

How JFK Assassination Brought Four Deaf Cub Scouts Together to Become Eagle Scouts
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America was plunged into collective shock on November 22, 1963 when the U.S. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald in downtown Dallas, Texas. Millions of Americans were glued to their television sets for the next few days to witness the events in Dallas, TX and Washington, D.C.

State and local communities across the nation held their events to mourn the late President. When North Carolina School for the Deaf (NCSD), Morganton, NC reopened doors for school on Tuesday, November 26, it asked its four Cub Scouts, aged nine from Troop 3 to help with a special ceremony. They were asked to raise the American flag to half-mast to honor the memory of the deceased President. This was unique as compared to other regular schools across America. The four Cub Scouts were among 600 students at NCSD that were deaf and used American Sign Language (ASL) as their means of communication.

Little did the four Cub Scouts realize then that in nine more years in 1972, they would be together before a packed house to attain Scouting's highest honor. The Cub Scouts were Leonard Worth Little, Jr. of Albemarle, NC, Darrell Hugh Moore of Hurdle Mills, NC, Angus Wilton McMillan, Jr. of Parkton, NC, and Claude Louis Stout of Pittsboro, NC. When they were ready to become Boy Scouts, they joined Troop 182, Piedmont Council with NCSD, Morganton, NC. They were most fortunate to be under an outstanding Scoutmaster, Mr. Paul Crutchfield, also deaf and well-versed in ASL. He was the school's woodwork instructor. He gave 50 years of his time and effort at NCSD with hundreds of Scouts with Troops 182 and 5. During his time, the two troops saw their forty-six Scouts earn the top rank of the Eagle Badge.

The four Scouts took the journey together for nearly a decade to reach the top rank in Boy Scouts. It gave them special, lifelong-learning memories that were inspirational, educational, character-building, and insightful. To illustrate a number as follows:

They participated with other Scouts in troop meetings on every Wednesday in a room on the top floor of the school's old supply warehouse. These meetings would usually start with the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, the Scout Oath, and the twelve Scout Laws. Then Mr. Crutchfield would captivate their attention to his stories about past Troop activities and former Scouts, Indians-Cowboys skirmishes in the Wild West, and the events and key figures from the school's past in its pursuits for academic excellence and full accessibility. He shared some words of wisdom, including the one about a twig as opposed to a bundle of them to demonstrate the power of an individual versus a group of individuals in a social, political, or cultural setting.

As a part to earn a merit badge in conservation of natural resources, they took a hike up in the mountains staying close to the creek, finally arriving at the area where there was just a drip of water. They learned that it takes many a drip to generate much water to sustain the creek. An eye-opening experience it was for them!

When working for a Lifesaving merit badge, they had to swim around in the school's indoor pool, without touching its perimeters for a total of 22 laps. This endurance test lasted for about an hour, and when they finished this feat, everything else was easier to meet for the Eagle Badge.

When out camping during many a weekend at the school's Watershed site or Camp McCall, they learned to cook and bake. Scoutmaster Crutchfield often had them bake an apple cobbler and baked beans by using ashes from a campfire to heat up the Dutch oven.

When earning a merit badge in hiking, they performed a total of five 10-mile hikes and one 20-mile hike. One hike had them trekking from the school to a nearby mountain called High Hill near Valdese, NC, and reaching to the top and then returning back to the campus.

Scoutmaster Crutchfield had an impressive collection of stamps and coins. He had them come to his house one Saturday to review pieces from his collection with them. They learned a lot that stamps are extremely fragile and that they need to be protected from dangers like being squashed, and extreme humidity. And that coins are far more durable, bigger, and heavier, thus that storage for them is more expensive.

Unlike many others who would hunt, fish, or play golf, Mr. Crutchfield enjoyed gold panning as a hobby. They had fun learning from him on how to pan for gold. After a few tries with Mr. Crutchfield, they went back home with a few flakes. He showed us a pea-sized nugget, which he arranged to make a necklace with for his wife, Bashie.

Scoutmaster Crutchfield helped them understand and appreciate nature as the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to humans or human creations. He marveled them with many a name for a rock, a wildflower, an insect, an animal, or a bird, etc.

