

Ceremonialism a Key to Retaining Scouts in Crossovers

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To the Doctoral Candidate Review Board

I am submitting herewith a Dissertation written by Jimmy Elkins, entitled "Ceremonialism a key to retain scouts in crossovers". 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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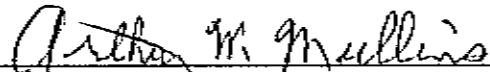
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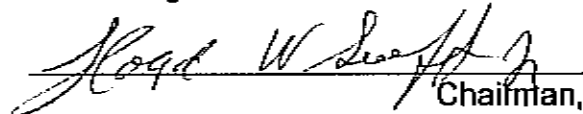


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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a record of how emphasizing ceremonies, in particular crossover ceremonies, helps increase the numbers of Cub Scouts that become Boy Scouts and remain Boy Scouts for a significant amount of time. Traditional methods of interesting young boys in Boy Scouts are becoming less and less effective. School talks for Boy Scout age boys do not reap many prospects. So, I, along with my District Commissioners, have begun a program of increasing the number of registered Cub Scouts, keeping them interested, and crossing over as many as possible to good strong troops. My study of the crossover ceremony is helping in this effort.

The crossover ceremony is not the only ceremony celebrating Cub Scouts transitioning to Boy Scouts. I found several of these type ceremonies. They are all similar. My research found that the particular ceremony that you perform isn't important. What is important is that you have ceremonies, you have good ceremonies, and you have timely ceremonies.

My research shows that putting emphasis on ceremonies, in particular crossover ceremonies, will increase interest in Cub Scouts becoming Boy Scouts.

Crossover ceremonies should be treated as a most important ceremony. We as commissioners should make sure that crossover ceremonies as well as other ceremonies are done well and timely throughout our districts.

Ceremonialism a Key to Retaining Scouts in Crossovers

Chapter I

Introduction

This study of ceremonialism as a key to retaining Scouts in crossovers is of particular interest to me. For those readers that are not familiar with the term crossover, this is the ceremony held to formally acknowledge and recognize those Webelos Scouts that have decided to continue on in their Scouting career, become a Boy Scout, and join a particular Boy Scout Troop. The crossover ceremony symbolically represents the moment when he leaves behind the Cub Scouts and becomes a Boy Scout. My theory is that improving crossover ceremonies in my district will increase the number of Cub Scouts that cross over and become active Boy Scouts.

Cumberland District, my district, was once one of the strongest districts of the Great Smoky Mountain Council. The numbers of Boy Scouts was very high considering the total population of the district. However, over the past few years, our district has seen a big drop off of the number of older Scouts. So this study of crossover ceremonies is a direct result of my efforts to help my district increase the numbers of registered Boy Scouts and Venturers in Troops, Venture Crews, Explorer Post, Ships, etc.

Recruiting older boys for these types of units is not very productive this day and age. As with most districts and councils, talks about Boy Scouts are still held at

area schools. This used to be a good way to generate new Scouts. However, over the last few decades the numbers of boys joining the Boy Scouts this way has dropped dramatically. Now days, considering all of the distractions both positive and negative, school talks generate very few new boys that eventually become Boy Scouts. Sadly, sometimes there are absolutely no boys interested. If a young boy has not been introduced into the Cub Scouts, chances are he will not become a Boy Scout. Surprisingly, we get several boys moving into our district every year that were Scouts elsewhere and want to join a local troop. I guess that's a sign of the times. There is a lot of moving to other places for work these days.

Since high school and middle school talks are losing their effectiveness, we must find other ways to interest boys in Scouting. School talks still generate moderate numbers of younger boys that become Cub Scouts. We have been putting a lot of energy into the elementary and middle school talks. In some cases, we have been having more than one talk at a particular school. So, to increase the number of Boy Scouts, my districts focus is to increase the numbers of boys that become Cub Scouts and try to crossover all of them. We strive to retain them from year to year by training leaders to lead good Cub Scout program.

