

John Hood

Scoutmaster Retirement

December 2008

Tonight is my final opportunity to speak to you as Scoutmaster of this awesome Troop. Tonight marks the official transfer of the position of Scoutmaster to Joel Sands. Joel and I have worked towards this moment for more than a year and I know without a shadow of a doubt that he will be an EXCELLENT scoutmaster with his years of scouting experience, heart for youth and his achievement of Eagle Scout to help guide his leadership. That experience is something I could never share with you because I am not an Eagle Scout.

Before I transfer this responsibility to Joel, I would like to reflect a little bit.

I would now ask that my wonderful wife and my boys join me. You see, it is not just me that serves you in this role. My family is always there beside me, encouraging me, supporting me, and even providing sound advice for me from time to time. As I thank you tonight for the incredible opportunity to serve you as Scoutmaster, please realize that this thank you comes not only from me, but from my family. Tim, Rick and I often joke about getting shirts that say "SCOUTING – "IT'S ALL ABOUT MY KID .. NOT YOURS". It is actually pretty funny to me, because sometimes I feel like some people think that on occasion, but in reality; it really has been quite the opposite. In order to serve the larger community of scouts, sometimes my boys have taken a back seat with their Dad, so I could do a good job as Scoutmaster. Guys .. I thank you for that and the opportunity you allowed me to have. You have not been selfish and I am grateful. Elizabeth has given up many evenings and countless weekends with me so that I could be there for you. Thank you for this gift.

Little did I realize the journey that I would travel when in 1996, Elizabeth got Tyler involved in scouting. These two are the ones that are responsible for Gavin's and my involvement. While the boys were Cub Scouts I was able to really see and experience the great opportunities scouting provided to our boys. I was able to serve as a Den Leader and a Committee Chairman. I learned a lot and found out how easy it was to touch the lives of other boys and their families in a very positive way.

Once coming over to the troop there was not a lot of down time between Committee Chairman and Scoutmaster. I had planned to take a well deserved rest after completing my committee chairman job, but God and his helpers had another plan.

Towards the end of 2001 I accepted the responsibility of Scoutmaster for this Troop. I thought this was not going to be very hard. We would figure out how to structure everything ... do some training for boy leadership, knock off the rough edges and it would be smooth sailing from there on out. I forgot about one little detail. Every six months we change out our boy leadership and it all starts over again! There is no smooth sailing, EVER! The troop does not and will not ever run itself, but for the new Adult leadership taking over "It only takes an hour a week".

The job of Scoutmaster is to constantly help boys learn from their successes and more importantly allow them the opportunity to fail, for that is the best teacher of all. A Scoutmaster needs to provide advice and direction that allows the boys to grow at their pace. A Scoutmaster needs to also be a friend, but one that has the long team goal for the boys in mind. A goal that imbeds high values, builds strong character and embraces service to others. I hope as you think about me you can say .. I have been those things. I hope each of you feel I have made some sort of positive difference in your lives. I can honestly tell you, that each of you have made a difference in mine.

I was once told that I was a young inexperienced scoutmaster and I should aspire to be more like the scoutmaster that told me so. I was told this at a lost pines summer camp by a scoutmaster that inspected our camp site. I was very much insulted, because that scoutmaster had no clue what had been accomplished by our boys in that week. We started out in some trees with some pine needles under our feet and little by little, day by day, made that place our home. We improved it every day and it was the way the boys made it. You see that scoutmaster's idea of a leader and a model troop was to come into camp, break out every chain saw ever built by man, work 24/7 to construct a pioneering museum for everyone to come and drool over. I must be honest with you ... it was quite impressive. What it represented to me was a ton of work, an incredible amount of adult leadership, a total lack of personal scout growth and summer camp experience and a great memorial to a "MY TROOP IS BETTER THAT YOUR TROOP" mentality. If there was a drop of HUMBLE in that troop it was buried under a ton of logs and rope ready to be constructed into some pioneering monstrosity.

