

T E N G R E A T Y E A R S



(A Brief History of Royal Rangers)

IN 1961 THE DECISION WAS MADE by the Executives of the Assemblies of God to begin a program for boys. This program was to be under the supervision of the Men's Fellowship Department. In the fall of 1961 Brother Howard Bush, Executive Director of Men's Fellowship, contacted Johnnie Barnes who was then District Christ Ambassador's President of the North Texas District and requested that he come to Springfield to supervise the formation and development of the program.

In January of 1962 Johnnie Barnes moved to Springfield to assume this position. The first few weeks were spent developing the basic philosophy of the program, such as purposes, goals, activities, emphases, and the organizational structure of the program. Many different names for the program were submitted to the Executives for consideration. During one of the Executive meetings Brother Charles W. H. Scott suggested the name "Royal Rangers." The group agreed and the program had its official name.

The program was divided into three age divisions. Ages 9-11 were called Pioneers, ages 12-14 were called Trailblazers, and ages 15-17 had a choice between Air or Sea Rangers. The local unit for each age group was called an "Outpost Council." The unit leader was called an "Outpost Commander" and his assistant "Lieutenant Commander." The outpost was divided into patrols with a Guide and Assistant Guide over each.

Johnnie Barnes spent the next few months tooling out the contents of the program which included the pledge, code, motto, advancement requirements, content of the handbooks, application form, charter certificates, membership cards, promotional brochures, uniforms, badges, insignia, and awards. Commander Barnes was awoken one night about 1:30 a.m. with an inspiration which resulted

in the design of the Royal Rangers emblem.

Six handbooks were prepared -- the Leader's Manual, Pioneer Handbook, Trail-blazer Handbook, Air-Sea Ranger Handbook, Adventures in Camping and an Outpost Record Book. While the handbooks were being prepared, a pilot outpost was organized in Springfield, Missouri. This first outpost in the nation was organized under the leadership of Bob Reid. Valuable knowledge and information was gleaned by observing this group in action.

By October, 1962, the materials were ready and the program was officially launched by announcements and articles in The Pentecostal Evangel.

Realizing that the success of the program depended upon trained leadership, in 1963 a Leadership Training Correspondence Course was developed. Bob Reid was appointed National Training Coordinator and became responsible for the enrollment, grading and processing of this course. (Later in 1965 this position was assumed by Paul Feller and in 1971 by Don Franklin.)

In the fall of 1963 the first issue of Dispatch Magazine (a quarterly publication for leaders) was published. Also included in Dispatch was a weekly Bible Study Course. This publication was designed to give leaders new ideas, devotions, and information.

The first District Commander's Seminar was held in Springfield, Missouri, in March of 1963, with 20 District Commanders in attendance. These men were commissioned by Brother Howard Bush in a very impressive ceremony conducted in the Assemblies of God Headquarters auditorium. Speaker for the occasion was General Superintendent, Thomas Zimmerman. These seminars are now an annual event for District Commanders.

The first district-wide Pow Wows were held in 1964 with five districts conducting Pow Wows. Today over 40 districts are featuring this district-wide event.

To encourage and give recognition for the district promotion of Royal Rangers, the Silver Eagle Award program for District Commanders was launched in 1965. The following year (1966) several District Commanders were presented with the Silver Eagle Award. Currently 36 District Commanders have qualified for this recognition.

Realizing the important role that the District Superintendents play in their districts, the decision was made in 1965 to involve these men more directly in the program. Each District Superintendent was given the title of District Chaplain and the rank of Brigadier General. The inspirational and promotional assistance of these men has been very valuable to the Royal Rangers program.

Due to an unusual interest for the program in Latin American countries, in 1966 a Royal Rangers handbook was translated and printed in the Spanish language. To further assist in the development of the program in these countries, George Davis was appointed Latin American Coordinator for Royal Rangers with Juan Romero as Training Coordinator. The program is experiencing an unusual growth in these countries as well as in many other countries around the world.

That same year (1966) the first group of Royal Rangers were organized in Australia by John Woodham. The group was located in Petersham, New South Wales. Under the leadership of Commonwealth Commander Will Thorne, groups have now been organized in most areas of Australia.

