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Scouting

A FAMILY MAGAZINE

**A RUGGED DAY'S WORK—
OREGON'S POST 859 EXPLORERS
SCALE MOUNT JEFFERSON**



A GATHERING OF EAGLES

BY CHARLES SEAGRAVES

Photographs by Manny Rubio



Can you believe this? Can you believe this?" Dr. Richard Greene asked again and again, shaking his head in disbelief. "We had no idea that so many would be able to return," he added as he continued to greet and pump the hands of the select group of men who were arriving for a very special Georgia luncheon.

A veterinarian and Scoutmaster of the Americus (Ga.) Kiwanis Club's Boy Scout Troop 21, Dr. Greene was a picture of pure joy. "This just proves that once an Eagle, always an Eagle. There's no other brotherhood quite like it."

A member of the select group himself, Dr. Greene was one of 91 of the 102 Eagle alumni of Troop 21 who would converge on this southwestern Georgia town for a memorable mid-April celebration. It would be a meeting that would evoke memories spanning a half-century.

Some came from as far away as Seattle, Los Angeles, Houston, and New Orleans. The 38 who live in the Americus area had only a short drive through the oak-lined streets of this again-tranquil town that served as base camp for reporters and visitors to nearby Plains, Ga., during the presidency of Jimmy Carter. Only one alumnus was deceased, Bobby Halliday, who earned 44 merit badges while a member of the troop. He was represented at the anniversary by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. E.F. Huff.

All the alumni shared a double mission: To celebrate 50 years of continuous partnership with the Americus Kiwanis Club; and to pay tribute to the troop's heritage of leadership, with one Scoutmaster, Charles S. Hogg Jr., singled out for a special thanks. Billed as "Troop 21's Greatest Weekend," this combination of reunion and convergence would prove to be an unforgettable gathering of the Americus Eagles.

The kickoff event was a Friday luncheon meeting of the Americus Kiwanis Club. There were greetings and dozens of small reunions before the alumni joined in for an off-key, rousing rendition of the troop song. Then came the reading of

(Top) Scoutmaster Richard Greene shows son, Ken, Stuart Rivers, and Tracy Gay some of his Scouting memorabilia. (Middle) Former President Jimmy Carter assists Greene with an Eagle court of honor. (Bottom) Troop 21 Scouts play handclapping game while waiting on a dinner of roasted pig.



telegrams and letters of congratulations. One was from E.B. "Mac" McKittrick, president of Kiwanis International, who wrote:

"When Scoutmasters . . . are willing to spend the hours of time necessary to good troop administration, and when they are able to furnish the inspiration and the ability to teach which causes more than 100 young men to strive for and achieve Scouting's highest honor, then they and your club are deserving of the greatest of praise. You are a source of pride to all of us."

Finally, Eagle after Eagle rose to give personal testimonial, many directing their thanks to the man they know as Charlie Hogg, Scoutmaster of Troop 21 for three decades. They praised him for his "contagious enthusiasm," his "dedication and inspiration," his "flawless leadership," and his "stickability." Eighty-seven of the troop's Eagles had earned their badges during Charlie Hogg's tenure as Scoutmaster.

Later that evening the alumni gathered at "Boss Hogg's" home for a reception and an opportunity to meet and visit with the families of their Eagle brothers. A highlight of the evening, a slide show of photos, newspaper articles, and memorabilia put together by alumnus Chuck Warren, now an independent film producer, played to a continuous chorus of laughter and comments. Butch was that kept the short hair of the 1950s Scouts in place virtually oozed from the screen, much to the delight of wives in attendance.

As a slide of the original troop charter flashed

More than 90 Eagles come home to Americus, Georgia, to celebrate Troop 21's 50th anniversary and say thank-you to Charles Hogg.

on the screen, Charlie Hogg pointed to the name of the late Rev. O.L. Evans.

"If it hadn't been for that man, I might never have become involved in Scouting," Hogg recalled. "In 1936 he was single-handedly trying to keep three troops going. He made an appeal at a Kiwanis meeting for help, and after the meeting I went up and talked with him. He told me, 'I don't know a whole lot, but I'll teach you what I know.'"

Following a short stint as assistant Scoutmaster, Hogg took over Troop 21 in January 1937. It would prove to be a Monday night marriage made in Scouting heaven.

Charlie Hogg was beaming. "I was a bachelor at the time," he said. "It was my intention to temporarily serve until someone more qualified could be found."

His "temporary" assignment lasted 30 years until his retirement in 1967. During that time he married, started a family, and established a successful insurance business in Americus. Though his once dark hair is now snowy white, he still looks as if he could strap on a backpack and hike



Troop 21 sets up a model campsite for the alumni's homecoming (top) complete with gateway, kitchen area, and pioneering projects. (Above) Scoutmaster Greene's walking stick shows his trail through the Boy Scout ranks.

