

NOW & Then



1 - Brad as a Scout. Photos courtesy Brad Tilden.

A Conversation with BSA National Chair Brad Tilden

By Mark Griffin, Editor-in-Chief

I recently had the opportunity to visit with Brad Tilden, the National Chair of the Boy Scouts of America.

Brad is an Eagle Scout, a Distinguished Eagle Scout in fact, who was elected to this role at the National Annual Meeting of the BSA this past May. He retired in 2021 as the chairman and CEO of Alaska Airlines and is the past chair of the Chief Seattle Council.

You can read more about Brad in a *Scouting* Magazine article from May 22, 2023, (<https://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/>).

We talked about several things, including ways to improve communications with and for retirees (he committed to try to help and started the process within 10 minutes of the end of our call!) and will be working to set up a *Now & Then* interview with the new CEO of the BSA.

But mostly we wanted to know how it is going so far and some of his thoughts on retirees.

I read your vision for the BSA in *Scouting* magazine when you took on this role. Has anything changed in the first six months?

("Our organization has been in the news recently for some of the wrong reasons. The simple vision is to be in the news for the right reasons. Let's get back to a very strong focus on changing the lives of young people.)

That *Scouting* magazine article feels like it was a world ago. But nothing at all has changed.

How are things going so far?

Things are good. We have so much work to do but we have made all these changes to the board. Thirty-six board members retired and we brought 11 new folks on, so it's a smaller board. And the new board has term limits. We just hired Roger Krone as our CEO. We are in the process of finalizing our road map. We are out of bankruptcy.

I really do think we've got bright days ahead. We do need to work together, and I think the National Service Center need to pay close attention to what local councils need and be in a position to support those needs.

I think there is a huge opportunity in front of us if we work together and go get it!

Do you think our retirees have a role in that?

I totally do! I spent most of my career at Alaska Airlines and the retirees there were a very, very important community. We tried to keep them abreast of what the company was doing. We did these pins for employees at one point that said, "I Am Alaska." We recognized the role of retirees, so we got them pins that said, "I Built Alaska."

I really think you stand on the shoulders of giants and the retirees who built this organization.

Several folks like you have emailed me and said, "I want to stay involved" and "What can I do?" I really think we've got to feed that, stimulate that desire.

You need people looking out for you and taking care of you. Our retirees are in a great position to do that. They are a super important audience.

For the second time in the BSA's recent history we have gone outside the field of professional Scouting for a CEO. Can you share your thoughts on that decision?

We actually had a very diligent search process. We put the search committee together in January 2023. They went through a detailed process defining requirements, choosing a search firm, advertising for the role, getting a pool of candidates, and then beginning the interviews.

We got lots of input. It was a nine-person search committee, but we also had input from Scout executives and youth into the decision.

The reason to go "outside" would be to bring in some outside influence and maybe have some change and transformation. The reason to go "inside" is we would want someone who knows and loves the organization. The ideal candidate would have had both. But in this particular case did decide to go outside because we think the organization needs some change.

It's not that someone inside the organization could not drive change, but we wanted someone who has done it in several different organizations. One of the things I have seen in my career is that the first time someone looks at a transformation it might take them two-three years to make the big decisions that need to be made. The second time it might take two or three months and the third time you get more confident and can move more quickly if you have been through the cycle once or twice.

It was a very tough call whether it was going to be an inside or outside candidate, but I think the desire to have someone with experience running a large organization, with scale, and driving transformation was probably what pushed us toward outside in this particular case.

Roger is an Eagle Scout and hiked the trails at Philmont. Did you consider internal candidates?

We did have some very qualified internal candidates.

We also have local councils hiring from, I'll say, outside the profession. Is professional Scouting still a career path?

Yes. Your audience will know this better than me, but I think with the bankruptcy talent development, career development, has almost ground to a halt. I think the organization does have a responsibility to develop its own talent.

If somebody has the aspiration to be the CEO of the Boy Scouts of America we need to give them feedback on where they need to develop so they ultimately can attain that role. It would be a really great reflection on us as an organization if the next time we were to hire a CEO if that person would come from the inside.

I understand if people feel discouraged, but I hope they are not too discouraged.

