

## Knight Sponsor

One organization, which seemed to complement the efforts of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting, was the Knights of Columbus.<sup>2</sup> On March 29, 1882 the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut granted a charter to the Knights of Columbus “for the purpose of rendering mutual aid and assistance to its members and their families.” It was also a great day in the life of a young Catholic priest, the Rev. Michael J. McGivney, for it marked the fulfillment of his dream to unite Catholic men in a society through which they might advance the ideals of their Faith. The order was twenty years old when it arrived in Texas. The Tisonia, a privately chartered Pullman railroad car with twenty-five Knights of Columbus aboard, left El Paso on May 8, 1903 and visited Dallas, Fort Worth, Galveston, Houston and San Antonio. And so it was on May 10, 1903, Knights of Columbus Council 759 was born as the “mother” council of the Fort Worth area. The arrival of Columbiansm in Texas gave a real boost to the establishment of Catholic Churches, the proliferation of Catholic education and the recommendation of a youth affiliate for the Knights.



Foundation of Catholic Columbianism and Scouting within Ft. Worth. Knights of Columbus Council #759 Hall. 1004 Lamar. Ft. Worth. Circa 1920's.

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<sup>2</sup> The Knights of Columbus is a fraternal organization of Catholic men. In general, the objectives are to provide a system of fraternal insurance to care for the widows and orphans of members; to provide fellowship among the members, to aid the cause of religion, and to perform charitable, educational and patriotic works for the benefit of their fellow men and their nation.”

By the 1920's, the Texas State Knights of Columbus Convention had endorsed Scouting as its "boy guidance program" for all councils to promote. Because of these and other states' early efforts, the 1922 National Knights of Columbus Convention adopted scouting as their official youth program for boys 12-15 years of age. A Boy Life Bureau was created by the KC Supreme Council to promote and supervise this important new activity, naming as its first director the nationally known authority on boy guidance, Brother Barnabas, FSC. At the suggestion of Brother Barnabas, a Department of Boy Guidance was established at Notre Dame University by the Knights of Columbus for the training of professional leaders. Two courses evolved in the boy guidance program. First is the 10-day summer camp and secondly the 30-hour course in Boyology. Camp schools were in operation in several cities around the country. The program includes scout work, club work, Big Brother work, woodcraft, playground and athletic activities, and Columbian Squire work. The most significant part of the work is the Boy Guidance Course at the University of Notre Dame. Although it is only open to graduates, the first graduating class of nineteen received diplomas in 1926 and has since acted as leaders to over 40,000 boys. The Holy Cross Fathers and Brothers of St. Edwards University were acquainted with the work of those at Notre Dame and introduced a similar course. In fact, Texas was the first state in the union to adopt and put in execution the plan sponsored by the Supreme Council of the KC's. Unfortunately, enrollment was light and it was not continued. However, it was only a matter of time before Catholic Scouting would be introduced to the city of Fort Worth.

The first Scouting unit registered under a Catholic institution in the Fort Worth Area Council<sup>3</sup> was Troop 31 on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1927. Grand Knight William Higgins of KC

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<sup>3</sup> Since the Fort Worth Area Council was the predominant council in what was to become Longhorn Council in 1949, and since we are predominantly concerned with the early CCS development, we are limiting our scope of early Catholic Scouting to the city of Fort Worth. *A Pious Moment*, our first installment, will grow to include all known Catholic units within the Fort Worth Diocese; which includes Longhorn Council, Northwest Texas Council, Comanche Trail Council and Heart of Texas Council. We hope the cooperation of scouters from the three other councils and their Council Executives will provide an opportunity to investigate the early sponsorship and successes of Catholic units in the future.

Council 759 was the Executive Officer while W.E. Corty was Scoutmaster. Undoubtedly, the popularity of the program must have soared as KC Council 759 chartered Troop 19 on March 10, 1927 and Troop 32 on March 17, 1927. Three Troops in three months! Although Troop 31 would later revert to sponsorship by St. Mary's Catholic School, it was this initial flurry of charters generated by KC Council 759 that energized Scouting under Catholic auspices in the Fort Worth area.

Although enthusiasm for the new program was apparent, training was non-existent. Undoubtedly, many early leaders were learning the program, creating their own tradition, and searching for what worked. Scouting itself was providing new programs such as Senior Scouts, Sea Scouts and Air Scouts. And so it was no surprise that a religious award program came into existence and provided the impetus of a whole new organization.

### **First Known Awardees**

After World War I, Rev. James E. Dolan created the Ad Altare Dei Award Program as a means to further the spiritual well-being of boys. First Class Scouts would be awarded the Ad Altare Dei Cross as recognition of their service as Altar boys. On February 8, 1926, Scout Edward Thurin was awarded the first Ad Altare Dei Cross by Rev. Dolan during ceremonies within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The program was so successful that he presented reports to the Annual Scout Chaplains Conferences. After several attempts, Rev. Dolan was rewarded with approval by the Bishops Committee and the BSA authorization to wear the award on a Scout uniform. The program went nationwide during 1941 and was the first religious emblem offered by any denomination to Boy Scouts.