We have begun to expose the Cub Scouts to as many Boy Scout activities, troops, patrols, and Boy Scouts as possible. Our district has been doing this by

combining Boy Scout and Cub Scout activities. We have been encouraging troops to share activities with a pack, on a one on one basis. This close association creates an interest in the Boy Scouts and a desire to crossover into the Boy Scouts when time comes. We are having Cub Scouts and their families come camp with us at district camporees. This has been a great success. We have been doing this to raise interest in the Cub Scouts and as an economic measure.

This has had an unanticipated benefit of generating male leaders from the fathers of Cub campers. The area where we live is very rural and heavily wooded. A large portion of men from this area work outside in the coal or timber industries. So, almost everyone camps and hunts. Family camping is very popular in this area. Campories or pack campouts are the first time we meet most fathers. Meeting these men in the camping environment makes talking with them about Scouting and possibly registering as a leader work much easier. They see how important camping is to Scouting and how well we do at it. At that point, they feel like they might have something to offer.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

The "Cub Scout Ceremonies for Dens and Packs" manual lists why we have ceremonies as:

- **Everyone likes to receive recognition. A den or pack ceremony helps recognize a boy in a positive way.**
- **Ceremonies provide meaningful and memorial highlights in a boys Cub Scouting experience.**
- **Ceremonies help teach the ideals and goals of Scouting. As boys participate in ceremonies they "learn by doing".**
- **Ceremonies focus attention not only on boys but also on families, leaders, and volunteers. All involved earn recognition for their accomplishments.**

The ceremony I am interested in is the crossover ceremony. Actually, I thought the crossover ceremony using a bridge was a universally used ceremony. It has been used in our district for years. I was wrong in thinking the rest of our council or other councils used it. Different districts have different ceremonies. Different councils have different ceremonies. A ceremony called the crossover ceremony is not even in the "Cub Scout Ceremonies for Dens and Packs" Manual. The ceremonies for Webelos Scout to Boy Scouts transition in this manual are: Colors of the wind, Seven Virtues of Life, and Cub Scout Trail. These were all different. However, they were similar in concept. They all had a theme of passage. Each one has the boy going from station to station as if on a journey. This theme is very much like the crossover ceremony. They all have the boy

starting with his Webelos leader and ending with the Scoutmaster and the Senior Patrol Leader. They welcome him into becoming a member of the Boy Scouts and their troop.

Since my interest began with the crossover ceremony using a bridge, I began searching for bridge references in Cub Scout books. However, I really did not find any specific descriptions of ceremonies using a bridge. Even though the bridge ceremony is not published in official Scout materials, one does contain bridge designs. Three good, simple bridge designs with materials lists are shown in the "Cub Scout Leader How-to Book" pages 1-6 & 1-7. These are quite simple and easy to assemble and disassemble.

In searching in Scouting literature for references to the crossover ceremony, I found some pertinent points in the "Den Chief Handbook". The handbook lists the following as methods to keep ceremonies interesting:

- **Keep them simple**
- **Keep them short**
- **Fit them to everyday experience.**
- **Don't use the same ceremony over and over. Try to make each one a little different.**

The last suggestion was a surprise. Common consensus has always been that ceremonies are always the same. However, after studying this list I realized that this was written for den chiefs. The ceremonies they would hold are held much more often and less formal. But, we can take some good points from this list.

The suggestion of keeping things short and simple is a good plan. This idea is not only good for ceremonies. We have been using these suggestions in other areas. In particular, all district meetings are now held to a fixed, relative short amount of time and we end on time. Holding meetings to a short fixed amount of time has also caused us to make things simple since we now don't a lot of time to waste.

A search of online sources for the crossover ceremony comes back with hundreds of pages. Looking through many of them, there was no real consistency in how the ceremony is done. However, there was similarity in all of them. There is always a representative of the pack, the boys that are transitioning, the Troop representatives, and the bridge. Most of the internet pages were of particular troops from all across the country holding ceremonies. I was searching for scripts of ceremonies. But, I didn't find any of those. I'm sure they are out there. The pages with pictures almost all have quotes from the boys about how they thought the ceremony was the coolest thing they have ever seen.