So many requests to include young boys in Royal Rangers were received that in 1966 the decision was made to develop a junior auxiliary for boys ages 7-8. The new age group was called Buckaroos and the program was built around a western theme. A new handbook was prepared for Buckaroos and also a booklet for Buckaroo leaders. The program was officially launched during Regional Sunday School conventions that same year. This has become one of our

largest enrollment age groups.

In 1966 another addition to the Royal Rangers program called the "Frontiersmen Camping Fraternity" was developed. This endeavor was designed to encourage advancement and the development of camping skills among older boys; to encourage leaders to complete the Leadership Training program; and to give recognition for these achievements. This fraternity with its colorful ceremonies which feature members dressed in buckskin shirts and coonskin caps, now has chapters organized in over 30 districts.

To help promote the F.C.F. program, Territorial Representatives were appointed in 1969. In 1970 John Eller was selected as the first National President and Paul Johnson, Elton Bell, Ralph Palmerton and Ollie Dalaba as National Vice Presidents. David Barnes was selected as the first National Scout. Another milestone was achieved in F.C.F. history when the first National F.C.F. Rendezvous was conducted in Springfield, Missouri in June, 1972. Over 200 delegates from all over the United States gathered to participate in the most spectacular event in Royal Ranger history.

A special Royal Rangers week in June 1966 was designated by the Executives to give recognition to the Royal Rangers program. This was to become an annual observance. The dates were later changed to the first week of October.

Early in the beginning of Royal Rangers, the need for qualified men to assist in the promotion of the program was realized. A small number of special promotional assistants were appointed and given the title "Aides-de-Camp." Later the decision was made to appoint an Aide-de-Camp for each district and one for each region. In March of 1968 the first meeting of the National Aides-de-Camp Council was held in Springfield, Missouri.

During the 1969 meeting of the National Aides-de-Camp Council, a constitution and bylaws were adopted and the first officers for the Council were elected.

Officers elected were: Wesley Kilcrease, President; Norman Winchar, First Vice President; and Floyd Larson, Second Vice President.

To meet the need of more specialized training for leaders, in 1968 four National Training Camps were conducted in Missouri, Colorado, New York and California. The camps were designed to give leaders the very best on-the-spot training possible. The response and benefits of these camps were so outstanding that more camps were added the following year. There is now a National Training Camp located in each of the eight regions.

In 1968 the decision was made to add another division to the 15-17 year old group calling them "Trail Rangers." This gave the older boys a choice of either Air, Sea, or Trail Rangers. The main emphasis of the Trail Rangers program is trail-type camping and survival techniques. A new revised handbook and additional materials were prepared and made available in 1969.

To meet the demand for even more outdoor training for leaders, in 1970 four National Training Trails were conducted. They were located in the Ozark Mountains, the High Sierra Mountains, the Rocky Mountains and the Adirondack Mountains. These Training Trails continue to meet a very vital need in the training program.

1971 was the year High Adventure was born. This special publication for boys is being utilized to challenge boys in narrative form to higher ideals and greater spiritual dedication as well as providing them with worthwhile, exciting reading.

To meet the demands of a fast-growing program, many additional books, brochures, awards, training materials and promotional materials have been added.

From the very beginning the Royal Rangers program proved an ideal evangelistic outreach. Leaders discovered that the exciting feature of this program provides a golden opportunity for reaching boys for Christ. Outpost devotions, personal counseling sessions, and campfire services became the scene of boys accepting Christ as their personal Saviour. Annual reports show over 17,000 boys

being won to Christ each year and over 7,000 being filled with the Spirit.

Over the past ten years chartered outposts have increased to 5,200. With an estimated 3,500 unchartered groups, this would make a total of approximately 8,700 units using the program.

The enrollment of the men and boys climbed to approximately 110,000, with many more thousands involved in the Royal Rangers program in other countries.

The main purpose of Royal Rangers from the beginning was to reach, to teach and to keep boys for Christ. This goal certainly has been reached over the past ten years. If the trend of the program continues, and we are confident that it will, Royal Rangers are destined to make a tremendous impact for Christ in the coming years.

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