

Ever had one of those days whereby you hear a song and it sticks in your head all day long?

No matter what you do, the song is still “playing” in your head. One could be taking a bath and out would come this song from your voice.

In my case, humming along and speaking the occasional words would have to do. Something along the lines of William Shatner (“Captain Kirk”)’s Priceline.com commercials, in which he “sings” the praises of the online pricing website!.

Or chopping onions in tune with “I’ve Been Working On the Railroad” or something like that.

In my case yesterday, it was the Christian fellowship song “And You Know That We’re Christians By Our Love.” At least, that was the name of the song as we all sang it during the Scout Chaplain course at Camp Covered Bridge. I don’t know why that song was “playing.” I was not in church, had not been praying before it started, and most of all, I did not hear the song being sung by anyone...the culprit in most cases. I can hear a song – Dean Martin’s “Amore” for instance – and for the rest of the day, I am running around the house trying to sound like Dino.

My neighbors are not as forgiving as my wife, my mother-in-law and their cat are. Still, it does hurt your soul a bit when all three are telling you in their own non-threatening way to “SHUT UP !! OR PICK ANOTHER SONG!”

It was the strangest thing. I was sitting here at my computer, hands on my keyboard. I was just finishing replying to a person thanking them for a gift. The guy sent me, completely out of the blue, a nice card along with a nicer patch. His note, full of nice words to me and my wife, made my day; so I wrote him back and posted my thanks and all of a sudden, I heard that song being playing in my brain.

We Scouters are a strange lot. We are perhaps the most outgoingest people on the face of this planet. Only the Boy Scouting program can take a man or woman, whom would be afraid to even stand before a crowd of others, let alone lead them in song – and magically transform this person with minimal effort, into an outgoing, almost sappy-sweet leader of youth. Part of it is repression, I am sure. Those of us whom are comfortable in front of others are even more relaxed due to the fact that those people and we all share something in common...a desire to help youth to make good decisions. Those of us whom are not comfortable in front of others, become so because Scouting is way different than what they would normally do. If it were a Rotary Club meeting those people would be addressing, they would either freeze up, or run from the room screaming, “I can’t do this!! I can’t do this!”

Scouters are the only people I know whom would get into an automobile and drive two to four hours to attend a two-hour meeting (and the one –hour “real meeting” afterwards!), drive the two to four hours back home, go to bed, and get up grudgingly a few hours later and go to work...and never complain about the trip, the time of departure, nor the drive back. I have heard Scouters complain about having to go to work the next day...or about the lack of sleep. But NEVER have I heard a Scouter complain about a meeting or activity. I mean REALLY complain, as in “Why am I going to this?” or “This is stupid!! They should do this by email!”

Nope. Scouters will drive; they will fly; they will run up long distance bills envious of some teenagers. They will change their work schedule and in many cases their personal schedules so that they can be of assistance to other Scouters. To be there as they are being recognized for their hard work with NO payment. To help them out. And turn around and drive back, or fly back, and happily pay that long distance bill knowing that they were a part of something greater than “just little old me and my Scout unit”.

I took a plane trip to Nashville a few years ago, from Lexington, Kentucky, to attend a Wood Badge presentation. Wood Badge is the advanced training course for Scouting leaders. It is an

intensive eight-day or three-weekend period of not just learning what Scouting in America is all about, but learning it all by doing it. At the conclusion of the formal part of the training, you make a contract with yourself to apply all of those skills and all of that information you gained in your present or anticipated Scouting role. For two years, Scouters apply skills similar to what junior managers do. It's hard work. It sounds easy: you make up your own tasks, and then you carry it out. What is hard about that?? It's the process that is hard... coming up with the tasks, developing ways that those tasks can be measurable, and carrying them out to the best of your ability.

Very few Scouters do not carry out their own "ticket", their own contract, and complete the Wood Badge. Why? Because of those many other Scouters that take off from work, or "X out" a weekend otherwise spent with their family and friends and go and work with Hank as he "completes his ticket". Or, picks up the phone during the commercials of a ball game or an interesting television show...and contact that Scouter and ask "Hey Hank! How's it going?? Are you still having problems with that project?? I was just sitting here thinking, and I may have some ideas for you. You have a few minutes??"

Stupid question. Scouters NEVER "turn down help!" We lose patience sometimes. We sometimes forget why we are doing all of this "extra work." But it comes back.

Like a song.

