

For David Alan Wolverton, Fair Haven,
the value of Scouting lasts a lifetime.

A GRAND TRADITION

By MICHAEL RILEY
STAFF WRITER

The long rows of cubicles inside the Lucent Technologies offices in Holmdel are virtually indistinguishable from one another. But you could identify the one where David Alan Wolverton works with no trouble.

It's the one with a huge poster by the door, the poster with pictures of the symbol for Boy Scouting in many of the 216 countries and territories around the world where the organization operates for the benefit of some 28 million kids.

Wolverton, a 40-year-old software designer from Fair Haven, knows this kind of stuff. One way or another, he has been active in the Boy Scouts since 1973, when he joined Troop 305 in Middletown.

He'd skipped the Cub Scout part of the organization, opting instead for the Indian Guides, sort of the YMCA counter-

part to the organization that Sir Robert Baden-Powell began in England in 1907. But once Wolverton found an old Boy Scouts of America handbook in 1973, he joined and never looked back.

He eventually rose to the rank of Eagle, Scouting's highest achievement, in part by building and maintaining a nature trail at Brookdale Community College in Middletown. And while the camping and outdoor activities held their allure for the young man, they were by no means the only or even necessarily the most important things he feels that Scouting has given him.

"Scouting gave me self-confidence," Wolverton says. "And it taught me real-life skills like cooking and sewing. Plus, you know how it is when you go to Home Depot on a Saturday morning and have to strap a bunch of stuff to the roof of

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your car? Well, I know that I can tie the correct knots."

He smiles and adds one more detail about Scouting skills:

"I was never worried about the possible effects of the Y2K problem (in the year 2000)," Wolverton says. "You know the Boy Scout motto: 'Be Prepared.' I was."

Wolverton stayed with Scouting even when most kids move on from it. He stayed active in college, as a camp counselor. Following graduation, he has continued his affiliation with the organization to this day. He has been an adult Scoutmaster for Troop 60 in Middletown and is currently the Troop Committee Chairman for Troop 125 in Fair Haven.

"That's more of an administrative position than Scoutmaster," Wolverton says, but he still gets to do the outdoorsy stuff he loves.

As someone who has spent nearly three quarters of his life in Scouting, Wolverton would be in a good position to see how the Boy Scouts have changed during the last 30 years.

They haven't, he says.

Oh, sure, the uniforms may get a little spiffier. New merit badges may be added from time to time, and, in fact, in some troops most of the Scouts carry laptop computers to the meetings. But basically, Wolverton says, the Boy Scouts, stand for the things they have always stood for.

"All the keystones are the same," Wolverton says. "You know, the Scout Oath and the Scout Law. Those qualities are timeless."

As if to prove his point, Wolverton, an amateur historian and a collector of Scouting memorabilia, has written a book for the Arcadia Publishing Images of America series titled "Monmouth Council Boy Scouts." "All we did was open up some photo archives, and David did all the work. The book is great," says David Thornton, executive director of Monmouth Council Boy Scouts, based in Ocean Township.

And, indeed, the photographs in the book, some dating back to 1911, reveal both the changes and the timeless elements of Boy Scouting.

Boys catching fish at, say, Camp Burton-at-Allaire in Farmingdale in 1932 look remarkably like boys fishing at Forestburg Scout Reservation in Forestburg, N.Y., in 1957.

Wolverton has crunched the numbers. He figures some 500,000 boys have been part of Monmouth Council Boy Scouts. Councils are regional groupings of Boy Scout troops. In 1927, the Ocean County area was added to the Monmouth Council and remained there until 1939, when a separate Ocean County Council was formed.

"Monmouth Council is one of the few remaining 'county councils' in the country," writes Wolverton in his book's introduction. "This has helped the Scouting program here retain a small-town quality."

But this county council found itself receiving national attention when James Dale, a Scoutmaster in the Monmouth Council, lost his position because of his sexual orientation. He contested the removal, but it was ultimately upheld in a 5 to 4 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court.

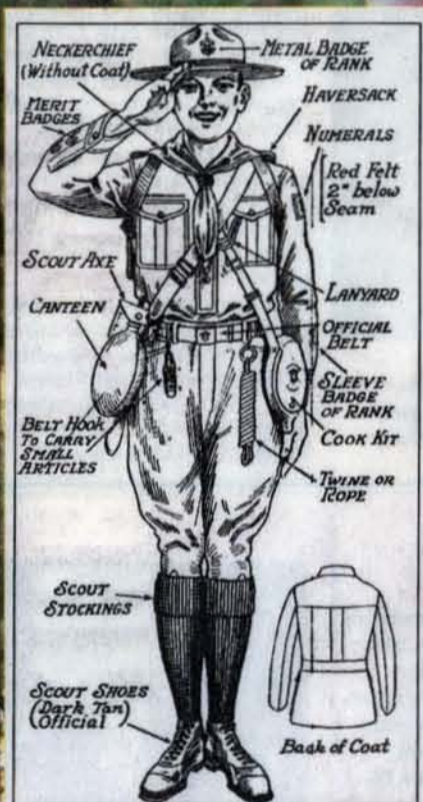
It's not a subject that Wolverton warms to, but he is willing to address it simply. The Boy Scouts are a private organization and within their rights to prohibit homosexuals from leadership positions, he says.

But Wolverton says plainly that any boy who wants to be a part of the grand tradition of Boy Scouting should not be denied that opportunity.

It is that grand tradition, Wolverton says, that keeps Scouting alive.

"Fathers who were Scouts have kids and bring their kids into Scouting. It's a way for them to relive their youth while enjoying the time with their sons," Wolverton says.

The past holds its fascination, he says, the present seems alive with possibilities and the future promises even more boys each pledging, as the Scout Oath says, "to do my best to do my duty to God and my country."



BOB BIELK/Staff Photographer

David Alan Wolverton, shown here at the Quail Hill Scout Reservation, Manalapan, wrote the recently published book "Monmouth Council Boy Scouts" for Arcadia Publishing's Images of America series. In photos from the book, the diagram (above) shows how a properly dressed Boy Scout should look, circa 1925. The photo (right), circa 1958, is used on the cover of the book.

