

## The Review Board

On my honor I will do my best  
To do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law;  
To help other people at all times;  
To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

"You mentioned the Scout Law, what is the Scout Law?" asked the crew cut man.

The twelve year old looked his questioner directly in the eyes and stated clearly and forcefully "A boy scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent."

"Thank you. You may be seated" the man replied.

The boy's sigh of relief was nearly imperceptible. He knew this was just the beginning.

He sat down across the table from the panel of three sunglass wearing adults, his board of review.

In what was the closest thing to the Spanish Inquisition he had ever encountered, he endured 30 minutes of probing questions, quizzes and practical tests. He faced detailed queries about first aid procedures; open ended questions about his desires, hopes and dreams; and his thoughts on leadership and values.

In each case he was well prepared, showed surprising levels of knowledge and was unfailingly honest, even, and perhaps especially, when he was telling his inquisitors something they may not have wanted to hear.

When the questions were over, he was sent away from the table, to stand and wait and wonder about his fate. The board members discussed his strengths, his weaknesses and whether he had what it took to advance to the rank he sought: Boy Scout, Second Class.

He was called back. The panel stood solemnly and quietly. He looked at the panel searchingly. No sign tipped his fate. One count of pause. Then two. At last the leader extended his left hand and said, "Congratulations on your advancement."

The boy smiled broadly and replied, "Thank you, Sir."

After receiving some pointers on weaknesses he needed to address, he was dismissed. A few seconds later the whoops and hollers of his patrol celebrated his success.

As I watched the boys exchange grins, shouts and high fives, I couldn't help but marvel at the sight. You would never know by watching them they were anything but a group of young boys being boys, sharing the adventure of camping by the Pacific, swimming, boating and learning. Yet each one I'd observed throughout the camp displayed levels of courtesy, courage and respect that seem rare in our world today.

Could the values they express, "To do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; To help other people at all times; To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight" really be applicable to any segment of today's youth? Is it possible that there are actually kids in America today who are "trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent?"

I often mourn for the youth of today. But on this day, it was hard for me to argue with the reality of watching our newly advanced Boy Scout Second Class, a Muslim African American son of Ethiopian immigrants, jump, shout and celebrate with the white Christian members of his patrol.

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These scouts were loyal. And trustworthy. And reverently respectful, regardless of the faiths of their fellow scouts.

They displayed, individually and en masse, qualities that reflect well on their generation. They will, indeed, always be prepared.