

SCOUTS-L

ITALY

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Reply-To: Gino Lucrezi <scouts-l@SCOUTNET.ORG>
Sender: Scouts-L Youth Group List <Scouts-L@tcu.edu>
From: Gino Lucrezi <scouts-l@SCOUTNET.ORG>
Organization: Global Scoutnet Italy
Subject: History of Women in Scouting?
To: Multiple recipients of list SCOUTS-L <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>
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Il giorno 27 Nov 1996, Jack Kelly (1907:39/800) ha scritto a All:

**JK> 2. History of women in Scouting in other countries
JK> than the USA.**

There are lots of books on the subject... almost each country published at least one on the history of its Girl Guide or Girl Scout movement.

Anyway, a few hints.

As soon as Scouting for Boys was published, a few girls started doing the same

thing as the boys.

Baden Powell initially wanted to admit them in the Scout Association, too (he

wrote "of course, the Scout program can be used with girls, too", or something

like that.. I just read the translation so I don't know the exact phrasing).

But Britain at the start of this century was still full of victorian values.

Most important, *his mother* was, and she had a great influence on her son.

So, he set up a parallel association (he often referred to "two associations, one movement").

He had his sister Agnes lead it, and together they developed a slightly different program. They called them "Girl Guides", recalling the memory of Indian Guides, who had really impressed BP early in his career for their scouting skills.

The key books were "Girl Guiding" and "How Young Girls can help the Empire".

Later, when Scouting spread to most UK colonies and then to other countries,

the World Organization of the Scout Movement was born. Guiding had a similar fate (even though in some countries they were called Girl Guides, such as the US). The world organ was called World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. I don't know whether it's always been called this way; I believe not.

While WOSM and WAGGGS are still separate, they currently share their European Offices, and their European "regional" bodies are closing more and more. The latest European Conference was held jointly in Salzburg in 1995. It was the first European Scouting and Guiding Conference.

Here in Italy, scouting started in 1910, with a few isolated troops. They formed an association called REI (Ragazzi Esploratori Italiani - Italian Boy Scouts). This association failed in 1912, and another took its place. It was called CNGEI (Corpo Nazionale Giovani Esploratori Italiani - Italian Young Scout National Corps). A parallel corps was founded for girls, called UNGEI (National Union of Italian Young Girl Scouts). It never flourished, however. Among its early leaders, we must remember Mary Rossi, who had worked with Lady Baden Powell, and Antonietta Giacomelli, who kept the reins of the Corps in the '20s, and was possibly their only significant leader before WWII.

In 1916, another scout association was born in Italy. It was called ASCI (Italian Catholic Scouts Association). Some of its troop had been part of REI. There was no counterpart for girls, since most of the catholic world didn't accept the idea of scouting for girls.

In 1927-28, scouting was disbanded in Italy. The fascist government couldn't accept anyone else educating the Italian youth. UNGEI suffered the same fate of CNGEI and ASCI.

Many scouts kept operating, and some of them later joined the Resistance movement.

In 1943, Rome had been liberated by allied troops. Giuliana di Carpegna (niece

of the founder of ASCI), and Josette Lupinacci (who had been brought up by an english governess) were looking for something to offer to italian girls after the end of the war. They looked at scouting, and found it suitable. They settled on the "Guide" name, and founded AGI (Associazione Guide Italiane - Italian Guides Association). It was a catholic association, but unlike ASCI it was open to girls of all faiths. On December 28, 1943, in the Catacombs of Priscilla, in Rome, the first Girl Guides took their Promise. Their chaplain was padre Ruggi d'Aragona, who had been a Scout before WWII, and had also been working on the rebirth of ASCI. He was National Chaplain until 1966. The first patrol was the "Squirrels", the second one was the "Turtles" (because they had been slower...).

They wanted to avoid having two girl scout/guide associations in Italy, but talks with UNGEI (which resumed activities on February 1945) failed. In 1945, Lady Baden Powell came to Italy, and persuaded both association to form FIGE (Federazione Italiana Guide ed Esploratrici - Italian Federation of Guides and Girl Scouts). This body, however, did little more than represent both associations in WAGGGS.

UNGEI was formally part of CNGEI, and was never much more than a small appendix. It's likely it never had more than 1.000 girl scouts after WWII.

AGI was bigger, but had a slow growth, too, reaching about 5.000 members in the '50s. Only after many years of re-evaluating the ASCI program to fit it to italian girls, and developing a good training program for leaders, it started reaching its potential, reaching 21.000 Girl Guides in 1974.

In the late '60s, both ASCI and CNGEI started thinking about co-education.

CNGEI Started experimenting co-ed packs in 1963, and in 1976 had a big reform which meant the disappearance of UNGEI.
>From then on, CNGEI was for Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

On the ASCI-AGI front, things went differently. Officially, there was a big pressure to keep the two associations separate.

However, some parishes had been sponsoring both Boy Scouts and Girl Guides.

This meant that often Units were living side to side... and sometimes had joint activities.

Most of the interaction was between the Rover section of ASCI (boys aged 16-25)

and the "Scolte" section of AGI (girls aged 16-21), and between the Wolf Cubs

(7-12) and "Coccinelle" sections. Also, leaders started working jointly....

Locally, some ASCI units started accepting girls and women, too. In 1969 both

associations agreed to start studying co-education.

In 1970, the joint commission started working, and in 1974 both associations

decided to merge. So AGESCI (Associazione Guide e Scout Cattolici Italiani - Italian Catholic Scouts and Guides Association) was born.

The early times were difficult. Many leaders in AGI had left in protest before

1974, and many more in ASCI left after the merger.

Some of these, in 1976, formed the italian section of FSE (Federation des Scouts d'Europe), joining a movement born in France a decade earlier, based on

strict catholic (and possibly Levfebriste) positions. Current FSE statutes forbid it from joining WOSM or WAGGGS, since both these bodies accept non-christians, too.

In the meanwhile, AGESCI developed its own program. It included, IMO, the best

bits of both worlds, and even though AGI was much smaller than ASCI, their

heritage can still be felt.

An early decision was to require both a man and a woman in all executive position, and both male and female leaders in mixed units.

Single-sex units are still possible (the usual arrangement, however, is to have

two such units, one of girls and one of boys who share some activities during

the year. We call them "parallel units").

Currently, 45% of AGESCI membership consists of girls and women, and numerical

parity is closer every year.

In truth, I believe that the birth of AGESCI allowed the ideas of AGI to reach many more girls than it could possibly have without the merger. And of course it allowed these ideas to reach *boys*, too :-)

Yours in Scouting and Guiding

Gino Lucrezi

L'Aquila 3

AGESCI (Associazione Guide E Scouts Cattolici Italiani)

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