

# THE DAILY GAZETTE

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MIDDLE GROVE

## Winter camping mentor

Ted Brown holds up kindling as he teaches his fire-starting class during a winter camping course at Boyhaven over the weekend.

ANA N.  
ZANGRONIZ/  
GAZETTE  
PHOTOGRAPHER



## honored at 92

### Generations of boys learned survival skills

BY JUSTIN MASON  
*Gazette Reporter*

There are 11 essentials of winter camping at the Boy Scouts of America's Camp Boyhaven in Middle Grove: Pack extra food and clothing;

make sure a map, compass, matches, firestarter, knife, flashlight and batteries are among your possessions; wear appropriate rain gear; and carry a first aid kit.

But most of all, make sure 92-year-old Ted Brown is there to lend his ear and expertise when it comes to braving sub-zero temperatures overnight in the woods.

The former organizer of the Klond-

ike Derby and key founder of the Twin River Council's OKPIK Winter Camping School was recognized for his years of service to the Boy Scouts with the dedication of Boyhaven's "lower-level" campsite in his name. Dozens of friends and fellow Scout leaders gathered at the edge of the 29-acre site Sunday as they celebrated Brown's enduring legacy in the woods he has camped in for more than four decades

"It will be a permanent testimonial that a great man once moved through these trees," said Bart Chabot, a former scoutmaster and fellow member of the OKPIK staff, as he unveiled the carving.

Brown, a former General Electric engineer from Schenectady, became involved with the Twin River Council when he enrolled his son in Troop 7

# Brown

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during the 1960s. He was integral in organizing the first Klondike Derby and Deep Freeze, an annual two-day winter camping event at Boyhaven that draws more than 400 Boy Scouts from around the region to compete in various cold weather survival skills.

In 1979, a bitter cold descended upon the derby, prompting many of the Boy Scout troops gathered at Boyhaven to abandon the second day of the competition. Brown was among a contingent of three troops that continued camping in tents throughout the weekend despite overnight temperatures dipping to -10 degrees on the first night and -30 degrees on the second.

"We said '... we came here to do some camping,'" Brown recalled

telling the departing scoutmasters.

The frosty weekend prompted Brown to write "Thirty Below Is a Piece of Cake," a definitive reference guide chronicling everything he had learned about winter survival skills. Two years later, Brown gathered with six other winter campers and developed a training program at Boyhaven to relay the skills they had learned to other scoutmasters.

By 1983, the group had named their annual camping school "OKPIK" after the Inuit term for snow owl. The two-day program is now nearly three decades old and draws winter enthusiasts from around the region to hone their survival abilities in the cold.

"Ted basically put it together and it's still going strong," said George Sogoian, who helps teach the program. "He's got my whole troop camping with confidence."

Despite Brown's age, scoutmasters continue to regard him as an

authoritative source when asking questions about winter camping. If he can't provide an answer from memory, he always knows where to find the right book in his personal library.

"He knows every book and he knows where they are," Chabot said. "It humbles me to have known him for so long."

Brown, who continues to teach at OKPIK each winter, was humble about his own contributions to Boyhaven. Instead, he thanked the scoutmasters who continue to properly mold the decision-making abilities of so many boys.

"This country needs young men who can size up a situation that is new to them and make the right decision," Brown told the group. "We train them here to make these decisions."

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# Boy Scouts to honor 'deep freeze' leader

At 92, Ted Brown still advocates winter safety at the Klondike Derby and other camp events

By **JIMMY VIELKIND**  
Staff writer

SCHENECTADY — One day 36 years ago, a scoutmaster in the Electric City was worried his boys didn't know the proper techniques for winter camping.

So he started a training program. And when that wasn't enough, Ted Brown organized the Klondike Derby — now an annual tradition for hundreds of Boy Scouts from around the Capital Region — so they could hone their skills in events from first aid to fire building.

"The kids learn by competing against each other," Bart Chabot, 67, a ex-scoutmaster at Troop 72 said. "Over the years Ted has been a mentor to thousands of boys, easily. We call him the guru. He's the man who knows everything."

And today, the 92-year-old pillar of Scouting will be honored at Camp Boyhaven in Milton where the lower lean-to camping area will be renamed the Ted Brown Winter Camping Area.

Brown spent Saturday at Camp

Boyhaven, instructing older Scouts on fire building and other winter survival techniques as part of the Okpik program, which derives its name from the Inuit word for snowy owl. The program was first developed in Minnesota, but Brown and a small corps of other instructors have been offering training at Boyhaven for several decades.



**BROWN**

Starting in the 1960s, Brown became involved with Troop 7 based at Zoller Elementary School. Over time he took on various posts in the Schenectady District of the local Twin Rivers Council and offered training presentation to Scouts around the city. He is a retired General Electric engineer.

"Ted was the go-to guy that I depended on when my son was in Troop 7, and he was someone I leaned on when I was a scoutmaster," said Doug Ward, another former scoutmaster. "He has a wealth of knowledge about camping and the outdoors. He's helped the kids a lot."

The public can attend the dedication at 9 a.m. today in the Banker II Area of Camp Boyhaven.