

In a region plagued by gangs, we could use more Boy Scouts

By Doug McIntyre

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The kid who lives in my house is an Eagle Scout, which fills his mother and me with both pride and astonishment. Is this the same lump of carbon that spent his tadpole years Velcroed to the sofa with a Game Boy controller in his paw?

A few years back he shuffled home from school and mumbled something about joining the Scouts. We would have been less shocked if he told us he had memorized the collected works of Chaucer in the original Middle-English.

As a 9-year-old he told us, "I don't like to sweat."

Eagle Scout? Not in our wildest parental fantasy.

I was a Boy Scout in Troop 103 in New York, the worst Boy Scout troop in the history of scouting. The only knot we learned was the noose. Our troop traveled to campouts in a Murphy's Moving & Storage van full of Schaffer Beer; cans not bottles, which was our idea of roughing it. Now an Eagle nests in my house.

His mother and I are proud he stuck it out. We're proud he quietly lives by the Scout creed; which doesn't mean he's a martinet or goody-two-shoes. In fact, he's a rock 'n' roll guitarist, a Bowie-Hendricks-Clapton-Beatles fan who knows several major obscenities. In other words, he's a teenager, warts and all.

But here are a few things he isn't: a gang-banger, a drug addict, mean, uncaring, boring. He hasn't brought the cops to our door or authored any of the teenage traumas that generate so many parental gray hairs, ulcers and episodes of Dr. Phil. He's an

Eagle Scout for crying out loud, they don't just hand that out.

The kid who lives in my house has learned the value of work and public service, empathy, teamwork, citizenship and yes, patriotism.

The Boy Scouts of America teaches patriotism to the next generation of Americans, and that's a good thing. It is, after all, the Boy Scouts of AMERICA. It's not the Earth Scouts or the Boy Scouts of Saudi Arabia, Norway or Guatemala. Every nation needs patriots. Every culture needs to pass its traditions to the next generation; otherwise we lose our culture and become a generic people rather than a name brand.

I know there are many who take John Lennon's "Imagine" literally and think the world would be better without borders. I don't. History, art, language, law, tradition and pride in place - patriotism, if you will - are the connective tissue that link one generation to the next. They make a nation a homeland.

Sadly, the Boy Scouts have become entangled in political agendas; specifically on gay rights issues. While all of America grapples with a social revolution, including liberal California, a vocal minority bash the Scouts while offering nothing in its place. I have actually spoken to functioning adults who see the Boy Scouts as nothing more than Hitler youth. We've produced a crop of citizens so fearful of "the military" they see anyone in uniform as a threat. I've wondered if these people turn over their luggage to the skycap or do they think curbside check-in is submitting to fascism?

The BSA is not a perfect organization and I don't mean to suggest the kid who lives in my house is perfect. I have stories! But he's a damn fine person, and he's made his mother and me better people by allowing us to coat-tail on his Eagle journey. Thousands upon thousands of boys learn to be giving, caring, responsible, patriotic men through Scouting. They are taught and mentored by busy adults, including many Scout moms. L.A.'s the beneficiary of their commitment to the future.

It's a sad irony that the neighborhoods that could benefit the most from Scouting, have the least of it. The Boy Scouts of America has a century of experience mentoring kids away from trouble. We don't

need a new Blue Ribbon Panel to study the latest gang intervention programs - we need more Boy Scouts.

Doug McIntyre hosts the "McIntyre in the Morning" program on Talk Radio 790 KABC, weekdays from 5 to 9 a.m.