

Campfire Yarn 9 – The Development of the Patrol Method in the BSA

By: Bill Nelson

Initially the Boy Scouts of America did not utilize the Patrol Method. It wasn't until William "Green Bar Bill" Hillcourt introduced it in the late 1920s and wrote extensively about it in the 1936 edition of the *Handbook for Scoutmasters* that it became an integral part of BSA scouting.

In the Beginning

The original literature did not have boy run troops or utilize the patrol method or system. Instead troops were completely controlled and run by the Scoutmaster with assistance from the patrol leaders¹. There was no official Patrol Leader's Council that ran the troop. Instead patrol leaders reported directly to the Scoutmaster. The boy who was the "senior in service" and was a patrol leader was considered the "senior" patrol leader, but the power rested in the Scoutmaster.

The patrol leaders and the assistant patrol leaders in the original troops ranked in order of seniority of service. The principal officers of the troop in business session were elected from the members of highest rank, consisting of patrol leaders, assistant patrol leaders, past patrol leaders and all first class scouts².

The first official handbook in 1911 described a basic patrol organization. "Each troop of boy scouts is named after the place to which it belongs. For example it is Troop No. 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. of New York or Chicago. Each patrol of the troop is named after an animal or a bird, but may be given any kind of a name if there is a valid reason. ... Each scout in his patrol has a number, the patrol leader No. 1, the assistant patrol leader No. 2, and the other scouts the remaining consecutive numbers. Scouts in this way should work in pairs; No. 3 and 4 together, No. 5 and 6 together.... Each scout in the patrol should be able to imitate the call of his patrol animal.... The patrol leader calls up his patrol by blowing his whistle and giving the call of the patrol.... Each patrol leader carries a small flag on the end of his staff or stave with the head of his patrol animal shown on both sides."³

The first Scoutmaster Handbook, published in 1913, instructed the Scoutmaster to form the patrols. It recommended that he group the boys by age because the interests in a younger boy would not be the same as those of an older one and there is little tolerance of the younger boys on the part of the older boys.⁴

¹ Rick Seymour, History of the Scoutmaster Handbook. <http://www.kudu.net/adult/methods/1st/index.htm>

² Handbook for scout masters, Boy scouts of America By Boy Scouts of America, First Edition 1914, pg 118

³ Handbook for Boys, Boy Scouts of America, 1911, pg 19

⁴ Handbook for scout masters, Boy scouts of America By Boy Scouts of America, First Edition 1914, pg 111

The Handbook for Scoutmasters recommended having the patrols appoint or elect their own patrol leaders; however in certain cases the Scoutmaster might have to appoint them. It left it to the discretion of the Scoutmaster⁵. Patrol leaders presided at patrol meetings with the assistant patrol leader acting as scribe. However the patrols “belonged” to the Scoutmaster and he attended the patrol meetings⁶.

At troop meetings the senior patrol leader usually presides. He was the patrol leader in most seniority, not a different elected office, and the next patrol leader in seniority acted as his assistant senior patrol leader.

It is important to keep in mind though that the program was developed by the Scoutmaster and given to the boys. Even at the patrol level⁷. The first Handbook for Scoutmasters didn't contain any hint of what we now know as a Patrol Method, Patrol System or any other concept of a boy run troop. In fact, it specifically taught against one.

The Patrol Leader and the Scout Master

Care should be taken by the Scout Master that the patrol leaders do not have too great authority in the supervision of their patrols. The success of the troop affairs and supervision of patrol progress is, in the last analysis, the responsibility of the Scout Master and not that of the patrol leader. There is also a danger, in magnifying the patrol leader in this way, of inordinately swelling the ordinary boy's head. The activities of the patrol should not be left to the judgment of any patrol leader, and if the Scout Master wants to delegate the work of the patrol and troop, the whole group should reach a decision in regard to the plan. Every patrol leader that a Scout Master has increases his responsibility all the more, and the addition of a patrol to his troop, with its corresponding new patrol leader, means just a little more supervisory work for him.⁸

In the section on Self Governance, the original Handbook for Scoutmasters states that the patrols are the Scoutmaster's patrols:

