



“Follow The White Stag”

A History of the White Stag Leadership Development Program

The White Stag has a very special place in the history of leadership development in the Boy Scouts of America. This program, still going strong, provided the substance of the eleven skills of leadership taught today in Wood Badge and the Junior Leader Training Conference. It also provided the conceptual framework for the application of an experiential learning process to leadership training in the BSA.

This history was written by Brian Phelps, a participant and later a Director of the White Stag program in Monterey, California. His research was supported by Bela Banathy, the originator of the program and Joe St. Clair, one of White Stag’s founders.

The White Stag Youth Leadership Development program was founded in 1958 on the Monterey Peninsula, in Monterey, California. But this program, so powerful that it has continued without interruption since that time with no funding or assistance other than that donated by its volunteer leaders and members, has direct roots that go back to a time, twenty-five years earlier (and indirectly long before that).

In 1933, at Gödöllő, Hungary, the Fourth World Jamboree is in full swing. Over 25,000 Scouts attend. From these beginnings, a chronological story of White Stag and people’s activities unfolds. This is a history that tells, in only a cursory way, of untold thousands of hours of effort, great expenditures of personal energy and money, and a devoted response by adults and youth to the challenge, “Follow the White Stag.”

1933

The Fourth World Jamboree is held in Gödöllő, Hungary. There are 25,792 Scouts in camp. The daily Jamboree paper is printed in Hungarian, English, French and German with contributions in other languages. The Jamboree Badge portrayed the “Miraculous Stag” of Hungary.... Baden Powell addressed the assembled Scouts:

“Each one of you wears the badge of the White Stag...I want you to treasure that badge when you go from here and remember that it has its message and meaning for you. Hunters of old pursued the miraculous stag, not because they expected to kill it, but because it led them in the joy of the chase to new and fresh adventures, and so to capture happiness. You may look on the White Stag as the true spirit of Scouting, springing forward and upward, ever leading you onward to leap over difficulties, to face new adventures in your active pursuit of the higher aims of Scouting — aims which bring you happiness. These aims are duty to God, to your country, and to your fellow man by carrying out the Scout Law. In that way you will help to bring about God’s kingdom upon earth — the reign of peace and goodwill.”

Paul Suján, Bela Banathy, and Joe St. Clair, three Scouts from Hungary, and F. Maurice Tripp, from the United States, are in attendance, and briefly meet for the first time. (Baden-Powell tastes some of Paul Suján’s stew.) These four will later play key roles in what will be called “White Stag Youth Leadership Development.”

1941-44

Bela Banathy is director of the youth leadership development program of the Hungarian Boy Scout Association.

1946-56

Bela Banathy, Paul Suján, Joe St. Clair and their families emigrate to the United States, though not without difficulties. All eventually find their way coincidentally to the Monterey Peninsula and the Defense Language Institute where they meet again. Bela’s and Joe’s wives rediscover a girlhood friendship from Budapest. As the three immigrants become involved in American Scouting, they meet Maury Tripp again and a fifth Scouter, Fran Peterson.

1957-58

Bela Banathy organizes an experimental troop consisting of two patrols for the purpose of trying out a leadership development program conceived by him. He is Chairman of the Leadership Training Committee of the Monterey Bay Area Council, Boy Scouts of America. This initial experiment takes place at the Pico Blanco Boy Scout Reservation, in summer 1958, which will remain the site of the program through 1978. The “White Stag” becomes the symbol of the program.

1959

Encouraged by the success of this experiment and because of the lack of adequate official intensive and long-range junior leader training program, the Monterey Bay Area Council decides to use Banathy’s design as a council-wide program. The first full-scale program takes place in the summer of 1959 with Banathy as Scoutmaster, Fran Peterson as Assistant Scoutmaster (Training), an adult staff of eight and a youth staff of 13, with John Chiorini as the Senior Patrol Leader. The Troop consists of 39 trainees from 24 troops. In the first two years of the program, the training of Patrol Leaders is stressed.

