

Stratford's Max Zorn Completes Another Season As The Area's Best-Loved Scouter

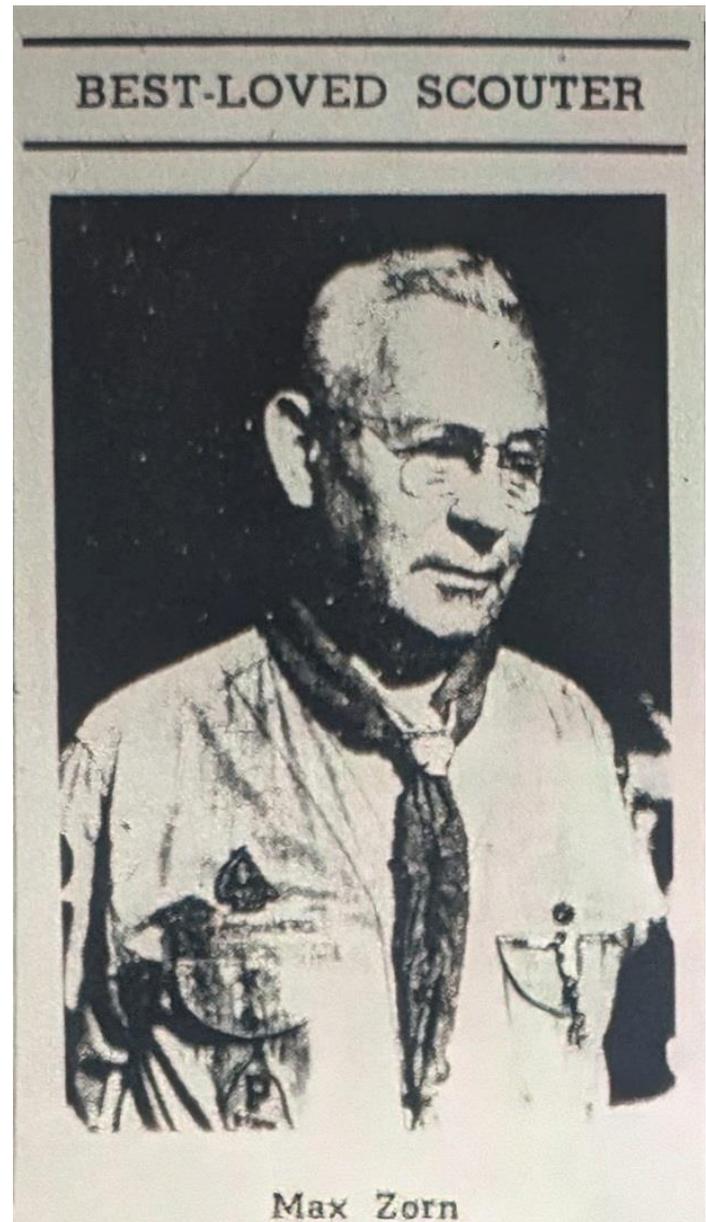
It was a silent impressive moment. A long line of Boy Scouts stood at earnest attention as the stars and stripes were slowly raised to the peak of Camp Mauwehau's flag pole. As it reached its goal, the heavy boom of the camp cannon shattered the early morning stillness. Eyes moist, sturdy, white-haired Max Zorn stood at attention, proud and erect in the Scout uniform he'd worn these past 20 years.

It was a new flag—and a special one. It had been used but once before, to drape the casket of Max's Army hero son, Richard. In giving this cherished possession to the camp, Max was paying the boys the most sincere tribute he knew, awarding them the symbol of a fine Scout, a symbol to serve as an inspiration for a generation of Boy Scouts to come.

Max (no one in Stratford calls him anything else), this year celebrated his 20th year of Scouting and his 72nd birthday by again devoting his entire summer to serving as handicraft director at this Red Feather Service of the Bridgeport-Stratford Community Chest, which closed its season on Sunday after giving nearly 500 Scouts from the Pomperaug and Mid-Fairfield councils the opportunity of sharing in camping experience.

As Scoutmaster of Stratford's peppy Troop 71, Max is beloved and respected throughout the town—an example to young and old alike—an immigrant once, but a real American today. A resident of Stratford for many years, 60 Riverview place as the home of Max Zorn is a familiar address to both Boy Scouts and adult Scouters in town.

Max's early history is a familiar story. Born in Germany, impressed into the Kaiser's army for four years of servitude,



then many slow years of apprenticeship, learning to become a skilled craftsman and tool-maker at the Allgemeine Electricitaet Gesellschaft, affiliated with our own General Electric.

When finally, at 26, Max found the German caste system oppressive and sought to leave the country to seek greater personal

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freedom, his first thought was to accept a position as a teacher of his trade in Africa. A lucky meeting with an enthusiastic American tourist turned his path to this country instead.