Self-Government

A wise leader, recognizing the inherent desire of all boys for fair play and for taking a part in their particular Scout work, will encourage self-government, making it in so far as practical an actual and usable part of their association. Self-government is always good where it is not abused, but valuable only as an object tending toward leadership. So much latitude must be allowed in this for local conditions and previous experiences, both of the Scout Master and his boys, that it is difficult to give definite and clear instructions which can be generally followed. However, one point must be kept always in mind, and that is *the Scout Master must always be the guiding factor*. When he ceases to become so, he loses his position of leadership. If his influence is felt rather than dominantly asserted, it is far more valuable. Several means might be suggested of letting the members of his patrol know his attitude on subjects.⁹

Patrol Leader Councils or Conferences were occasions where the Scoutmaster met with the Patrol Leaders and discussed troop business, counseled or trained them. They

⁵ Handbook for scout masters, Boy scouts of America By Boy Scouts of America, First Edition 1914, pg 114

⁶ Handbook for scout masters, Boy scouts of America By Boy Scouts of America, First Edition 1914, pg 121

⁷ Handbook for scout masters, Boy scouts of America By Boy Scouts of America, First Edition 1914, pg 86.

⁸ Handbook for scout masters, Boy scouts of America By Boy Scouts of America, First Edition 1914, pg 85.

⁹ Handbook for scout masters, Boy scouts of America By Boy Scouts of America, First Edition 1914, pg 145

were run by the Scoutmaster and conducted at his pleasure. They were not, as they are today, meetings of the junior leadership, run by the junior leadership to plan troop meetings and activities.¹⁰

By 1920, the office of Senior Patrol Leader was officially recognized and could be either a Scout in a Patrol (for small troops) or a troop officer not associated with any Patrol.¹¹

So we now have a picture of what a Scoutmaster run troop looked like from 1911 to 1936. Things dramatically changed with the publication of the 1936 Handbook for Scoutmasters.

The Introduction of the Patrol Method by William Hillcourt

In 1936, Bill Hillcourt published the Third Edition of the Handbook for Scoutmasters. This edition spelled out a new method to be used in Boy Scout Troops called the Patrol Method. This method pushed the leadership and day to day running of the troop down from the Scoutmaster to the boy level. The Scoutmaster was to take upon himself the role of mentor, safety advisor, and guide.

The Patrol Method had such a great and positive affect on Scouting in the United States, that it behooves us to go into what he presented in detail.

Green Bar Bill described his ideal boy run troop as follows:

Troop No. 3 has its share of Merit Badge Scouts and streamers testifying to its proficiency at Council Rallies and Camporees. Yet, its Scoutmaster is never much in evidence. He keeps himself in the background and offers only such stimulus, guidance and is necessary for the best development of Patrol efficiency and Troop spirit. The meetings of the Troop are planned and executed by the boys themselves through their chosen boy leaders. Always one Patrol or another has a surprise to spring on the others, such as a stunt, a game, a contest. There are never any problems of discipline, because the discipline comes from within each boy and is not stamped upon him from without. Advancement is steady because the boys of their own desire are actually practicing Scoutcraft, not only at Troop meetings and occasional Troop hikes, but at numerous individual Patrol meetings and hikes in which no adults take part. Each Patrol does its own thinking and can be trusted to carry a job through to the end under its own leadership.¹²

And he provided an easy test to see if your troop is using the Patrol Method:

An old experienced Scoutmaster said once: "The test of the Patrol Method is in the easy chair!"

His audience looked nonplused, so he elaborated his statement: "Get an easy chair and place it in a corner of the Troop meeting room. If you can sink into it just after the opening ceremony and just sit throughout the meeting, without a worry for its success, without lifting a finger or moving a

¹⁰ Handbook for scout masters, Boy scouts of America By Boy Scouts of America, First Edition 1914, pg 143

¹¹ The official handbook for boys By Boy Scouts of America; 1920, pg 21

¹² Handbook for Scoutmasters by William "Green Bar Bill" Hillcourt, 1936, Chapter 11.

foot until time comes for the closing-well, then your Troop is run on the Patrol Method-your boy leaders are actually leading."

