

This letter was first written on June 16, 2003. This portion was omitted to reduce the length.

Early in my scouting career I noticed that all white scout leaders were organized into "districts" (Durham District) and all black leaders were organized as "divisions" (Durham Divisional Committee) with no council-level recognition or representation. We were permitted to do scouting with the permission of the copyright owners endorsed by the local whites. We were assigned a black field executive whose position allowed him to go the council office for instructions, but he could not attend council meetings or executive board meetings as did the white field executives. Our scouts could not go to Camp Durant, a council owned Boy Scout camp in Wake County.

Each summer we had to take our scouts to Whispering Pines and Reedy Creek Park campsites at John Umstead State Park for camping experiences. ALL white scouting units and troops automatically had representation on the Occoneechee Council Boy Scouts of America executive board, blacks had none.

Since the Boy Scouts was one of the three organizations chartered by the Congress of the US (American Legion, American Red Cross and BSA), I began expressing my concerns and served as the chairman of the Durham Divisional Committee from 1951 through 1957. We wrote letters, participated in many meetings with national, regional, council and local Boy Scout officers, and others. We submitted a signed petition and kept the fire burning. I knew that the conditions that we were enduring were a concoction of Region 6 of BSA with its office in Atlanta and serving NC, SC, GA, FL and Panama Canal. I knew, too, that the following officers of North Carolina Mutual—Messrs. C. C. Spaulding, President, W. J. Kennedy, Jr., Vice President Secretary of Durham and Vice President David C. Deans of Richmond, VA—were honorary members of the Executive Board, National Council BSA, while we were struggling for recognition. It was not until 1964 when Bill Clement was the chairperson of the black division that we were given district status, council executive board representation, etc. which we had been seeking for years.

There is a long story of what happened between 1931 and 1964 but time is limited here. Yet in spite of this, black scout leaders gave their scouts the very best that they could get. In 1953 I carried scouts from Troop 187 at Burton School to the National Boy Scout Jamboree in Santa Ana, CA, on three occasions I carried scouts on week-long naval cruises on board of the USS Wyandot, USS Maury and USS Monrovia, to camporees at Fort Bragg and flew in C-130's at Pope AFB. Black scouts from Durham attended scout expositions, scout camporees, Camp Philmont in New Mexico, Valley Forge, PA, World Jamborees—England and Paris, France, etc. More . . . Scouters James W. Carrington, J. M. Schooler, Nathaniel B. White, Noah H. Bennett, Jr., J. H. B. Mayes, Pendarvis, William A. Clement and a host of other men and women leaders saw to that our young men had a broad experience and participation in the scouting programs. Black scout executives were William D. King, George Fisher Newell, Marion E. "Jinglebell" Johnson, Henry W. Gillis, Willie Larry Harris, Charles Walden, Ervin L. Kearney . . .and others.

*R. Kelly Bryant Jr.*