

## ELDER OSCAR A. KIRKHAM

*Of the First Council of the Seventy*

I trust that I may enjoy the blessings of the Spirit of the Lord.

## BOY SCOUT JAMBOREE

On July 15 of this year, at the request of the national organization of the Boy Scouts of America, and with the co-operation of the First Presidency of the Church. I was invited to go with a representation of the youth of America to the Old World. This was my seventh opportunity to go to Europe; five of these trips have been with the Boy Scouts of America. This time there were boys from every state in the Union and from Alaska. It was truly a great occasion. I trust that I may enjoy the blessing of memory and of the spirit of the occasion so that for these few moments I may interpret to you one or two of the highlights of this great event.

This Church has ever been deeply interested in youth. In its beginning God put full trust in a boy, and he became the leader of this dispensation. It was young men, largely, who fought their way into the beginnings of this great western land. We must be deeply concerned with youth. Our hope lies here. The after years of life set us so fast in habits. If but one generation would truly devote itself to the oncoming generation and give of itself to the youth of the land, what great things might be wrought!

## IMPRESSIVE SIGHTS OF OLD WORLD

The government of the United States was deeply interested in this adventure. They chartered one of our transport ships for our use, for both going and coming. When we arrived in the Old World, the lads had been built in morale and spirit for a great occasion. At Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, we rallied before departing on a great open field, and there the Catholic father, the Jewish rabbi, the Lutheran minister, the Presbyterian minister, the Methodist minister, the Mormon elder united. We prayed for God to be with us to help us and bless us. We didn't want to go boastfully; we wanted to go humbly; we wanted to help and be friendly. We started our journey, and after a few days were in the midst of interesting experiences. One morning I heard boys about the ship at four o'clock; they were seeing for the first time the white cliffs of Dover. We sailed on up the channel passing Dunkirk. We were deeply impressed to note when the word *Dunkirk* was spoken, these thousand lads fell into silence. They had read the papers; they had read the magazines; they had heard the radio. Great hulks of ships still are protruding from the waters. This told the story of Great Britain on her knees, the onrush of the foe, the inspiration of that great Britisher, Churchill, who gave the people so much faith and so much hope.

Then we went on through Holland and Belgium, deeply impressed by every step we took. In Antwerp the mayor spoke to our boys in grateful appreciation. He said:

Friday, October 3

There would have been no Antwerp if your fathers and your brothers had not come.

We went on through France. And overnight a city arose on a great old French estate; thirty-two thousand boys, in a drizzling rain pitched their tents! They were from thirty-eight different nations.

### WELCOME IN FRANCE

Early in the morning we heard the singing of the "Jamboree" sung for the first time by a lovely chorus of French lads. It was inspiring. All through the trees and across the old French meadow, it came to us by radio. We knew we were now in France. Soon we heard the voice of a nation through its youth saying to us,

We're happy you're here, all you fellows—black, red, brown, yellow, white, from all over the world with all your different languages—we're glad you've come.

Men of France were saying in their hearts,

Here is our hope. We've been fought and destroyed. Here lies our one hope—the youth of France must be saved.

They made a tremendous effort to have us come. They did everything they could for us and then more, to have the youth of the world come when they felt so sick at heart. This was deeply appreciated.

Many men in France have lost faith. They are bewildered. They are confused. Mothers were standing in doorways with small, poorly-fed children clinging to them as we went by. They wonder what tomorrow will bring, while men talk and argue about their destiny.

### REASONS FOR ATTENDING JAMBOREE

At the jamboree I went about among our men and asked them this question: "What was it that impelled you to come over here?" There were eighty-nine American men. We sat down on the old logs, we sat in tents, we talked intimately and thoughtfully with each other.

I want to read the answers to you, for as soon as I had the opportunity I wrote the answers they gave. I will read a number of them. They deeply impressed me. They challenge our thinking. Here is what the American men said:

1. I want the United States to be better understood. Some of the people over here in Europe are saying all that the Americans want is gold.

2. I am an assistant scoutmaster. I belong to the league of frightened men. I was at Bikini. I know what the atomic bomb can do. Our hope lies in the youth of the world. Scouting is not talk but action for peace.

3. There were 300,000 United States men killed in World War II. Among them was my brother. I don't want him to have died in vain. I believe I can help through scouting. Other programs seem so complex. This is simple and effective.

4. I came to America, a poor Russian-Jewish boy. I have received so much. I want to tell my friends here in Europe the truth about America. That's one reason why I came.

Toward the end of the jamboree I asked one of our successful leaders, "And why are you here?" He answered:

5. Oscar, I've seen scouting change the lives of boys for good. I have been inspired by it. I'm here to get more inspiration and help. We have some real problems in our country. On my way to the ship in America I saw from the train window the sign, "We Do Not Serve Colored Trade." I've broken bread with colored boys and men here from different countries. They are fine fellows. I have been deeply impressed.

In Belgium I saw a group of American-Jewish boys standing at a grave with bowed heads while the rabbi said a prayer. It made me feel humble, yet proud. I must work more, have greater faith in men and boys.

6. The world is spiritually ill. Religion is ill. The world is breaking down. Scouting has an answer, I believe, and I want to find out how it is influencing the boys of other countries.

7. I brought my boy with me. I am a G.I. I flew many times over Europe. I helped to wreck the world. I told my son on shipboard he must help to build it back again. We are talking it over. My son is very hopeful.

8. I am a minister and a scoutmaster of thirty-two of these Scouts. I want to know whether scouting helps build a Christian life. The sincere love of our American boys for the boys of other nations and their personal devotions greatly impress me.

Finally one of my intimate friends said:

9. When I received the last letter from my boy, he was fighting from the ruins of a French home. "It is hell here, Dad," he wrote. "The next few hours may decide everything!" I am going to see his grave. I want to be as near as possible to him again. I want him to know I am working for the ideals for which he gave his life.

Brethren and sisters, scouting is not a cure-all, but it is as its great founder said: "We want to make boys healthy, happy, and helpful." The gospel of Jesus Christ, the plan of God unto salvation is the answer. May we humbly live it; may we help youth to its great future.

The world will adjust itself when the Lord's plans are duly unfolded. God help us and bless us, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**President George Albert Smith:**

President Oscar A. Kirkham of the First Council of the Seventy has just spoken to us. I may say that he was Morale Officer for the United States in this last world Scout Jamboree as well as all the others that have been held since Scouting began.

The Relief Society Mothers and the congregation sang the hymn, "We Thank Thee, O God, For a Prophet."