

The Troop Planning Fire

by Herb Barge, Calgary Region

Troop planning is like building a good fire. You must gather a variety of fuel, surround it with rocks to organize and contain it, then find a good match to ignite it and start it to burn.

In the case of Troop planning; the fuel is input from the Scouts, Counsellors, Troop Scouter, Parents and Group Committee; the Rocks to organize and contain it are the Court of Honour; the Match to ignite and start it to burn is the Troop Scouter.

Too many Troops that I have observed use only the Match for the planning fire and then wonder why it throws no heat and quickly goes out. They also wonder why no one will sit around it to keep warm or cook.

The successful Troops are the ones who use all their fuel, surround it with solid rocks, light it with the match. The match (Troop Scouter) can then sit back and watch it burn brightly and warmly. Used by all to keep warm and cook!

Here then are my suggested steps to building a good planning fire:

Step 1: Gather the Fuel

- a) Have your Patrols hold a "Patrol in Council" meeting with the assigned task* of listing on paper the things they would like to do as a Patrol or as a Troop activity during the year. On separate paper have them list the Badges that each member of their Patrol wants to earn during the year.
- b) Have each Scouter prepare a list of things they would like to do or accomplish during the year.
- c) Have all Scouts and Scouters get a list of important dates, holidays, etc. from their families. Scouters should also include known job commitments.
- d) Get from your Group Committee, Sponsor, District, Region, etc. a list of activities and District, Regional and National events that are of importance to them and/or may be of interest to the Troop.

Step 2: Contain, Organize and Lay the Fire.

Have the Court Of Honour gather all of the lists prepared in step 1 and hold a meeting or probably a series of meetings with the following assigned tasks*:

- Task a)** Take the list of badges received from each patrol and combine them into one list (hopefully there will be duplications) and then on large sheets of paper, one for each badge which can be hung on the wall, list the badge requirements. highlight or circle the requirements which **must** be completed outdoors (Who needs a Data base?).
- Task b)** On a large year planing calendar enter holidays and; District, Region and National Events they want to attend. A List of family and Scouter's commitments should be made for reference. From the wall Badge sheets enter on these dates any Badge requirements that can be accomplished on that activity and check them off the Badge list.
- Task c)** Establish an outline plan or themes for each month and note it at the top of each month's calendar.
- Task d)** Enter on the Calendar the dates of all Patrol meetings, events, hikes and camps as determined from the Patrol lists or through consultation. From the wall Badge sheets enter on each activity the badge requirements that can be accomplished on that event and check them off the Badge sheet.
- Task e)** Plan and enter on the Calendar the dates for Troop meetings, events, hikes and camps. From the wall Badge sheets enter on each activity the badge requirements than can be accomplished on that event and check them off the Badge sheet.

Task f) Review the wall Badge lists noting any requirements that have not been checked off. Decide if activities can be planned which will encompass them or if it is decided that it is something an individual Scout must do on their own. If this is the case the encouragement of the Scout to do that should be planned.

Task g) Publish an outline calendar of events and make sure the each Scout, Scouter, Parents, Group Committee and Sponsor get a copy so that no one involved has the excuse "I did not know it was happening".

The detailed plan can now be turned over to the Scout Counsellors and Troop Scouters to detail plan each event. I would certainly hope that this process would be done in conjunction with the various Patrol in Councils and the Court of Honour.

Now Mr. Match Light that Fire!

*** Some Tips and Comments from the Author:**

·You will find that organizing a Patrol In Council or Court of Honour is much easier if you start them in stages with planning as their main function. Things like Troop honour and discipline will work better, later, once they have gotten used to working together on the planning process.

·When holding Patrol in Council or Court of Honour meetings you will find they work better if they are given specific tasks to accomplish. Make sure the task can be accomplished in the time they have available, if not, break it down in to smaller tasks and hold more meetings.

·You will find this process will probably cause your Troop to grow as everyone now has input to "their" Scout Troop. You have a "buy in" situation.

·You will find that , at least initially, it will be a longer process and will probably mean more work for you the Troop Scouter. However I would ask who are we trying to benefit: You or your Scouts?

·A big side benefit to all of this is that your Scouts will be far better prepared for Venturers when time comes for them leave the nest and move on.

Herb Barge