

APPENDIX F

“MOST REMARKABLE TROOP”¹

OUT ON A PACIFIC ISLAND, UNHERALDED BY THE PRESS,
THESE SCOUTS HAVE OVERCOME THEIR HANDICAPS IN A
MOST INCREDIBLE FASHION.

THE most unusual Troop registered by the Boy Scouts of America has never camped or hiked beyond the ten-square-mile neck of land that, like a rough thumbnail, juts into the Pacific Ocean from beneath towering green cliffs on the windward side of Molokai, Hawaii. Despite such a limited area, this Troop boasts of two counteractive months of camping each summer, and has a high record of day hikes during the remaining seasons of the year.

But more surprising is the fact that Troop 46 has never seen another Scout Troop. The closest contact they have had with other Scouts occurred last summer when one of the Troops “topside”—a term used to refer to any place beyond the overshadowing cliffs—came to the precipitous edge of the cliffs and signaled greetings to Troop 46 in Morse code by means of a blinker system.

Undoubtedly both Troops were more than a little curious about the other. But the Troop topside had stopped at the head of a trail leading over the *pali* Hawaiians call their cliffs, where a sign read “Kalaupapa Settlement.” It is necessary to secure permission to go beyond this sign, for

1. James W. English, “Most Remarkable Troop,” *Boys’ Life* 7, no. 30 (February 1949).

KALAUAPAPA

since King Kamehameha V passed the law of segregation in 1865, Hawaii has sent its lepers to Kalaupapa.

Since its pitiful beginning, when the first boatload of victims was put ashore to die of a feared disease unattended and unwanted, Kalaupapa has undergone remarkable changes. Missionaries brought a spiritual hope to those cast out by society, while trained staff were sent by the medical world to seek a cure. Today there is a restrained but bright hope at Kalaupapa, for a new drug, sulfone, gives promise of doing more for the treatment of leprosy than any other known medicine.

But the change that has come to Kalaupapa preceded even this new medical discovery, for the change was one brought about by the patients themselves, with the help of able administrators from the Hawaiian Board of Hospitals and Settlement. From filth and squalor and moral latitude has grown an enterprising colony of industrious, happy people, who receive free medical care, adequate housing and board, and 50 dollars a year for clothing. They may work for good pay within the limitation of each patient's physical and personal capabilities. Perhaps no place on earth offers more security.

For the boys in the Scout Troop, the Settlement is something like a boarding school. As leprosy seldom strikes at all members of a family, a majority of the patients at Kalaupapa are separated from their families who remain in that other world topside. The young patients live in halls like boarding school students but actually they have much greater freedom of movement and considerably wider variety of occupations for their times.

HOW A TROOP WAS STARTED

It was in 1942 that Troop 46 was organized. At that time there were over 30 boys of Scout age in the Settlement. Those under 16 years of age attended school for half a day, while the older boys who were able to work did so for three or four hours a day. But by and large there was little opportunity for this group of boys to be other than followers in the Settlement. Decisions and planning were done almost entirely by older patients, the administration staff and the doctors. These boys felt keenly

APPENDIX F

their lack of opportunity for self expression in the community where they would live out their lives.

It was for these reasons that Scouting came to Kalaupapa. The Damien Post of the American Legion accepted the sponsorship of the Troop, whose members represented every nationality group found in the Hawaiian Islands. The Troop Committee included every religious denomination working at the Settlement, for leprosy cuts across race, color, and creed.

Every boy in the Settlement eligible to join the Troop did so. Few of these Scouts have dropped out. A few have died, and several new patients of Scout age have joined. But Troop 46 is one Scout Troop that doesn't want new members, and the reason isn't snobbishness on their part. It's just that every new member means a new leper patient, something no one wants to see.

At the present time two young missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, both Eagle Scouts, are giving new life to the Troop and its activities. Scoutmaster of the Troop is Kenso [Seki], an arrested patient who has chosen to remain in the Settlement, as the people topside, misinformed and believing old superstitions about leprosy, shy away from him because of his physical deformities of face and hands wrought by the disease.

According to Mr. Lawrence M. Judd, Resident Superintendent of Kalaupapa Settlement, it is indeed rare when a patient in whom the disease has been arrested can live topside, so prejudiced is the mind of most people regarding leprosy and those it has affected. As a result most of these prefer to remain in the Settlement working at various trades or assisting the Superintendent.

