

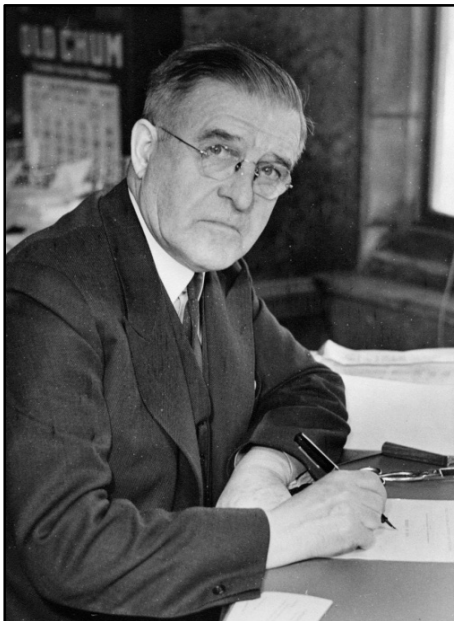


## Senator Buchanan Winter Sports Competition

Waterton's first Boy Scout troop was not formed until 1931 for one very simple reason. There were not enough eligible boys living the park to qualify for a troop of their own. Once started, however, the Waterton Boy Scout troop prevailed for decades.<sup>1</sup>

Initially the Boy Scouts were the responsibility of the local branch of the Canadian Legion but when a Lions Club was formed in the park immediately after the Second World War, its Boys and Girls Committee took over.<sup>2</sup> A decade later, the Scouts' most ambitious and successful effort of a regional nature came to the fore with the establishment of a tradition known as the Senator Buchanan Winter Sports Competition.

Senator William Ashbury Buchanan, a long time newspaper publisher and politician from Lethbridge, had a keen interest in the park and was its most influential supporter



Senator William Buchanan  
(Photo: Galt Museum and Archives)

taking an interest in everything "Waterton" even from his office across the country in Ottawa. Having won the support of his fellow senators for the 1932 passage of legislation creating the world's first international peace park, Buchanan was affectionately referred to as "the Senator from Waterton Lakes National Park."<sup>3</sup>

Among a myriad of duties he took on during his career was that of member of the General Council of the Boy Scouts Association of Canada.<sup>4</sup> After his death in July, 1954, his widow and son Hugh sponsored a trophy in the senator's name to encourage Boy Scouts to participate in winter sports.<sup>5</sup>

According to Frank Goble, Waterton business man, community supporter and Boy Scout leader, the idea for a winter sports competition began when the Banff Boy Scouts invited the Waterton troop to an inter-troop meet early in March, 1955 and later that month the Waterton boys reciprocated by inviting troops from Banff and Canmore to the park. The Buchanan event evolved from there<sup>6</sup> with the first official annual regional competition held March 24, 1956.<sup>7</sup>

Over the next 11 winters, the competition drew Boy Scouts by the score from throughout Southern Alberta. The events included such winter activities as signalling, toboggan rescue, snowshoe races, fire making and cooking and skiing.<sup>8</sup> As the years went by, the camp expanded from one to three days during Easter vacation and additional events were added and altered. For example, in 1963, the camp was divided into two skill levels, one for the less experienced boys and one for those with more experience. Only those in the latter group competed for the trophy, sometimes in pairs rather than entire troops. In 1966 the trophy was shared with the entire camp because the scores were so close.<sup>9</sup>





Waterton Supt. Al Pettis, left, presents the Buchanan trophy in 1965 to joint winners: Waterton and Pincher Creek troops. (Photo: Galt Museum and Archives)

“Our best camps were based in the Akamina Pass area of British Columbia at Wall Lake where the snow would be from seven to 10 feet deep on the level. At these camps we would snowshoe in from Little Prairie [off the Akamina Parkway], a distance of more than five miles [eight kilometres]. There would be from 150 to 200 boys and leaders,” Goble recalled in 1984.<sup>10</sup>

Each fall, in preparation for the winter camp, Goble visited Scouts in Southern Alberta teaching them how to make their own snowshoes, the techniques of winter camping and survival.<sup>11</sup>

The Waterton troop placed first in the competition six times<sup>12</sup> against keen competition with troops from Barons, Glenwood, Lethbridge, Cardston, Claresholm, Mountain View, Taber, Bow Island, Wrentham, Pincher Creek, and New Dayton among others. Sites for the camp varied over the years and included Forum Lake, Cameron Lake, Wall Lake and Pass Creek.

