

SiBrown

Growing up near the swamp inspired his role in creating Louisiana's popular Swamp Base.

Si Brown first got tangled up with Scouting — literally — at his initial Cub Scout meeting, where the subject was knot-tying.

"We had a bunch of string and started learning how to do the square knot, slipknot and bowline," Brown says. "That's my first experience."

Brown went on to become president of Bruce Foods in New Iberia, La., as well as a Distinguished Eagle Scout, Silver Buffalo and member of the executive committee of the Evangeline Area Council. He has also been a prime mover behind development of Swamp Base, the council's high-adventure facility offering treks through Louisiana's Atchafalaya Swamp.

It took more than knot-tying to get him that far. His first serious brush with Scouting was through outdoor activities sponsored by Troop 13 in New Iberia.

"We got right into camping and the outdoors, and the outdoors is what kept me interested," he says. "That and the camaraderie with the group."

The opportunity to achieve was another factor that hooked the boy who would one day be honored by two

presidents — Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush — for his business success.

"Scouting challenges a young person with a succession of skill sets that inspires exceptionalism," Brown says. "It's just ideal for a younger person who is an achiever and someone with ambition to be the best he can be."

Ever since earning Eagle at 14, Brown has had a special interest in Eagle Scouts and supporting the rank.

"It teaches a person not to give up," he says. "If you can make it all the way to Eagle, you are not a quitter, and I think that is the most valuable lesson in life: to avoid the temptation to give up when it gets tough."

Brown also sees value in the BSA's safety-focused shooting sports program.

"I was fortunate enough to grow up in an area where hunting and fishing is a very popular pastime," he says. "That inspired me to develop the shooting skill."

Brown's rifle skills earned him the designation of expert marksman as a youth. His wife, Eaton, later took up the sport and became a champion, joining the Louisiana Trapshooting Hall of Fame in 2010.



In addition to the honors of Distinguished Eagle Scout and Silver Buffalo, Si Brown is also recognized for his generosity. The creator of Brown's Bluff celebrates with Art Hawkins (left), Evangeline Area Council Scout Executive from Brown's hometown of Lafayette, La.



Brown has supported the inclusion and development of shooting sports as a Scouter. He put his signature on Scouting's connection with shooting sports by funding Brown's Bluff, featuring stations for rifle, pistol and sporting clay shooting within the Summit Bechtel Reserve's shooting sports area.

He's also justifiably proud of Swamp Base. Brown helped the council select the site, acquire state funding and obtain a 100-year lease to the property. The idea for the base dates back to Scouting's

centennial celebration when the Evangeline Area Council organized a trash cleanup in the Atchafalaya Basin.

The swamp is part of the Mississippi River system and drains the middle third of the nation. It is home to species including ospreys, bald eagles and alligators, and is renowned for its fishing and hunting.

"It's a gorgeous area, but it had been littered by visitors," Brown says. "We wanted to clean it up."

They also wanted to leave it better than they found it, so they planted 12,000 cypress trees.

"During the course of that planting, we were just enchanted with the beauty of the swamp," Brown says.

Recalling his own fishing and hunting experiences in the swamp while growing up nearby, he was encouraged to develop a way for kids from all over to see it. That idea eventually became a permanent facility offering experiences ranging from weeklong treks to overnight houseboat stays.

"You can see alligators sunning in the afternoon," Brown says of Swamp Base.

It started with learning a

Scouts Luke Jones, Kadin Ellis, Jacob Heller and Daniel Deboard join Si Brown at the ribbon cutting for Brown's Bluff at the Summit Bechtel Reserve in West Virginia.

few basic knots. Ultimately, it led to spearheading the creation of a high-adventure base in his beloved swamp — while running an international food company.

Brown has maintained a high level of enthusiasm for Scouting, and he continues to express it with leadership and support befitting his deep appreciation for Scouting and all it has to offer.

WHY WE GIVE

Because each smile is priceless.

WHEN EATON BROWN asks her husband why he spends so much time going to Scout meetings as an adult volunteer, Si Brown has an answer ready.

"I tell her this is the only organization I've ever belonged to that I've never had a bad experience with," he says. "I mean that sincerely."

Of course, in more than 15 years as an adult volunteer, Brown has been motivated by more than the lack of a bad experience. In particular, he says one of his signature achievements, the development of the Swamp Base adventure facility, provides

a more tangibly positive benefit.

"My reward is to see the smiles on these kids' faces," he says. "When I go to Swamp Base and see the kids at the houseboats at the basin after they've spent the night in the swamp, one of those is worth a million to me."

Looking at the bigger picture, Brown says encouraging Scouting is important to the nation.

"There's no time in history that the United States has needed Scouting more than right now," he says. "Scouting teaches skills and knowledge not available to kids anymore in schools."

So despite a career as an adult Scouter that, among many other honors, includes a Silver Buffalo Award, he's far from finished working in and for the organization.

"It's an absolutely vital link in the development of young boys as they grow into leaders," he says. "My goal is to see that as many young people get exposed to the values and principles of Scouting as possible."



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