

## Little things can mean a lot

**By Tim Linscott**

*Managing Editor*

A group of local Scouts came in last week and it was great to see so many curious, young minds in action learning about their local newspaper.

I want to thank them for taking an interest in the paper and a special thank you to the leaders and moms who came to help. Scout leaders can have a profound effect on the lives of the boys they lead.

I know this first-hand.

My father, Burt Linscott, was a Scout leader for over 30 years. His service to Scouting led him to be inducted into the Great Nebraska Navy, an accomplishment he was very proud of, however, his greatest accomplishment was helping boys become men.

My father passed the torch of being the Den Master on before I was able to get into Scouts, but as I grew older saw how and heard from some of his former Scouts how he changed their lives for the better.

A brief background on my father: he grew up in Sioux City, Iowa, in a very poor neighborhood, raised by a single mother. My dad had a paper route at age five to help put food on the table, so things like Scouts wouldn't fit into his schedule or financial situation.

As a kid I always wondered why my father's closet had a rack of Scout uniforms of different sizes. The garage had four cases of new Pinewood Derby cars and there were countless Scout manuals stacked in a closet.

Whenever a Scout couldn't afford a uniform, derby car or anything at all, my dad would say, 'I think the Council has a scholarship program that will take care of it' and the boy would receive what he needed to continue in Scouts.

It wasn't until after my father passed away I learned there was no scholarship. My dad just told the boys that and bought them their uniforms, etc., on his own dime so they could go on being in Scouts and have a chance to be like some of the other kids...a chance he never had as a youth.

When my father first started in Scouts he used a management technique of motivating the boys during Scout-O-Rama. Each year the boys were to sell tickets to Scout-O-Rama and each Pack would be ranked.

"Boys, I just got off the phone with the Council," my father began. "It isn't good news."

The boys quieted down and looked curiously at my father.

"They said you are last in the region for selling tickets. They said you were the worst group of boys as far as selling was concerned they've ever seen," Burt explained. "They weren't sure they would even let us be Scouts anymore we did so poorly."

Audible moans came from the group of boys. Some looked down, defeated. Sad faces shone throughout the room.

"You know what I told them? I told them they don't know my boys. They obviously don't know my Scouts, because my Scouts are the best Scouts there are out there," Burt said, his words intensifying as he let the mood in the room build. "I told them that this group of boys was going

to surprise them this year, this group of boys was going to be at the top because we believe we can.”

The boys began to stand up and shout, getting excited, agreeing with every word. Like a preacher working his congregation into a frenzy my father started using wider hand gestures, pumping his fists and using his booming voice to get them to buy into his story.

“I told that Council to never say that again because we, yes, we, were going to be at the top of the list for sales and they would never, ever say that this group of Scouts couldn’t do something,” Burt said as the boys had been worked into a fever-pitch.

Most of the boys began jumping up and down, yelling and cheering.

“Now let’s get out there and show them how it is done!” my dad yelled and the group of boys tore off out of the room, yelling, hands in defiant victory in the air....not one of them with tickets to sell in their hands.

They all came back with enthusiasm and grabbed several books of tickets to sell.

His Pack won the most sales award that year and every year after that, the Scouts my dad led were either at the top or close to the top.

Was there ever a phone call from the Council? No one is ever for sure, the only certainty is those boys knew my dad had their back in any situation.

I can’t recall ever seeing my father cry. He misted up once, however, and no matter how many plaques or awards he received over the years, a simple business card made him tear up.

One day in my teens I was hanging out at my dad’s business after school when a young man came in and asked for the manager.

My dad came to the front, shook the man’s hand and took a business card from him. The two talked for a few minutes and the young man shook my dad’s hand on the way out. For the first time in my life I saw tears in my father’s eyes. He tucked the business card in his pocket and went back to work.

With my father being a former Marine, I knew not to ask what happened.

I found out years later that the young man was a Scout my dad took under his wing. His life at home wasn’t the greatest and he didn’t have a lot of money. My father paid for his Scouting and helped him make his Pinewood Derby car, helped him earn badges and became like a father/big brother to the boy.

All of those years later that young man came into my dad’s store and handed him his business card. He was an attorney now, married and had children. He was in town for business and stopped to simply say, ‘Thank you.’

All of the gold plaques, certificates, medals and awards my dad acquired over the years meant a lot to him. However, a simple business card, handshake and ‘thank you’ touched him more than any of those honors.

The validation that by just caring enough to help one young person make a better life for themselves was worth more to my father than anything else he’d received.

For all of those leaders out there who are helping Scouts each and every day, stay the course and know that, someday, the life of that young man may be greatly changed because of your knowledge, help and caring.