Working hard at his trade, learning the language, marrying and rearing a family of four sturdy sons more than kept Max Zorn occupied during his first dozen years in America. When his oldest son, Robert was twelve and asked for permission to join the Boy Scouts, Max was shocked and disapproving. Weren't the Boy Scouts a militaristic organization? Hadn't he fled Germany to escape just such regimentation? After much pleading by the boy, he reluctantly gave his consent but he bristled with disapproval every time Scouting was mentioned.

From the beginning. Robert was an eager, enthusiastic Scout, "a natural" his Scoutmaster called him. Although the Zorns could not afford to send the boy to camp, a wily Scoutmaster made it possible for the boy to attend Camp Pomperaug without charge. Max, still disapproving, reluctantly allowed the boy to accept the chance. At the summer's close, Max was invited to attend ceremonies at Pomperaug, where, to his great amazement, he saw and for the first time understood what Scouting really accomplished for boys. When his son was cited as the best Scout at camp and awarded a silver trophy, Max's conversion to Scouting was complete. Before long he was devoting all his spare time to working with the lads, and has dedicated the past 20 years to making this Red Feather service an important one for Stratford boys.

Max, one of 200 volunteer adult Scouters working with more than 700 boys in various phases of Scouting in Stratford, believes that the work of helping boys become self-reliant, capable and honest is one of the most vital of the Red Feather Services. He is constantly on the lookout for likely Stratford men to aid

in the work and give of their time and service to the cause of boyhood.

The small staff of Pomperaug Council (there are only four professional workers on the staff) constantly rely on men such as Max Zorn to work with boys, and feels that these volunteer adult Scouters are largely responsible for the extremely low juvenile delinquency rate in Stratford. The Council, which organizes, leads, plans and directs these volunteers, receives approximately \$30,000 a year in Community Chest contributions to help carry on this essential community service.

Now that Max has retired, he's really plunged into Scout work, and enjoyed life so thoroughly at Camp Mauwehau that he didn't take a day off since the start of summer.

Max's hobby shop at Camp Mauwehau, housed in a picturesque 250-year-old red barn with a floor of hand-hewn boards and hand-hammered nails that delights his craftsman's soul, was constantly swarming with eager boys, anxious to learn to work with wood, leather, metal and plastics. New arrivals at camp soon learned it was the most popular spot there, and at least 75 percent of them attended his classes, eager to make bracelets, belts or ash trays for mom, sis or their best gals.

Most remarkable thing about Max, aside of his love for boys, is his inventiveness. He's a born gadgeteer and his tent at camp abounded with examples of his resourcefulness in devising new comforts and convenience for himself and the boys. Max, who is never idle for a moment, says his best ideas are due to his inherent laziness. He dislikes doing things the hard way and so is constantly working out intricate devices to help him "cut corners." Camp visitors were amazed at his assortment of gadgets. One woman recently asked, in all sincerity, if he were a cousin of Rube Goldberg! Some of

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his devices would even astound the imaginative Rube.

For instance, hand Max an empty tin can and in a few seconds he'll concoct a workable shower under a tree that'll run for a full five minutes with just one filling. With another tin can and a thorn, he made himself an ingenious apparatus so that he could wash his hands in clear, running water. In Max's skilled fingers other bits of tin become paper holders, candle sticks, pancake turners, washboards, bread toasters or a tricky wall broom-holder!

His camp area is like a feudal domain, with scores of creature comforts invented by his agile brain. Four beech boughs, lashed together with twine, holding a seat made from an old burlap coffee bag, form a most comfortable easy chair. Not only is it practical, but it is portable as well, rolling into a compact bundle he can transport in his car. After 14 years it's as good as new, as is a portable hammock he slings between two trees, also concocted of burlap, twine and a frame of saplings. He has converted an old tree stump into a private picnic table overlooking the lake. Stones from the area have been gathered to form a sizeable fireplace. Max doesn't buy anything he can make, and that includes not only the big items, but even down to making his own clothespins!

Max, by his own example, has shown the boys how easy it is to provide for their own comfort, how to use make use of their hands and minds. Many a youngster at this Red Feather camp who never before knew the joy and value of craftsmanship has come home at the close of summer with an appreciation of the skills he's learned from Max Zorn.

On Sunday afternoons, when Max had a group of visitors in tow, he liked to show them through his own tent, explaining his trick gadgets and pointing out to them that their sons, through the skilled leadership of trained Scoutmasters, are learning not to

depend on bought conveniences and modern contrivances, but are being equipped with the know-how to fend for themselves. He's also just as apt to remind parents that the weekly fees they pay for their sons at camp do not cover more than half the cost, the Community Chest contributions meeting the difference and supplying trained leadership and administration,

Eavesdropping on Max as he works -with youngsters, it soon becomes evident why he is so loved and respected. A nice-looking young lad, after watching for many minutes while Max worked strands of colored plastic into a smart-looking bracelet, edged over to him and confidently asked: "If I pay you, will you make a bracelet for me?" Max smiled serenely and answered: "No, but I'll show you how YOU can do it." That briefly, sums up the secret of Max's success with boys. He'll show them how to do a job, but from then on, it's strictly up to the boys themselves.