PATIENTS HELP EACH OTHER

Besides Kenso and the two missionaries, there is William, an Assistant Scoutmaster, who had been rendered speechless by the disease. However, as the disease has afflicted everyone although in varying forms, such as contracture or atrophy of fingers, swelling of the ears, wrinkled skin, blotches or lumps on the face, the patients seek to compensate for each other's handicaps. Consequently one would never know of William's

KALAUPAPA

particular affliction if he saw the young man surrounded by members of the Troop, telling them by signs what to do.

And anyone at Kalaupapa will tell you their Troop is doing things. These boys, who once had no practical means of self-expressing in the affairs of the Settlement, are now setting a place for other groups to shoot at.

The Troop is planning to put up street signs on the various tree-lined drives of the Settlement. They are almost all members of the volunteer fire department. Recently, when the Settlement's bakery burned, these volunteer firemen dashed over from the movies and assisted in the evacuation of people from a residence in an adjoining building pushed a car out of a threatened garage, and helped handle the fire hoses. And next day one of the Scouts was around filling the fire extinguishers, a job he had voluntarily assigned to himself.

The Troop has undertaken to build an American Legion Club house, which will also serve as a Scout meeting place. The Scouts are tearing down old buildings, salvaging the lumber, and doing the work themselves. After the building is completed the Settlement will provide the Troop with woodworking equipment for a shop.

When a tidal wave hit the Settlement on April 1, 1946, the Scout Troop was on hand to help move foodstuffs from a damaged warehouse, and helped carry two inch pipe along the foot of the pali to build a temporary water line to replace the one washed out by the wave. They also packed poles up the pali trail to aid with the installation of temporary telephone lines.

As a result of the Isolation wrought by this tidal wave, much interest has been shown in amateur radio, and under the direction of Judge Edward Bell, of the Troop Committee, a ham club is being formed with many of the Scouts, already proficient in the use of code, as members.

ONE VOLUNTEERS FOR WORK

During the war an Army doctor visited the Settlement, calling at the hospital where he saw volunteer first-aid men at work. In amazement, he watched Anthony, despite badly disfigured hands, do such a perfect job of dressing an open sore that the doctor, a full Army Colonel, took off his

APPENDIX F

Eisenhower jacket and handed it to Anthony, “Here,” the Colonel said, “wear my jacket. You’re doing a better job than I could do.”

Except for the very newest Scouts, every member of Troop 46 has a complete Scout uniform, which he has purchased himself with money earned at various jobs around the Settlement.

As the married patients live in their own homes, the Settlement needs most of the shopping facilities of any small town, a factor which provides jobs for many. Although no one has to work, most prefer to do something. So William works as a clerk in the butcher shop, and Edwin in the welding shop. Fred works as a house painter, and Jimmy works on the garbage truck. Paul and “Big Boy” work with the nursery mom, a very important job at Kalaupapa, for everyone now takes a great personal pride in the appearance of his home. They have truly converted this little lead-shaped abutment of land into a garden spot. George trims the hedges and mows the lawns, and cuts the dead fronds and heavy coconut from the palm trees. And so it goes with the entire Troop, everyone working as many hours a day as the doctors will permit at whatever needed task must suit his taste and ability.

With earnings from these jobs the Scouts have purchased their uniforms, and have also made great strides in furnishing their room in the dormitory like homes where they live. As the 50 dollars a year each patient receives for clothes, pins whatever he desires to use from his own earnings, must be spent by mail order, the mail order catalogue is one of the most prized possessions of anyone at Kalaupapa. And from it, these Scouts have purchased everything from clothes to radios and electric refrigerators—the latter kept well stocked with soda pop for which all Hawaiians seem to have an inexhaustible thirst.

Many of the rooms are as modern as that of a boarding school dorm on the mainland. Frequently the occupant has placed religious pictures on the wall, has a Scout bookshelf, and may even be working on a design to black print his own brightly-patterned aloha shirts.

However, come July and August, Troop 46 pitches its pyramid tents at Kalawao, where the original Father Damien settlement of the colony was located. The Scouts have the old concrete foundations of the former administration building for a mess hall and shower room.

KALAUPAPA

The site is an ideal camp location. The pali rises abruptly behind them, towering some 2,000 feet overhead. Around the grassy clearing where they have pitched their tents is a regular jungle of ironwood, date palms, and guava trees.

Right in front of the camp site is the ocean, pounding against the lava rocks 50 feet below. Sometimes the Scouts swim in the natural pools beneath the cliffs or at a nearby pebbly beach.

To the east is one of the most startling views in the entire Hawaiian Islands. This is called the Pelakunu side of Molokai, and here the pali falls directly into the ocean, the spray leaping futilely up the emerald green cliffs. Several huge gorges cut through the pali to the sea and numerous waterfalls are visible. Just off shore are two small islands known as the Needle and the Pin Cushion, because of their respective shapes.