Scoutmaster John Edward "Ole Man" Gillespie at Worth Ranch. Circa 1929. (See Exemplary Scouter Section)

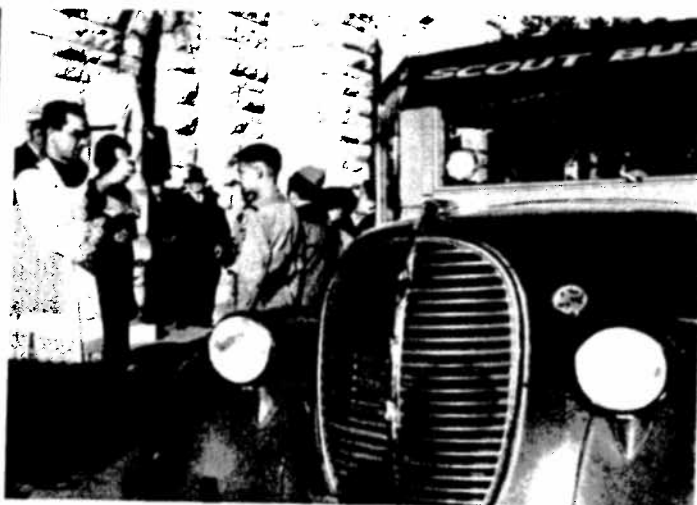
It was a cold, blustery day when the magic of scouting was born March 17, 1927 at the KC Hall on 1004 Lamar Street in Downtown Fort Worth. Although the charter reflects Charles Gomer as Scoutmaster, it was a shy but thin young man who is generally recognized as the real leadership in Troop 32 through its first forty-nine years. John Edward "Ole Man" Gillespie (See First CCS Chairman Fort Worth Deanery) had already been a scout leader of Troop 19 when he was officially registered Scoutmaster of Troop 32 during 1929.

When Troop 32 was organized in 1927, there were fewer than 2,000 scouts in the Fort Worth Area Council. The troop was made up of local boys, orphans, and a few who had transferred from other units. During an early scouting event, one of his own scouts nicknamed him "The Ole Man" and it stuck for forty-nine years. Boys would visit his home and be thrilled by stories told by his father, the last surviving Texas Ranger who had participated in the raid to return Cynthia Ann Parker from the Comanche Indians. Six-gun revolvers, Indian stories, and the presence of a fabled Texas Ranger created a larger than life atmosphere for impressionable boys. It was from this aura of adventure that Ole Man would inspire his scouts to participate in each new program that scouting offered.

As one of the first known proponents of the Ad Altare Dei program, Ole Man made it an unwritten rule within Troop 32 that each scout would attain the Ad Altare Dei Award on his way to Eagle Scout (this tradition survived until the 70's when Ole Man became infirm). The first verifiable Fort Worth Area Council awardees are identified by the Star Telegram in the Morning Edition on February 13, 1944. Pictured are Charles Bush, Eugene Witkowski, and Larry Jo Rich from Troop 32. At the time, a young cleric who assisted the troop in transporting boys out to camp, Rev. Thomas Tschoepe, presented the awards to the boys at St. Patrick's Church (Rev. Thomas Tschoepe would later become Bishop of the Diocese of Dallas).



First Known Awardees. Rev. Tschoeppe presents the Ad Altare Dei Award to (L to R) Eugene Witkowski, Charles Bush and Larry Jo Rich from T32 as first known awardees in Ft. Worth area on 2/13/1944.



Scout Bus Dedication. Circa 1940's. Rev. Tschoeppe (future Bishop of Dallas) dedicates Scout Bus used to take scouts to camp.



Msgr. O. Donoghue presents scouts Alfred Becan, Maurice Ball, and Bill Breen their Ad Altare Dei Award during ceremonies on 02/09/1947.



Circa 1940's. Troops 19 and 32 participate in ceremonies conducted at St. Patrick's Church.

We are fortunate indeed to have a pictorial record of early activities surrounding St. Patrick's Church downtown. Since the first Catholic units were located downtown Fort Worth, and since the Fort Worth Star Telegram newspaper was a great supporter of Scouting, many scouts from these units found themselves featured in the Star Telegram pictorials. One such ceremony involved Monsignor O'Donoghue presenting the Ad Altare Dei Award to each scout as they processed forward. This picture featured Alfred

Becan, Maurice Ball, and Bill Breen as scouts receiving their award on February 9, 1947. Religious award ceremonies inside St. Patrick's, Msgr. O'Donoghue dedicating a scout bus with Rev. Tschoepe (11/23/45) and flag ceremonies involving several units inside the church (11/20/41) appear in CCS Pictorial Archives for events that occurred during the 1940's. The Priest-Scout method of working on the Ad Altare Dei Award would invigorate the Scouting movement by increasing the prominence of the 12<sup>th</sup> Scout Law to that approaching Eagle Scout. It would also deepen the relationship of local churches with Scouting.

