

Now on the

STORY BY
MIKE LATONA

PHOTOS BY
KARIN VON VOIGTLANDER

Renewed fervor for the flag

Retreats are designed to give people a break from everyday life, and this year's diocesan Catholic Scouting Retreat was no exception. Surrounded by the colorful, peaceful hills of southern Ontario County, approximately 250 Boy and Girl Scouts took part in the annual retreat Sept. 28-30.

There was, however, one reminder of tragic events that took place elsewhere. A reminder designed to instill pride and hope in Americans, even in the most troubling of times.

The American flag, an integral part of Scouting, waved all day Sept. 29 in front of the dining hall at the J. Warren Cutler Scout Reservation. Due to terrorist attacks on the United States Sept. 11, the flag took on extra meaning for several Scouts who attended the retreat.

"I pay attention a lot more now, because it means more. It's a symbol of unity," said Penny McClure, 16.

James Panning, 16, said the flag reminds him that "people now are happy to be Americans. Before, we just took it for granted, but now we appreciate what we have."

Adam Servatius, 17, cited the first two lines of the Boy Scout Oath — "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country" — as the foundation for his devotion to the American flag.

"The flag represents our country, and we have a duty to help protect the citizens of the United States," said Adam, an Eagle Scout from Troop 260 at St.

Joseph's Church in Penfield.

To Adam, the flag is also a reminder of those who have risked their lives to protect Americans' freedoms, such as his ability to practice his Catholic faith. "There's a lot of people who died for us; I don't want to forget that," he said.

Anna Cole, 15, also acknowledged the flag's historical importance, saying, "It's what we stand for. We've been through a lot (of wars) and the American flag is still there."

As is customary at the Catholic Scouting Retreat, participants honored their country with ceremonies on Sept. 29 in which the flag was raised, lowered, folded into a triangle and retired. The flag-folding ceremony was adapted from a military ritual. The ceremony, through 12 folds, paid homage to the following: life on earth; eternal life; military veterans; trust in God; the United States; our heartfelt allegiance to the flag; our armed forces; mothers; womanhood; fathers; biblical figures in the Hebrew tradition; and biblical figures in the Christian tradition.

The retiring ceremony — invoked for the respectful burning of an American flag that has become worn, torn or dirty — is a common practice in Scouting. Dan Servatius, retreat director, noted that at least one flag is retired at each Catholic Scouting Retreat. This year's flag, he added, belonged to a deceased World



Joe Tubiolo holds the folded flag during a flag-lowering ceremony at the diocesan Catholic Scouting Retreat, at J. Warren Cutler Scout Reservation Sept. 29.

War II veteran.

Tributes to the American flag, retreatants said, are going well beyond their weekend at Camp Cutler. For instance, Anna said her family now flies the flag in front of their house almost every day, whereas prior to Sept. 11 they only flew it on holidays. Meanwhile, Penny said her home's doorway is now adorned by the American flag.

Penny acknowledged that she, and many peers, formerly regarded participation in the national anthem and Pledge of Allegiance as "kind of going through the motions." James, from Troop 260 in Penfield, said the flag and its meaning seemingly get taken granted "until somebody attacks it."

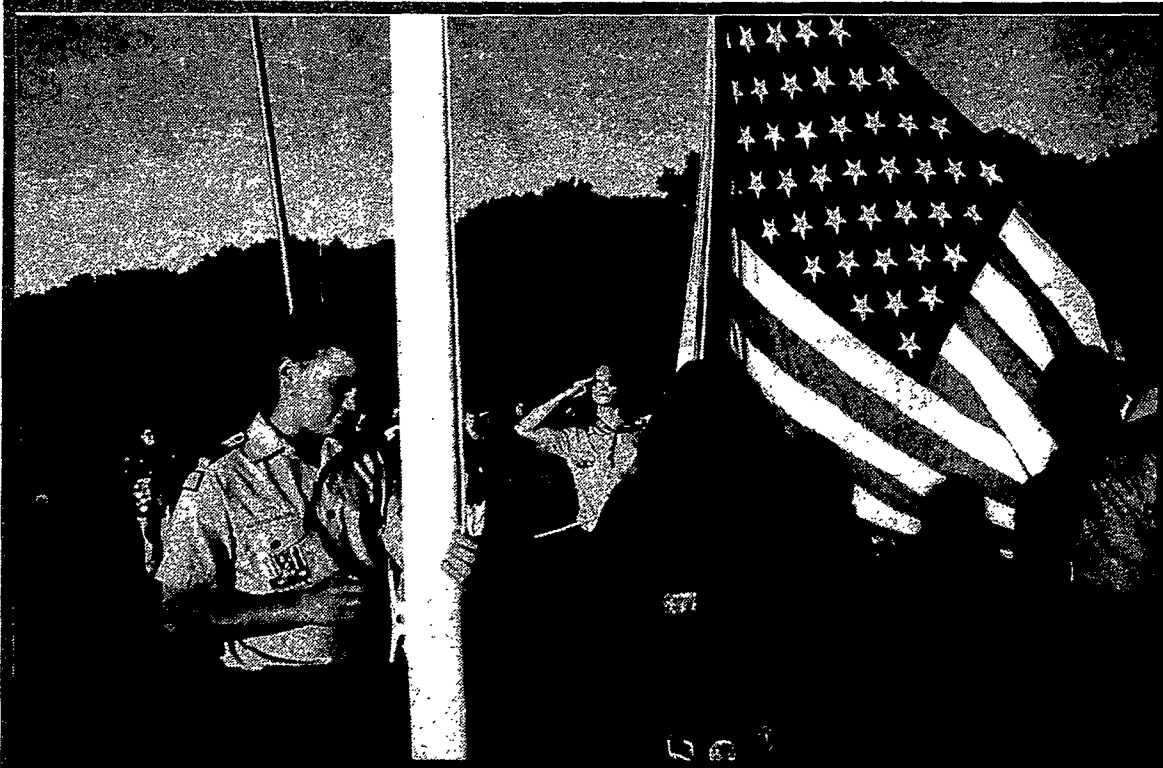
Teenagers only knew about such attacks from a historical perspective prior to Sept. 11, Anna and Penny noted: "There had never been any big problems in my lifetime," said Anna, who attends Nazareth Academy. "This generation has never had to face anything hard," agreed Penny, who attends Our Lady of Mercy High School.

But Anna, for one, is pleased that people of all ages are paying special tribute to the American flag at major sporting events, in front yards, on cars and on clothing.

"I didn't quite expect that many people, but I guess we've been brought together," Anna said.

The events of Sept. 11, Adam stated, will not weaken the country's strength and resolve that the flag symbolizes.

"It goes to half-mast and then it goes back up. We're not going to sit and morn all the time," Adam said.



G. Richard Rabarsky-Newport, 14, (left) helps other color guard members lower the flag.