

CAMPFIRE ASHES

Campfires are a tradition in Scouting. They are shared by young and old, boys and girls in nearly every nation on earth. Fire has always been important to human kind. It warms our bodies, cooks our food and brings joy to our spirit. At the dawn of mankind, fire was frightening and mysterious. Over time our species learned to control fire, carrying it from place to place. Later we learned to tame it, create it and master it. And yet, it still can harm or heal. Fire has always been a part of our survival, our religions, and our recreation.

As we come to the close of this scouting evening, I wish to share an important ceremony with you.

Lord Robert Baden-Powell, the Chief Scout of the World, used to collect some of the ashes from each Scouting event and carry them with him to the next event. He would mix the ashes of the old fire with the new one. As this tradition has spread, scouts from around the world have shared campfires and ashes with each other. Lists have been kept of the events where they have been shared. These lists form a history and a bond between us over the years and across the miles, no matter our language, culture or uniform.

These ashes represent the Friendship and Scouting Spirit shared by Scouts and Guides at campfires around the world. May the joining of these remnants of past Scouting experiences with the leaping flames of new ones symbolize the unbroken chain of fellowship and dedication to a common purpose that binds the Scouts and Guides of all nations. All who keep the friendship ashes and wish to share their ashes or event lists are welcome to step forward at this time. *(Those coming forward may add their ashes to the fire at this time, followed by the ceremony leader's ashes. For extra spark effect, you may want to add some sugar or flour to your ashes.)*

As we add the ashes of the past to the flames tonight, may the sparks that rise remind you of all the lives that have passed this way before. They shared their fires and blazed the trail that we follow tonight. *(At this point a group of older girls will hum "Linger" in the background while I read an abbreviated list of the ashes history. I try to pick out interesting events and places for these highlights.)*

The ashes tonight bring with them this history: *(Read some of the ashes history highlights.)*

Scouts, please carry these ashes further on their journey around the world and share them again and again. In so doing, remember to thank those who have gone before you and give of yourself to those who follow you. May the trail you blaze with your life be worthy of such remembrance.

Please join us now in singing "Linger". *(Try to get the group to sing at a slow, reflective tempo.)*