The first known senior scout unit (Fort Worth Area Council) sponsored by a Catholic Church was Ship 19 by St. Patrick's Church on September 11, 1944. The 16-foot Lightning Class Sailboat used by Ship 19 was christened the "Santa Maria" and moored at Lake Worth by Camp Shuman. Although this unit reverted back to KC sponsorship when it became Post 32 in 1952, it laid the foundation for future cooperation in the 50's and 60's.

Postwar America ushered in the "Baby Boomers" generation and Scouting was the beneficiary. While the transition from wartime economy to peacetime prosperity accompanied the return of servicemen from war, Scouting was also an outlet for many volunteers to get past the horror of war and promote the ideal of world brotherhood. The initial explosion of scouting by the KC's was tempered by World War II and led the growth of dozens of units in Catholic institutions in and around Fort Worth after the war.

### **The Golden Age of Scouting**

There were a number of factors contributing to the local development of Catholic Scouting. Postwar volunteerism, a solid foundation of Catholic units downtown, the increase of parishes in the diocese, the patriotic image of scouting acquired during the war, the use of scouts for community events, and the installation of Bishop Thomas Gorman on August 19, 1954 as Bishop of the newly named Dallas-Fort Worth

Diocese.<sup>4</sup> Because of his expertise in the craft of journalism, Bishop Gorman revived the Texas Catholic newspaper as an important communication vehicle. Once the newspaper was revived, it had little space for scouting news located within the future Diocese of Fort Worth. However, as activities and print technology advanced, it included insertions mailed to Fort Worth readers under the same banner – *The Texas Catholic*. This growth in coverage allowed such organizations as the Knights of Columbus, Longhorn Council, and scout units sponsored by individual parishes to promote and recognize their activities.

Research of Texas Catholic newspaper issues dating from its first year of publication through 1958 indicate little diocesan involvement with the award program or with Scouting itself. However, there are glimpses of individual scout troops and leaders receiving recognition that include the presence of monsignors and parish priests. One strong indication of support came in the campaign to build and dedicate a new scout hut for Troop 32 on February 8, 1953. There had never been a greater sponsorship effort by KC Council #759 than the months leading up to the dedication. Troop 32 marked National Scout Sunday by taking possession of its new scout hut adjacent to the Knights of Columbus Hall at 904 Collier Street. Sam Renner donated his time as a contractor, James Roach Sr. donated materials so that the scouts could build their own furniture, and donations obtained from businesses throughout the area helped furnish a tile floor, air conditioning and a full set of recreational materials for boys. Rev. Ernest Langenhorst spoke the following words at the Dedication and Open House. "When boys do not get their recreation and help and inspiration from the best, they are liable to get it from the worst! Through the Boy Scouts of America and the Knights of Columbus,

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<sup>4</sup> Bishop Lynch served for over 50 years, but when the disabilities of the aged Bishop Lynch made it necessary to appoint an heir apparent, the Bishop of the Diocese of Reno was selected. Since portions of the original Diocese of Dallas were split off into their own Diocese, and realizing the growth of the Fort Worth area would lead to a future division, Bishop Gorman requested the name of the Diocese be changed to that of the "Dallas/Fort Worth Diocese."

our boys have been offered the best in boys' leadership." In addition, Msgr. Joseph O'Donohue took the opportunity to present the Ad Altare Dei Award to nine scouts of Troop 32. As it was noted in the story, the scout hut became a favorite centrally located place to meet for area scouters.

An atmosphere of cooperation was also central to the growth of Scouting in Catholic institutions. As an example, leadership of Troop 32 assisted in the continuation of St. George's Troop 34 at several points in its history. Again, Troop 97 led to the establishment of Troop 497. Although members of Troop 32 assisted Troop 15, it later went inactive. Another example is the leadership of Knights of Columbus Council #759 using its Degree Team to establish other KC Councils within the Fort Worth and surrounding areas. Many of these same KC councils would charter new troops or become the sponsor of existing troops looking for a new home. The spirit and fellowship associated with these efforts led to the creation of an organization dedicated to instituting a consistent religious award program.

These factors offer a snapshot of the early days of the program before we have records for CCS committee work. As we progress from World War II to the Korean Conflict, The Eisenhower presidency, and the election of Pope John XXIII, we begin to glimpse the presence of a committee to help oversee the award program and to realize the beginnings of Diocesan support by the presence of Bishop Gorman during award proceedings.