In addition to attending the Table Rock District camporees, they went to two camporees for the deaf, one hosted by Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind in Staunton, VA in 1971 and another one by Missouri School for the Deaf near Hannibal, MO in 1973. North Carolina School for the Deaf, Morganton was for many years a steadfast, faithful sponsor for Troop 182, its members, and Scoutmaster. This key support was made possible, thanks to the school's chief executive officer, the Superintendent Dr. Rance Henderson. He was an active member in the community including the city of Morganton and Burke County, representing the Table Rock District on the Piedmont Council with the Boy Scouts of America.

Little, McMillan, and Stout attended the National Jamboree at Farragut State Park in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho from July 16-22, 1969. 34,251 Scouts from across America, and a few from overseas participated in the week-long event. Astronaut and Eagle Scout Neil A. Armstrong sent greetings to those at the Jamboree from outer space during his historic voyage to the moon. Lady Baden-Powell, the wife of the Boy Scouts founder Robert Baden-Powell made an appearance at the closing ceremonies.

Little, Moore, and Stout went to Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron, New Mexico in June 1971. At the ranch, they spent ten days hiking and carrying 70-lb backpacks across the rugged terrain ranging in elevation from 6,500 to 12,441 feet. They climbed successfully on the famed Tooth of Time mountain. One night, while they were away for an activity, a bear stopped by their campsite and took down the bag with their food/supplies that was hung from the tree. The mistake was that the bag was too close to the trunk of the tree, enough for the bear to reach it. Other activities they enjoyed were horseback-riding, conservation projects, and making new friends with other participating Scouts.

In 1973 McMillan, Moore, and Stout were inducted into the Order of the Arrow, an Indian fraternity with the national Boy Scouts organization. Stout received the God and Country Award in 1971, after a summer's volunteer activities with his church in Pittsboro, NC.

During their time with Troop 182, NCSD, the four Scouts conducted various leadership roles. They acknowledged the importance of team/group decision-making and consensus-building processes. Little served as assistant patrol leader, patrol leader, and senior patrol leader. Moore served as assistant patrol leader, patrol leader, and senior patrol leader. McMillan served as assistant patrol leader, patrol leader, senior patrol leader, and scribe. Stout served as assistant patrol leader, patrol leader, senior patrol leader, and scribe.

On May 26, 1972, NCSD's students, teachers, dorm counselors, and administration officials attended the Eagle Scout Award presentation for the four Scouts. It was held in the auditorium of Main Building on the school campus (fifty years ago this year in 2022!). The event theme was "As They Grow." Five skits were presented by other Scouts portraying the four boys' ascension with Troop 182 starting as Cub Scouts in 1963, then transitioning into as Boy Scouts in 1966, and finally meeting the full requirements after six years in 1972 for the Eagle Badge. They were promoted to First Class in 1968, advanced to Star Rank in 1969, and attained Life Rank in 1970. Participating in the ceremony with the four Scouts were their parents: Ms. Doris Little, Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Moore, Mr. and Mrs. Angus W. McMillan, Sr., and Mr. and Mrs. Arvie Stout. The Scouts' mothers had the honors to pin the Eagle Award on their sons' uniform shirt left pocket flaps.

The best part in addition to the presentation of the Eagle Awards to the four Scouts, was seeing Mr. Crutchfield give his Scoutmaster's Minute, titled "The Living Badge." Partly quoting Crutchfield's remarks, he said, "Today, I would like to call your badge, the LIVING BADGE. This badge is very special and is different from any other badge, medal, or honor that you will ever receive. In your future life you will see your badge again and again whenever you open the case, drawer, or wherever you keep it. You will, perhaps, wonder if you are worthy to wear it and sometimes you will feel you are unworthy. But the badge is still yours and it will always help you remember that you can do your best." And he concluded as follows: "You can see that the Eagle Scout is a symbol of what a boy has done, but more important, it represents what a boy will be in the future as he grows to manhood and goes out to meet a world with confidence and pride, always striving to do his best, knowing that in serving others he will be serving himself. And now you know why I am calling your Eagle Badge, THE LIVING BADGE."

Fast forward the five decades to the year 2022, the four NCSA Eagle Scouts have strived to do their very best. They have been most fortunate to have made a good living, to marry their high school sweethearts and to produce children with them, and to give their time and service for their deaf and hard of hearing community.

