

## The Man-Eater

Brother Arnold Linney is one of the younger members of Acacia 357. He is the local Boy Scout executive, and is doing a fine job as a steward this year. He's already given the Apron Lecture, and is working hard on the junior deacon's work. We think he's probably ready to fill in if need be, but he's a bit nervous about the prospect. We've all tried to encourage him — that's our job, helping a new man along, and giving him every opportunity to succeed.

I think it is important to never criticize an officer except to him personally, privately, and then only in a constructive way. Every one of us has the ability to crush the initiative of a man who is trying hard to meet the expectations of the lodge. We can build him up or knock him down. I've given serious thought to the power I have as a more experienced member. I hope I never use that power for anything other than encouragement. We had a good meeting at Acacia last evening, and the banter in the kitchen was great.

Brother Alvin Garnet has just returned from a trip to Alaska, and he really had a tale to tell. His story had everyone at the lodge laughing last night.

Alvin had approached an outfitter in the Klondike about his needs as he began a four-day trek into the Alaskan wilderness. Concerned with the large bear population in the area, he asked what precautions he should take. The outfitter sold him two bottles of pepper spray, a vest with two pockets for the bottles, and a necklace of little bells that jingled as he walked. The bells were to alert any bears of his presence so as not to startle them, and the pepper spray was a final deterrent should he face a charge from a bear.

His first morning out, he approached the summit of a ridge. The bells on his vest sang a rhythm as he walked. As he turned a corner, he came upon a local — an old gent seated on a downed tree. The old fellow had a weathered face, and a well-worn Carey pipe protruding from his mouth. The pipe billowed like a steam engine.

“Good day,” said Alvin. “How far to the top?”

“Less than a mile,” said the old-timer, “You've almost got it made.”

Alvin looked down on the trail at what looked like bear droppings. “Is this a bear stool?” asked Alvin.

“Sure 'nuff is,” said the gent, pausing as he puffed a stream of smoke into the air.

“Do you think it's a man-eating bear?” asked Alvin.

The old man rose, pushed his walking stick into the droppings, spread them around a bit, and said, “Nope, not this bear.”

“Well, how can you tell?” asked Alvin. “What about the droppings gives you a clue?”

The old gent cracked a bit of a smile and said, “Them man-eaters — their stools always have little bells in 'em and smell like pepper!”