Chapter III

Methods

In detail, I feel that that Cub Scouts that are properly recognized by their Cub leaders, fellow Cub Scouts, and eventually their troop leaders, with properly impressive ceremonies, in particular the crossover ceremony, will become active Boy Scouts for years. I think the serious and impressive nature of ceremonies make an indelible impression on young Cub Scouts. Ultimately, I think this impression of ceremony and wanting to take part in ceremonies and receive rewards will be one of the main reasons they will stay in the Cub Scouts, crossover into Boy Scouting and stay in Scouting after crossover.

The method I used in my study was very simple. I tried to study every aspect of the crossover ceremony in an attempt to improve its effectiveness. Over the years, very few of the Cub Scout Packs in our district had a standard and consistent method for holding crossover ceremonies. Nothing was standard. The packs would hold them on demand, not at a particular fixed date. The ceremonies were held at one place one time and another place at another time. The ceremony participants were different. Nothing was ever the same. My method was to study all aspects of the crossover (History, where, who, why, when, etc). Then try to generalize good methods and develop some standards and use our commissioner staff and OA brothers to insure crossovers happen. Standardization was basically what I wanted to develop. However,

standardization is a bit too strong a word. Being commissioners we are continuously trying not to tell people how to do things.

My interest in this initiative is studying and improving the crossover ceremony in our district. In particular, my part where I am most needed is making sure there is a ceremony and that is done with dignity and with all of the pomp, regalia, and accoutrements needed to ensure that they will be remembered forever by the Cub Scouts. It is meant to be the most impressive and important ceremony in a Cub Scouts life. This ceremony represents the exact moment they become Boy Scouts.

In years past, most packs had an affiliated troop and sometimes other type units sponsored by the same organization, sharing the same unit number and meeting in the same building. They often had common committee members. Most of the boys in the troop came from the pack and felt vested in it. The younger Cub boys would see the older Scouts doing Scout things. Sometimes they would be allowed to do Scouting things together. Most times they would have a younger Boy Scout serving as Den Chief from the troop that they knew, liked, and would want to emulate. This creates a strong desire to be a member of their Den Chiefs' troop. The troop leaders would help the Cub leaders with problems, because many of them were previous leaders in the same pack. They would have their own crossovers and it was kind of a family affair. There were just

many more interactions between Scouts and Cubs on all levels. So high retention and crossover was a forgone conclusion.

In our district, this association with several type units sponsored by the same organization has broken down. Very few of our troops and packs are sponsored by the same organizations these days. As, I would imagine, this is true of almost everywhere. Years ago, almost every pack had an associated troop and/or other type Scout unit sponsored by the same organization. To have a proper crossover ceremony representatives of the boys pack and the troop he is joining have to be participating. So, another initiative of our district is to link up packs with troops that are not sponsored by the same organization. This initiative helps me in my study since when these connections are made we have the proper people to perform the ceremony. When the Cub unit agrees it becomes the, so-called, feeder pack for the Scout troop. We must also stress that the boys in these packs get exposure to the districts other troops at outings and can join any they wish. They are encouraged to visit any troop, not just the one we have associated in this way. However, this troop is usually selected. The closest unit is usually chosen. Distance and travel is a major concern these days. The units that we have connected this way meet near each other and generally serve the same community.

The initial connection of the leaders of these units was done through roundtable contacts. Roundtables have become important in our district again. They had lost

favor and gotten stale over the last few years. Many of our leaders think the roundtable is out of date. They think everything they need to know is available online. So, they don't come to roundtable. We also have leaders that were Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts as youth. Many of these do not think they need roundtable or training. Our councils and districts send much information electronically straight to the unit leaders thus reducing the immediate need and effectiveness of the roundtable. Everyone thinks they are so high tech. All of our modern electronic gadgets have really reduced the amount of face to face and ear to ear communication. This type of personal communication is really important in commissioning.

So, we as commissioners have started changing things with consideration given to the times in which we live. As a money and time saving measure, both Boy Scout and Cub Scout roundtables meet together in our district. Getting these leaders together and planning crossovers and working together was a natural occurrence when the roundtables were combined. Now, we are having more ceremonies. They now hold crossover ceremonies together. The troop supplies boys and men to hold the ceremonies.

