

## A CUB SCOUT MEETING - 1950

### SADDLE BROOK HISTORICAL SOCIETY – JANUARY 2014

The house at 63 Strathmore Terrace is still there, pretty much unchanged over the many years since the early 1950's when Gerald and Eunice Baker were den parents for about fifteen excited and sometimes slightly unruly Cub Scouts. I was one of them, and we were all members of Pack 113. Mr. and Mrs. Baker were wonderful, attractive parents whose love and respect for each other was easily discerned. They reminded me of the Cleavers on the early television series *Leave It to Beaver*: patient, soft spoken and approachable. They were the kind of people that you didn't want to disappoint. Their son Jerry and I were classmates at Cambridge, now Helen I. Smith School, and are still close friends some sixty years later. Jerry, who was lucky enough to be the only boy in a family with a younger sister, Dorothy, and older sister, Marcia, had a way of trying his parent's patience. To the best of my knowledge, they never succumbed to screaming or paddling him, restraint worthy of sainthood!

Our meetings began at 7:00 P.M. on Thursday, and the first activity offered by the Bakers involved two opponents, each trying to grab a blackboard eraser without being tagged (hit on the hand by one's opponent). Ping Pong was a treat since most of us didn't have our own Ping Pong tables. Mr. Baker also provided a weekly project. One of the more laborious projects (on his part) was fabricating bird houses which each Scout could assemble. He provided asphalt shingles for the roof. Another involved empty wooden thread spools which when attached to a wooden match stick and a rubber band could be wound up. Once released, the spool propelled itself slowly across a surface such as the Ping Pong table. To this day, I can't understand how it worked or how the Bakers found fifteen threadless spools. One of the riskier projects was carving wooden rings to hold our Scout neckties. Surprisingly, no one lost a thumb. In addition to the many weekly projects, games such as Follow the Leader and Pin the Tail on the Donkey became scheduled staples. Towards the end of the meeting, Mrs. Baker provided soft drinks and outstanding homemade cookies.

There were also achievements awards, silver and gold cloth stars which our mothers sewed onto our blue Cub Scout shirts and small, metal pin-on badges which were given for achieving a required level of ability or performing a prescribed task. I wasn't fully motivated but do remember receiving a Bobcat badge for doing something that the years have erased from my memory. There were also demerits for bad behaviors but these were not frequently issued. We knew that five demerits would result in some serious consequence which, however, was unknown to us. No one ever received five demerits. Also, the Bakers were pretty perceptive; they knew that idle hands were the "devil's workshop." They kept us busy.



Each meeting began with the Cub Scout Promise:

I promise...

To do my best to do my duty

To God and my Country

To be square, and

To obey the Law of the Pack

Although we probably recited the pledge without giving it a significant deal of thought, I suspect that it had been an unidentified part of our growing value systems, one of those hidden ingredients that would shape us as adults. The greatest lesson was Mr. and Mrs. Baker themselves: their kindness, dedication, patience and the wonderful way that they interacted with each other were lessons to us all.

Jack Wasdyke: Township Historian