Well, that scoutmaster was wrong, dead wrong ... at least I think so. I was less experienced than I am now, but I think I was getting it right. The measure of getting it right to me lies directly with the character of boys in your troop and is measured by the quality of the Eagle Scouts it produces. I am very proud of our Eagle Scouts and I am very proud of the boys in our troop. I can tell you story after story of the compliments I have received about the boys in our troop over the years. People go out of their way to tell me how great you guys are. We have been a fixture in Matagorda for years because of the service you have provided to that community. We are asked to help the Pflugerville community more than any other troop I know. That

is not because of the Adult relationships we have, it is because of the awesome impression you guys leave behind when you serve others. When we attended Rancho Cortez this spring I was again complimented on how well behaved and polite you guys were and they get a lot of scouts and youth at that ranch. To me this really is the measure that we are doing good things. It is your character and the way you treat others when adults are not around to direct you, that tells me what really great guys you are and together we are getting it right.

For those of you that think that sometimes you are personally challenged by really hard stuff we do, be patient with yourself and give yourself the opportunity to grow and gain experience. You can do anything! Two years ago I watched a boy who was so scared of heights that it took almost the whole day to encourage him just to climb 20 feet up in the air on a telephone pole and then come back down. This year I was proud to be with that same boy as we took off through the trees, 65' in the air on the most difficult Challenge course at Cypress Valley. Several weeks ago I was honored to be asked to attend an Eagle COH for a young man that started his Boy Scout journey with Troop 4277 but after a few years moved to San Antonio. My strongest memory of this scout was our backpack trip at Lake Georgetown. He literally cried for almost 4 straight miles and vowed to never ever backpack again. It took every trick in the book to get him not to leave his backpack and all its equipment in the middle of the hike. I was absolutely amazed to find out that this same young man lead a group of 13 and 14 year olds on a 68 mile backpacking trip through New Mexico not too long ago. I have seen boys do incredible things that I could never imagine accomplishing like swimming a solid mile. I witnessed a great accomplishment this summer with two guys that could not get a canoe to go straight down a river no matter what, With some kind encouragement and teaching by one of the adults they quickly became experts in the ability maneuver however they wanted and I found them easily moving from the front to the back of our group at will. Two summers ago I witnessed a young scout that really struggled with idea of repelling down the face of a 60' wall at Enchanted Rock and would have given up on the idea if it was not for another scout, an Eagle scout, that decided he would repel right next to this boy and encourage him through the process and break through his fear. I have witnessed the birth of an idea from the giving heart of a young scout that once thought "What about our troop overseas during the holidays" can we do something for them. From this young scout born was the concept of "Popcorn for the Troops" which today is a National program. I have been told that it has had it's roots traced back to a troop in central Texas. I know that Troop and I am proud to say I know that scout. This past summer I felt the determination of my own son to complete his Eagle project from the seat of a wheelchair when it would have been very easy to just give up after the bad car accident he was in.

I was once told by a man I worked for and that I respect very much to this day “**THAT YOU NEVER KNOW HOW FAR YOU CAN GO UNTIL YOU GET THERE**”. What that really means is that if you challenge yourself you can accomplish considerable more than you ever expect of yourself. I encourage each of you to continually challenge yourself to experience as much as you can and always put yourself in the game. Sometimes opportunities only come once and you never want to regret not taking the opportunity when it is presented to you. It will keep your life full.

At the Foxbottom Campout last month ... along with a well tattered flag, I retired my old friend. My **ONLY** scout shirt of 12 years. To me, this shirt represented all the memories and experiences I have had over the past years in scouting. It really held my spirit as a Scoutmaster and I thought of no more fitting way to end my tenure than dedicating this shirt to the boys it helped me served. I collected ash from that special ceremony so that in some way I could pass on my Scoutmaster spirit to each of you.

