

## Homecoming

(90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 10<sup>th</sup> Hong Kong Scout Group 25<sup>th</sup> December 2012)



(Google images)

Last Saturday our scouts celebrated their 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary here at the College. The afternoon commenced with the investiture of all the new Cubs, Scouts and Venture Scouts where the boys received their scarves and badges and pledged an oath to the Scout movement and promised to serve God and Nation. It was a very formal event held in the Lower Playground and attended by many proud parents, Mrs. Yvonne Chan (the Headmistress of our Primary School) and myself.

Later in the afternoon a reception party was held in the Upper Playground and Wong Ming Him Hall where the scouts displayed examples of their camp craft that included bamboo kitchen and storage furniture bound together by intricate knots and lashings. There was also an exhibition of photographs taken at the many scouting events of the past 90 years. Of course, a special area was set aside for the display of trophies and banners won at competitions over the years at the centre of which was the Carlton Trophy, the jewel in the crown.

The evening's function was held in the Hall and attended by many high ranking officers from the Scout Movement and other dignitaries that included in their ranks two well-known figures in Hong Kong government circles, Mr. Tsang Yok Sing and his younger brother Tsang Tak Sing. Both were active members of our Scout Group and immensely proud of the 10<sup>th</sup> Hong Kong's achievements. The evening was one of celebration with a mix of stories and photographs (mainly in black and white) that told of countless happy events and funny tales of being in the cubs and scouts. Our Scout Group entertained those assembled with song and instrumental music that complemented the four course dinner we were all enjoying. What touched me the most was the strong sense of belonging that enveloped those gathered in this Hall. The conversations around the dinner tables centred on the 10<sup>th</sup> Hong Kong with other topics put to one side for the evening. We were all gathered with one purpose in mind; to honour ninety years of wonderful work by the St. Paul's College Scout Group.

I had the honour of speaking at the dinner and used the opportunity to share my journey through the Cub Scouts, Scouts and Venture Scouts as a boy who grew up in England. In many ways, I was destined to become a member of the Scout Movement. My father was the Scout Leader at the one of the Groups in the town Folkestone on the south coast of England. My elder sister was also an Assistant Cub Scout leader. In some respects I had little choice but to be involved although I would never come to regret my involvement. I remember the day when I was told that I could join the cubs.

I was eight years of age when I joined the Cubs in 1961 and proudly put on the uniform. At my first meeting I was presented with a certificate to show that I was now a real cub, a certificate that hung in my bedroom for the next four years.



In those days the Cubs were known by their full name, Wolf Cubs. As you know, a wolf is a strong animal that must learn to survive in harsh environments. They are pack dogs with a high degree of loyalty to the other dogs in their group. They work as a team and help each other in times of need. Once a member of a pack a wolf remains a member for life.

Baby wolves or wolf cubs must learn survival skills from their elders. As a wolf cub acquired those basic skills he was given a small metal star. All the cubs would aim to be presented with two stars that when placed in the front of your cap would look like two eyes. It was at this point in time that a young wolf cub's eyes were opened and he could move up to the scouts. I am wearing one of those stars in the lapel of my jacket this morning – the original from 51 years ago! The most important message I learned from my cub years was that loyalty to team-mates came first, no matter what we had to endure. We were a united group.

My teenage years were devoted to scouting. I spent hours at weekends and over the holidays on scout related activities mostly with the same group of boys in my patrol. I learned a great deal from my patrol leader and longed for day when I might get the chance to be in charge of a patrol. We went camping most weekends in tents or in shelters we built from tree branches, leaves and ground sheets. It was often cold, wet and extremely uncomfortable but immensely enjoyable. We used axes to chop the firewood and scout knives to open tins of food when one of us

had forgotten to bring a tin opener. The food was often disgusting but nobody cared – we were enjoying the adventure.



As I progressed through the scouts I was indeed promoted to the rank of patrol leader. In due course I became a Venture Scout and then reached the ultimate level of accomplishment, the Queen's Scout (called the Dragon Scout Award in Hong Kong), the highest honour for any scout at that time. It was soon after this award that I left England for Australia on a university scholarship. This would mean that my childhood passion and engagement with the scout movement had come to an end. It would not be reconnected until I moved to Hong Kong many years later and realised that SPC had its own famous and active scout group.

I can say with all sincerity that one of the reasons why I became a school principal was because I was a scout. Scouting taught me confidence and self-assurance. I had also learned the art of teamwork and the need to stick together and work as a group both in times of success but also in times of difficulty. I learned about loyalty and the responsibility we have to protect the more vulnerable members of the group. Being a scout was like being a wolf.



(Google images)

We cannot survive on our own and need the help and support of others. I encourage each of you to consider joining the scout movement. If you do not I still hope that you will live your lives in the way of a scout.

J.R. Kennard