

# FIRED-UP FOR EXPLORING

By EDWARD THOMPSON, Fire Commissioner, New York City

**T**HERE IS SOMETHING about a fireman that makes him go above and beyond the call of duty. Of course, his primary job is to educate the public, assist in fire prevention, and eventually to extinguish fires. But, he is also the kind of citizen who likes to contribute to the common good, who feels concern for America's number one resource—its people.

In all parts of the country, firemen have been active in Scouting, serving as unit leaders, merit badge counselors, and in numerous other ways. Just last year, more than 75,000 Firemanship merit badges were earned, a large part of them counseled and approved by firemen. Since 1911 nearly 1.5 million Firemanship merit badges have been earned.

However, we of the New York Fire Department felt for a long time that we should be helping in other ways. Several years ago former fire commissioner, Edward F. Cavanagh, Jr., now deputy mayor of the city, inaugurated a plan whereby Explorer posts and ships could be sponsored by the city's fire stations. A letter was sent to all stations inviting department members having a Scouting background and those interested in the program to meet with the fire commissioner and Scout council representatives to set up the program.

More than one hundred officers and members attended that first meeting. Using these men, pilot groups were set up to get experience in the formation and leadership of Explorer units. Since then there has been a gradual increase in the number of units.

Men in the various branches of the fire service have been wholehearted in contributing time and talent to the success of the program. A considerable number of the Explorers enrolled in these posts are interested in knowing more about entering the fire-fighting profession. They are eager for the kind of information and training that we can give them. But whether a young man is interested in firemanship as a lifework or not, we want to help him develop a better understanding so that

as a participating citizen he will always be a friend of safety and fire prevention.

Explorers in department posts receive considerable training in fields related to our work. These include first aid, transportation of the injured, rescue breathing and resuscitation, and use of fire extinguishers. In addition to making such instruction available to the posts and ships we sponsor, the department is always ready to extend such help to other Scout groups. The department also engages in seamanship training, where the resources of our marine units come in to play in a very practical and effective way.

The work done by these young citizens has aided immeasurably in the furtherance of fire-prevention programs. They distribute literature, man displays at Scout expositions, set up displays in merchants' windows, and attend Scout meetings to request cooperation of local Scout groups in fire-safety. The brush fire campaigns and beach area education programs are other projects in which they have worked. They have also acted as guides for hundreds of visitors during probationary graduation exercises on Welfare Island and at firehouses during open-house periods.

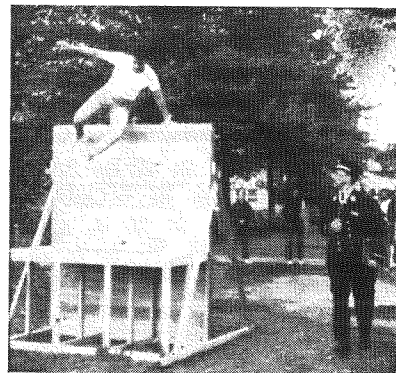
Last May we staged our second annual Explorer competition for department Explorer units at the Welfare Island Fire Department Training Center. Events included first aid, hose rolling and stretching, bucket brigade races, and numerous Scoutcraft and physical-fitness skills. Our units do not confine their activity to the one specialty—they engage in all six Exploring experience areas.

Our department's aim is to double the twenty-five Explorer units sponsored by fire companies. We find that the fathers of these Explorer-age boys are genuinely interested and helpful in the work of their sons. In many cases, this parent cooperation has been the key to the success of a unit.

I have reported the work of the New York Fire Department, but I am fully aware that through the years fire



Annual competition at New York Fire Department Training Center included testing Explorers in skills like first aid (above) and running obstacle course (below).



departments throughout America have worked closely with Scout groups. Just last year, members of the Boy Scouts of America distributed 2.75 million fire-prevention posters. And more than 1 million Scouts served as junior firemen and junior forest rangers.

Even more important has been the enthusiasm Scouts and Scout trained young men have shown in helping to clean out attics, reducing fire hazards, and spreading the gospel of fire prevention.

We are happy to do our part as good citizens in helping Scouting. But frankly, our efforts can never equal the help that we get from Scouts.