Also during the second year, Banathy’s research efforts indicates an interest in leadership development by the Human Resources Research Office (HumRRO). Banathy initiates contact with Paul Hood, a research psychologist and Task Leader of Task NCO at HumRRO. A research team which Hood is heading publishes “A Guide for the Infantry Squad Leader — What the Beginning Squad Leader Should Know About Human Relations” (1959). This publication contributes greatly to elaboration of the leadership tasks, as Banathy finds its conceptual basis fully compatible with his program. By this time Banathy focuses his research on leadership development and formalizes his efforts in his Master’s Thesis at San Jose State University.

Bob Perin, Assistant National Director, Volunteer Training Service, Boy Scouts of America, a friend of Bela’s, provides guidance and acts as a liaison to the National Council. Mr. Banathy is continually aided and supported by Fran Peterson, who is active on both the local and national levels.

Banathy continues as Director through 1964.

1960

At the end of the 1959 intensive summer camp event, it is announced that in the following year a two-phase program will be offered: one for the 12-14 year age group, with the objective of training Patrol Leaders in the patrol method; and another for the 14-17 year age group to train "junior trainers and impart leadership skills"

1961-65

During this period of time, the present three phase/three-level plan emerges in which Phase I imparts Patrol Membership skills, Phase II Patrol Leader skills, and Phase III Troop Leader skills. Each phase has a candidate (learner or trainee) level, a youth staff level, and an adult staff level.

1962

An advisory board of educators, psychologists, management specialists and members of the Scout professional staff is formed, chaired by Dr. R. Maurice Tripp. Dr. Tripp is a research scientist and member of the National Council, BSA.

Explorer Post 122 is established, in which young men conduct research on leadership development. Banathy is advisor, Ted Minnis is Committee Chairman, and Markham Johnston is Institutional Representative.

1963

The Monterey Bay Area Council publishes Banathy's book, "A Design for Leadership Development in Scouting", an expanded version of his master's thesis for San Jose State University. This book becomes the main source of information and guidance for the program. In developing his ideas on leadership development, Banathy receives continued scientific support from Hood, then stationed at the Presidio of Monterey.

Dr. Tripp presents a paper entitled, "Development of Leadership in Boy Leaders of Boys," at the fifty-third Annual Meeting of the National Council, BSA. He advocates leadership development by design in Scouting, based on the leadership competencies of White Stag.

A patrol of Scouts from the San Mateo County Council and a few boys from the Circle Ten Council in Dallas attend White Stag summer camp. The boys from Dallas are part of an experimental pilot program to take the White Stag program nationwide.

1963-64

Through the efforts of Maury Tripp, Bob Perin, and Fran Peterson, the National Council takes an early interest in Banathy's ideas. The Research Service of the BSA sends observers to Pico Blanco: Ken Wells (Director of Research Service) and John Larsen (Staff Researcher). They evaluate the local experiment, and in January of 1964 a number of key individuals assemble at Asilomar in Pacific Grove, California. The purpose is to acquaint the national council with the new design and plan for effective teaching of the skills of leadership within the design of Scouting, in a manner "similar to the way we teach Scoutcraft skills" In attendance from National are Ken Wells; Walt Whidden (Region 12 Executive); Bill Lawrence (National Director of Volunteer Training); Marshall Monroe (Assistant National Scout Executive); Harold Hunt (Vice President of the National Council and Professor of Education at Harvard); Ellsworth Augustus (National Council President); Jack Rhey (National Director of Professional Training); and Bob Perin (National Training Representative).