That, figuratively, is the test-as exemplified by Troop No. 3 above and indicates the condition toward which you should aim for the future of your Troop. For unless a Troop makes use of the Patrol Method it cannot be considered a Scout Troop, since "the Patrol Method is not ONE method in which Scouting can be carried on. It is the ONLY method."

And the two-fold secret of success is simple:

- I. Make the Patrol the unit ALWAYS, in and out through thick and thin, for better and worse in victory and defeat, in games arid on hikes, and in camp.
- II. Train your boy leaders for their positions, place the responsibility of leadership on them and let them exercise it.

Only as a Scoutmaster acts on this principle does he understand—and use—the Patrol Method.¹³

Hillcourt established three parts to the Patrol Method which he called "phases:"

1. The Troop Leaders' Council
2. The activities of the Patrols as separate units – Patrol Work.
3. The activities of the sum of the Patrols as one corporate unit – Troop Work¹⁴

The Troop Leaders' Council

The Troop Leaders' Council (TLC), as presented by Green Bar Bill, took upon the everyday leadership roles the Scoutmaster previously held. The TLC managed the Troop. It planned the Troop activities (not patrol activates) and it executes the plans. It also acted as the clearing house of the Troop on such individual problems of conduct or personality as the Scoutmaster may think the members capable of handling.

Some of the activities conducted by a typical TLC:

- Plan, promote, organize and operate all Troop (not Patrol) camping and hiking.
- Determine what offices (other than those of senior leaders) are elective and what offices are appointed in the Troop, the terms of that office, qualifications and those eligible to vote.
- Lay down basic rules with respect to recruiting of candidates, admission to Patrols and the size of Patrols.
- Operate Troop meeting programs.
- Fix the dues
- Plan, promote, organize and operate competitions.
- Supervise the operation of Troop Good Turns
- Plan, promote, organize, and operate the annual banquets
- Determine the eligibility and qualifications of examiners in the administration of the Troop's advancement program.
- Discuss current problems such as retarded advancement, poor Patrol organization, absences, delinquency in dues, etc.; proposes solutions.

¹³ Handbook for Scoutmasters by William "Green Bar Bill" Hillcourt, 1936, Chapter 11

¹⁴ Handbook for Scoutmasters by William "Green Bar Bill" Hillcourt, 1936, pg 209

- Effect an executive committee from among its own membership to make decisions where immediate action is required.
- Determine Troop participation in district and Council events.¹⁵

The TLC consisted of the Patrol Leaders, the Senior Patrol Leader¹⁶, and Junior Assistant Scoutmasters¹⁷, if any, and the Troop Scribe. The TLC also included, in a non-voting role, the Assistant Scoutmasters and the Scoutmaster who acted as advisors to the group.¹⁸ This was, in reality, all the leaders of the troop except the Assistant Patrol Leaders.

The TLC met monthly. They could also meet to be trained by the Scoutmaster in leadership. Hillcourt suggested that when they met for training they were called the “Green Bar Patrol” or “Cornertooth Patrol.” It was the name “Green Bar Patrol” that stuck and is used by many troops today. Hillcourt suggested the “Green Bar Patrol” meet once a month for training with occasional outdoor practices.¹⁹

It was up to the Scoutmaster to decide who shall be the chairman of the Troop Leaders’ Council. In a young troop where the Patrol Leaders are just learning their jobs, it was recommended that the Scoutmaster take that role. With a more troop where the Patrol Method was more established, the election of a boy chairman (for a meeting at a time or for a month) was recommended. In many troops the Senior Patrol Leader or the Junior Assistant Scoutmaster acted as chairman.²⁰

Hillcourt notes that although the Scoutmaster did not have a vote, and since he looks to his Patrol Leaders to decide what is going to happen in *their* troop (note it is no longer the Scoutmaster’s troop), he does reserve the right to “veto.” Thus he has the final decision on matter in which difference of opinion might not be to the best interests of the troop.

Hillcourt introduced a number of patrol planning activities that we still utilize today.

The Troop Leaders’ Council (TLC) met on a monthly basis and planned the weekly Troop Meetings based upon a monthly schedule which reflected the Troop Leaders’ Council plan for the year.

