

## **OCTOBER – HOW TO HAVE A MEANINGFUL COURT OF HONOR**

### **Music Full then Under**

ANISSA: Welcome to *Scouting Magazine's* October ScoutCast. I'm Anissa Hicks with my partner in hosting duties, Owen McCullough.

OWEN: OK, listeners, we've had discussions on recruiting youth and leaders, how to start a troop, training and advancement. And now is the time to start planning those Courts of Honor.

ANISSA: This month's episode will help us figure out what we need to do to prepare for a meaningful Court of Honor.

### **Music Fades**

ANISSA: So, we invited Steve Bowen back to the show. You may remember Steve from the November 2018 episode about adults crossing over from the Cub Scout to Scouts BSA. As well as being a member of the Scouts BSA Committee and other national committees, Steve has served as both a Cubmaster and a Scoutmaster, so we look to him for guidance on this topic. Welcome to ScoutCast, Steve.

STEVE: Thank you very much. Glad to be with ya.

ANISSA: OK, so in a nutshell, what is a Court of Honor? Is it different from a recognition ceremony?

STEVE: Advancement in general has four steps: Scout learns, tested, then he or she is reviewed, and is finally recognized. Recognition is basically what we're going to be talking about in relative to Courts of Honor. There are a couple kinds of Courts of Honor. There are the Eagle Courts of Honor which are the pinnacle for a Scout, and there are the Courts of Honor up to that point. There's also something that we sort of call informal or instant recognition, and these may or may not be a ceremonies but they're all

important because they're part of the recognition process.

A Court of Honor is a formal gathering of a family, friends, peers, dignitaries to recognize the work that a Scout has done, be it during the year or even after summer camp. And the informal recognition may be something like on a campout where a Scout might have had a Board of Review on the campouts or after a troop meeting where a Scout may be recognized for a Board of Review completion. One of the big differences is that a formal Court of Honor the Scout will receive rank badges and merit badge patches and pins the informal ones they may just receive the card that announces they have graduated up a rank and then you wait and give the patches at a formal Court of Honor.

OWEN: So, Steve, are they more important than just handing the Scout their badge? Isn't it about recognition?

STEVE: Oh, my goodness, Courts of Honor are special moments. We all like to be recognized for our efforts, but they're important for a number of reasons. One is it recognizes the completion of a Scout's work. The recognition is presented in front of peers and family, and who wouldn't like that? The Scout likes to see his work rewarded and the sooner the better. It encourages a Scout maybe to do more, to work towards new goals, to set new goals. And it's definitely a representation of personal growth. So, all those are important reasons for having Courts of Honor.

ANISSA: So, how often should we have a Court of Honor?

STEVE: At least every two or three months. Don't make the Scout wait four or five, six months before any patches for his or her uniform. It's particularly important to have a Court of Honor sometime soon after summer camp. The Scouts have earned lots of merit badges and maybe qualified for a Rank Board of Review and then earned the rank or other awards, and so

it's real important that that one be handled right after summer camp, as soon as you can.

OWEN: So, Steve, I've got a son in a troop and a daughter in a troop, and my daughter just had her first Court of Honor and she got her merit badges from summer camp, got her First Class Scout awarded to her, and it was really special. And I know that these, done right, it takes some planning. How long in advance do you really need to plan a Court of Honor? What are the elements that you have to plan for?

STEVE: It should take as long as you need. Make sure that you don't short-change yourself on, the time it takes to plan, but the elements will vary. An Eagle Court of Honor, is the pinnacle, is much more involved, will take a lot more planning, organization, letters to be written, invitations, etc. But for a standard Court of Honor, to hold every two to three months, there's a planning phase. That might be started a month or so ahead of time. The troop committee will begin to talk about that in their committee meetings so that they are all on the same page. Then there needs to be some time to assign duties such as the physical arrangements, and usually these Courts of Honor are held at the location where the unit has its meetings, so unless it conflicts with a special night, say, at the church or the school or wherever they meet, generally they could be scheduled so that they fall right into their regular schedule. There needs to be some time set aside to make sure that the awards are all present. You gotta make sure you've got them on hand. You don't want to wait till the last minute and forget about having the awards. Then some Courts of Honor have a little program with it, for example, if it's the first Court of Honor after summer camp, there might be a little video to show. You just sort of need to be a good program director and pick you all these things that are necessary for all the elements that are for the Court of Honor, keep that mind and then allow the proper time. So, I would say as a rule of thumb, at least one to

two months just to be planning for it. As soon as you have one you might want to be starting to think about the next one, what we did right, what we did wrong, so you don't have those problems again.

ANISSA: This is all great information and it seems like there are a lot of components and planning, so who would be responsible for leading the charge for this planning in the Court of Honor?

STEVE: I separate the two because the Eagle Courts of Honor are a bigger deal, but a general regular Court of Honor, usually it's chaired by the head of the troop committee or a troop committee member may be in charge of advancement, or even the Scoutmaster. The parents may or may not be involved. The Senior Patrol Leader should be involved but as far as running the Court of Honor and doing all the behind-the-scenes planning, those adults are involved.

The Eagle Court of Honor, the parents probably are more involved. The same people that represent the committee and the leadership will be involved, but the parents will be more involved with this one as far as planning it because it's just generally one Scout. Now, if you have multiple Eagles having their Court of Honor together, then you might have a group of parents that work together. The more the merrier.

OWEN: Steve, you mentioned different kinds of Courts of Honor, between Eagle Court of Honor and a regular troop Court of Honor, who should the audience be and what would they get out of it? You've mentioned parents – are there older Scouts or younger Scouts? Would you even invite other age Scouts or Cub Scouts or Venturers to something like this? Who's the audience and what would they get out of it?