I think life is all about growth, bottom line. It is fun for all of us, and it is good for the organization if we are growing. I really do feel we have a responsibility under Roger Krone and HR to get going with the talent development stuff again.

It is totally different if our executives feel it. That there are things happening that make them feel they are being grown and developed. That's where we need to get.

Do you have an overall message you would like to share with retirees?

My main message would be to say Thank You! It is an amazing organization. It has been through so much in the last few years, but there is not a better organization out there that helps young people.

I want to thank retirees for everything they did to bring us to this point and ask them to wish us well as we push it forward to get into more schools, homes, and communities. Try to change more lives for young people.

Helping is what Scouting calls us to do. We are meant to On Our Honor, Do Our Duty, and Help Other People at All Times. We are meant to be in the thick of things trying to make things better.

The "get involved" message to retirees is good. Regardless of what you think right now we are in a perfect position. The bankruptcy is behind us. We have dealt with that and apologized. Every youth in the country can be a Scout. There is no reason for an organization or corporation to not support us.

But we do have to get out there and spread the word, and actually get back into schools and back into communities. There just are no reasons to not support the Scouts. We need to be proud of who we are and talk it up. Go out and ask for the support we need to run these programs.



2 - Brad's den (later the Owl patrol) during Day 1 of Wood Badge at the Summit Bechtel Reserve in 2022.

Photo courtesy of Scott Beckett.

Editors' Note:

Each edition of *Now & Then* includes stories of the volunteer service of retirees and spouses in Scouting and other organizations. If you are inspired to follow the encouragement of BSA National Chair Brad Tilden to include the BSA in your volunteer service, there are opportunities at the unit, district, council, territory, and national levels. Simply connect with your local council or Scouters already serving.

The content of each issue of *Now & Then* and our *Now & Then* Facebook page will also equip you to be an informed ambassador for Scouting in the everyday conversations you have with others.

In Fond Remembrance: *In Tribute and Gratitude for Distinguished Service*

November 2023

Paul B. Bannon, Royal Oak, Michigan www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/paul-bannon-obituary?id=52126126	May 30, 2023
Lowell E. White, Tallapoosa, Georgia www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/28569556/lowell-white	July 28, 2023
Steven A. Zimmer, Miami, New Mexico https://krtnradio.com/2023/09/20/in-loving-memory-of-stephen-anton-zimmer/	August 15, 2023
Wendel I. Lathrop, Kennewick, Washington www.muellersfuneralhomes.com/obituaries/Wendel-Ivan-Lathrop	August 20, 2023
Steven Wesley Harris, Phenix City, Alabama www.mcmullenfuneralhome.com/obituary/Steven-Harris	September 21, 2023
Don Adkins, Norman, Oklahoma, www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/ardmoreite/name/donald-adkins-obituary?id=53624899	November 11, 2023
David S. Allen, Lenexa, Kansas www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/overland-park-ks/david-allen-11540880	November 11, 2023

PLEASE NOTE:

Each issue of *Now & Then* will share this summary of names and links to obituaries of retirees and spouses reported to us who have passed since our last issue. If you become aware of a fellow BSA retiree or spouse who has passed, please let us know by going online to nowandthenbsa.org to file an In-Fond Remembrance notification. We'll then honor that departed colleague or spouse in this listing <https://nowandthenbsa.org/in-remembrance>

When accessing our on-line BSA retiree directory found at nowandthenbsa.org, should you notice the name of a BSA colleague who has passed, please also alert Bob Rydell at rydellbob@aol.com



Now & Then on the Web

You can find *Now & Then*, resources, past issues, news, and more on our Facebook page and our web page. Please bookmark these pages and share them with other BSA retirees and spouses.

<https://nowandthenbsa.org>

www.facebook.com/groups/nowandthenbsa/

In December we will post information regarding registering, or renewing your registration, with the National Council on both of these links. We will also include this information in the next issue of the newsletter.

Please Share *Now & Then* with fellow retirees: If you know of a BSA retiree or retiree spouse with limited or no computer access, please do a Good Turn; print and mail or bring a copy of this issue of *Now & Then* to them to help assure they feel informed, included, and cared about. Thanks!

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In Memorium - Allen Mossman Now & Then Editor 2006-2020