Tonight I have that for you. May it always remind you of the experiences you have had with me in scouting. May it also encourage you to always be your best in all aspects of life. I pray that each of you will continue to strive to achieve Eagle scout and that this accomplishment will play a significant role in the way you live out your life. May it also be an example of what service to others is really all about and remind you of not only me, but of all the volunteers in scouting that have worked hard to served you in your journey to manhood.

Throughout the years as Scoutmaster for our Troop I have had more fun then I deserve. I have enjoyed watching my boys grow into young men that I am eternally proud of. I am so grateful for a program that has allowed me to be so involved in many of their life experiences. I have been privileged to be able to help many boys grow in skill, leadership and maturity. Each of you has your own place in my heart.

This is not a one adult show ... not even close. Ultimately without the support of a boy's parents Boy Scouting would not be possible and my hat goes off to those parents who support their boys in their scouting effort. A special thank you also goes out to our Chartered Organization, First Baptist Church of Pflugerville which has provided a consistent place to meet so we can hold our weekly functions, courts of honor and has not only supported the troop but has made us feel welcome and an extension of their larger body and great works.

I will forever be changed by the countless boys that I worked with and some of the parents who volunteered their time to directly support me in my quest to serve our scouts. Some have been Assistant Scout Masters, Merit Badge Counselors, Troop

Committee Members, Board of Reviewers and all have demonstrated a passion for our youth.

For the last time as Troop 4277's Scoutmaster I take the time to personally give them some well deserved recognition.

This individual has been involved with the troop in several ways for many, many years. He is part of the old guard and was here years before me, he is actually one of the people that got me pointed at this troop in the first place. He has two sons, both Eagle scouts, from this troop. He filled the position of advancement chairmen for many years, he has counseled many scouts, primarily on the most important merit badges, Eagle Merit Badges. He has helped me with youth leadership training several years back. He has attended many campouts with me including a hot summer at Lost Pines. He has offered up his family's property for several memorable campouts including some of the best Bass Fishing I have ever done. Yes I did catch some nice Bass at one time. - Gary Guilbert

This individual has a gentle heart and is always looking out for the best interest of the boys. I have witnessed him spend time with scouts to help encourage and teach them. He knows how to get involved with the guys and I think of him as the biggest kid I know. I have had more fun with him over the years with practical jokes and his willingness to take some light hearted ribbing. He has a real heart for the boys and I have always admired the way he rolls up his sleeves and engages in the fun stuff with the guys. It has been a pleasure to have had your help over the years. It would have not been the same without your involvement. - Brett Tomlison

This next person has helped me on countless occasions. He has attended many campouts with us and has built the biggest camp fire I have ever been a part of earning him the name of El Feguo. I hear somewhere there is a legend written about him. His trademark is his campaign hat and his whistle. Man .. I hate that whistle! Boys, if you ever get it from him it is worth \$5 from me. Scoutmaster or not. I have been to several summer camps with him where he has a unique ability to get tons of free stuff. I remember attending Bear Creek with him where after gloating about his free camp commissioner shirt, he found it flying from the flag pole in camp. - Carlos Falcon

This individual is a quiet force of nature. I have known him for as long as I have known most anyone in scouting. He was a Den Leader in the Pack, I was Committee Chairmen for and has been on many campouts with the troop. He works a tough schedule which sometime means he has had to join us part way into a trip in order to be able to attend. I know that is not an easy thing to do and I really respect the effort he has made to be there as often as he can for both his boys and to help me. He is a

quiet person, so it might take you a little while to get to know him but he is a great person. One thing I can tell you is he is a very difficult person to go canoeing with. For some reason he enjoys spending his time as much out of the boat in the water as he does in it. I thought this was just a summer canoe trip thing, but I found out with just a simple assignment like canoeing drinking water into Foxbottom on our last campout he could not resist the urge to take the plunge! - Steve Rodriguez

