

The Troop Leaders' Council as the Training Ground for the Patrol Leaders

By William Hillcourt

In the meetings and deliberations of the Troop Leaders' Council, the Patrol Leaders are initiated into and guided in the parts they are to play in connection with their *Troop leadership*. Simultaneous with this, but at separate gatherings, is carried out their training for successful *Patrol leadership*, for their work as the heads of groups of boys clamoring for things to do.

This second phase of their training is, obviously, the more difficult and exacting of the two. In the meetings of the Troop Leaders' Council the Patrol Leader may lean upon his associates, but in the meetings of his Patrol he must stand on his own feet, at all times giving his leadership. He must be trained to the point where he can do this. *And it is the Scoutmaster who imparts this training.*

The Green Bar Patrol

For this training purpose the Troop Leaders' Council takes on the aspects of a Patrol, with the Scoutmaster as its Patrol Leader, and the boy leaders as members. Throughout this training discussion we shall refer to the Troop Leaders' Council group as the "Green Bar Patrol."

This "Green Bar Patrol"—or "Cornertooth Patrol" or whatever other name the group may decide upon giving it—is then conducted in a manner similar to a regular Patrol, with meetings, hikes, camps and special features such as might be planned and executed by a normal Patrol, with the possible exception that many of its activities, such as games, contests, handicrafts, become "condensed," i.e., started as demonstrations of what might be done in a Patrol rather than carried through to their absolute conclusion.

The Green Bar Patrol should meet at least once every month with occasional outdoor practices scheduled at times that will not interfere with the work of the Troop and Patrols.

Important Points of Training

This matter of training the boy leaders is a continuous job and should never be considered as completed.

Boys are steadily growing and developing. The Scoutmaster's opportunity is to help them grow into fine types of leaders. To accomplish this, one Scout may need perpetual encouragement, another restraint, one subtle suggestion, still another definite direction; but all need guidance.

To be of the greatest help the Scoutmaster therefore must know his boy leaders thoroughly. He must keep his eyes and brain busy while they are working in his presence and make mental notes of their behavior and their fellows' ways of reacting to their leadership. Based upon such study, he can make a genuine appraisal of each leader and learn his weak and strong points.

It is important that the Scoutmaster have a personal friendship with every boy leader which will encourage mutual regard and confidence. In this way only may he succeed in really helping them. More than once a Patrol Leader has revealed to his Scoutmaster the real reasons for his Patrol's failings while they were enjoying a walk or even a movie together.

With a proper understanding of the boy leaders and their problems, the Scoutmaster has a basis for their thorough training.

Two Angles of Patrol Leader Training

There are two angles to the training of the Patrol Leaders which should both be thoroughly covered by the Scoutmaster in his efforts to help his leaders develop themselves.

(1) *Patrol Leadership.* The Scoutmaster must make clear to his boy leaders the extent of their responsibilities and explain the principles of Patrol Leadership. He must teach them "how" to do what is expected of them, treating every subject in complete detail, not leaving out anything because he thinks it is obvious. What is simple to him may not be simple to his boy leaders.

He should encourage them to read and study available literature (Handbook for Patrol Leaders, *Scouting* magazine, *Boy's Life*) that will help them with their Patrols, and should discuss with them the handling of specific Patrol problems as they arise. In this connection he may urge and arrange for his leaders to visit other Troops for the purpose of observing how other Patrols are run.

(2) *The Scoutmaster should help his leaders to advance*, not so much by teaching them the actual techniques as by stimulating their desire to learn for themselves.

Method of Training

The method of training in its simplest form may be considered the "interpretation of the *Handbook for Patrol Leaders in terms of action.*"

A copy of that complete manual on Patrol Leadership should be in the hands of each Patrol Leader, and the idea of consulting it whenever he is in need of new suggestions or methods of coping with Patrol problems should be instilled in his mind.

The way to do this is to base all their training on the *Handbook for Patrol Leaders* by using it for study helps and by planning the meetings, hikes and camps of the Green Bar Patrol according to its recommendations.¹

¹ Handbook for Scoutmasters, By William Hillcourt, BSA 1936, pg 200ff