

DENNY PRATT: Scouter, Educator  
Long-time Canyon Camp Director goes home  
By Don Kinney, Scout Executive  
Blackhawk Area Council

Denny Pratt, long-time Camp Director of Canyon Camp passed away Thursday, October 13, 2005 at University of Wisconsin Hospital in Madison. These words are difficult to write, and even more difficult to understand. This can't be... not Denny... so full of life and energy, so kind and gentle, steadfast friend, a comrade to veteran Scouters and a sympathetic counselor to homesick first-year camper.

Denny has been a permanent fixture at Canyon since his childhood friend Ron Spielman took him to interview for Camp Staff back in the mid 50's. He must have liked it because he never left. Duff, as he was known to fellow campers, had found his niche in life. He would complete his degree in education at UW Platteville, and go into teaching, and then into school administration. Turns out that Denny Pratt was a Scouter who would be an Educator in the off season... or perhaps he was an Educator who would turn Scouter during the camping season. You really can't separate the two, because that's what Denny did - in his mind, the two were inseparable. Work was school, and home was camp.

Denny was the kind of person who rose to the top of whatever container he was placed in. As an Educator, he quickly became the top school administrator in his school districts. As a Scouter, he served three years as our Council President. As Camp Director, he distinguished himself in a way that elevated him to Director of numerous National BSA Camp Schools where he trained others to direct camps in councils all across the nation. Denny received Scouting's highest awards: the Eagle Scout Badge as a youngster, the Award of Merit in his District, the Silver Beaver in his Council, and the very rare Silver Antelope in our Central Region. He has also been recognized with two prestigious awards by the University of Wisconsin Platteville.

Where did he find the time and the energy to sing in the choir, be a church leader, and rescue squad volunteer in Darlington? How is it possible to excel as he always did? To what does one attribute the affection and intense loyalty of a veritable army of friends all around the world? I happen to believe that God blesses all of his children with a set of talents in various areas of life, along with instructions on how to use them, and that a very few of his children actually pay attention. Always the good student, Denny was one of those who actually paid attention to God's lesson plan for life.

Denny's courageous struggle to regain his health over the couple of years has been an inspiration to us all. We have seen miracle after miracle during that time, and seen hope rise and fall and rise again. Through it all he was always concerned about all of us, asking about his friends and loved ones, and always checking to see that the cinnamon rolls were being made correctly.

Our friend and mentor has been released from his burdens and called to his eternal home now, as we all will be some day. And just like He promised, the Great Master of all Scouts has prepared a place for Duff beyond his wildest dreams. I'm not exactly sure what his new quarters or the dinning hall look like, but they're pretty close to the water front and the parade grounds, and just a short walk to the Vesper Trail...it's the start of a new season.