

**History of Troop 533 BSA – 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
**Munster, Indiana**  
*July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017*  
***Munster Firefighters Association***

Today marks the 241<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the birth of our nation. In addition to paying tribute to our country, the Munster Firefighters Association would also like to recognize Troop 533 this year which celebrates their 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a troop in the Boy Scouts of America.

In early spring 1927, a young 12 year old boy named Maurice Kraay obtained an old Boy Scout handbook and was determined to become a boy scout. Unfortunately, there were only 3 other boys in the eighth grade at Munster Public School. Maurice along with his friend, George McKee worked hard to convince the other two boys, Harry Horton and John Vander Tuuk, to join boy scouts. One Saturday, Maury Kraay and George McKee journeyed to downtown Hammond to see Mr. I.K. Scott who was the Scout Executive of the Hammond Pokagan Council of the Boy Scouts of America. Maury recalled being “scared to death” ahead of their meeting but found Mr. Scott to be very kind and helpful. He informed them that in order to form a boy scout troop, it required 8 boys and a Scoutmaster. In Munster, at this time, it would be difficult to find four more boys but these original boys were able to convince four more older boys – Harry Koester, Virgil Daugherty, Johnny Denton and one other boy to join.

Now, the boys approached the principal of Munster Public School, Miss Stone, to assist in recruiting a Scoutmaster. She recommended the retired school principal, Mr. Henry Sailor Daugherty and he agreed. In the spring of 1927, Troop 33 of Munster, Indiana received a charter from the Boy Scouts of America. Through the late 1920’s and into the 1930’s, several other men would serve as the Scoutmaster of Troop 33 including Ray Kaske, Fred Koester, Dan Lynch, and George Radford.

Maury Kraay fondly remembered going camping in the woods at Camp Wicker (now Wicker Park) where the scouts had a lodge or really a shack as he recalled. In the summers, members of Troop 33 journeyed to Camp Frank S. Betz in Berrien Springs, Michigan which coincidentally celebrates it’s 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary this summer.

On June 14, 1927, at the dedication of Wicker Park by President Calvin Coolidge, Troop 33 would be honored by participating in the ceremony and seated in the second row in front of the grandstand. There is a historical picture of the dedication with Troop 33 in the foreground which can be found in the History of Munster publication and at the Munster Historical Society.

In 1960 or 1961, Troop 33’s numbers were changed to Troop 133. In 1965, the Troops numbers would again be changed to Troop 533.

Over the years, Troop 533 has performed thousands of services projects for the Town, the parks, the churches, and the various service organizations of Munster and surrounding communities. Troop 533 has performed countless flag ceremonies including the dedication of Munster High School in 1966 and the dedication of the Munster Firefighters Tribute Memorial last October at the corner of Fisher Street and Calumet Avenue.

Troop 533 was recycling long before anyone had a recycling programs. In fact, the scouts collected literally hundreds of tons of newspaper from the 1940’s until the 1980’s – often transporting as much as 6 tons on a single Saturday.

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Eagle Scout is the highest rank which a scout can achieve in boy scouting. Only about 4% of scouts are able to obtain this prestigious award. Beginning in the 1940's, scouts from Troop 33 began achieving the Eagle rank and currently 124 Eagles have been awarded from Troop 533. Interestingly, there are four Eagles Scouts who are currently members of the Munster Fire Department – two from Troop 533. Frank Sikora from Engine 2222, Mike Drapac from Engine 2226 and from Troop 533, myself from Troop 533, and Captain Rob Groszewski of Truck 2221.

In today's day and age, it is not unusual for an individual to obtain 90 years of age. However, for an organization of any kind to obtain 90 years, it generally takes 2 or 3 dedicated generations and many individuals. For a boy scout troop, it is even more remarkable considering a scout can join boy scouts at 11 years old but can only remain a scout until 18 years old when he must become an adult scouter. Therefore, there is a complete turnover in a boy scout troop at least every 7 years and thus, it is remarkable for a boy scout troop to celebrate 90 years of service. While today we talk of the scouts of yesteryear, each and every scout here today carries on the tradition of Troop 533 and the high ideals of the Scout Oath and Scout Laws. Without these scouts here today, Troop 533 would not be celebrating it's 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. They are a significant part of Troop 533's history.

Finally, isn't it remarkable that today the two oldest service organizations by far in the Town of Munster – Troop 533 with 90 years of service and the Munster Firefighters of the Munster Fire Department with 92 years of service come together to celebrate the Fourth of July with this Kid's Parade. Even more incredible these two organizations have participated together in this Parade for over the past 75 years.