Our district is also hosting Cub Scout and Boy Scout combined camporees. The main two driving forces for doing this was economics and taking Cub Scout program to a new level in our district. This allows the Cubs and their parents to be exposed to Boy Scout camping activities. Being from a very rural forested

area of Tennessee interest in camping, hunting, and fishing is quite high. So there is great interest in Cubs going camping and bringing their parents. They bring their parents and we have combined as well as separate Cub and Scout activities. We always have campfire with ceremony. Sometimes it is combined and sometimes separate. We prefer to have them combined so the Cubs can witness the OA call out ceremonies.

My effort to emphasize ceremony is also being echoed and supported by our councils Order of the Arrow lodge. Pellissippi Lodge of Great Smoky Mountain Council and its chapters are helping increase interest in the Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts by emphasizing OA presence in full regalia doing dance and ceremony at council, district, and unit events. They have been supplying brothers and teams to perform impressive crossovers as well as other events in numbers and in full regalia. Our Cumberland Chapter of the Pellissippi Lodge OA as well as the lodge itself is also supplying regalia to both OA and non-OA leaders to do crossover ceremonies. The young OA boys really get a kick out of doing this service. There are only so many brothers that can be on ceremony teams for the lodge and chapter. So, this allows other brothers that wish to participate an avenue to contribute. The younger brothers can take part in the crossover, as their parts are simpler than they would be in official OA ceremonies. My study was concerning the crossover ceremony. But, I must say that any OA ceremony or dance is the most impressive thing that our Cub Scouts see. When we allow

them to camp at camporees, the OA ceremony is always among the most talked about events by the Cub Scouts.

In every endeavor, throughout history, ceremony has been used to express the recognition of significant events and people. Over the eons, ceremony has become more and more elaborate using pomp and circumstance. So many of our organizations use ceremony we don't even realize it. We have ceremonies for birthdays, holidays, graduations, weddings, religious events, and special occasions. As I writing part of this paper, I am watching the inaugural ceremony.

Individual recognition is very important to everyone. To a Cub Scout, recognition by name is one of his most important goals. To be recognized in front of den mates is very important. Ceremonies fulfill a deep seeded need for recognition. The crossover ceremony is a ceremony that is designed to recognize the individual. It is very symbolic of a member of a pack coming of age and crossing a bridge as an individual to become a member of a troop.

The crossover is arguably the most important ceremony in a Cub Scouts life. Some say the arrow of light ceremony is more important. Personally, I think it is the crossover. Some units combine these into one ceremony. I actually met with some leaders that do not think holding ceremonies is that important. They have just been handing out awards and ranks without any fanfare or real recognition.

When I started my study, I noted that several packs were not really holding any solemn, serious ceremonies of any kind. Sometimes, humor is injected into these ceremonies. This has to be done very carefully, if at all. Humor can completely ruin the moment. I also noted that many Cub Scout packs might not be having ceremonies when they should. Some packs really have no set ceremonies. So, one of my aims is insuring that ceremonies, crossover included, are taking place and they are done with proper seriousness. For the packs that have not been holding proper ceremonies, I have been asking them to use the symbolism and regalia of the American Indian. The American Indian influences are throughout Boy Scouting. This initiative has been enthusiastically supported by a parallel effort of the lodge and our districts chapter of the Order of the Arrow. I wanted to investigate using Indian Ceremony in the crossover ceremony. Other districts have been using the OA to help with crossover ceremonies. So, I wanted to see just how much this would help our district.

Some of our Packs have been combining the crossover with courts of honor. We don't recommend doing that. Being the ceremony that represents crossing over into the Boy Scouts, the feeling in my district is that it should not be performed with other ceremonies or at a court of honor. The crossover is so important it should be done by itself. Many packs combine the crossover with their Blue and Gold Banquets. You must be careful combining events. If done properly, the ceremony will take a good amount of time and if done with other ceremonies they take too long. The only other ceremony that we have witnessed being performed

with crossover was the Arrow of Light Ceremony. This ceremony is the only one that is appropriate. But, here again the time ran really long. When the ceremonies run long and boring. The younger boys get restless and loose interest. There are those leaders that do not think the Arrow of Light ceremony should be done with the crossover, as well.

