

Pay it forward

Good Samaritans still exist, as I discovered first-hand • By Corey Callaway

Recently, I had the opportunity to take my nephew to one of his Webelo campouts. This was a family type of outing where parents and siblings are invited. I had all of my gear loaded up, and, due to the chance of rain, I had a tarp covering it.

I dropped by my nephew's house to pick him up and promptly loaded his gear. He had a plastic footlocker with most of his clothes, tent, sleeping bag, Webelo uniform and his handbook. We refer to the footlockers as Canticos. I believe it is a brand name.

I wedged his Cantico between my chuck box and ice chest on top of the tarp. Canticos are fairly water-resistant – unless you sink them. Therefore, I was not concerned that his gear would get wet.

And off we went.

It had just turned dark when we reached the campsite. Many families had already arrived and set up camp. There were a bevy of excited children and flashlights floating around in the field.

I climbed in the back of my truck and started to grab some gear and noticed that my nephew's Cantico was not there. I asked him if he had grabbed it when my back was turned, and he had not. The Cantico had apparently blown out of the back of the truck in route to the Scout camp.

There is nothing worse than looking into the eyes of a child you just let down. I failed him by losing his gear and potentially wrecking his campout.

I cannot tell you how many trips I have been on, how many trucks and trailers I have packed gear in. And I never lost anything on a trip before.

But we rallied together, had him share a tent with some other Scouts and borrowed a sleeping bag. He had fun that evening. Meanwhile, I backtracked in hopes of finding his gear. I stopped at the Rangers' house and let them know where to contact us, if anyone found his gear and turned it in to them. I continued to drive for

about an hour, back tracking in hopes of finding his Cantico lying on the side of the road undisturbed. No such luck.

When I returned, it was 11 p.m., and everyone was asleep.

The next morning and the rest of the day, my nephew had a great time. We put on a short hike, shot BB guns and did some archery shooting. I assisted with the archery range. My nephew was oblivious to the fact his gear was still gone. He had a great time that day.

The next morning, the den leader gave me the good news that a Good Samaritan had found my nephew's Cantico. The den leader had the gentlemen's name and phone number. I was relieved – and off the hook.

Throughout the whole weekend, I was going through my mind of how much gear I was going to have to replace. It was adding up to a couple hundred dollars quickly.

We packed up and headed home and contacted the gentlemen and arranged a place and time to meet to get my nephew's gear. I had pulled \$40 or \$60 dollars out of my wallet to present to the man in exchange for his time and generosity. I had it handy in my front pocket to hand to him when he returned the Cantico.

We had a nice visit. He was a grandfather. He refused my money and only charged me to teach my nephew and other young Scouts to do good deeds for others, to raise them with good values. We both agreed that our society needs it more and more.

The Cantico ... it had been hit by a car. One corner was busted up. Two of the snapping locks held,

though. And, unbelievably, all of his gear was there, and nothing was broken. And on top of that, because of the gentlemen's generosity, I have saved face with my nephew.

I have a very large debit in my "Pay it Forward" account. **A**

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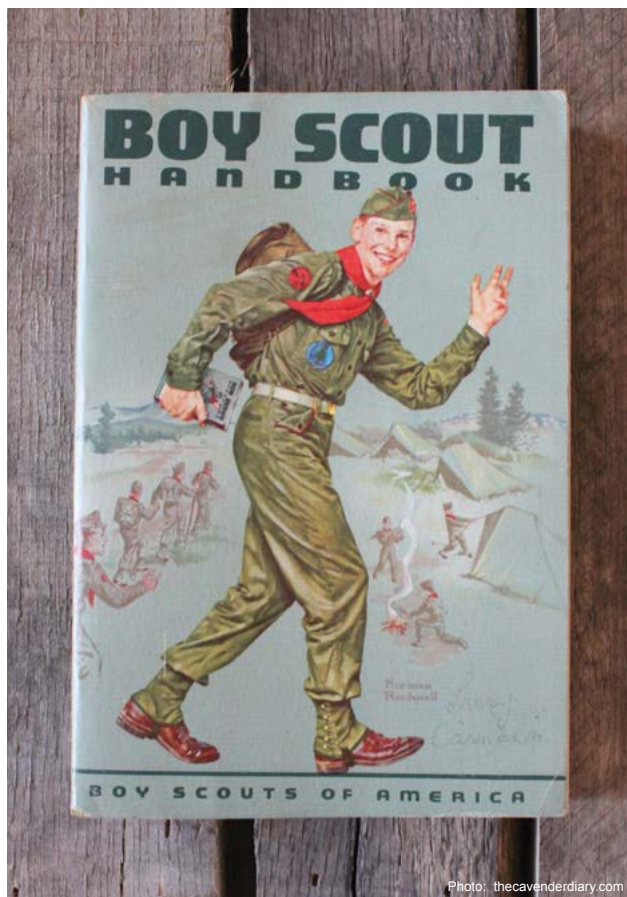


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