

# DR. JAMES E. WEST, CHIEF SCOUT, DEAD

Head of Organization for 32  
Years at His Retirement  
Five Years Ago Was 72

## FRIEND OF PRESIDENTS

Crippled in Boyhood, Became  
Successful as Lawyer, Boys  
Editor and Author

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

NEW ROCHELLE, N. Y., May 15—Dr. James E. West, chief scout of the Boy Scouts of America since he retired in 1943 after thirty-two years as chief executive of the organization, died today at 6:30 P. M. of an intestinal ailment in New Rochelle Hospital, to which he was moved last night from his home at 1338 North Avenue here. He would have been 72 years old tomorrow.

At his bedside were his wife, their two sons and their two daughters.

### Overcame Many Handicaps

Few Americans have contributed so much to the welfare of the youth of the nation as Dr. James E. West. Severely crippled as a child, and orphaned, Dr. West overcame his handicaps to become first a lawyer and later executive head of the Boy Scouts of America.

Born in Washington, D. C., May 16, 1876, Dr. West was orphaned at an early age and placed in an orphan asylum. When six, he was crippled with tuberculosis of the bone and spent two years in a hospital, eighteen months of which he was strapped to an orthopedic board.

On crutches for twelve years—he threw them away when he discovered the sight of them impeded his efforts to obtain jobs—he worked his way through high school, then college, became first an outstanding young attorney and a leader in social endeavor involving children, and finally chief executive of the then newly incorporated Boy Scouts of America.

At his death Dr. West held the post of Chief Scout, a volunteer and honorary post conferred upon him when he retired from his executive tasks in the organization on Feb. 1, 1943.

### Praised By F. D. Roosevelt

Dr. West was the friend of several Presidents of the United States, commencing with Theodore Roosevelt. On May 17, 1941, at a celebration commemorating Dr. West's sixty-fifth anniversary the day before, President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote this of him:

"During these perilous times I am more conscious than ever of the patriotism of our Boy Scouts and the strength of their leadership. To you belongs much of the credit for the effectiveness of Scouting in this country. I desire therefore to take this means, on your birthday and on your thirtieth anniversary as chief Scout executive at the ceremonies in your honor at Hillcrest, the Children's Village, Washington, where you got your start in life, to tell you how much we appreciate your accomplishments in behalf of American boyhood."

When Dr. West joined the Scouts as chief executive officer on Jan. 2, 1911, the young organization had 61,495 boys and leaders on its rolls. When he retired in 1943, there were 1,553,080 active Scouts and leaders and 10,769,041 boys had passed through its ranks in the thirty-two years.

Dr. West was graduated from Business High School, Washington, in 1895. He received LL. B. and LL. M. degrees from National University in the same city in 1901. In the intervening years until his death he received many honorary degrees from colleges and universities throughout the country.

### Honored by Institute

Among the awards conferred upon Dr. West was the gold medal of the National Institute of Social Sciences, presented to him in 1940. Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt and Wendell L. Willkie were similarly honored by the Institute in the same year.

Through a common interest in youth welfare activities, Dr. West and President Theodore Roosevelt became fast friends. The latter appointed him a member of the Board of Pension Appeals and, subsequently, an assistant attorney in the office of the Secretary of the Interior.

Even during this period, child welfare dominated Dr. West's activities. He promoted the Washington Playground Association and organized a Citizens' Committee which succeeded in persuading the Congress to establish a Juvenile Court in Washington. He organized and served as secretary of the National Child Rescue League, which placed more than 2,000 homeless children in childless homes through a campaign conducted in a national magazine.

He interested President Theodore Roosevelt in a project which resulted in the latter calling the First White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children in 1909. Dr. West organized the conference and acted as its secretary.

Dr. West had been actively connected with every White House Conference on Youth held since. He participated in President Harding's Second White House Conference and in President Hoover's White House Conference on Child Health and Protection. In connection with the latter he was chairman of the Committee on Youth Outside the Home and School and cooperated in the development of the Children's Charter.

In 1933 Dr. West was chairman of the Committee of Character Building Agencies of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Conference on Mobilization for Human Needs.



DR. JAMES E. WEST  
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He was also a member of the White House Conference on Children in a Democracy in 1939-40.

At the suggestion of the Scout sponsors, Dr. West abandoned his private law practice and took over the running of the organization. In the latter connection he was editor of the magazine Boys' Life from 1922-43.

Dr. West received awards from several foreign Scout organizations. He was a member of the International Committee, a group of nine men who have the responsibility of directing the Boy Scouts International Bureau and passing upon international problems in the intervals between international conferences.

Dr. West was largely responsible for the Scout program as it has been adapted to conditions in the United States. The Twelfth Scout Law, "A Scout is reverent," is due in large measure to the conviction that he entertained of the need on the part of youth today for the strengthening influence of a church.

Another activity to which Dr. West gave personal leadership and support was a Reading Program for the Youth of America. In addition to editing Boys' Life, he wrote, or collaborated in the writing of the following books: "The Lone Scout of the Sky"; "The Boys' Book of Honor"; "He Who Sees in the Dark"; "The Scout Jamboree"; and "Making the Most of Yourself."

On June 19, 1907, Dr. West married Marion Speaks of Washington, who survives. Also surviving are two sons, Arthur P. of White Plains, N. Y., and Dr. Robert West of New Rochelle, N. Y.; two daughters, Mrs. Marion Higgins of Bayonne, N. J., and Mrs. Helen Van Sinderen of New Rochelle, and nine grandchildren.