



Photo by H. Armstrong Roberts

No father at home

As a young boy in a broken home, I was often confused. I really didn't understand why Dad wasn't with us anymore; I just had to accept it.

It was hard for me to see why adults couldn't get along. If my brothers and I fought like Mom and Dad, we received a hard spanking with a thick leather belt and were then required to make up. I guess the rules for adults were different. At any rate, Dad was gone, and that was that!

Shortly after the divorce my mother and the family began looking for a church to attend. My grandfather was a Pentecostal evangelist, and I'm sure that influenced my mother a great deal, even though Grandpa was my dad's father.

Each Sunday morning the entire family would set off for a church. At first we had to walk, but then we saved enough to buy an old car.

Each Sunday after Sunday school, morning worship, or children's

church, all the family would vote on whether we liked that church or not. If any one of us voted no, we would keep looking.

Then it happened. After attending a Sunday morning service at Highland Assembly of God in Albuquerque, New Mexico, we met in the car, and everybody voted in favor of the church. I had no idea the individuals of that church, and especially the Royal Rangers commanders, would have a great effect on my life.

At first I was too young to attend Royal Rangers. But after a full year of my persistently nagging the commanders, they let me start coming to Pioneers.

The thrill of camping and the fun of recreation were exciting to a boy without a father at home. I hardly missed a meeting; and when I earned some of the basic awards, I obtained a uniform to put them on.

I can remember the first time I put on a Royal Rangers shirt with all the

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patches sewn on just right. Man, it was really something!

As the years went by, I continued to advance in the ministry of Royal Rangers: *mentally*—through awards and advancements in rank; *physically*—through learning camping skills and recreation; *socially*—through meeting new boys and seeing new places. But most important, I advanced spiritually.

It was at a state powwow that I accepted Christ as my Saviour. At another powwow just 2 years later I was baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4). One reason God had directed my family to Highland Assembly of God was so I could be a Royal Ranger!

I continued to progress in Royal Rangers until I graduated from high school. At my very last Royal Ranger powwow, I felt God calling me into the ministry. Not sure of this calling, I once again turned to a Royal Rangers commander for advice.

Now as an Assemblies of God pastor in Baker, Montana, I look back with gratitude over the many years of training and instruction I received in Royal Rangers. I am thankful for an idea, a hope, a dream that an Assemblies of God boys ministry would come into existence. I praise God for Royal Rangers and how it helped me stay true to Christ through troublesome years.

No, I didn't have a father at home, but I had many fathers as a Royal Ranger. Each commander did his best to show a godly kind of love for the boys—and treated all of us as something special.

As I have labored in the ministry as a youth pastor, an associate pastor, and now as a senior pastor, I have always endeavored to establish an active Royal Rangers ministry for the boys.

Who knows; maybe another little boy with no father at home needs the same love and encouragement that I received as a Royal Ranger. Maybe that boy is in your church. 