



SCOUT'S OWN

Excerpt by Scouter Liam Morland (Canada) from Scouting-E-Zine

A Scouts' Own is an important and often misunderstood part of a Scout program. Most of the Scouts' Owns that I have seen are essentially distilled church services which do little for the spiritual life of those present, particularly those who do not regularly attend religious services. This essay is intended to help Scouts and Scouters run effective Scouts' Owns by providing a definition of Scouts' Own, some things that follow from the definition, and examples of how this can be put into practice. While I will use Scouts section terminology for this essay, Beavers' Owns, Cubs' Owns, Venturers' Owns, Rovers' Owns, and Scouters' Owns are important parts of their respective sections.

What is a Scouts' Own?

I will define a Scouts' Own as "a gathering of Scouts held to contribute to the development of their spirituality and to promote a fuller understanding of the Scout Law." Let's look at what this definition means.

A Scouts' Own is a gathering of Scouts. This can be in groups as small as two or as large as a whole World Jamboree, though groups of a few patrols work best. In smaller groups, Scouts are able to get involved, share their experiences, and see that spirituality is something that affects everyone.

A Scouts' Own is held for the development of the Scouts' spirituality. Spirituality is that which is beyond the material; that which gives meaning and direction to one's life.

Scouting is primarily concerned with how people live out their beliefs in everyday life. Hence, a Scouts' Own should connect in some way to the Scout Law, the ethical code of Scouting. Usually, this is done by mentioning the Scout Law, making allusions to it, and/or including a recitation of the Law as part of the Scouts' Own. Some Scouts' Owns may simply include ethical content that the Scouts can connect to the Law themselves.

Designing a Scouts' Own

Scouts' Owns are made up of a combination of stories with a moral or spiritual message; metaphors, such as describing learning in terms of packing a backpack for life; prayers, where hopes, fears, emotions, and thankfulness are expressed; songs, which usually are prayers; and sharing between those present.

These elements can be combined in a variety of ways. One should not include any elements that will not lead towards the goal of the Scouts' Own. For example,



songs should not be included unless the members would really enjoy singing them. Campfires are the place to introduce Scouts to singing, not Scouts' Own. These elements also need not be combined in a manner that resembles a church service. When telling a story or parable, one need not explain its meaning. A parable hides the truth from those who are listening until they are ready to understand it. The Scouts may be turned off by the moralizing instead of leaving thinking about the story, later to find meaning in it.

A Scouts' Own should be focused on a few closely related concepts. If the topic of the Scouts' Own is too broad, the Scouts will be unable to grasp it. In Beavers and Cubs, the Scouts' Own should concentrate on one very simple message that is illustrated with many examples. Kids of these ages are unable to fully comprehend abstract concepts like justice. They can give many examples of what is just or unjust, but they cannot deal with an abstract definition. Scouts can start to understand abstract concepts, but things must still be kept to a few concepts.

To help the Scouts concentrate on the Scouts' Own, it is a good idea to hold it in a special place, such as a lookout or pretty clearing in the forest. It should be a spot not usually used for other activities, so that it will be somewhat special. Many camps have a chapel area set aside. Be careful, however, as many chapels come with crosses which make them appropriate only for Christian Scouts' Owns. Choosing a spot some distance from the campsite is beneficial in another way. At the end of the Scouts' Own, the group can file back to the camp in silence and walking with several paces between each person, allowing a time for silent contemplation of the topic of the Scouts' Own.

Scouts' Owns must be planned by Scouts and/or Scouters. When planning a Scouts' Own, one can draw upon many sources for inspiration. Books of ancient wisdom, such as the Koran, the Christian Bible or other religious texts; children's stories; The Best of The Leader Cut Out Pages; the writings of Baden-Powell; and the Jungle Book are all good sources. Remember that a Scouts' Own does not need to fit any prescribed framework: one does not have to include a reading or a prayer if one does not want to. In fact, pointing out that what is being said is a prayer might distract the Scouts from the words.

