



Scout's Honor: A Father's Unlikely Foray into the Woods

By Peter Applebome

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Peter Applebome grew up obsessed by box scores, so when his son, Ben, joined Little League he happily assumed he'd be spending Ben's childhood at the ballfield. But what Ben really liked was hiking and camping--and when he joined the local Scout troop Applebome reluctantly went along for the ride.

As someone who had never made a fire except in a gas grill and tied knots only in his shoelaces, Applebome was an unlikely recruit. Taking us from the low points (sneaking out of camp to watch basketball in a bar) to the unexpected triumphs (winning the Scoutmaster Challenge) and through all the trekorees and derbies in between, Applebome hikes the difficult trail from tenderfoot skeptic to proud Scout dad. Offering affectionate portraits of troop leaders and the motley group of boys in their charge, he also laces his very funny narrative with an informal but fascinating history of Scouting and grapples with the modern-day controversies that will help determine Scouting's future.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

New York Times writer and author Applebome (Dixie Rising) turns from the political to the personal as he recounts his adventures over three years as a Scoutmaster for his son's Boy Scout troop in suburban New York. A "committed indoorsman" who was turned off by the "dorky superfluity" of scouting during his own baby boomer childhood, he "soon found himself sucked in to Scouting" and "the way that it brought kids and dads together in a totally noncompetitive way." This engaging book moves back and forth among three narrative strands. Applebome gives a loving and often amusing description of his son's scouting adventures, "one part Braveheart and one part Lord of the Flies." He provides an excellent short history of the Boy Scouts, from the Edwardian roots of its first leader, the "astoundingly complex" British war hero and "repressed homosexual" Lord Robert Baden-Powell, to its current enrollment decline. He also discusses the institutional scouting policy that bans gays from being members, a position successfully defended before the Supreme Court. Applebome struggles with the tension between the right of free association and the "threadbare" logic of the Scout position. But while he disagrees with the ban, he too easily dismisses it as having "minimal real-world implications," not fully acknowledging that the wonderfulness of this "unexpected vehicle to share [his] son's youth" is something that the Boy Scout organization openly denies to parents with gay children.-- son's youth" is something that the Boy Scout organization openly denies to parents with gay children.

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Review

"Scout's Honor is at the same time a hilarious outdoor odyssey, a moving glimpse of a father's heart, and the best commentary ever on the Boy Scouts and their touchingly awkward history. When I was a Scout, the ultimate approbation for a job well done was something called "Three and a Half Hows." So here's to you, Peter Applebome: How! How! How! Hhhhh!" -- Stephen Harrigan, author of *The Gates of the Alamo*

"...a hilarious outdoor odyssey, a moving glimpse of a father's heart, and the best commentary ever on the Boy Scouts..." (Stephen Harrigan *author of The Gates of the Alamo* 2003-02-19)

From the Inside Flap

Peter Applebome grew up obsessed by box scores and basketball, and happily assumed his son Ben would follow in his footsteps. But Ben had other ideas. He soon informed his dad that what he really liked was camping and hiking--and when he joined the local Boy Scout troop Applebome found himself along for the ride.

Scout's Honor is the story of how a 50-year-old self-proclaimed "committed indoorsman" became a Scout. As someone who had never made a fire in anything but a gas grill and couldn't tie a knot except in his shoelaces, Applebome was an unlikely recruit. He takes us through the three years he and Ben spent with the troop, from the low points (sneaking out of camp to watch college basketball in a bar) to the high (winning the Scoutmaster Challenge), and through all the sweltering hikes, soggy canoe trips, and bear-haunted campouts in between. He draws affectionate portraits of troop leaders, volunteer dads, and the motley troop of kids in their charge. And, most surprisingly, he finds himself growing to appreciate Scouting's old-

fashioned virtues--well, at least most of them--as he grapples with the modern-day controversies that will determine Scouting's future.

Laced with a fascinating history of Scouting and the deeply eccentric men who created it, *Scout's Honor* is a gloriously funny tale of misadventure that reminds us what a father will do for a son and what Scouting has done for American boyhood.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Gerald Warfield:

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