional year with the organization) for a total of 24 years at the time his portrait was painted.



James E. West – Chief Scout, in 1936

When not in uniform, adult leaders of Mr. West's era could display their BSA tenure by wearing lapel pins with Roman numerals to mark

the years - here, X for ten years of service and XV for 15.

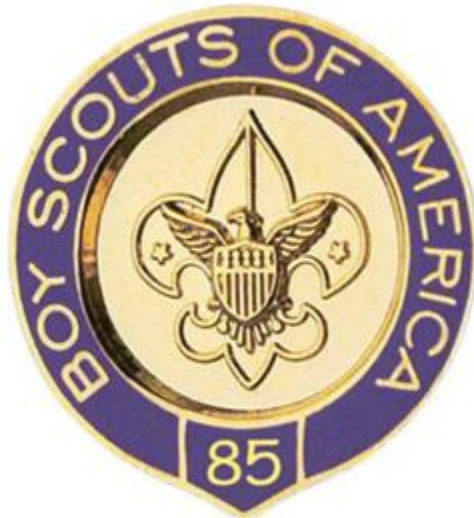


10-year pin



15-year pin

Today's *veteran Scouter pins* document years of Scouting service with numbers ranging from five to 90.



Veteran Scouter Pin

One Scouter eligible to wear the 85-year pin is Seattle, Washington, native Phil Smart, Sr. The Eagle Scout, Scoutmaster, and holder of the Silver Beaver and Silver Antelope awards firmly believes that Scouting's values have guided him through a lifetime of challenge, service, and success. Now in his 90s, Mr. Smart still does all he can to support young people enrolled in the Scouting program.

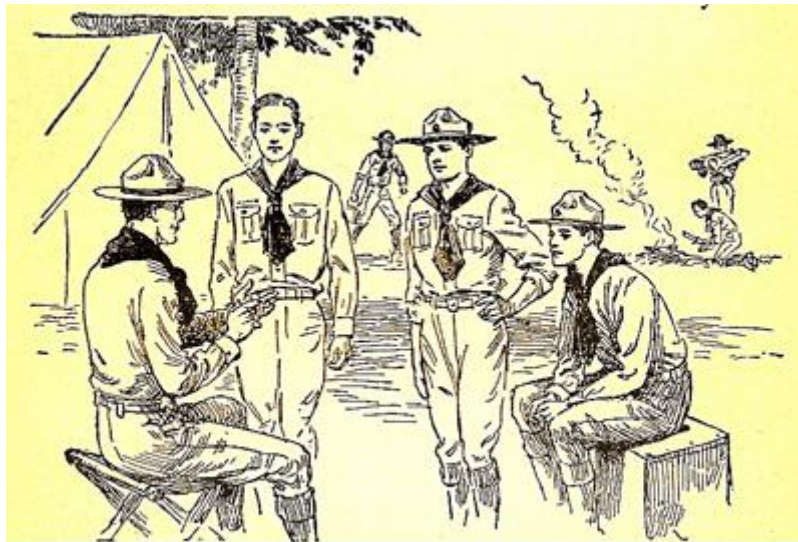


Phil Smart at age 15 leading a Scout expedition to the north summit of Brothers Peak in Washington State's Olympic National Park.



Almost 70 years later, Mr. Smart continues to play an active role in the Chief Seattle council.

GIVING THANKS BY THANKING OTHERS

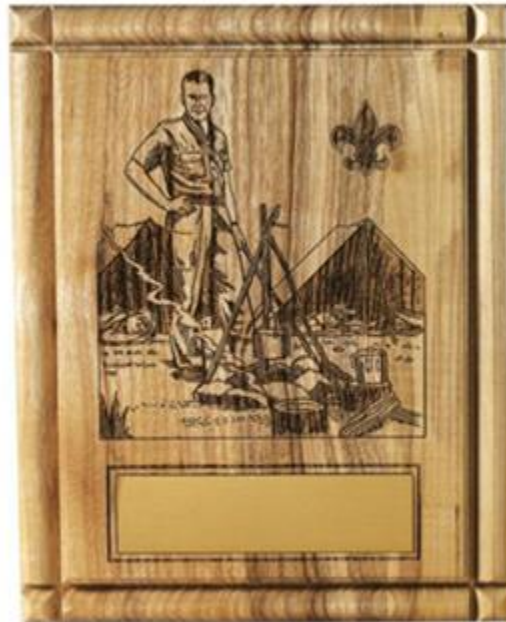


Adult leaders have always been essential to Scouting's success

From the newest adult leaders to those wearing double-digit veteran pins, BSA volunteers and staff dedicate tremendous time and effort to youth. A great way to show your appreciation is with mementos from www.scoutstuff.org. Among them are a print of Norman Rockwell's painting *The Scoutmaster*, and the same scene etched onto a wooden plaque suitable for engraving.



The Scoutmaster, Norman Rockwell, 1956

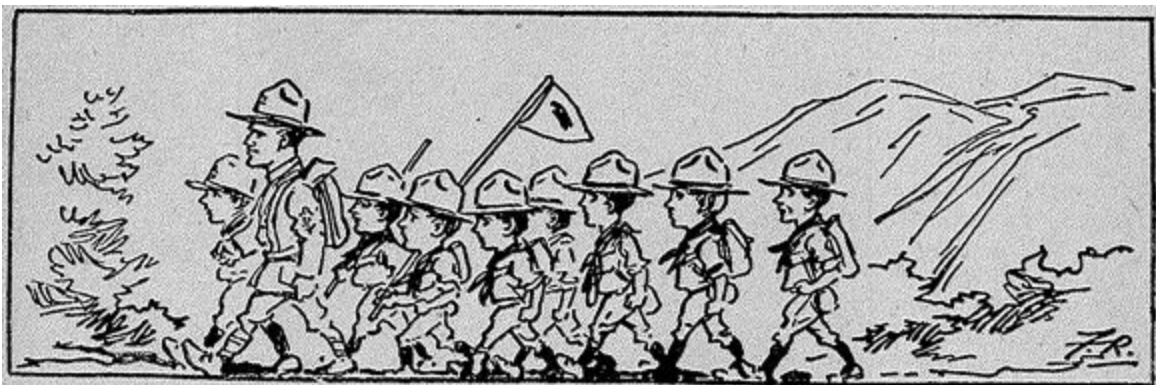


The Scoutmaster presentation plaque



Universal Emblem Crystal Paperweight

The universal emblem paperweight, another fine gift for Scout leaders, gives brilliant testimony to the BSA emblem. Along with the motto Do a Good Turn Daily, the values of Scouting have offered crystal clear guidance for millions of youth and adults. For that, we can all be thankful.



(This edition of the *Be Prepared Newsletter* was developed and written by Robert Birkby, author of the current editions of the *Boy Scout Handbook*, *Fieldbook* and *Eagle Scouts: A Centennial History*.)