This next person I have known for just a few years, but have the greatest respect for. He is the poster child for "How can I help" and by the way .. don't give me a title. He has opened up his house to us for what is now an annual COH pool party. He took on a HUGH challenge and organized the only out of state campout this troop has had since I have been involved and did not allow any road blocks detour him. Because of him we have a much larger group attending next year. He helped us find the coolest house in Matagorda this fall. His involvement in the Rotary Club has opened leadership training opportunities to our oldest scouts which has been an awesome addition to their leadership training. - Bill Fischer

This person I have known since the days of Pack 407. She served as a Den leader at that time. Several years ago she stepped up in this troop to accept the role of Activities Chairperson. I have to tell you, for me personally this was a huge burden lifted off my shoulders. In addition to all the other things I do as Scoutmaster, planning for most of the events fell on me. I cannot fully express how very much I appreciate your help these past couple of years. It is no small task and the impact you have made although it served the committee, impacted me the most. It has been invaluable and has kept my sanity. Thank you so much for your support. - Jennifer Yarborough

This person is someone I have the highest respect for in his quiet knowledge of nature and the outdoors. I have learned many things from him over the years and I know I have only skimmed the surface of the knowledge of the outdoors he has. He has accompanied me on many campouts and I have truly enjoyed watching him teach scouts some of the things he knows and teaching me for that matter. I enjoy his love of photography and have personally learned several things from him about this hobby. My only regret is not being able to share more time exploring this hobby with him on campouts. He has served as our Troop Treasurer for the past few years. He is a man of great character and if you take the time to get to know him you will find what an awesome person he is. My son once told me that he is so smart he has got to be a professor of something! - Jim Grant

This person is beyond a doubt the most knowledgeable person on scouting I know. I think he is a direct decedent of Lord Baden Powell himself, he just won't admit it. He has been on many, many campouts, and told many, many stories. I can remember at least 2 winter camps he attended with me and I still remember the story of how to

make moose nose stew from the very first one. I greatly respect his dedication to scouting at all levels. He has personally helped me and the boys in the troop in so many ways. He has served as merit badge counselor for many merit badges. He was my direct assistant Scoutmaster for several years. He has been in most board of reviews and especially Eagle board of reviews where he has upheld the high standards that Eagle scout demands. To me scouting as an adult is almost 100% service to others. If you are not in it for the boys ... you are not in it. His dedication to our troop without the tie of his on boy in the troop is incredible to me. I am honored he chose our troop and he is here to help our boys. I was a witness to one of the coolest compliments I think he could ever be paid. As I spoke earlier several weeks ago we attended the Eagle COH of a former Troop 4277 scout. This scout has not been with our troop for at least 4 years. When it came time to present his mentor pin to the person that was the most influential to him in his journey to Eagle ... he presented it to John. This speaks volumes about a man that can have such a lasting impression that 4 years later he is still the most impactful person in this young man's journey. I am honored and blessed to have had the opportunity to work next to you over these seven years. - John Hines

Ok ... now let's get to the obvious!

This person has poured his heart and soul into helping this troop, not only provide opportunities to boys but also track their advancement. He has sat behind the keyboard of his computer juggling input and trying to keep scout records straight for years. He is an idea guy and has come up with many good ones for our troop. He is the reason Matagorda is a yearly destination and he has built the relationship between our troop and that community. Until recently when his son has been more involved in high school band he could be counted on for almost every campout. He has a passion for helping others and has found many opportunities for us to serve our community. He is our Charter Organization rep and was the catalyst for building the relationship between our troop and 1st Baptist Church of Pflugerville. To run scouting at the level we try and run it can easily become an everyday thing. I know for him he slightly exceeds his 1 hour a week quota. If you ask him, he describes his role as "Making the Scoutmaster Look Good" ... I like that description, but he also has a blast poking fun at the scoutmaster too. I have truly enjoyed these many years working with him to help our scouts and I have more great memories than I could possibly list. I am so very thankful for your years of dedicated service to our troop and your friendship throughout. - Rick McCown

