

Bob Cruickshank

Giving back to Scouting with a legacy of leadership and support.



When Bob Cruickshank got an invitation to attend the opening of the 2013 National Jamboree and see a bridge at Summit Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve dedicated in his honor, his first impulse was to decline. "I'd been to some of the jamborees before and slept in old leaky Army tents," Cruickshank says. "I wasn't interested in that."

Then Cruickshank learned he'd be at The Greenbrier, a luxury resort in West Virginia not far from the jamboree grounds. So much for leaky tents. He also found that Amtrak's Cardinal passenger train could take him directly to The Greenbrier from Huntington, W.Va., just across the Ohio River from his South Point, Ohio, home. That piqued his interest, especially since Cruickshank, the son of a railway employee, has a life-long love of riding trains.

In the end, he was there to see the Robert G. Cruickshank Bridge open for traffic. And he says he's glad he made it. "What a beautiful bridge!" he said

upon seeing the span named in recognition of his financial and leadership support of Scouting. "What a surprise!"

He probably should not have been surprised, however. During the nearly three-quarters of a century since Cruickshank's first encounter with Scouting, he says two steady companions have been his devotion to the movement and a conviction that he was born lucky. "Things in my life just seem to go amazingly the way they should," he says.

Good fortune and Scouting crossed paths in Cruickshank's life in Springfield, Ill., when he joined Troop 14. His railroader father was Scoutmaster, setting an adult leadership example that never left the impressionable youngster. Cruickshank aged out of Scouts as an Eagle from Arlington Heights, Ill., and, after graduating from Ripon College in Wisconsin, earning a civil engineering degree from MIT and serving two years with the Army Corps of Engineers, he volunteered as an adult with a troop in Ashland, Ky., where his job took him.

Cruickshank still holds a

Just as Bob Cruickshank has helped Scouts bridge from boyhood to manhood thanks to his leadership in Scouting, the Robert G. Cruickshank Bridge stands to help visitors of the Summit Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve traverse the grounds within Scott Visitor Center. Cruickshank celebrated the opening of the bridge with Scouts and leaders of Troop 112 from the Tri-State Area Council in West Virginia.

leadership position in that troop in addition to serving with the Tri-State Area Council. He's organized countless trips, witnessed the elevation of 47 Eagles from the troop and had a good time the whole way. Whether leading Scouts on an unexpected riverboat cruise, mentoring at-risk boys through their teen years or even getting passed over for Order of the Arrow his first try, he describes Scouting as one long adventure of learning and growth.

His adventure at the last jamboree began a couple of years ago when Cruickshank, approaching 80, unmarried and with no direct heirs, began doing some estate planning, including setting up trusts to benefit various causes. "I thought I might make a little gift to the Boy Scouts," he says.

Cruickshank contacted



the national office with a simple request that did not include having a bridge named after him. "All I wanted was the federal tax identification number that the trust required," he said. "And the correct mailing address so it would get to the right person or office."

No one was more surprised when he was later asked if he'd like his name

on a bridge at the Summit Bechtel Reserve. "Why me?" he wondered. "Many more people have given more in financial support or more years. And many have made a greater impact on Scouting."

While it's true that Scouting runs on the contributions of countless supporters, few have dedicated their lives as well as their fortunes to the movement as

At the bridge ribbon cutting, Cruickshank is joined by Scouts as well as Dan McCarthy, director of the Summit Group (far left), and J.R. Spencer, Tri-State Area Council Scout executive (far right).

generously as Cruickshank. And, to hear him tell it, Scouting has given back every bit as much. "In 1944 I joined the Boy Scouts for fun and adventure," he says. "I have not been disappointed."

WHY WE GIVE

Continuing the fun and adventure

ALTHOUGH HE'S NEVER backpacked with Scouts through Philmont Scout Ranch, Bob Cruickshank has visited for adult training. On one trip a couple of decades ago, he picked up a Philmont T-shirt that he still has. On the back it reads "The only things we keep permanently are the things we give away."

That, of course, was the philosophy of Waite Phillips, who donated the land and other assets that allowed for the creation and maintenance of Philmont. Many years later, as Cruickshank was mulling how to distribute his own assets, he spotted the T-shirt, and Phillips' philanthropy came to mind. "I thought, 'Isn't

that a wonderful thing for a person to do?'" Cruickshank says.

By then, of course, Cruickshank had done countless wonderful things for Scouting. One of his first moves as an adult was revitalizing a moribund troop in Ashland, Ky. It was down to just one boy and him, the Scoutmaster, at one point, he recalls. He revived the troop by organizing a string of adventurous summer trips that lured boys to join in plentiful numbers. Then, through more than a decade as Scoutmaster and later head of the district advancement committee, he encouraged and enabled even more Scouts to reach for the stars.

Cruickshank stresses the fact that he has benefited personally from Scouting in addition to aiding others. "It's helped me stay physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight," he says. He would like his support to help others get the same benefits he has received from Scouting since he joined Troop 14 in Illinois 70 years ago. "Ever since 1944, many surprising, wonderful things happened in my life," he says. "I wanted to continue the fun and adventure."