### **Catholic Committee on Scouting – Fort Worth Deanery**

Existence of a local Catholic Committee on Scouting (CCS) organization from 1941–1958 are sketchy at best. Its organization, meetings, and Diocesan involvement are not immediately known as we can only speculate that Scouters begin to feel the need to create a committee from the growth of scouting and boys' interest in the Catholic religious awards. Speculation suggests that Diocesan participation had not yet begun



on a grander scale since the Bishop does not appear in early award ceremonies covered by the media during the 1940's and 1950's. However, the installation of Bishop Gorman proved to be the catalyst for increased Diocesan support.

The Texas Catholic provides an early record of Bishop Gorman's involvement through Courts of Honor awarding each and every rank advancement at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in downtown Dallas. "There are vicious efforts being made throughout the world to remove moral and spiritual values from our lives... the scout program has placed much emphasis on building the strength to resist such materialistic forces," the Bishop said at one ceremony as he commended the work of the scouts' parents and leaders. From the article covering this event, it is easy to see scouts and parishes receiving recognition and encouragement for their efforts. This unprecedented support bred increased participation. The fellowship of the Fort Worth Deanery began to grow as a concept of its own proud accomplishments and in its interest to establish a Catholic Scout Retreat.

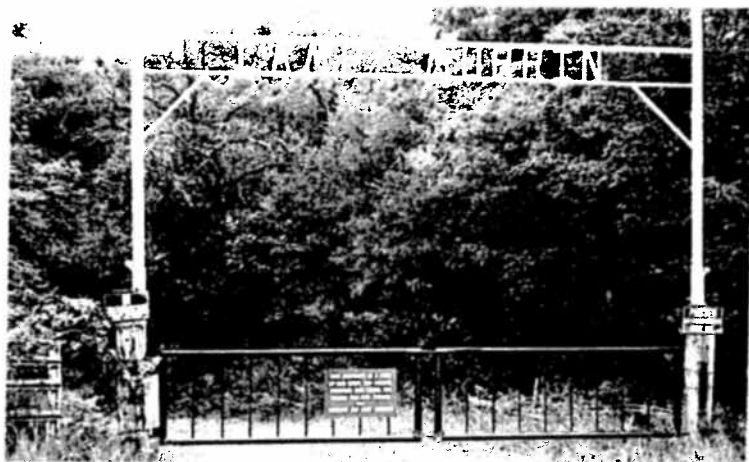
During 1958, John Edward "Ole Man" Gillespie became chairman of the CCS Fort Worth Deanery. His early efforts included assistance with the promotion and organization of religious awards in the Catholic units of Longhorn Council. George Perdue recalls Ole Man's early work in arranging "pilgrimages" required to complete a portion of the Ad Altare Dei religious award. Communication between the diocesan committee through Ole Man and the individual troops regarding boy candidates, planning Sacred Heart Cathedral Award Ceremonies, and administering any tests or reviews were all duties that Ole Man undoubtedly performed. However, it was Father William Moran who helped steer the volunteers of the Fort Worth Deanery into a deeper and highly organized committee.

Although an organized CCS became prevalent during the late 50's & 60's, individual troops sponsored by Catholic institutions had their own traditions. In keeping with the patriotic and fraternal nature of the Knights of Columbus, Troop and Post 32 would

accompany KC Council #759 for a mass celebrating fallen soldiers during the Memorial Day weekend at Old Calvary Cemetery. This was an annual tradition that included Ad Altare Dei awardees as altar boys, scouts as flag bearers, and KC 4<sup>th</sup> Degree members in full regalia. Since Ole Man's father was a former Confederate Soldier and Texas Ranger buried at the cemetery, he would relate the story of his parents to each scout.

### Camp John Murrin

Ole Man passed the baton of CCS leadership to George Perdue during 1960. Although he was no longer chairman, he would serve as an integral figure of the committee until his untimely death in 1976. However, George Perdue continued the development of the first annual retreat besides having a significant donation occur during his reign. Land



Camp Murrin. Although Catholic units camped there since 1961, it was not until Tom Lovelace and Scott O'Neal's Eagle Project that it had a sign marking the entrance. Circa 1978.

was donated to the Catholic Troops of the Longhorn Council that would come to be known as Camp John Murrin. Although it became official during the summer of 1960, Troop 1 laid the groundwork many years earlier.

Although Scout Week is always a celebration of the Scouting program, it also provides an opportunity for men and boys to see it first hand at the local level. It was one such weekend during February 1952 that Carl King visited Troop 1 while it was camping on the playground of St. Alice Parish. Scoutmaster Hack Clemens was unaware of the providence of having two visitors that day: Carl King and John Murrin. However, the offer to camp on John Murrin's Ranch and the ensuing involvement of Carl King would bring future dividends to Troop 1. The camping area seemed ideal