

## TRADITIONS

What makes something a tradition? Something must consistently reoccur in thought or action over generations, becoming a pattern of behavior. This could be because of religious belief, customs or stories relating to the past that are accepted as historical. Traditions can be oral or written but must have cultural continuity in social attitudes, customs, and institutions.

The end of each year brings with it many traditions. Some traditions are linked to various religions; others are secular in nature. Some examples that come to mind are the Thanksgiving turkey with family and friends, Religious Services, special meals, the Christmas Tree and decorations, mistletoe, and ringing in the New Year.

Families and groups have traditions. In general, Church traditions are very long standing and may actually be written as ceremonies to be performed or witnessed at specific times. Organizational traditions may be as old as the institution. They may also be written or expressed as ceremonies. Younger institutions may have traditions that are still evolving around a central theme. Family traditions are carried from one generation to another and because they are not normally in written form may evolve slightly from one generation to the next. Each generation may add to or delete from what has been passed down to them depending on their perception of the past and future desires. Some traditions are, or seem to be immutable while other traditions can be more flexible.

The Boy Scouts of America is a relatively young organization with many long standing traditions, as well as traditions in the making currently stated as policy. They may come from historical events or in memory of a particular action or event. They may be evolving from current social ethics, training, or practice but are all rooted in the Scouting Mission.

Scouting traditions remind us that it is the mission of the Boy Scouts of America to serve others by helping to instill values in young people and, in other ways, to prepare them to make ethical choices during their lifetime in achieving their full potential. The values we strive to instill are based on those found in the *Scout Oath and Law*.

As members of The Boy Scouts of America, we can have a large impact upon its traditions. Although Scouting traditions look straightforward many have underlying purposes not easily discerned. We can pass them on to the next generation intact or change them slightly to suit our current situations. By altering traditions or traditions in the making, we may also alter those underlying purposes thereby significantly changing the intent. As Commissioners we are the front line quality control officers between the National Organization and Units. When we observe others slightly altering policy to fit their agenda we should point out the potential consequences of any deviation from tradition or tradition in the making.

Is it possible that some small change, followed by other small changes over time, could significantly impact the Scouting ideal?

As an example, the Scout Law is held in high esteem worldwide as an ideal for all people. What part of that would you want to change?