A short “half-meeting” of the TLC met after the meeting to reflect on what happened during that meeting and to prepare for the next meeting and assign responsibilities for that meeting.²¹

¹⁵ Handbook for Scoutmasters by William “Green Bar Bill” Hillcourt, 1936, pg 196

¹⁶ Elected by the Patrol Leaders

¹⁷ Boys 16 years old and less than 18 given a Warrant to the position by the Scoutmaster and approved by the troop committee and local Council

¹⁸ Handbook for Scoutmasters by William “Green Bar Bill” Hillcourt, 1936, pg 192

¹⁹ Handbook for Scoutmasters by William “Green Bar Bill” Hillcourt, 1936, pg 201

²⁰ Handbook for Scoutmasters by William “Green Bar Bill” Hillcourt, 1936, pg 193

²¹ Handbook for Scoutmasters by William “Green Bar Bill” Hillcourt, 1936, pg 549

Patrol Work

After training by the adult leaders of the Troop, the Patrol Leader will become ready to build his Scouts into the best Patrol he can imagine. He will strive to instill in his Scouts that the reputation of the Patrol depends on each individual Scout. And his work is to see that every Scout has an opportunity to share in the planning of the Patrol activities get the most out of them as they can.

Patrol meetings changed from primarily “patrol corners” in a troop meeting (although those still occurred) to more independent gatherings of the group for specific Scout purposes under its own leadership with no adult present. “The Scoutmaster’s aim in training his leaders is to make these gatherings not only possible but purposeful.”²²

Hillcourt recommended Patrol meetings at least once a week, in addition to the Troop meetings except when the Scouts have extraordinary demands on their time from school work or home work.



Hiking back to their camp site, singing as they go, this Patrol is swinging along with the breeze. Their totem is with them.

Many patrols ended up meeting right after school for an hour a week.

Patrols of “raw recruits” should have an adult on all hikes and campouts. However, once the Scouts became proficient in the outdoors, and the Patrol Leaders have been properly trained they were encouraged to hike and camp as separate patrol activities.

Hillcourt emphasized Patrol Spirit within the patrols. Patrol Spirit can be fostered by the right Patrol Name, Call, Flag, Signature, Patrol Medallion, and traditions. “Another valuable reinforcement of Patrol consciousness is a definite Patrol headquarters.... A special meeting place which it jealously defends against all comers, the Scout Patrol should have at least a corner of the Troop meeting place that it can call its own. The Patrol Corners

²² Handbook for Scoutmasters by William “Green Bar Bill” Hillcourt, 1936, pg 210

should be individualized as much as possible by decorations with flags, pictures, knot-boards, trophies and the like, and by appropriate names, such as “The Panthers’ Cave,” “The Fox’s Lair,” “The Eagles’ Aerie.”²³

The Troop Officers

Hillcourt divided the troop into these groups:

Commissioned Leaders (Scoutmaster, Asst. Scoutmaster, Troop Committee) who held an annual commission issued by the local Council.

Warrant Leaders: Senior Patrol Leader and Jr. Assistant Scoutmasters. These officers serve directly under the Scoutmaster and are not assigned to a Patrol.

The SPL is selected by the Troop Leaders’ Council with the approval of the Scoutmaster. He ranks in the troop next to the Asst. Scoutmasters. You had to be a First Class Scout who served for a minimum term of twenty weeks as a Patrol Leader. The SPL does duties assigned to him by the Scoutmaster and is usually responsible for running the troop meetings as planned out by the Troop Leaders’ Council.

The Jr. Assistant Scoutmaster was any First Class Scout sixteen or over and is appointed by the Scoutmaster. A warrant is issued by the local council upon recommendation by the Scoutmaster and Troop Committee. He is registered as a Scout, but can wear an adult uniform.

Patrol Officers: Patrol Leaders and Assistant Patrol Leaders.

Patrol Leaders rank right under the Scoutmaster in having the most influence on the boys in the troop. The Scouts in the patrol select their patrol leader.

OK, now we come to a common problem, how do you select which boy is in which patrol and who their patrol leader will be. Green Bar Bill has a couple of possible solutions.

