



Mostly about People

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By Wally Traling

I hate to drop this bomb right smack in the middle of the campfire after such a strenuous day of knot tying.

But do you know who really founded the Boy Scouts of America?

Do you?

It was Calamity Jane.

She was one of the toughest, tobacco chewingist, fist fightingist, whisky drinkingist, swearingist pistol-packing women of the west.

But when she was sober, she was real good with kids.

One of those kids was Jack (Redshirt) Thebert, now 73, of 224 Ross street, who learned outdoorsmanship from Calamity in the Black Hills near Deadwood, South Dakota—a good 10 years before the scouting movement was started in England by Lord Robert Baden-Powell.

Thebert, a retired advertising man and scouting executive, claims Calamity should have had this honor in the U.S.

He pointed this out to Lord Baden-Powell's face when he came to San Francisco in 1934 for an International Merit Badge exposition of which Thebert was executive director. Apparently Lord Baden-Powell was not over-

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Thebert is a tall, craggy-faced man who says he holds a degree in journalism from the University of Nebraska and spent his tadpole phase of growing up in Central City, near Deadwood—where the deer and Calamity roamed.

Her real name was Martha Jane Canary Burke, a mannish, unattractive, independent woman, who was born in 1852 and was bullwhacking when Thebert knew her in the 1890's.

"There wasn't a word in the vocabulary of profanity that she couldn't use with proficiency.

"She could fight like a man and there wasn't any belt line rule with her," he said. "I saw her in several street brawls and watched her empty her pistols in the air."

Calamity had, by then, gained fame in the west as a frontierswoman and a scout for General Custer in the 1870's. She also was

a great friend of Wild Bill Hickok.

She might have had her naughty moments (I wonder how many Scout executives have fainted so far), but Thebert likes to show her good side, too.

"She had great heart, Calamity did. I call her the White Angel of Deadwood.

"She once ignored the black smallpox plague in those hills and nursed 15 to 20 men back to health in an isolated shack. No one else would touch them.

"She loved kids and she used to take five to 10 of us camping—taught us how to cook in the woods, read the stars, and travel by night in the mountains," said Thebert.

Calamity built the first reflector oven Thebert ever saw and taught the boys how to do it.

"The one I made is in the Salt Lake City museum," he said.

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When this amazing woman wasn't bullwhacking or scouting or drinking or fighting, she gave her time to the kids — knuckled down in the mud for a game of marbles or gave her last pennies to a crowd of tykes.

She was also great on stories, recalled Thebert, and good at impressing on the youngsters "do as I say, not as you see me do." She would warn the boys against drinking and cussin' and fighting.

Jane died in 1903. She was buried at Deadwood, alongside of her idol and friend, Wild Bill Hickock.

Seven years later, W. C. Boyce, a Chicago publisher, brought the Boy Scout idea from London and is generally recognized as its originator in the U.S.

Jack Thebert is not among the Boyce followers.

Everyone for Calamity raise your _____ hands.

Mothers welcome Easy-Care



Messiah Lutheran