

Mid-century Cub Scouts built friendships while building crafts

By GENEVIEVE CLARK

It wasn't until the late 1950s, at the suggestion of the Northfield Boy Scout troop, that my town had any Cub Scout dens. When I heard about the idea of starting a group for younger boys, I volunteered as a den mother.

After World War II, so many veterans, even my husband and I, were starting families. There were a lot more local children than there are now and a lot of interest in joining the Cub Scouts. On the first day of our after-school meetings, 18 boys crowded into my home.

Though I was able to convince a friend to be a den mother for the children who lived closer to her, my house on Millers Falls Road — in which I still reside 60 years later — became Den 2 in Northfield. It was a lot of work to have 10 or 12 boys come into your home immediately after school once a week for seven or eight years, but it was also a lot of fun.

At the time, Cub Scout meetings were held in homes. Though our Cub Scout chief was a man, working with the children fell on the women's shoulders because the men were still at work when school let out. Occasionally, all the individual dens in town would have a pack meeting where the Senior Center is today, in the lower level of Town Hall.

Each den meeting would start with the boys reciting the Cub Scout motto while saluting the U.S. flag. We'd often do arts and crafts activities, have races or take trips — anything that would serve as an outlet for their energy after school. All the boys would bring a nickel each week so we could afford refreshments, and we'd work on accomplishing tasks outlined in their little wolf, bear and lion books.

Usually, we would make something that would turn out well, but my kitchen was a disaster! I remember the mess of making our own candles by melting sticks of wax.

On other occasions, we made wreaths and even used empty juice and tuna fish cans to make miniature stoves. By popping a candle inside, we used the cans to cook hamburgers. It didn't take a lot of work, it was just a matter of figuring out how you'd do it.

After we'd made one particular project — I wish I could remember what it was now — one of the boys who came from a poor family said to me, "This is the first thing I've had that was just my own." I've never forgotten that.

And once, just so they'd have the experience of going on a train, I took them to the West Northfield railroad station and we rode the train to Greenfield and back. Some of them have told me they haven't been on a train since.

By the time each Cub Scout aged out of the program at 12 or otherwise left the group, they had learned what it means to be honest and help one another, and gained a lot of friend-

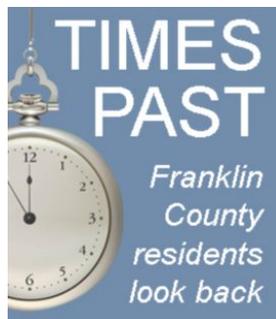


CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS/GENEVIEVE CLARK

Top: Genevieve Clark, den mother of Northfield's Cub Scout Den 2 in the late 1950s and early '60s, recites the Cub Scout motto with a group of Scouts while saluting the flag in her living room. Bottom: Boys in Northfield's Cub Scout Den 2 pose for a photo in front of Clark's home in the early 1960s.



CLARK



ships while learning to work with their hands.

As for me, despite being around children all the time, whether it be while working in a children's hospital or as a teacher at Linden Hill School, being their den mother gave me a lot of extra patience and confidence that you have to have when working with children. It also allowed me to bond more with my own sons, Gary, Mark and Kit, who were Scouts themselves. Even today, I work with children through

the Generations of Fun program the Senior Center oversees with Northfield Elementary School.

Though the Cub Scouts stopped having den mothers in the 1980s, every once in a while I'll run into one of my boys. I recently ran into three of them and was so excited to tell them who I was. They were equally excited. "Our old den mother!" they exclaimed. It's nice to know they had that much fun and developed memories that have withstood the test of time.

W. River Jct.		Passage Cancellation Here		Springfield	
Wilder	OHLY	IN	Book No.	Memo No.	Brightwood
N'wich-N'ver	FORM		3		Riverside
Kendall	E				Holyoke
Thetford				2951-85	Mount Tom
Northboro					N'hampton
Ely	Jefferson, N.H.	Clarendon			Whately
Fairlee	Randolph	Northville			So. Deerfield
Bradford, Vt.	Gorham	Newport			Deerfield
Coaklet	Berlin, N.H.	Sunapee			Gregg-Jud
Newbury, Vt.	Twin Mt.	Mt. Sunapee			Malvin
Wells River	Boston W'cs	Warner			Mt. Herman
	-Fabyan	Concord			E. N' ...eld
Woodsville	Boston	Concord			Brattleboro
Bath	Cambridge	Waltham			Dale Jct.
Lisbon	Waltham	Ayer			Windsor
Sugar Hill	Concord, Ma.	Fitchburg			Ashtut
Littleton	and	Gardner			Wichester
Battleham	Jc. H.	Alburt			Shelburne
Whitefield	Orange	Shelburne			Falls
Lancaster	N. H.	No. Adams			Westport
Northumb'g	William's	William's			W. Swancy
Groveland	Hoosick Falls	Hoosick Falls			Swancy
	Troy, N. Y.	Troy, N. Y.			Keene
					Windsor

CONTRIBUTED/GENEVIEVE CLARK

A train ticket from a trip Genevieve Clark took with her Cub Scouts from West Northfield to Greenfield and back in the early 1960s.