Have the boys play a few two team game (or more for larger groups) and let the boys team up without any suggestion of forming patrols. Let the teams even themselves up, as normally takes place amongst boys, and let them play the game. At the next meeting, repeat the process. This gives the boys a chance to judge each others compatibility. Now you are ready to form the patrols:

Simply ask the boys to divide themselves into two groups in two corners of the meeting room. In most cases this will work now that they know each other a bit. After the initial

²³ Handbook for Scoutmasters by William “Green Bar Bill” Hillcourt, 1936, pg 219

rush, there may be a few stragglers, but they will be absorbed readily enough as they were in the setting up of teams in the previous exercise.

The patrols should be ready to elect their Patrol Leader. If there is any doubt in your mind, give out papers and pencils and ask the boys to write down the names of those they would like to team up with in a Patrol. Collect the ballots and let them know you will examine the ballots and assemble the Patrols at the next meeting. Let them know that all consideration will be given to individual wishes. Arrange the Patrols utilizing the ballots and your own best judgment and announce the patrols at the next meeting.

Hillcourt recommends that the Patrol leader be both elected by the Patrol and selected by the Scoutmaster. Although paradoxical, his answer is that the Scoutmaster has the ultimate responsibility and he should decide upon the method to be followed. Depending on conditions, such as starting out with new boys, it may be better for the Scoutmaster to select the Patrol Leaders. At other times, an election is the best way to make sure the Patrol knows it is their gang. Ideally, the Patrol Leader is elected.

The Assistant Patrol Leader is selected by the Patrol Leader to fill in for him when he is absent.

As a general rule, a Patrol Leader may be kept in office as long as he gets results. Nevertheless, it is advisable to make public the fact that the term of office is for a predetermined length of time. Say one year and then the Patrol Leader is eligible for reelection.

Common Scouts (the rest of the boys)

Hillcourt recommends patrols are from four to eight boys.

Troop Work

Hillcourt stresses that the Patrol Method doesn't give carte blanche to the Patrols to be let loose and permitted to each run their own program, independent of the other Patrols or the Troop as a whole. The Patrol Method is to promote the coordination and cooperation of the Patrols. No Patrol exists for and by itself alone. It has another part to play aside from its important individual life. Every Patrol has its obligations toward and its share in the larger life of the Troop. The truest kind of Patrol spirit contains a genuine Troop spirit, pride in the Troop as a whole and eagerness to help the Troop succeed.²⁴

Patrols have their regular place in the troop meeting. Each Patrol should have its own session during the meeting and its own corner. There should be games and contests in which the Patrols vie with each other to show their prowess and Scouting abilities.

²⁴ Handbook for Patrol Leaders by William "Green Bar Bill" Hillcourt, 1929, Chapter III

On troop hikes and campouts, each Patrol takes care of its own commissary and does its share of the work and the play. Tents are grouped by Patrols, cooking done by Patrols, etc. "And in everything—discipline is enforced by Patrols, the Scout Law and Oath upheld by the Patrols."²⁵

The Patrol Method—The Only Method

At this point—if not before—some Scoutmaster will step forward and say, "That is all right, all you have been saying about We Patrol Method. But I have tried it in my Troop, and it just doesn't work!" And he goes on, "Take last week, for instance. We had our program all outlined, but the boys fell down on it. The Patrol Leaders had forgotten to prepare their Scouts, equipment was missing, our game leader didn't show up. I simply had to take over the meeting myself in order to keep it from being a general mix-up!"

Which altogether proves nothing against the Patrol Method, but on the contrary that the Scoutmaster wasn't using it. He proved it by making the mistake of taking over the meeting. And for two reasons: In the first place, the boy leader will expect him to do the same thing next time they fail and failure under those circumstances will mean nothing to them, will teach them nothing. And secondly, the Scoutmaster by his action showed all the members of the Troop that he had no faith in the leaders they had chosen, breaking do" completely the respect for them.

The failure was the Scoutmaster's, not the boys', nor the Patrol Method's He had failed to apply to himself the "test of the easy chair," and had not remembered the simple formula for success in using his Patrol Leaders: "*Train 'em trust 'em, and let 'em lead!*"²⁶

Hillcourt instructs the Scoutmaster to trust the Scouts. Don't hide behind a corner to see if Johnny will do what is right, but trust that he will in fact do what is right. Hillcourt quotes Baden-Powell, "To get the best results, you must give the leader real, free-handed responsibility. If you only give partial responsibility, you will only get partial results." Praise the junior leader when they succeed, encourage them when they fail.