If one is going to include a prayer, ensure that it is appropriate for those present. One should never assume that everyone is, for example, Christian. Often the difference between a Christian prayer and a universal one is the closing. References to Jesus or Lord are Christian-specific (Father is marginal). A reference to God is not, as Scouting uses that word to refer to all conceptions of God. However, Be aware that many religions, such as Jainism and Humanism, have no conception of God. Prayers can be worded "We are thankful for..." instead of "We thank God for..." to get around this problem. If people wish to say "Amen" at the end of a prayer, they may do so, but if it is written on the Scouts' Own program (if you have one), then that suggests an expectation that it be said, making the prayer Christian-specific.



While it is important to set a Scouts' Own apart from the rest of the day, if one makes too big a deal of it, the Scouts may be distracted and the point is missed. The Scouts should gain the understanding that thinking about spiritual concepts is a normal part of life and should not be restricted to special places and times.

Most Scouters believe that hats should not be worn and knives should not be carried at Scouts' Owns. The not wearing of hats is due to the Christian tradition where males do not wear hats in church. In many other religions, however, it is expected that hats be worn during prayer. In any case, a Scouts' Own is not a church service. At my Scouts' Owns, I make no comment about hats; people make the choice to wear or not wear hats as individuals.

The issue of knives is similar. At many Scouts' Owns that I have attended, there has been a knife log into which one sticks one's knife upon entry to the area where the Scouts' Own is taking place. The reason for this has been that Scouts should not carry weapons during a Scouts' Own, as in a church service. However, a knife is not a weapon to a Scout. A knife carried by a Scout is a tool that helps them to Be Prepared to carry out the Scout Law. A Scout should Be Prepared no less at a Scouts' Own than any other time, so Scouts should continue to carry their knives during Scouts' Owns.

A Scouter's Five has the same purpose as a Scouts' Own, but should not last longer than five minutes and consists of a story or metaphor told by one Scouter, usually without any interaction with those listening. A Scouter's Five should be held at the end of campfires and Scout meetings.

Conclusion:

The key to success in a Scouts' Own is to stick to the purpose: to develop spirituality and a better understanding of the Scout Law. The Scouts' Own must be interesting to the Scouts and be at their level in order to be effective. If you leave behind any preconceptions about a Scouts' Own being similar to a church service and you stick to spirituality that the Scouts can understand, you will succeed in contributing to the spiritual development of your Scouts, meeting Scouting's Purpose.



Another take on Scouts Own:

Involve all of your Scouts at a Scout's Own Service

When planning your next Scout's own service, why not invite all of the Scouts to celebrate and share a little of their religious beliefs as part of the service. Typically a troop may have Scouts from more than one religious denomination in their membership. Instead of trying to make the service "non-denominational", make it multi-denominational.

This is best done by announcing at a PLC or Troop meeting that everyone should think of a part of their religious services that they would like to share. Have someone co-ordinate, plan, and review each part and use it as a "script" during the service. This is one way a Troop can help all Scouts feel comfortable with their religious commitments during campouts and weekend trips.

Here are a few minutes & graces you can use. More available at the MegaVersity Scout's Own Session.

An Interview With God...

author unknown

I dreamed I had an interview with God.

"Come in," God said. "So, you would like to interview Me?"

"If you have the time," I said.

God smiled and said: "My time is eternity and is enough to do everything; what questions do you have in mind to ask me?"

"What surprises you most about mankind?"

God answered: "That they get bored of being children, are in a rush to grow up, and then long to be children again. That they lose their health to make money and then lose their money to restore their health. That by thinking anxiously about the future, they forget the present, such that they live neither for the present nor the future. That they live as if they will never die, and they die as if they had never lived..."

"God's hands took mine and we were silent for while and then I asked..."

"As a parent, what are some of life's lessons you want your children to learn?"



