

Not every skit is in good taste. Read this important memo from the Northeast Region of the BSA that highlights some of the most frequent problems of questionable taste in skits we have all seen too often.

## **The Gray Areas: Campfire Songs and Skits**

By Douglas C. Fullman

Scouting's program is designed to develop boys in character, citizenship, and fitness including mental, moral, spiritual, and physical fitness. Activities, meetings, camp programs, and campfires all contribute to Scouting's aims. Therefore, some items that may be acceptable in other segments of society are not part of the Scouting program.

One of the important elements of Scouting is FUN. In our attempt to use humor and fun activities, we must continually remind ourselves that these amusing and entertaining programs are excellent opportunities to teach the values of Scouting, and must not detract from, nor contradict the philosophy expressed in the Scout Oath and Law.

Although many leaders are able to determine the appropriateness of most program choices, there are certainly numerous songs, stories, skits, and stunts that force the leader to make decisions. To add to the complexity of the decision is that in many cases it is not so much what is done, but how it is done that makes the difference. The areas that fall between the inappropriate and the absolutely acceptable, we call the gray area.

Just because a skit, song, or story falls in one of the gray area categories does not, in itself, establish that it may not be done. At the same time, if an item is in the gray area, then a leader must exercise his judgment concerning not only the subject matter, but also the performers and their sensitivity to the values and ideals of Scouting. The final decision must be the impact the item has on developing character, fitness, and citizenship or setting the wrong example of what Scouting is all about.

The following "Gray Areas" should alert leaders to exercise their best judgment:

### 1. Underwear

- Concerns: Nudity, natural modesty of Scouts, mental fitness, and cleanliness.
- Judgment Note: The J. C. Penney Skit can be done in Swimsuits as an example.

### 2. Water

- Concerns: Victims (self-worth and self-esteem) Persons may be hurt physically and emotionally. Equipment/clothing damaged.
- Bodily Functions - Skits, etc., portraying urination, sexual acts, or defecation do not contribute to developing Scouting's Ideals and Values.

### 3. Toilet Paper

- Concerns: Bodily Functions (see above) and Toilet Humor.
- Judgment Note: "The Viper is Coming" can have a person with Paper Towels and Windex to clean someone else's eyeglasses.

#### 4. Inside Jokes

- Concerns: Only the participants or those in the "KNOW" can appreciate the humor, etc. Don't bore, or even worse, ignore the rest of us in the audience.
- Judgment Note: Staff Banquets, and Last Wills and Testaments, are great uses of inside jokes and most, if not all, of the participants are "in."

#### 5. Alcohol/Drunkenness

- Concerns: BSA's Unacceptables - Alcohol is the most abused drug especially within the age group Scouting is trying to serve.
- Drunkenness - Making fun of people. Courtesy. Self-esteem and self-worth.

#### 6. Cross Gender Impersonation

- Concerns: Bodily Functions and excessive, inappropriate exaggeration of body parts. Embarrassments. May become a form of sexual harassment.
- Judgment Note: Can be great fun. Area that most probably fits into the "not what is done, but how it's done" category.

This guide has been prepared with the sincere desire for wholesome fun, recreation, and enjoyment for all at Scouting activities, especially campfires. Hopefully, you the leader, find these guidelines helpful as you thoughtfully approve these activities, guide boys in making the right decisions, and personally set the example for Scouting at its best.