This person has been has been Committee Chairman of this troop for as long as I have been Scoutmaster. He has some of the best organization skills of anyone I know. Throughout the seven years we have led together we have not always agreed on everything, but that has been very healthy for our troop and we both have not been

afraid to make a strong case and then live with the best decision. It has been an enjoyable relationship to say the least. I highly respect his dedication to scouting and the several generations of Eagle scouts his family represents. I can think of no better person to have done this with. I am quite proud of this troop and the boys that are in it and he has been so key to making sure we had a sound running operation. From a troop business perspective he has been the engine of this organization. He has attended so many campouts helping me and the boys. He has served as Troop Scoutmaster at many summer camps just to help me cover the load and in the latter years has been the primary summer camp scoutmaster. We have different styles but together in the roles we have I think we have been great. I am honored and blessed to work next to this man for all these years to help guide boys towards manhood. It has been a blast. I do have a serious complaint I can air without any remorse. He has way too much maroon ... EVERYWHERE! - Tim Moltz

Lastly I would like to recognize someone that really means a lot to me. This man has been with me in scouting since Webelos. His son was in the troop, got out, got in and out again. All the while he remained. He has always been by my side and helped me every way possible from counseling merit badges, to helping the youth leadership with training and mentoring. He has been on many, many campouts and has been influential with many boys including my own. He has been my backpacking partner attending almost every one and I was honored once again to have him along on our recent one. He always brings his camera and is one of main the reason I have photographic memories of me with the troop. It is hard to have that if you are the guy behind the camera most of the time. He has made an impact, so much so that two boys have thought highly enough of him to honor him as their mentor. Now, to not have grown up in scouting and then to have a son that did not stick with scouting and then to dedicate himself to serving our young men for all these years has earned my utmost respect and friendship. He has served as our Webmaster which has made it so easy to share and communicate across the troop. In all the years I have been in scouting one thing I can remember is him never turning down desert. It will never happen. You my friend are very much appreciated and your outstanding service to others is something to be admired. - Greg Schuck

OK ... My scoutmaster hour is just about over. My last duty as scoutmaster is to pass over my responsibility. Joel would you join me. I am highly honored to be passing on this responsibility to you. I know you are worthy and will be an awesome Scoutmaster. I have truly enjoyed working closely with you over the past year as we have aimed to make this transition a smooth one. I have seen the heart you have for the boys and I know your love of the outdoors. This alone is a great recipe for

success. I hope that like me you will reap the many awesome memories and rewards that serving these young men can provide.

You have heard and seen that at the last campout I retired my good friend, my one and only scout shirt which I wore for 12 straight years. It is the only shirt I had and I have a million great memories while in that shirt. It really meant a lot to me and meant more to me that I could share the spirit that it represents with our scouts. Well it is said, it is a good thing to where your "heart on your sleeve". That really means that you are open for people to see your true feelings, to me that also means being real. For this Scoutmaster, I like to think I did wear my heart on my sleeve and it is because of that, that I ask you honor me by accepting the sleeve from my scout uniform. I did burn the body of my shirt which represents my scoutmaster sprit, but I did not burn the sleeve that represents the heart of this Scoutmaster. I ask you to accept it and use it for encouragement. It has served me well and now I ask that it inspire you. It means a lot to me and I can think no more fitting item to pass on to you as you start your journey.

One more thing before I give you your patch and you take the podium. As we left Fox Bottom, my final camp as scoutmaster, and crossed the dried lake bed for the second time I found something that I thought would be very fitting to help complete this transition. There was an old stick standing in the lake bed yearning for a greater purpose. I took him home with me and with some TLC, gave him that purpose. This walking stick comes from my last campout. I give this to you, may it represent the passing of leadership and the bond between scoutmasters that cannot be broken. Our dedication to serving young men, teaching high values and building strong character will not miss a beat.

If there be any true measure of a man then by what he does, it must be by what he gives. In this regard this is where I have done my best. To all my friends in scouting, I will never forget you, you have changed my life.

Now, Joel I present you your patch and relinquish the podium so that you may close out the court of honor for YOUR troop in the manner of your choosing.