After graduating from NCSA as the class valedictorian in 1974, Mr. Little went to Chowan College where he received an Associate of Arts degree in Printing and Graphics. He worked with Pelton Crane for 25 years as an equipment polisher, and then with Freightliner for 15 years, first as an assembler, and then as a parts delivery specialist. He was married to the former Diane Coleman for 40 years. They have a daughter Jennifer and a son Joshua. Little was Vice President of the North Carolina Deaf Campers Association for 5 years. Unfortunately, in July 2019, he passed away at age 65. Little's widow, Diane remarked, "Scouting was a big part of Worth's life. He loved sharing his Scouting stories with his children to teach them the importance of building healthy relationships with their friends, giving back to their community, and to do the best they can in everything they do. The experience made Worth the man he was – a loving husband and father, a great friend who loved his community. Thank you, the Boy Scouts of America, for all the tools you have given Worth and others, so that they could pass them on to their children."

After graduating from NCSA in 1973, within a few months Mr. Moore married the former Donya Heath on one hot summer day in Greenville, NC. They have two sons, Bryan and Jamie. Moore worked with his father at the Moore Rock Hill Farm for 12 years, producing tobacco, soybeans, and corn in the fields in Hurdle Mills, N.C. Then when farming was more challenging, he saw it fit to switch to 18-wheel commercial truck-driving, and he was with Loxcren Company for 21 years before he retired in 2011. For 20 years, Moore was a volunteer fire fighter for Hurdle Mills Fire Department. For 10 years, Moore has been a member of North Carolina Deaf Golfers Association, and five years with Southeastern Deaf Golfers Association. Asked about Scouting's impact on him, Moore said, "As I went on camping trips, I became closer with my friends. Boy Scouts has painted a bigger picture of life, our country, and the world for me, and many others. I will always be an Eagle no matter what I do, or where I go."

Mr. McMillan graduated from Gallaudet University with a bachelor's degree in Physical Education and a Masters' degree in School Counseling. While at Gallaudet, he was Grand Rajah with Kappa Gamma Fraternity. He was married to the former Jennifer Thomas for eighteen years, and they have three sons, Jonathan, Brandon, and Clayton. McMillan retired in 2016 from thirty-eight years in education of the deaf and hard of hearing, the first 18 years with the Model Secondary School for the Deaf on the Gallaudet campus in Washington, D.C., and then the last 20 years with Kentucky School for the Deaf in Danville, KY and the Kentucky Department of Education in Frankfort, KY. He served as Chairperson of the Kentucky State Mental Health Advisory Council for five years. He has served on the Youth Leadership Camp Alumni Foundation Board of Directors since 2012. When asked on Scouting's imprint on him, McMillan said: "I learned pretty quickly that, in order to succeed, you needed to "SOAR like An EAGLE" and look at LIFE from an aerial perspective. I believe in "THE GOLDEN RULE" and being in both the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts shaped my life to what it became and still is today. The Scout Oath and Scout Law still hold true for me in that we all must create an even playing

field for everyone. This quote is what I always tell everyone ... “the best gift you can give to anyone is YOUR TIME.” LONG LIVE BSA!!!”

Claude Stout graduated from Gallaudet University with a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration and a Master of Business Administration degree in Management. He was President of the Student Body Government at Gallaudet for two years. He has been married to the former Judy Cummings for forty-one years, and they have two children, Abigail and Tyler. Stout retired in June 2020 after forty years in public service. The first ten years were in business services with National Association of the Deaf, then seven years in community services with Missouri Commission for the Deaf and North Carolina Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and last with twenty three years in national consumer advocacy for disability access with Telecommunications for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing, Inc. He was Chair of the Deaf & Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network for 18 years. When asked about Scouting’s influence on him, Stout said, “We feel closer to God when we go camping or hiking. As we met the requirements with the merit badges and projects for the Eagle Badge, it was an extra curriculum for our future as highly functional Americans. We have seen over the years how mutually beneficial it is to do volunteer service for our community. And we identify more today with the founder Robert Baden-Powell’s famous Scout motto, “Be Prepared.”

After a well-deserved retirement from NCSD for fourteen years, Mr. Crutchfield passed away in April 1990. The four Eagle Scouts met together for the last time during the school’s October 2014 Homecoming weekend activities. Crutchfield’s family observed his 100th birthday anniversary two years ago with a dinner gathering at the school’s Scout Cabin. Troop 182 has since been disbanded and there is a historical museum at NCSD that has an impressive display of the memorabilia, some as donated by the Troop and the rest from some of its former Scouts.