

# Personally Speaking

## Give 'Em a Chance

LAST MONTH we were talking about the value of Merit Badge work, and how worthwhile it is to reach Eagle rank. Writing about the subject made me curious, and I looked up the latest records. They're startling. There have been 12,000,000 Scouts since 1910, and in the same forty-one years these Scouts have earned a total of 16,000,000 Merit Badges. That's about one and a third badges per boy, not a very rich experience on the average. Only 235,000 Scouts have reached Eagle rank — a little short of two out of every hundred boys going "all the way."

One can defend such a record by saying that Scouting is a voluntary program; that boys are not forced to advance, but go at their own pace. That is true, of course, and those who have reached Eagle are to be congratulated for having the ability and determination required.

We would surely all agree, however, that we would like to see more boys getting the full value of the Scout program. We would like to see a lot more boys reach Eagle rank, wouldn't we?

Well, it's possible — there are a few simple things we leaders can do that can change the whole picture. It starts 'way back in a boy's first Cub Scouting experience. We can set the stage there for a successful Scouting "career" by providing two things: lots of opportunity (at home and in Dens) to learn skills and complete projects, and plenty of evidence at the Pack meetings that advancement is important.

In the Troop and Explorer Unit the same two factors — opportunity and recognition — are important, but the methods change. Here opportunity depends on good sound instruction and plenty of chances to test one's skill. Every Troop bulletin board should feature a list of counselors, for Second and First Class requirements as well as for Merit Badges, so the Scouts can know to whom to go. That sounds easy, but there are a lot of Troops where such basic information is either missing or obsolete.

Opportunity in the Troop also means frequent Boards of Review. When a Troop Board of Review meets monthly (and counsels with the boys who are slow to advance as well as those who are up for a new rank), the Scouts are sure to move forward steadily.

Impressive Courts of Honor give satisfaction to the Scouts who are going ahead, and help stimulate the others to want to.

So it goes, from first Cub Scouting days right up through Boy Scouting and Exploring. The work related to advancement should be a rich experience, shared by all Scouts. But the cold fact remains that only a handful get the full experience.

Let's change this picture! Let's give more boys the full program that is waiting for them in Scouting!

*Lex R. Lucas*  
Editor

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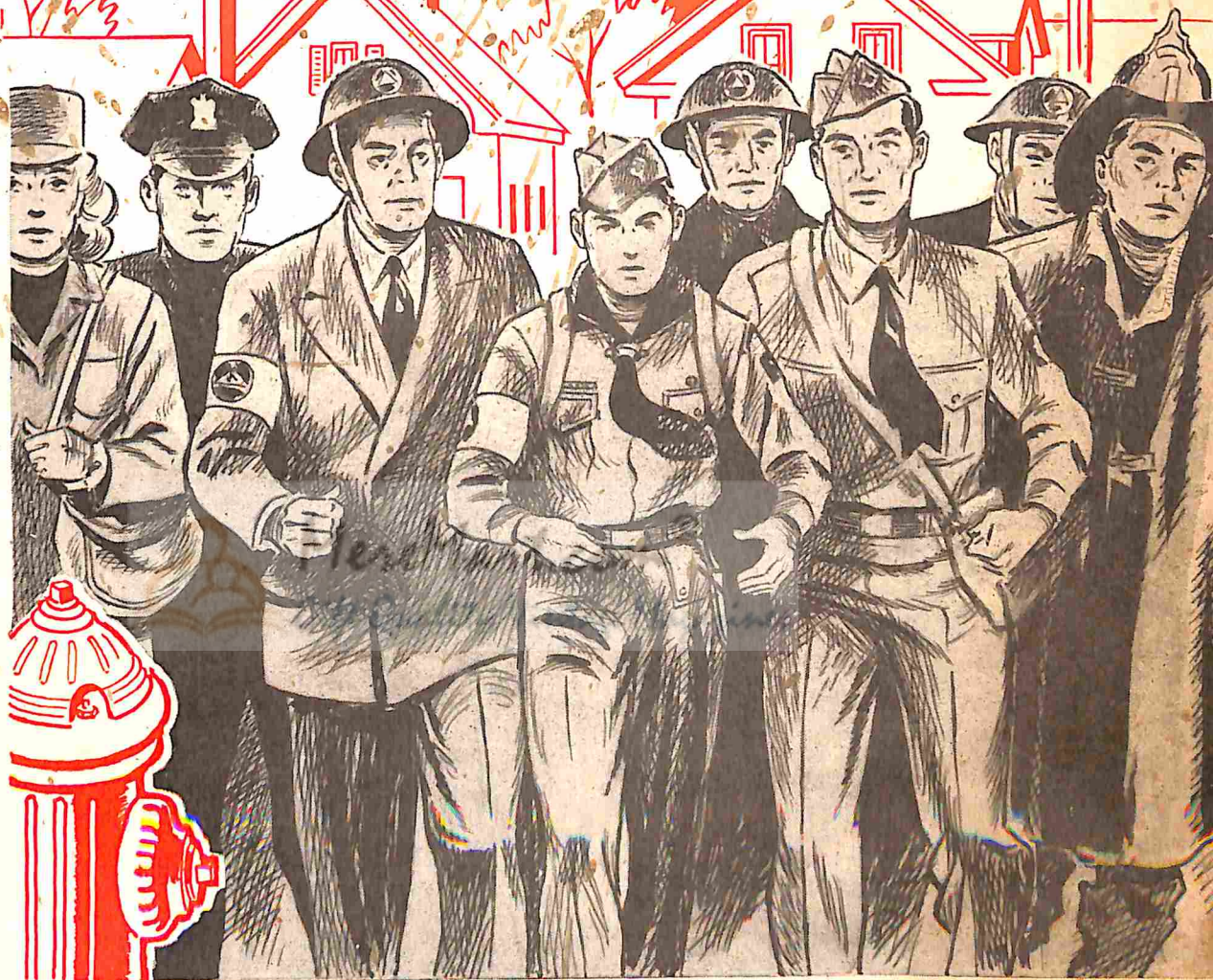
## CONTENTS

- ★ FOR ALL SCOUT LEADERS
  - 40 Year Men 2
  - Sheep In My Sleep 2
  - 12 Men 4
  - Suppose You Get A Bad One — Front Line Stuff 5
  - One Of The Team 6
  - Just A Minute 30
- ◆ FOR CUB SCOUT LEADERS
  - Strengthen Pack Program 7
  - Circus — Theme for May 8
  - Den Circus 9
  - Pack Circus 11
  - It Aint Fair 12
  - No It Aint 13
  - Circus Helps 14
- ✿ FOR BOY SCOUT LEADERS
  - You Can't Build A House Without A Hammer 15
  - Use Explorers in Your Scout Camp 16
  - Planning for May 17
  - Survival Training 18
  - Your Country's Natural Resources 20
  - Game File 29
- FOR EXPLORER LEADERS
  - Rendezvous and Regattas 22
  - Explorer Leadership in the Troop 24
  - Voyageur Training 25
  - May Planning 26
  - Blue Ribbon Events 28

Follow the "Trail Signs" at bottom of pages for articles of special interest to you.







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ONE OF THE TEAM

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