CAST

By Commander
THOMAS J. KEANE, U.S.N.R.

Scout training does register, sometimes in unexpected ways, as this experience of Tom Keane, one-time director of Sea Scouting, shows.

"HOW MANY COUNTRIES HAVE YOU BEEN IN?" "How many ships have you sailed?" "Were you ever shipwrecked?" "How many battles have you fought in?"

The questions came thick and fast from all parts of the group seated on benches in a semicircle around me. There were thirty of them—young men, well-groomed and looking very trim in their Sea Scout uniforms. They had invited me to a meeting on their ship, and after the opening ceremonies they asked me to talk to them about the sea and ships.

We talked informally for several hours, discussing the double salute, which is a unique Sea Scout ceremony, the origin of the use of bells on shipboard to tell the passage

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of time, the custom of having side boys at the gangway when officers or guests come aboard a ship. Between questions about the fascinating lore of the sea there were occasional sorties into more personal matters . . . falling in love, dating girls, and even my own preference as to blondes, brunettes, and redheads. Finally it was time for me to leave so I briefly summarized our talk.

"Men, we've talked of many things—customs, ceremonies, ships, the sea," I said, "but we haven't talked about the reason you and I are in Sea Scouting. We're not Sea Scouts just to become good seamen, or to perform ceremonies, or merely to have good times sailing and cruising. The real reason we're in Sea Scouting is that we want to develop ourselves mentally, physically, and morally so that we may become patriotic American citizens, able leaders in our communities, and, above all else, gentlemen in the highest sense of the word. We try to live by one of the finest codes of ethics ever devised by man—the Scout Oath and the Scout Law.

"Now, you're all fine-looking fellows, but that in itself doesn't tell much about you. It's your words, conduct, and actions that reveal you and show others your true worth. Be loyal to your leaders and friends, trustworthy in your undertakings, thoughtful and considerate in your relations with all people—and one thing more—*always be courteous, because courtesy is the outward expression of a gentleman.*"

It had been a pleasant evening exchanging information and swapping tales, but not an exceptional one, I thought, as I walked to my hotel. I could recall hundreds of similar visits with friendly Sea Scout ships and flatteringly attentive young men. This had been just another one—or so I thought.

Next morning at ten o'clock there was a knock on my door, and outside stood a delegation of five of last evening's audience smartly dressed in Sea Scout uniforms. A handsome lad, about seventeen years old, seemed to be the spokesman.

"Sir," he said, "after you left last night all the fellows talked about the things you told us, and then we voted unanimously to invite you to write in our log."

The log is the book in which Sea Scouts keep a record of everything that happens on board their ships. I told the delegation that I was honored by their request and would gladly make an entry in the log. But, as I stretched my hand to take the book from the lad who was carrying it, he seemed to take an even firmer grip on it. Puzzled, I looked to the leader who explained the hesitancy.

"Sir, we want you to write something special in our log," he said. I assured him I would certainly think of "something special" to write, but still there was no move to give me the book. Once more the leader spoke up.

"But sir, we *know* what we want you to write in it." With that he directed the log-holder to put the book on the desk and open it to a fresh page.

As I sat down, fountain pen in hand, I asked, "Now, son, what is it that you want me to write?"

Although I was still a comparatively young man at the time, my life had already been singularly rich in unusual, thrilling, and adventurous experiences. I did not know as I looked up at the young leader that I was about to have one of the rarest and most dramatic incidents of my whole life. When he did not reply immediately I repeated the question, "Son, what shall I write?"

"Sir, please write 'Courtesy is the outward expression of a gentleman.' " He said it simply, earnestly, as young men caught in an emotion speak.

It was fortunate that I had to bend down over the page while I wrote. It would never have done for them to see the tears in my eyes. Never have I written so carefully; never have I written so happily!

As I wrote, I recalled that I had talked with those thirty young men for the better part of two hours; that I must have spoken thousands of words in answer to their questions; that we had ranged over the subjects that young men have uppermost in their minds and hearts—adventure and romance, war and victory, distant lands and distant seas. Yet the words they chose to keep in their log, the words by which they wanted to remember me, were only eight in number . . . eight words that seemed to me then, and even now, to encompass the true spirit of Scouting—"Courtesy is the outward expression of a gentleman."

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ELEVEN YEARS LATER a fleet of warships was anchored in Belfast Harbor, Northern Ireland. This was one of the great fleets that was soon to bombard the coast of Normandy preliminary to landing Allied invasion forces

The day before the fleet left on this historic mission I was on board the U.S.S. "Tuscaloosa," the flagship of the fleet, making an official call on the admiral in my capacity as port officer. Then, as my name was mentioned, a young officer approached me and asked if I were the Commander Keane who had been national director of

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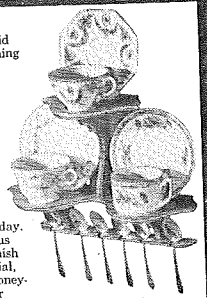
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TRAIN 'EM

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"There is one thing that we think works well. Whenever we take a new boy into the troop I visit his home and he passes his Tenderfoot requirements in front of his mother and father. At that time I try to find out some of the father's interest and I show the dad how he can help in the troop, too. This is a good time to sign the father up as a Scouter."

Basic Philosophy

"Have you any special philosophy relating to boys and Scouting?" I asked. "Only this," he answered. "When you've once made a commitment to boys, don't change it. When we've once announced a trip, we've never canceled it on account of bad weather or for any other reason. That idea applies to any promise we make to boys.

"Well, maybe this other bit of philosophy, too—be sure the stage is set so that the boy knows how, knows what he is expected to do, and has the tools to work with—then give him the job, put him on his own, and *let him*. That's about all there is to it."

I still am not sure of all the factors that contribute to the strength of this strong troop, but I'm convinced that Scoutmaster Poundstone's first statement sums up a good deal of the troop's basis of success: "We just believe that Scouting is important enough for fathers to put their very best into it. When the fathers feel that way about Scouting, it's just natural that boys will, too."

Maybe that's all there needs to be to it. A lot of fathers, believing that Scouting is important enough to put their very best into it, train their boys and then trust 'em. *END*

"Sure, he can stay out all night, and I'm in Dutch for coming home at 2 a.m."

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Sea Scouting. When I admitted that I was, he then said, "Sir, you probably don't remember me, but I have never forgotten you."

To hide my embarrassment, I asked him where we had met.

"Many years ago," he said, "you visited the Sea Scout ship of which I was a member. A group of us called on you in your hotel room and asked you to write something you had said to us the night before. I was the lad who carried the log."

With that he handed me his calling card, and after I had read his name I was about to put it in my pocket when he asked me to turn it over. Picture my pride and pleasure as I read the words printed there—eight words a Sea Scout, now a young naval officer, had treasured from boyhood to the very eve of battle—"Courtesy is the outward expression of a gentleman." *END*

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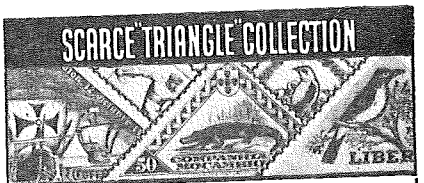
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