STEVE: There's a couple of reasons to have a broad-based audience. One is the troop so the other Scouts can sort of be stimulated by, "Oh, boy, Johnny

or Mary is getting awards and I want to get mine next time too.” So that’s an important element. The parents, certainly the institutional representatives, the pastor of the church or the head of the youth program. You want to maybe invite schoolteachers or principals or members of the community government that might have been involved or that you want to invite so they can see what your neighborhood kids are doing. Certainly, inviting other Scout leaders that want to come maybe just to see how you do it but also just to kind of add to the throng of people that are there, and they all have the same interest. So, maybe the size of the facility is the biggest limit, but you invite whoever you want to invite. Asking the newspaper, if you’re a small community probably to come and take pictures or take an article or something like that is always a good idea too. There’s a need to let people see that our Scouts are progressing, they’re growing, they’re having character and personal development.

ANISSA: OK, we’ll be right back with more on having a meaningful Court of Honor, right after this.

### **COMMERICAL: Family Camping 101**

ANISSA: So, with a great program in place and all of these guests, typically how long does a Court of Honor last?

STEVE: If you have a lot of awards from summer camp, it will maybe drag on a little bit; trying to keep it around an hour is a good timeframe. Eagle Courts of Honor might last a little more but for a general Court of Honor for a troop, it does not need to include a lot of the other stuff that you do at a regular weekly meeting of it. Court of Honors just ought to be their own entity. Now, the only thing that may extend that beyond the one hour is if you have food. Sometimes troops like to have little potlucks afterwards.

We used to do that in our troop all the time and it was just a sort of a social hour after the formal ceremonies.

OWEN: Our troop does that too. Thinking of these two different kinds of Courts of Honor, Steve, if somebody hasn't been to one, if they haven't seen one before and they're looking for resources; a planning guide, materials, decorations, are there resources available for somebody who is planning a Court of Honor, whether it be an Eagle Court of Honor or a regular troop Court of Honor?

STEVE: Well, in this day and age of the internet there's all kinds of resources out there. Probably the first go-to one is Scouting.org, Program Resources. There's a whole bunch of troop ceremony ideas. And then under search of ceremonies there's a whole bunch of Courts of Honor ideas. And also, on the internet you could Google, "Second Class Courts of Honor" and you'd probably get ideas from all across the country of what this troop or that troop had done. So go to the Scouting.org Program Resources site and then just start huntin' from there.

Another source are going to other Courts of Honors in other troops to see what they do, talk to other Scoutmasters. Discuss what people do when you go to a Roundtable and just say, "Hey, what do you do in your troop for a Court of Honor? What do you do if you're gonna do something on a campout?" These are great resources that are really down to earth and very practical.

ANISSA: Is there anything else about planning a meaningful Court of Honor that you think should be shared with our listeners?

STEVE: The thing that we found most useful was, if you had a real good one, then everybody wants to keep coming, and they start bringing ideas to the troop committee meetings. They pick up ideas from weddings or from

graduation parties or from just from all different sources. I never let the fact that an idea came from something other than a Scouting event limit what I would think about doing.

ANISSA: So, it may take some effort to prepare for a Court of Honor, but the preparations will make it go so much smoother for you and it'll provide a lifetime of memories for the Scout. Steve, thank you so much for joining us on ScoutCast, and we really appreciate this wealth of information.

STEVE: Well, I'm glad to be able to share some of my experiences and good luck with the Courts of Honors for those who are listening.

OWEN: Stay tuned. We'll be back with Reminders and Tips right after this brief Safety Moment.

### **(Safety Moment - Wounds)**

OWEN: Now for Reminders and Tips. Let's start with District Roundtables: Check with your local Scouting professional, the Council Service Center or website, or the Scout calendar to locate meeting sites and times.

ANISSA: There is really no better way to have a great unit than to experience the idea sharing that goes on at those meetings. And here's a question you should be asking yourself: Are all your committee positions filled? Check out the September 2016 ScoutCast for everything you need to know about the Troop Committee.

OWEN: Just to review, you should have a committee chair, secretary, treasurer, advancement chair, outdoor chair, membership chair, and a finance and fundraising chair. The committee chair is responsible for filling all the slots, but leaders can help out by remaining on the lookout for good candidates at their work, church, neighborhood, or even the gym!

ANISSA: You might be saying to yourself, “I have no idea who qualifies as an advancement chair.” No problem. Just go download the July 2017 ScoutCast to find out just how easy it is to identify and cultivate volunteers. Make sure all new volunteers complete their Youth Protection Training.

OWEN: Be sure to check out this month’s *Boys’ Life* Magazine to read about an all-girl Venturing crew from Texas that explores Louisiana’s Swamp Base by canoe. Also, this month, readers can get step-by-step instructions on magic tricks from professional magician and *America’s Got Talent* contestant, Blake Vogt.

ANISSA: In the September-October issue of *Scouting* Magazine, meet five inspiring Scouting families – from brand new to multigenerational – who find time in their busy lives to experience all that Scouting has to offer.

### **BEGIN MUSIC UNDER**

ANISSA: So that’s it for the October ScoutCast. Thanks to our guest, Steve Bowen.

OWEN: And thank you for listening. Are there other topics we should be discussing? Don’t be shy. Just send us an email to Scoutcast@scouting.org, or tweet to @s-BSAScoutcast. We read them, Scouts Honor! With that, I’m Owen McCullough.

ANISSA: And I’m Anissa Hicks. We look forward to hearing from you.

### **Music Full then Finish**