God replied with a smile:

"To learn that they cannot make anyone love them. What they can do is to let themselves be loved.

To learn that what is most valuable is not what they have in their lives, but who they have in their lives.

To learn that it is not good to compare themselves to others. All will be judged individually on their own merits, not as a group on a comparison basis!

To learn that a rich person is not the one who has the most, but is one who needs the least.

To learn that it only takes a few seconds to open profound wounds in persons we love, and that it takes many years to heal them.

To learn to forgive by practicing forgiveness.

To learn that there are persons that love them dearly, but simply do not know how to express or show their feelings.

To learn that money can buy everything but happiness.

To learn that two people can look at the same thing and see it totally different.

To learn that a true friend is someone who knows everything about you...and loves you anyway.

To learn that it is not always enough that they be forgiven by others, but that they have to forgive themselves."

I sat there for awhile enjoying the moment. I thanked Him for His time and for all that He has done for me and my family, and He replied,

"Anytime. I'm here 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. All you have to do is ask for me, and I'll answer." Just remember: People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

God



A Scouter's Prayer

"Build me a Scout, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid; one who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, and humble and gentle in victory... Build me a Scout whose wishes will not take the place of deeds; a Scout who himself is the foundation stone of knowledge...

Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort, but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenge. Here let him learn to stand up in the storm; here let him learn compassion for those who fail...

Build me a Scout whose heart will be clear, whose goals will be high. A Scout who will master himself before he seeks to master others, one who will march into the future, yet never forget the past...

And after all these things are his, add, I pray, enough of a sense of humor so that he may always be serious, yet never take himself too seriously. Give him humility, so that he may always remember the simplicity of true wisdom, and the meekness of true strength...

Then I, a Scouter who knew him, will dare to whisper, "I have not lived in vain."

Taken from the archives at:

<http://www.macscouter.com/ScoutsOwn/Prayers.html#GreatSpirit>

Time to Pray

(Author Unknown)

I got up early one morning
and I rushed into the day,
I had so much to accomplish
that I didn't take time to pray.

Problems just tumbled about me,
and heavier came each task,
"Why doesn't God help me?" I wondered.
He answered: "You didn't ask."

I wanted to see joy and beauty,
but the day toiled on, gray and bleak,
I wondered why God didn't show me,
He said: "But you didn't seek."

I tried to come into God's presence,



I used all my keys at the lock,
God gently and lovingly chided,
"My child you didn't knock."

I woke up early this morning,
and paused before entering the day
I had so much to accomplish
that I had to take time to pray.

Taken from
"Just A Minute... A Collection of Scoutmaster Minutes"
by Dave Tracewell

The Tale Of Three Trees

Origin: Unknown

As Retold by Angela Elwell Hunt

Once upon a mountain top, three little trees stood and dreamed of what they wanted to become when they grew up.

The first little tree looked up at the stars twinkling like diamonds above him. "I want to hold treasure," he said. "I want to be covered with gold and filled with precious stones. I will be the most beautiful treasure chest in the world!"

The second little tree looked out at the small stream trickling by on its way to the ocean. "I want to be a strong sailing ship," he said. "I want to travel mighty waters and carry powerful kings. I will be the strongest ship in the world!"

The third little tree looked down into the valley below where busy men and busy women worked in a busy town. "I don't want to leave this mountain top at all," she said. "I want to grow so tall that when people look at me they will raise their eyes to heaven and think of God. I will be the tallest tree in the world!"

Years passed. The rains came, the sun shone, and the little trees grew tall. One day three woodcutters climbed the mountain.

The first woodcutter looked at the first tree and said, "This tree is beautiful. It is perfect for me." With a swoop of his shining axe, the first tree fell. "Now I shall be made into a beautiful chest," thought the first tree. "I shall hold wonderful treasure."

The second woodcutter looked at the second tree and said, "This tree is strong. It is perfect for me." With a swoop of his shining axe, the second tree fell. "Now I



shall sail mighty waters," thought the second tree. "I shall be a strong ship fit for kings!"