From time to time a *Lethbridge Herald* reporter would tag along in an effort to see for himself what was involved. Joe Balla, outdoor writer for the newspaper, was one such participant and wrote glowingly of the outing: “It was an exercise in preparedness, physical fitness and survival proficiency. It snowed. Then it rained. Then it poured,” he reported. “One troop built a fire and it disappeared to the bottom of five feet of snow. One Scout decided that if he had to fall, what better place than in the middle of Cameron Creek, gear and all. These were just a few of the



A Boy Scout prepares a rough meal in the Akamina Pass where the boys learned the art of winter camping. (Photo: Waterton Natural History Association)



*Scouts David Allison, Tommy Pierce and Jim Duggan of Waterton's Troop No. 1 prepare their equipment for the toboggan rescue competition. (Photo: Waterton Natural History Association.)*

trials and tribulations that Scouts and leaders had to go through at the Southern Alberta Regional Boy Scout Easter week camping trip.”<sup>13</sup>

Asked if it was worth the effort, Balla hit the nail on the head: “There will be few, if any, who will forget the experience for some time. The worth will come in the lessons learned, the hardships overcome and the retelling and perpetuating of the stories about the camp on into manhood.”<sup>14</sup>

The last year of the Buchanan competition in Waterton was 1966. It was said to have been the only Scout Camp of its kind in Canada.<sup>15</sup> The following year, the new 260 acre Camp Impeesa<sup>16</sup> was developed, about 40 kilometres southwest of

Pincher Creek adjoining the shore of Beaver Mines Lake in the Crowsnest Forest Reserve. Impeesa became home to the Buchanan competition and the Waterton Boy Scouts participated at the new location for three years before interest waned, resumed and waned again coming to an end in 1985 despite efforts to revive the competition.<sup>17</sup> Winter camping is still sponsored by the Boy Scouts but the Buchanan trophy has been retired.

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<sup>1</sup> “Wonderful Waterton,” *Lethbridge Herald*, Dec. 28, 1931, 3. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 28.

<sup>2</sup> “Wonderful Waterton,” *Lethbridge Herald*, Dec. 13, 1945. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 28.

<sup>3</sup> Chris Morrison, *Waterton – Glacier International Peace Park: Born of a Vision*, (Lethbridge: Waterton Natural History Association and Pincher Creek Rotary Club, 2007), 20.

“Senator William Ashbury Buchanan, Son of the Parsonage, Who Became Publisher of The *Lethbridge Herald*,” *Lethbridge Herald*, July 12, 1954, 8. WLNP Archives Box 130, Item 28.

Buchanan and his wife Alma Maude Freeman owned a cabin on Emerald Bay and their sons, Donald and Hugh, wrote extensively about Waterton for *The Lethbridge Herald*.

<sup>4</sup> C. Frank Steele, *Prairie Editor*, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1961), 179.

<sup>5</sup> Letter to Joe Balla, *Lethridge Herald*, Lethbridge from R.T. Clarke, Regional Executive Commissioner (of Boy Scouts), Lethbridge (?), March 11, 1963. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 28.

<sup>6</sup> “Boy Scouts Winter Camp Brings Back the Memories,” *Lethbridge Herald*, March 13, 1984, 9. WLNP Archives Box 130, Item 28.

<sup>7</sup> Program for The First Annual Winter Sports Competition, 1956. Waterton Natural History Association, Scrapbook, Waterton Scout Troop 1953-1966. Excerpts in WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 28.

<sup>8</sup> Program of the 1962 scouting event detailed dates, place, a list of individual and patrol equipment required, as well as general comments. Waterton Natural History Association, Scrapbook, Waterton Scout Troop 1953-1966. Excerpts in WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 28.

<sup>9</sup> “Unique Judgment is Made: Entire Scout Camp Wins Buchanan Award,” *Lethbridge Herald*, April 15, 1966, 18. WLNP Archives Box 130, Item 28.

<sup>10</sup> “Boy Scouts Winter Camp Brings Back the Memories.”

<sup>11</sup> “Boy Scouts Winter Camp Brings Back the Memories.”

<sup>12</sup> From information supplied by the Boy Scouts of Canada Southern Alberta Regional Council the Waterton Scouts won in 1956, 1957, 1960, 1963, 1964 and 1965.

<sup>13</sup> Joe Balla, “Camping in Winter Can Be A Tough Test,” *Lethbridge Herald*, April 23, 1965, 11. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 28.

<sup>14</sup> Joe Balla, “Camping in Winter Can Be A Tough Test.”

<sup>15</sup> “Claresholm Scout Wins Senator Buchanan Trophy,” *Lethbridge Herald*, March 31, 1967, 14. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 28.

<sup>16</sup> “Impeesa” was the Zulu name given to Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scout movement. It means “wolf that never sleeps” symbolizing a creed that the Boy Scout movement is always vigilant to the need of tomorrow’s citizens. “Set Plans \$71,500 Scout Camp,” *Lethbridge Herald*, November 15, 1963, 15. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 28.

<sup>17</sup> “Weekend in the Wild Spent on Top of the World.”