

A CONVERSATION WITH

Fred Deaver

by John Hicks

In 1962 when Johnnie Barnes was appointed to launch a new program called Royal Rangers, our first national commander had the weight of the task on his shoulders. But his heart was no doubt encouraged by the faithful support of a great number of men, founders of this now worldwide ministry, who committed their time and resources to make the young ministry successful.

One of those early pioneers was Fred Deaver, known to many National Training Camp graduates as “Mr. Senior Guide,” the epitome of that role for many years. Fred became a close friend of Johnnie, and together, along with many others, laid the foundations that we are building on today.

In December 2008, Doug Marsh and John Hicks traveled to Riverton, Kansas to visit with Fred in his art studio about those early years and to hear his perspective on the days ahead in view of the many improvements taking place. As is his custom, Fred began the conversation by declaring his unwavering belief in God’s ability to empower and direct men who commit themselves to His will.

“I believe the basis for any leadership is to be in the center of God’s will and to have a burning desire to be successful and not be satisfied with second best.” Fred continued, “Ranger leaders have to hold above all else their personal commitments to reach, teach, and keep boys for Christ. Everything they do must be centered on this goal, from the meetings they plan to the activities they conduct; everything must be purposefully designed to lead boys closer to Christ.”

Fred went on to declare the importance of leaders maintaining their own personal spiritual health,

keeping the fire of the Holy Spirit alive in their hearts in a way that constantly influences others. “I believe a man ought to have enough of the Holy Spirit in him that when people walk by they’ll feel the presence of the Spirit. They should be able to see it on his face and in his countenance.”

As the discussion turned to the future of the

program and the changes planned for the days ahead, Fred began to reflect on meetings and discussions in the early days when Johnnie faced many of the same issues we face today. “This is not a new thing,” Fred said. “Back in the early days, we had the same problem. We realized that the interests of boys were going in many directions. And there was a lot of discussion about how we could make the ministry more appealing to a broader variety of boys.”

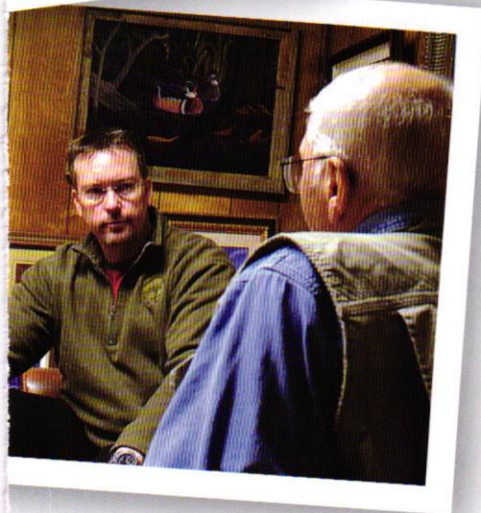
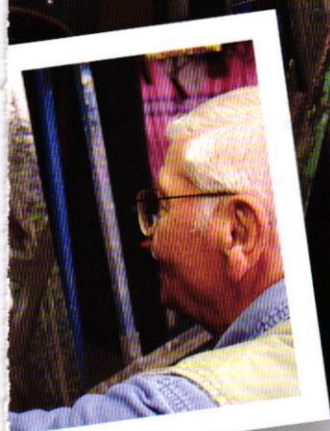
Concerning the issue of diversifying the focus of the ministry, “It all boils down to the local outpost

leader having a vision for reaching more than just the campers. He has to understand that he doesn’t have to do it all himself; he can draw men from the church and community to help. Most churches have men with interests and expertise in areas not related to camping who would be willing to share their experience with boys if we would just ask them.”

Fred went on to relate how he had worked on restoring an old truck with his grandson and how it had given them a great opportunity to spend time together by sharing a common interest. He further emphasized how virtually any activity where men and boys share a common interest can be an effective avenue for mentoring boys.

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At one point Doug asked, “What would you say to some of our more tenured leaders who are struggling with some of the changes under way? No one intends to step on the past but rather build on it.”

“One of the things that has always made the American soldier so great from the beginning was his ability to adapt and adjust to new situations. If you’re not able to adapt and adjust in all walks of life, you’re not going to make it. When George Washington’s men faced the British, they faced the strongest military in the world at

the time, but they were successful because they learned to adapt and adjust. And that’s where the Holy Spirit can really help you and enable you to adapt and adjust to any situation.”

The conversation ended with Fred voicing his optimism for the future of Rangers. “This ministry is solid, and I believe we’ll see a great harvest of boys won into the Kingdom for Christ. We all just have to be willing to adapt and adjust because that’s what it takes to be successful.” 🌹