The third tree felt her heart sink when the last woodcutter looked her way. She stood straight and tall and pointed bravely to heaven. But the woodcutter never even looked up. "Any kind of tree will do for me," he muttered. With a swoop of his axe, the third tree fell.

The first tree rejoiced when the first woodcutter brought him to a carpenter's shop, but the busy carpenter was not thinking about treasure chests. Instead his work worn hands fashioned the tree into a feed box for animals. The once beautiful tree was not covered with gold or filled with treasure. He was coated with sawdust and filled with hay for hungry farm animals.

The second tree smiled when the woodcutter took him to a shipyard, but no mighty sailing ships were being made that day. Instead the once strong tree was hammered and sawed into a simple fishing boat. Too small and too weak to sail an ocean or even a river, he was taken to a little lake. Every day he brought in loads of dead, smelly fish.

The third tree was confused when the woodcutter cut her into strong beams and left her in a lumberyard. "What happened?" the once tall tree wondered. "All I ever wanted to do was stay on the mountain top and point to God."

Many, Many days and nights passed. The three trees nearly forgot their dreams. But one night golden starlight poured over the first tree as a young woman placed her newborn baby in the feed box. "I wish I could make a cradle for him," her husband whispered. The mother squeezed his hand and smiled as the starlight shone on the smooth and sturdy wood. "This manger is beautiful," she said. And suddenly the first tree knew he was holding the greatest treasure in the world.

One evening a tired traveler and his friends crowded into the old fishing boat. The traveler fell asleep as the second tree quietly sailed out into the lake. Soon, a thundering and a thrashing storm arose. The little tree shuttered. He knew he did not have the strength to carry so many passengers safely through the wind and rain. The tired man awakened. He stood up, stretched out his hand, and said, "Peace," The storm stopped as quickly as it had begun. And suddenly the second tree knew he was carrying the King of heaven and earth.

One Friday morning, the third tree was startled when her beams were yanked from the forgotten woodpile. She flinched as she was carried through an angry, jeering crowd. She shuttered when the soldiers nailed a man's hands to her. She felt ugly and harsh and cruel. But on Sunday morning, when the sun rose and the earth trembled with joy beneath her, the third tree knew that God's love had



changed everything. It had made the first tree beautiful. It had made the second tree strong. And every time people thought of the third tree, they would think of God. That was better than being the tallest tree in the world.

This tale is available in a Children's Book from Lion Publishing

The Acorn and The Tree

A Children's Sermon

One Sunday not long ago, I shared with the children at Johns Creek UMC this message during the time when the Pastor has a moment with the children. This is expanded a bit for those who want to renew it with their children or may have missed it. During the Sunday morning worship hour, I gave out acorns to all the children and asked them to plant them.

I have been meditating and thinking about our children, and how they can learn this very important idea. One that adults often miss the most. It is not easy to discuss with a child, but this may make it more possible. One thing we all must do is learn that it in dying we live, in giving up and in surrender we receive. Children need to know there is nothing out ahead of them but Life. That way, they can learn, not only how to give, but how to live. In one way, it is the same.

Once I was with my father in our front yard in North Carolina, when I was in the first grade. I was just five years old. (My birthday is January 6, so I would either be early or late in starting school. My mother had the good sense and the influence to see that it was early.)

My Father reached down and picked up an acorn. He said, "You know son, there is a tree in this acorn." He dug a hole, put the acorn carefully in, and covered it up. "Now," he said, "you will see there is really a tree in that acorn." The next day I came home from school, dug up the acorn, but did not see a tree. I felt kind of let down, but put it back. A few days later I looked again...and to my surprise and dismay, there was no tree! My father had never told me anything that was not true...till now. I returned the acorn back, and buried the disappointment in my mind.

