



# Parents' Ordeal Letter

*Providing Resources to Support Units, Chapters, and Lodges*

The Ordeal is a unique Scouting experience. It challenges a candidate physically, spiritually, and mentally. It provides the candidate a time to reflect on how brotherhood, cheerfulness, and service will direct the candidate's life. It does so in many symbolic ways. Many of these ways are difficult to understand by those who have not participated in the Ordeal before. Understandably, then, sometimes the parents of a new Arrowman have questions regarding what the Order of the Arrow is and what the Ordeal was all about. For that reason, one lodge created a letter which it mails to the parents of all new youth Ordeal members. It sheds a little bit of light on the things that the candidate did, even if the candidate himself does not yet understand the meaning behind the symbolism. It also clarifies some background about the Order of the Arrow and puts a brief lodge calendar in the hands of parents. Take a look at the attached letter and consider using a similar letter in your lodge to answer any questions that parents may have.

*This resource was submitted by Tabosa Lodge in Denver Colorado. Tabosa calls its Ordeal weekends "Cony Parties" and has experienced success with this letter. The letter was developed by a former national chief and current lodge adviser of Tabosa Lodge. How does your lodge solve problems it faces? Tell us at [ChapterResources@oa-bsa.org](mailto:ChapterResources@oa-bsa.org).*



August 3, 2011

Congratulations on your son!!

This weekend your son attended his Order of the Arrow Ordeal. For some parents, you may be well aware of the OA—*Scouting's Honor Society*—and the challenge, meaning, and symbolism involved in the Cony Party. Others have been kept in the dark by their teenager, and, for all you know, this was just another weekend where your son returned with bag of dirty clothes and another interesting odor.

*Awake, my friends! You now are starting on a long and toilsome journey...  
...You were sent to seek a vision of yourselves, and of your purpose...  
The spark is there, already glowing, fan it now...feed it, till it is a fire...*

**Our History...** The Order was begun in 1915 outside of Philadelphia. For the past 96 years, the OA has been made up of the best and brightest in Scouting. You should be proud that the Scouts in your son's unit see him as being one who lives the Scout Oath and Law in his daily life. However, the OA is not an award one earns like Eagle Scout; rather, it is a call for a life of *cheerful service to others*.

**About the Ordeal...** This weekend at Cony Party your son faced four challenges, each symbolic of '*the challenges a leader often faces*.' He might not have returned home Sunday fully aware of the meaning of everything through which he has been this weekend. I want to share with you about these challenges so you can help him to understand and look ahead to how he can better serve his unit, his school, his family, and his community. The four challenges of the Ordeal are...

- **A Vow of Silence...** the candidates take on a 24-hour vow of silence. Hours spent in thoughtful silence helps us make the right decisions, more than many days of talking. Silence helps bind us all together in brotherhood.
- **Sleep Alone...** on Friday night, the candidates slept alone on their groundsheet underneath the stars (actually, not 20 feet away from anyone else, but in the dark night they didn't know that). This challenges the candidates to be steadfast as the polestar, self-reliant and undiscouraged.
- **Scant Food...** during Saturday, both the breakfast and lunch meals were smaller than a typical meal. Through this form of fasting, sacrifice, and self-denial, we learn that a cheerful heart is lively even under hardship.
- **Arduous Labor...** the day is spent working in service of the camp, as a day spent in cheerful service, is consistent with the Order's purpose of seeking to serve and being faithful to the high ideals of the Order of the Arrow.

*...Who among you now is ready? Who will go upon this journey? You must choose...*

**What's Next #1...** the first place your son can get involved is by attending his chapter's monthly meeting. Not only will he be able to claim his lodge flap (the patch each dues-paying OA member is permitted to wear on the right pocket of his uniform) at the meeting, he will be able to take part in a lot of fun activities, meet kids from other units, and get involved in the fun program of the Order of the Arrow. Chapter meetings

are typically held each month in conjunction with district roundtable meetings, but check the lodge newsletter or website for specific times and locations.

*What's Next #2...* completing the Ordeal is just the first step in one's path as a member of the Order of the Arrow. Next year (after at least ten months as an arrowman) your son should seal his membership in the OA by becoming a *Brotherhood member*. We will be offering Brotherhood classes throughout the year and occasionally at chapter meetings. Information will be in the lodge newsletter, *The Cony Chatter*.

*What's Next #3...* we want to make sure that your son and you know about what lodge events are coming up so you can make sure he is able to take part in everything. Here's a brief run-down:

1. *End of Summer BBQ*: burgers, dogs, and a ton of fun await for all members and their families at the End of Summer BBQ. No uniforms or sashes needed, but wear a favorite Scout tshirt. August 20 (Sat) 11a - 130p, Clement Park in Littleton. \$5 per person.
2. *Fall Fellowship*: nothing but fun, games, big plates of good food, and ton of fun. It's chapter vs. chapter - who will win *The Amazing Race: Tahosa Style*? September 9-11 @ Camp Tahosa. \$20 per person.
3. *Section W5 Conclave*: Tahosa and seven other lodges from four states will convene for the annual conclave. Great training, inspiring shows, fun competitions, patch trading are all a part of the event. September 23-25 in Colorado Springs. \$45 per person.

*For more information and/or to register for any lodge event, go to [www.tahosalodge.org](http://www.tahosalodge.org) or contact your son's chapter chief or chapter adviser.*

Lastly, you should know that the OA is youth-run: young men are able to take on district and council leadership roles beyond their units. Each district's OA chapter has a youth chapter chief, and Denver Area Council's lodge chief, Nick Warren, sits on the council's executive board. In fact, this weekend's Ordeal was organized and led in large part by youth. It's an amazing organization—I'm honored to work with these kids.

*...he who serves his fellows is, of all his fellows, greatest.*

There is so much more to the Order of the Arrow - your son can have the time of his life as a part of the OA. Who knows the path he will take, but I do know this: being a brother in the Order of the Arrow is about being a person who serves his community, family, and Scouting unselfishly. The OA is about the joy of cheerful service to others. We are pleased to welcome him into the brotherhood!

In the spirit of Scouting,