February is the month that Webelos Scouts normally transition to Boy Scouts. It is very important that crossover ceremonies are done at this time. Many packs hold the crossover ceremony at their Blue & Gold Banquet. This banquet is traditionally held in February. If you have boys ready to transition, they must not be made to wait. The longer they wait, the less likely they will be good enthusiastic Boy Scouts. It is proper to have the ceremonies at other times. But, they must be done when the boys have completed their Webelos requirements.

Many districts actually hold a district wide crossover ceremony. We have not attempted anything like this. Our District is over 100 miles wide and scheduling all the packs coming together would not be easy. We have discussed it at roundtable. But, as of yet no leaders seem interested. In more urban districts this would probably work well and could be something to consider. If only one or two crossovers were done per year per district, they could be made very elaborate with many more participants. The costs could be shared among more packs and money could be saved. We have been considering combining young or smaller packs with others to help them get started doing their ceremonies.

My district is extremely lucky to have a true Native American and veteran as one of our commissioners. Commissioner Deverrell Mahooty is a Zuni from western New Mexico. All of us that travel to Philmont will appreciate how far away that is. Deverrell helps the district and me with my research by performing various parts at ceremonies in his regalia. He brings a real sense of dignity, seriousness, and authenticity to the occasion. Dressed in his Native American regalia, he is impressive. He knows the power of ceremony, having gone through many ceremonies held at his pueblo in his youth and his service as a veteran. He along with the brothers of the OA have really helped me in my study.

You can't always be lucky enough to have real live Indians hold your ceremonies. However, we all have Armed Service Veterans in our numbers and they make superior leaders of ceremonies. In our district, we are also very honored to have a retired Naval Officer as a leader in our District. Jim Cose is a retired submarine captain and the Chartered Organization Representative for his VFW Posts pack and troop. He performs crossover ceremonies in the Claiborne County section of our district. They were more military and well rehearsed.

The location where a ceremony is held makes a big difference. The locations are varied throughout the district. Lately, our district has been having roundtables outside. Roundtables had been held in the basement of a local church and had gotten rather stale and unattended over the last few years. So the Roundtable

Commissioners started shaking things up by having roundtables outside at a nearby state park and serving dinner over a camp stove. The attendance rose dramatically. We have also been trying this technique with crossover ceremonies. The crossovers held in Claiborne County have been held at an outdoor pavilion in the shadow of Cumberland Gap. The Cumberland Gap is a perfect place to hold ceremonies. In addition to being a very beautiful location, there is a historical mystique all about the area. It symbolizes an ancient crossover point from the eastern US to the wild, wild, west. Another crossover was held at Cove Lake State Park. Being outside makes all the difference. The Indian theme and OA brothers work so well outside with the darkness, feathers, and torches. However, it doesn't work too well in the winter.

Even though I found that there were several ceremonies to celebrate Cub Scout to Boy Scout transition, I believe that the crossover ceremony is the most effective. This crossover ceremony has such a strong symbol in the actual bridge. The center of the bridge represents the point at which the Cub Scout becomes the Boy Scout. The Cubmaster or Webelos Leader being on one side of the bridge represents the Cub Scouts the boy is leaving. Walking across the bridge and meeting the Scoutmaster represents being welcomed into the Boy Scouts. The act of the Scoutmaster and any other Boy Scouts shaking the new Boy Scouts hand and asking him to take the oath to become a member of their troop is serious. It is something the new Scout will remember forever. It makes the bond with the troop immediate.

We have been making sure that there is a proper bridge at the ceremony. Over the years, some bridges have been pretty poorly made. A bridge that falls apart during the ceremony is not very impressive. Seriously, problem with props during ceremonies can ruin the mood and render a ceremony ineffective and maybe detrimental.