*The Scoutmaster's job requires
"more than dedication, hard
work, intelligence, and tenacity.
It requires that you care about
people in a self-sacrificing way."*

—Jimmy Carter



(Above) Three Eagles who returned for Troop 21's week-end celebration are, from left, Dr. Henry Teaford, Jim Schmidt, a G.E. engineer; and John Argo, a pilot for Delta Airlines. (Left) Jimmy Carter jokes with Charles Hogg during the anniversary banquet.



from dawn to sunset as he did so many times for three decades.

"Something you have to remember," interjected Frank Easterlin Jr., Troop 21's first Eagle, "is that Charlie Hogg had no sons. He had two beautiful daughters, but no sons. For a Scoutmaster to stick with it that long and not have sons involved is really something."

Following Hogg's retirement, Troop 21 experienced an expected letdown. But a host of other factors—poor economic times in the area, competition from other units—nearly brought the troop to its knees. The Americus Kiwanis Club, however, was determined not to let that happen. A strong chartered organization, committed to Scouting, and the heritage of Troop 21, continued to provide support and encouragement.

Now under the leadership of a trio of Eagles, two of which are troop alumni, the unit is as strong as ever. Winston Oxford handles much of the paperwork, Wade Barr the programs, with Scoutmaster Dr. Greene doing the coordinating. In the fall Greene plans to assume other duties in the troop while Barr takes a turn as head man.

The trio of leaders arrived at Troop 21's Scout hut early on the second day of the celebration to supervise the nearly 40 current members of the troop in setting up displays of Scouting today. As younger members struggled with timbers and timber hitches, Eagle alumni streamed in.

"Nothing's changed," said a smiling Joe Ansley, who earned his Eagle in 1948. "They're still wasting twine just like we did."

Turning to the display of sleek, light-weight, bright-orange tents, Ansley laughed. "I take that back. Our tents were coated with wax and must have weighed about 200 pounds each. These kids don't know how good they have it."

Planning for this day's events had sent many wives and mothers of alumni to attics and closets in search of old handbooks, merit badge sashes, and other memorabilia that would be displayed at the open house. Among the most impressive was John Argo's display of Scouting artifacts from Europe. Chosen as one of a dozen Scouts to make a six-week goodwill mission to Europe in 1955, Argo's experience would shape his life.

"The Air Force flew us all over Europe," Argo said, "and I got to see the pilots and flight crews work and liked what I saw." Argo now flies out of Miami, Fla., for Delta Airlines.

Later in the evening the displays were moved to the student center of Georgia Southwestern College in Americus for the final event of the celebration, an anniversary banquet that would also include an Eagle Scout court of honor for Troop 21's four newest Eagles.

When the idea of the reunion was first conceived, the plan was that it would coincide with the awarding of the troop's 100th Eagle. A careful search of the records, however, revealed four "lost" Eagles which brought the total to 102.

For the newest members of the select fraternity—David Cohen, Jay Wannier, Russ Carreker, and Bill Dudley—it proved to be a memorable event. Former President Jimmy Carter assisted in the Eagle Scout court of honor and delivered the banquet's keynote address.

In his remarks Carter lauded Charlie Hogg for being a "modest man who never broadcast his own praises," then compared him to the great presidents he had studied dur-

(continued on page 49)

Gathering of Eagles (from page 26)

ing his tenure in the White House.

"They were no greater," Carter said, turning to the guest of honor and smiling broadly, "than people like Charlie Hogg who touched so many lives in such a special way."

Drawing on his own experiences as a Scoutmaster, Carter told the more than 500 attending that the job requires "more than dedication, hard work, intelligence, and tenacity. It requires that you care about other people in a self-sacrificing way."

As Charlie Hogg took the podium, his face glowed. "It hasn't been a one-way street, you know," he said. "I have gained so much from these boys. And I had a lot of help through the years."

Hogg received a plaque, and heard a proclamation from Georgia Governor George Busbee commending him for the "positive influence he has had on hundreds of young people."

But perhaps the most memorable tribute was paid him by his Eagles who set up a fund in his name to renovate Troop 21's Scout hut and christened the small, stark, block structure "The Charlie Hogg Scout Hut."

Carter praised Charlie Hogg as "a modest man who never broadcast his own praises."

At the reception that followed, an enormous cake was served and the now 106 Eagle alumni took time to reflect on the celebration and their years in Scouting. A mailgram from Bob Ivey, an attorney in California who was unable to attend, summed up much of what they expressed.

"The importance of Scouting," Ivey wrote, "was not in the sheepshanks, the Indian songs, or the lean-tos. It was in the process by which we learned these things. Scouting was simply one of the finest learning experiences of my life. I learned about teamwork, about sharing, and about community spirit. I also learned about self-reliance and independence, and dozens of other important lessons. Those experiences, and the qualities they gave us, have more enduring significance than even the Eagle badges we honor this week."

As the weekend drew to a close, it was clear that Troop 21 had not merely endured, but prevailed. It is good to report that the American Eagle is not an endangered species. ■



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