Then one day, I was running to catch the bus, and I saw a little green-brownish blade coming up by the stick where my Dad had marked the planting of the acorn. I skidded to a stop, returned and sat down and stared at the little tree coming into this world. It was the most beautiful thing in the whole world. My brother said the bus driver blew his horn a long time before going on, but I never heard. I just sat there till my mother came out and said, "Joseph, Joseph Brown"



(that is what she called me when I was in trouble,) "what are you doing sitting there on the ground. You are supposed to be in school!" "Mother, look...just look...there was a tree in that acorn!" She took my arm and drove me to school. After all, I had up to then, and for years later, never missed a day. I watched that tree grow and become a great oak, which stands tall in our yard to this day.

When you see an acorn on the ground, just remember, there is a tree in that acorn. And please, remember the lesson I learned that day.

The lesson I learned has stayed with me. "Don't dig up the acorn." So many of us make good beginnings, good resolutions, and good decisions. Then we want the "quick fix" the "instant everything" and have little or no patience to wait for the growth that comes, sometimes slowly, in ourselves and others, in God's own time.

As a Counselor, I have read and studied those who seek "instant gratification." You know what they found out...a bunch of scientists and people who study people. Children who know how to wait for things, who can learn not to scream and yell when they do not get their way, but have the power, the inner something that helps them to wait, grow up to be more successful in almost everything...business, marriage, and just plain living.

So remember, "Don't dig up the acorn!"

© 1998 The Reverend Doctor Joseph B. Kennedy, Sr.

This Scout's Own Service, Found on the N.A.U.M.S. (National Association of United Methodist Scouters) website can be adapted for many Scouting Worship, http://www.umcscouting.org/services/acorn_and_the_tree.htm

The Four Winds Blessing

O Great Spirit, Bless us from the north with the cool winds that calm our passions. Bless us from the east with the winds that bring and review life. Bless us from the south with the warm wet winds that invite growth. Bless us from the west with the winds that lead us though this life to the next. Fill the sky so that we might sense your presence. And bless us from mother earth from which we've come and to whom we shall return.

May God bless us and protect us;
May God show us favor and be gracious to us;
May God show us kindness and grant us peace
AMEN



GRACES

Graces suitable for any meal

For food and health and friendship, we give Thee thanks, O Lord.

For health and strength and daily food, we give Thee thanks, O Lord.

For this and all Thy mercies, Lord, make us duly grateful

We thank Thee, our Heavenly Father, for this food. Bless us as we partake of it that it may strengthen us for Thy service.

Morning Graces

Gracious Giver of all good, we thank Thee for rest and food. Grant that all we do or say, in Thy service be this day.

Our Father, we thank Thee, for this new day and for Thy living care. Help us to be mindful of Thee in these happy sunlit hours.

Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for Thy care through the night and for this new day. Guide us by Thy Spirit and at the close of this day may we not be ashamed before Thee.

Noon Graces

Father, for this noonday meal, we would speak the praise we feel. Health and strength we have from Thee, help us Lord to faithful be.

Heavenly Father, help us to see the beautiful things in earth and sky which are tokens of Thy love. Walk with us in the days we spend together here. May the food we eat and all Thy blessings help us to better serve Thee.

Our Father in Heaven, as the day leads on, let us not forget our obligation to honor and serve Thee. We thank Thee for these gifts and Thy bounty. Bless them to our use and our lives to Thy service.



Evening Graces

Tireless Guardian on our way, Thou has kept us well this day. While we thank Thee, we request care continued, pardon, and rest.

Heavenly Father, we thank thee for this day and for Thy presence in it. Forgive us if we have not made it a better day and help us to be tomorrow what we have failed to be today.

Our Father, God, we thank Thee for this evening meal. As thou has been mindful of us, so help us to be mindful of Thee, that we may know and do Thy will.

"There are no secrets to success: Don't waste time looking for them. Success is the result of perfection, hard work, learning from failure, loyalty to those for whom you work, and persistence."

GENERAL COLIN POWELL,
U.S. Army (retired)