Attending from the local council are Fran Peterson, (member of the White Stag Advisory Board, Scoutmaster in Chular, and member of the National Engineering Service); Ralph Herring (member of the White Stag Committee); Ferris Bagley (a retired businessman with an interest in leadership development); Bela Banathy (Director of White Stag and Director of the East Europe and Middle East Division of the Army Language School); Tom Moore (Monterey Bay Area Council Executive); Dale Hirt (President of the Monterey Bay Area Council); Paul Hood (Research Scientist at

HumRRO); John Barr (Chairman of the Department of Education at San Jose State University); Joe St. Clair, (Chairman, Hungarian Department at the Army Language School on the Presidio and MBAC Training Committee) Chairman; Judson Stull; F. Maurice Tripp (Chairman, White Stag Advisory Committee and member, Boy Scout Committee, National Council, and organizer of this conference); and a few Scouts from the local council who provide personal testimony about the program. This conference marks the beginning of a long process that eventually results not only in the redesigning of Junior Leader Training for the BSA, but also a new approach to the Wood Badge Adult Scouter Training Plan. The San Mateo County Council joins the program, and a total of 80 Scouts participate. The 1964-65 director is Fran Peterson.

1965

This is the first year in which the three-phase/three-level program is presented. The National Council selects the training of Scoutmasters in Wood Badge as the first area of national application of the White Stag Leadership Development design. The application is designed by Banathy, Perin and Larsen.

1967

The Wood Badge program is laboratory tested in June at Schiff Scout Reservation in New Jersey and at Philmont Scout Ranch, New Mexico.

1967-77

Leaders of the Mexican Scout movement ask Banathy to guide them in the adaptation of the White Stag program concept. In 1968, Salvador Fernandez, Director of Training of the World Bureau of the Boy Scouts, visits the White Stag Camp at Pico Blanco. Appointed to the subcommittee of the Interamerican Scout Committee, Banathy participates in three Interamerican Train the Trainer events in Mexico, Costa Rica, and Venezuela. He assists their national training teams in designing leadership development by design programs.

1968

The National Leadership Development Project is formally established for the purpose of continuing experimentation and developing a program suitable for nation-wide application. This program is implemented by John Larson, advised by a committee chaired by Bela Banathy. They also establish the goal of infusing the principles inherent in White Stag, including that of "leadership development by design," into the national training program.

An experimental Wood Badge course (#25-2, Fort Ord, California, January and February, 1968) is conducted by the Monterey Bay Area Council. The course director is Joe St. Clair; the course evaluator, F. Maurice Tripp. It is one of five councils that have been selected by National council for field testing of the revised Wood Badge program.

1969

The Boy Scout World Bureau (Geneva, Switzerland) publishes a paper by Banathy under the title, "Leadership Development," Scout Reference Paper #1. This paper is instrumental in spreading the philosophy of White Stag to Scout organizations outside the United States. Banathy makes a presentation of "Leadership Development by Design," at the Helsinki, Finland conference of the worldwide Scout movement.

In the meantime, the "Monterey Bay experiment," attracts interested observers and participants from councils in California and other states. This marks the beginning of long and fruitful cooperation with many Scouts and Scouters from outside the Monterey Bay Area Council. The National Council is determined to expand leadership development within the five test councils. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund is approached and underwrites continued experimentation and evaluation into 1970.

1971

More than 800 young men ages 13-17 experience the "leadership development by design," program at Philmont. The National Council commits to a national program.

1972

The leadership development concept is fully integrated into the national Wood Badge curriculum and is represented in every course conducted that year.

1974

The National Council publishes the Troop Leader Development Staff Guide (No. 6544), which credits White Stag with its origins (pages 91-92). This program is now mandated for use by every council in the United States.

1979

The National Council publishes the Junior Leader Training Conference Staff Guide (No. 6535), to replace the TLD Staff Guide and “also provide the Scoutcraft skills experiences of Brownsea Double Two” This revision dilutes the previous emphasis on the leadership competency curriculum and on the training troop experience.

1980-1996

Since 1980, the White Stag program has continued in essentially its original form. It is sponsored by the White Stag Association and Explorer Post 122 of the Monterey Bay Area Council.

In 1990, Bela Banathy returned to Hungary, as the country achieved its freedom. As a member of the Hungarian Scout Association Abroad, he helped restart the Hungarian Scout Association. Hungary was the first country formerly of the Soviet block to win readmission to the World Scout Conference.

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