Here I was standing there, behind other Scouters as my friend Marty, a chiropractor and Scoutmaster of a small Troop in West Nashville, received his beads, neckerchief, and certificate during his Troop's awards ceremony. I wasn't a part of his Wood Badge course; was not asked to teach a session; nor was I his Coach/Counselor, helping him and encouraging Marty and the rest of the Rushin' Antelopes to earn their Wood Badge. Marty saw my name a few months prior, on America Online, and looked me up through the campus operator. He just wanted to ask me a couple of questions about how to keep his sanity when his boys wanted to do things like go bowling on Scout Nights. He read my posting to a Scouting forum at eleven PM Central time; called me at midnight Central Time; and we talked on the phone until 3AM, Eastern Time. Two hours.

I never complained the next morning. No need to, for I was doing what other Scouters have been doing, are doing even as you are reading or hearing this, and will be doing for the rest of Scouting's life in this land. Scouters are notorious for helping other Scouters. That's just the way we are. Marty later invited me to the presentation.

It was a good thing that after the bead presentation, they broke for cake and coffee. No singing of the Wood Badge song...I was the only Beaver present and I would have to sing the entire verse:

"I used to be a Beaver, and a pretty good Beaver too...
but now I've finished Beavering and I don't know what to do.
I'm growing old and feeble and I just can't Beaver no more,
so I'm going to work my Ticket if I can..." ALL by myself!!

It was a beautiful church....lots of glass everywhere. I'm glad we did not sing. Okay. I'm glad *I* did not sing!!

On the flight back, a younger man asked me about my trip. After I told him of the award presentation, he said, "I'm sorry for saying this, but that's not very smart of you. I wouldn't done it...you didn't know this guy? Isn't that like crashing a wedding or something like that??"

I smiled and said "Scouters do it all of the time. We're the ultimate party crashers. If there's a Scouting event somewhere, and we can afford to be there, we're there." I then added, "We're

not stupid. We know that our families and our work come ahead of what we do in Scouting. But we believe in the program so much, and we want others to get out of it what we've gotten out of it, that many of us will go that extra mile or two to help out others and to let them know that they're appreciated!"

The guy just looked at me and shook his head. "I could think of better things to do with my off time than to go to some Scout award thing a state away." I could as well. There are times in which we as Scouters truly question why do we do this stuff.

Why do we work a 40 or 50-hour job and then turn around and work another 15 to 20 hours for free?

Why do we endure the yelling and cussing of parents whom view us as "professional childcare tenders" and as "people whom don't have a life?"

Why do we pay out of our own pockets to go to a ten-day campout, to get dirty every day, to get rained upon five out of those ten days, and to eat food half-cooked or half-baked?

Why do we put up with petty in-fighting over "Who's going to be in charge" of what activity and "Why you can't do it but I can?" stuff...worst than what we put up with at work. At least at work, we can complain and if we complain enough, the boss fires someone!

Why do we put out large stacks of money to insure that we look good in a uniform, that we are educated as well as we can, and that we have the resources to do what – a job without pay?

A private Scouting survey done for a local Boy Scout Council revealed that the average volunteer Scouter spends close to \$300 a year on himself or herself in an attempt to prepare themselves for their role as a volunteer. Three hundred dollars can purchase a lot of things, and in many cases, pay a car loan or all of the utilities for an entire month. It can prepay a year's worth of basic cable television, or provide a respite for a couple in their first years of marriage. So why spend it on SCOUTING??

Why do we have to deal with 10, or 20 or 50 other people's kids...kids that don't share the same values as your family does; can't spell most cuss words but can use them as verbs or nouns in five different sentences (and maybe in two different languages!); kids who come to a meeting dressed as if someone draped the dirty clothes basket over them in a rush to get them out of the house; kids that are not hiding the fact that they seem to know more about life and living than you will ever know. Why?

We offer Scouting to every American boy that wants it. Some think that they want it, and change their minds once we offer it. Others drink it in as if it was the last cool drink on Earth. We keep offering it because as boys grow, their minds change. Their habits change and their outlook on life and living change. We do it because we know that it's important for American boys to learn from one another good qualities of being a citizen, of being a responsible young man, and to help him grow physically and mentally.

We do it because we know something that those at our workplace, those parents, our families, those other Scouters that are there "for the name" and nothing more...do not know. Or they are aware of, but have never thought about it much. We do it because we want to share our lives with others through this special set of programs called Scouting, that's why. We do those things because we want to be an example – a personal example – of what we believe in, what we hold as principled, what we know. We do those things because we know that people – youth and adults – act upon examples. All of the talking and fine words in the world don't mean a thing without the reasoned actions behind them. We can read those books about Scouting but I won't know what Scouting's like unless I was a part of it.

That song keeps playing in my mind. Because they will know that we're Scouters by our love, by our love.

Yes, they'll know we're Scouters by our love.