In this ideal setting the Scouts run their own camp program.

Fishing is a favorite sport at camp. Forty and 50 pound uluas have been caught with set lines, while the haul with a throw net includes uouos, manini, enenui, lobster and crab, and occasionally they poke fish along the edge of the pounding surf for diversion.

CHASING GOATS ON THE PALI

Another favorite sport is goat hunting on the pali. As firearms are not allowed at the Settlement, it is necessary to chase the animals across the pali and corner a goat in order to catch him. If you've ever hunted mountain goats you'll know what a job this must be.

However, in the summer of 1947, on the Waikola trail, which skirts the foot of the pali on the Pelakuna side, an accident occurred while goat hunting. Nearly a dozen Scouts were scrambling over the lower slopes of the pali, in pursuit of a goat, when someone dislodged a loose stone. The stone, bounding down the pali, struck Bataan in the shoulder, tumbling him from his precarious footing, Bataan suffered a broken collar bone and fractured ribs.

Anthony and the other Scouts, who had specialized in first aid at the hospital, promptly strapped Bataan's arm to his side, gave what first aid they could, and prepared to transport him to camp. It was necessary to make a stretcher of poles and their shirts in order to lower him over some

APPENDIX F

50-foot drops. Once they got Bataan to the trail they transported him to camp using the three man carry.

Other Scouts had gone to the Settlement to notify Dr. Norman R. Sloan of the accident, and he arrived just as the Troop brought in the injured Scout. Bataan was rushed to the hospital, but after a thorough examination Dr. Sloan discovered that what could have been a serious situation had been greatly lessened because of the prompt and correct emergency treatment given by the Scouts.

Evenings are frequently given over to singing, accompaniment being provided by the Troop's five-piece orchestra, consisting of two guitars, two ukuleles, and a bass fiddle. Besides the traditional Hawaiian songs, the orchestra keeps up with popular music by listening to the radio. They have no sheet music, but play by ear, keeping at a number heard on the radio until they get it down pat.

And right there is something that stumps the occasional visitor. The members of the orchestra, almost to the man, suffer from atrophied fingers or have some fingers missing entirely. Yet, whether it be picking the chords on a ukulele or guitar, or slapping the bass fiddle, the orchestra performs a job that leaves one wondering how they do it.

But if the feats of the orchestra leave you surprised, there is still a greater surprise ahead. First Class Achievement Scout Sampson had to settle for the Achievement rank as he couldn't swim because of a trachea tube in his throat which had been afflicted by the disease. However, after he had reached the rank of Achievement Scout First Class, the disease attacked Sampson's sight, leaving him totally blind. Sampson had a natural ear for music, and music now meant more to him than ever before. He put his love of music to work and has written three songs, *Angel of My Vision*, *Sunset over Kalaupapa*, and *I'll Say Goodbye* which are being considered for publication by music publishers in both Honolulu and New York City.

When your reporter visited Troop 46, Sampson consented to sing his own compositions. Because of the trachea tube, which was concealed behind a cotton patch and a piece of adhesive tape, his voice was not that of Frank Sinatra. Aware of this, Sampson tried to sing while hiding behind the bass fiddler Willie. But there was no need for modesty. The

KALAUAPAPA

compositions were of professional quality, and Sampson carried off the vocal in a remarkable fashion despite his handicap.

AN ATMOSPHERE OF THEIR OWN

Sampson, the orchestra, Bataan—who is back goat hunting, are only part of the story of tenacity and determination of the Scouts of Troop 46. They are part of a unique Settlement of people, once thought to be unfortunates, to be pitied and shunned. But by their own personal attitude and determination to conquer their handicaps, they have wrought profound change. Amidst people who are similarly afflicted, in a society where one has no financial worries, and the opportunity to work at something that interests him, the entire Settlement is now reaching a degree of physical comfort and mental satisfaction often found lacking in the hustle of today's hurried living elsewhere.

On these ten square miles—connected to the outside by a perilous trail over the pali, by a tiny airfield for light planes, and by a weekly visit of a small inter-island steamer, there is a sense of friendliness, of understanding, that makes the visitor wish to share the remarkable mental attitude of the members of the Kalaupapa Settlement.

Purely selfish motives seem to be a thing relegated to that society which live “topside,” and it's a delight to report that the Scouts of Troop 46 aided and guided by the Damien Post of the American Legion, are showing the way in thought and deed, and are putting the Scout Oath and Law to practice, not just for themselves but for the entire Settlement. In Kalaupapa the spirit of the “good turn” is a reality, not just a challenge.