The trust must be within reason. Don't give him a job a Scoutmaster may not even be able to accomplish. Give him easy burdens and increase them as his leadership and Scoutcraft grow stronger.

Let Them Lead!

So again, "Train 'em, trust 'em, and let 'em lead!" And remember that that last point is of tremendous importance. Let them lead in practically everything. Let them work out their own problems, interfere as little as possible but be ever ready to give wise guidance—not when you think they need it, but when they seek it. Keep in mind that unwarranted, ill-advised interference discourages leadership and that those boy leaders of yours are "learning by doing." Mistakes, some of them serious, are bound to be made; therefore, be ever ready with a kindly and friendly spirit to urge them to try again.

Help them occasionally with constructive criticism. *But do your coaching on the side lines always, never in front of the Patrols.*

²⁵ Handbook for Scoutmasters by William "Green Bar Bill" Hillcourt, 1936, pg 223

²⁶ Handbook for Scoutmasters by William "Green Bar Bill" Hillcourt, 1936, pg 223

And then, when the Patrol Leader succeeds in his job, praise him for it. Commendation which is justified and not overdone is an absolute necessity. Such statements of approval should be made occasionally before the interested group. They like it, and so does the leader, as long as it is short, free from "soft soap," and genuine.²⁷

Hillcourt presents some self examination questions that the Scoutmaster can periodically utilize to make sure he is using the Patrol Method to its highest advantage:

"Do I *always* think of my Patrols in terms of the leaders? Do I always transmit announcements and information to the Scouts through the Patrol Leaders?"

"Do I *always* answer the Scouts' questions about routine details by saying, 'Ask your Patrol Leader; he knows!' instead of giving them the answer myself, thus doing my part to develop in them a certain amount of respect for those leaders, to whom they have to look for vital facts and guidance?"

"Do I keep asking the Patrol Leaders for specific pieces of information about their boys, such as advancement, progress, home conditions, finances?"

"Do I stick these alleged leaders right out in front at *every opportunity* where they get a *feeling* of leadership?"

"*Do I commend* them publicly whenever they show signs of taking responsibility, and do I *always* refrain from criticizing them before their group?"

"When something goes wrong in one of those Patrols during a Troop meeting, say a little matter of discipline, do I jump on the boys themselves, or do I *first* call the Patrol Leader aside and point out the situation to him, making him realize that it is his responsibility to handle it?"

"Those are *some* of the questions a Scoutmaster may ask himself. If his answer to most of them is "Yes!" then he is truly a leader of boy leaders. But not only that—*he is using the Patrol Method in his Troop!*"

Yes, siree, the Patrol Method does work, but it must be given its chance.

Patrols in the 1950s

By the 1950s the Troop Leader's Council was known as the Patrol Leaders' Council (PLC). Officers such as the Quartermaster and Scribe were invited to attend in a non-voting capacity. The Patrol Leaders' Council, at the discretion of the Scoutmaster, can review for Scout Spirit at advancement time. Scouts are then presented to the troop committee's Board of Review upon the recommendation of the Scoutmaster and the PLC.²⁸

Patrols could earn awards by accomplishing tasks as a patrol. Such as completing five all day patrol hikes.

²⁷ Handbook for Scoutmasters by William "Green Bar Bill" Hillcourt, 1936, pg 225

²⁸ Scoutmaster's Handbook: A Manual of Troop Leadership, by the Boy Scouts of America, 1959

Improved Scouting Program - 1972

By the time of the ill-fated “Improved Scouting Program” in 1972, a number of changes had been made to the Patrol Method.