When a young boy becomes a Cub Scout most do not understand the true meaning of a promise. They do not fully understand the true implications of reciting the Cub Scout Promise. It is only after memorizing it and reciting it many times that they begin to realize its seriousness and true meaning. Repeating it along with den mates at every meeting drives home its seriousness. It takes time for a young one to learn exactly what making a promise means. The making of a promise, at this point, is beginning to take effect. Really young Cubs don't fully understand that what they say in the promise is expected of them. But, by the time a boy becomes a Webelos Scout, he should be fully aware of what making a promise or oath means. So, taking the oath to become a Boy Scout and keeping it is a very meaningful step.

Every unit has different ceremonies. Some units have old ceremonies that have evolved over the years. Some units do not put much emphasis on ceremonies. Many Cub Scout leaders do not fully appreciate the importance of ceremonies, including the crossover. Some have abbreviated ceremonies or make it a comical

situation due to inexperience or feeling uncomfortable. Hopefully, every district has new or relatively new units that have never had a ceremony. For these new units and leaders, the commissioners have been making an effort to stress the importance of ceremonies in general and in particular the crossover. For these units, the district is assisting in all aspects of the crossover. Coaching new leaders in performing ceremonies for the first time is very helpful.

Chapter IV

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The results of my theory and study are positive. The numbers of Cub Scouts that have become Boy Scouts in Cumberland District has risen during my study time. As of this writing, a very high percentage of boys that participated in crossover ceremonies are still registered with Boy Scout Troops. The emphasis on holding good crossover ceremonies in our district has also increased the amount of interest that all of our units have in all ceremonies. The American Indian flavor and influences we have been promoting with Akela being represented as an indian and the OA Brothers in the crossover ceremony have piqued the interest of our younger Cub Scouts. Since the Cub Scouts come to camporees, they know all of the members of the OA from the call-outs at campfires. They have become interested in the Order of the Arrow, even though, they know little about it. But, they do know you can't be a member unless you're a Boy Scout. The OA brothers have been doing more work and are more visible on the district level. This has been something they have wanted to accomplish for a long time.

Chapter V

SUMMARY

Emphasizing ceremony will help keep young boys interested in the Cub Scouts. Holding impressive crossover ceremonies will instill a desire to become Boy Scouts. Young kids these days are what you might call sensation freaks. That means they are extremely visual and need a lot of stimulation. Young Cub Scouts watching good ceremonies, especially the crossover, with plenty of pageantry and regalia will keep them interested. Ceremonies need to be short and sweet. Long ceremonies are boring to young boys. If they get disinterested, you have lost them.

Our emphasis on using Indian regalia and ceremony has raised interest in all levels of the Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and the Order of the Arrow in our district. However, after looking at all of the web pages from around the United States, I ultimately think it does not matter if the ceremony is done in any particular style. Young boys do respond to Indians, though.

What matters is that ceremonies are held regularly throughout the year and they are performed properly and seriously. Cub Scouts of any rank dislike not being rewarded soon after achievement. Webelos Scouts that are not allowed to crossover may drop out. Do not allow that to happen. Young packs and troops should be helped develop their ceremonies, in particular the crossover ceremony. Commissioners should ask each pack leaders when they are

performing their ceremonies. If they are deficient or need help, help them with what they need. Each pack and troop should have the corresponding other. If they do not, the unit commissioners for those units should help them find one. You need both the Webelos leader and the Boy Scout Leaders to do any of the transition ceremonies.

Change things up. Have ceremonies in interesting places. Ask your Order of the Arrow brothers in your district to help with crossover ceremonies. As commissioners, attend ceremonies, in particular crossover ceremonies. Take part. Wear regalia and carry a torch, at least wear your OA sash. Be there!

If we as commissioners and unit leaders take ceremonies seriously the boys will take them seriously. Good ceremonies make boys think deeply. They think about being in ceremonies, hearing their name called out, receiving recognition, earning ranks, receiving their Arrow of Light, and crossing over someday. They think about someday dressing in Indian regalia and taking part in future ceremonies. Once the time comes, they will eagerly and gladly crossover and become good Boy Scouts, looking forward to other challenges and advancements.

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