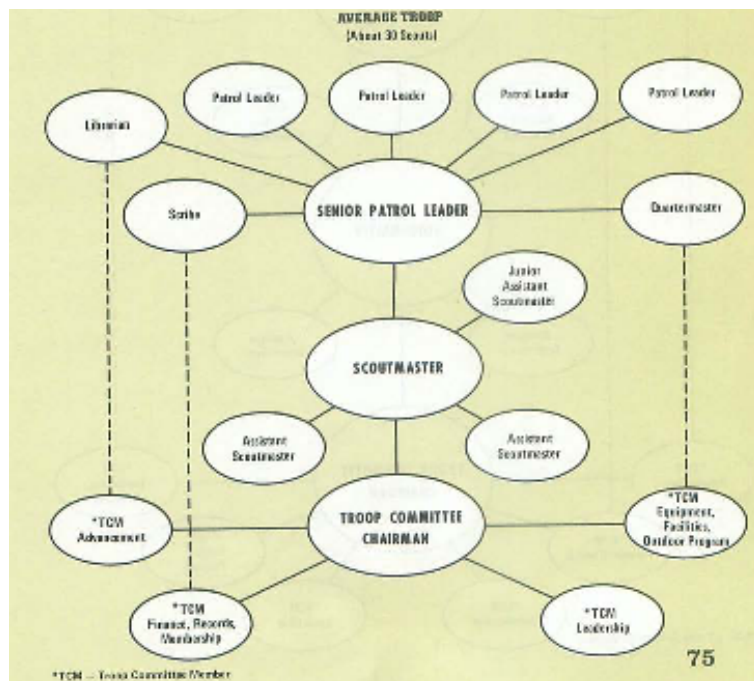


Figure 1 Troop organization in the 1970s

The Senior Patrol Leader was now elected by all the Scouts, not just the members of the Troop Leaders’ Council (no longer called a PLC). The SPL was also now automatically the chairman of the Troop Leaders’ Council. The SPL can now appoint Scouts to the troop jobs of: Scribe, Quartermaster, Librarian, Bugler and Den Chiefs. Also he could appoint Scouts to the “Leadership Corps.”

The Leadership Corps was a group to help younger Scouts and Patrol Leaders when asked. They could sign off on requirements. The minimum size of a Leadership Corps was three Scouts and they had to be

14 to 15 years of age, First Class and show what it takes to be leaders. Besides helping in the troop, the Leadership Corps could conduct activities on their own. In fact the Leadership Corps was encouraged to plan and execute high adventure activities.²⁹ Members wore a darker green uniform and red beret regardless of what the troop wore.³⁰

The Troop Leaders’ Council can establish requirements that must be met by potential Patrol Leaders.³¹

One of many significant changes was that the Troop Leaders’ Council could conduct the Progress Review (Board of Review) for the “Progress Awards” of Tenderfoot, Second and First Class. The Troop committee would conduct the reviews for Star, Life and Eagle.³² Troop “instructors” from the Leadership Corps could sign Scouts off on “Skill

²⁹ Fieldbook for Boy Scouts, Explorers, Scouters, educators [and] outdoorsmen by Boy Scouts of America, James Edward West, 1967, pg 278

³⁰ Scout Handbook, Boy Scouts of America, 1972, pg 26

³¹ Patrol and troop leadership By Boy Scouts of America, 1972, pg 31

³² Scout Handbook, Boy Scouts of America, 1972, pg 74

Awards” which gave them immediate recognition of skills earned towards Progress Awards in the form of a belt loop.

More training emphasis during this period was placed on leadership and can be seen in the Patrol Leaders’ handbook at the time which was called “Patrol and Troop Leadership.” Subsequent Patrol Leader Handbooks deal more with how to get your job done and less on the theories of leadership.

Back to Basics Scouting in the 1980s

After delving into the “Improved Scouting Program” in the 1970s, the BSA returned to basic Scouting methods in the 1980s. Bill Hillcourt was steering the large ship again with a new Boy Scout Handbook. The Patrol Leaders’ Council was back doing what they had done previously and the Patrol Method and a emphasis on camping and

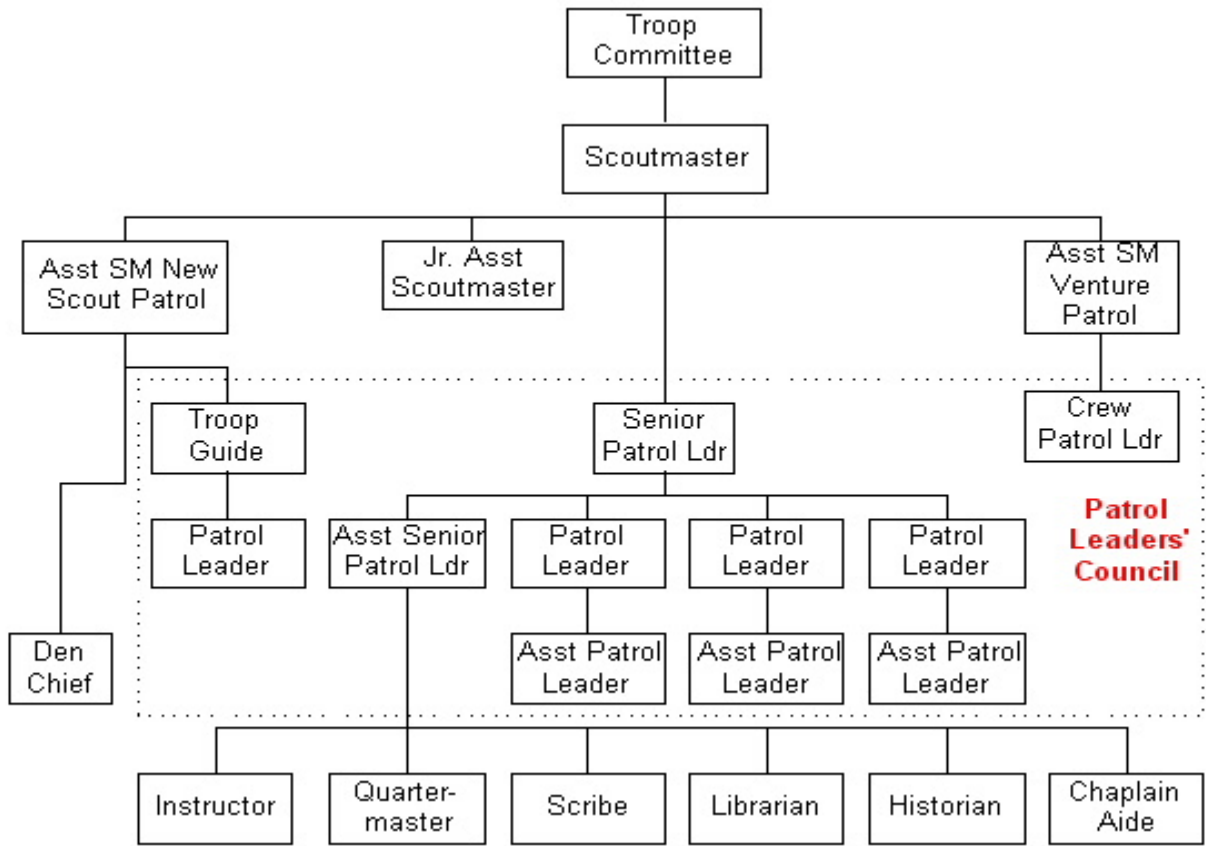


Figure 2 Modern Troop Organization

outdoor activities were being taught again to Scoutmasters.

The Leadership Corps was dropped, again placing all Scouts on an equal footing. So were the Skill Awards and in 1989, the position of Troop Guide was introduced to be a Scout age mentor to new Scouts going through the advancement ranks through First

Class. Senior patrols never went away though and eventually the BSA gave them the designation of Venture Patrols able to wear a special badge above the right pocket of the standard uniform.

In 1984 the BSA introduced Varsity Scouting is a sports-oriented program that is part of the Boy Scout Division. The teams meet separately from Boy Scout troops and can earn additional awards in addition to Boy Scouting Ranks, awards and badges.

In 2008 the policy on Patrol Camping was changed to: "A Boy Scout patrol or Varsity Scout squad may participate in Patrol Activities with the permission of their Scoutmaster or Coach and parents/guardians." The clarification is intended to provide leaders and parents the discretion to approve local activities for patrols or squads while eliminating hiking or camping outings without proper adult leadership and planning tools such as Tour Permits.

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