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GRANT BAGNE
EAGLE SCOUT

Scout wears badges of pride - 137 of them

The Placentia teen joins a rare troop of young men who have earned every merit badge offered in Boy Scouting.

BY LOUIS CASIANO JR.
ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

No one can question Grant Bagne's dedication to the Boy Scouts.

The 17-year-old Valencia High School senior of Troop 241 in Orange achieved a rare feat in November when he earned the last of every possible merit badge in the organization.

To put Bagne's achievement in context, it takes 21 badges to earn the Eagle Scout rank, which less than 2 percent of Scouts ever do, said Devon Dougherty, spokesman for the Boy Scouts of America Orange County Council.

The types of badges are as diverse as the Scouts themselves. There's welding, chemistry, public health, movie making and architecture, just to name a few of the 137. "Each merit badge teaches you something different," Bagne said. "It's something most boys never have a chance to do."

The over-achieving Eagle Scout joined Scouting when he was 7. Three years later, he was up to 50 badges.

Earning a merit badge can take anywhere from a few days to a few months.

The most difficult for Bagne was scuba diving. He took several classes explaining the types of ecosystems that exist and first-aid procedures before diving in the waters off Catalina Island for his certification.

Grant Bagne remodeled the patio at Messiah Lutheran Church in Yorba Linda for his Eagle Scout project.

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"It was freezing," Bagne remembered about the dive last January. In all, it took him a month to conquer scuba diving from start to finish.

Then there was the bugle. It took him 10 months of practicing sporadically before fulfilling the requirements. In addition to learning the instrument's history, he had to play taps and several other military musical pieces.

The personal management badge requires Scouts to keep track of their personal finances for up to three months.

"Some of them are pretty in-depth like that," Bagne said. "It's pretty intense."

Each badge requires writing an essay, first-aid and safety training and the demonstration of a task.

For cycling, Bagne, with the help of his father, Matt, biked a combined 150 miles, including a 50-mile ride from Prado Dam to Newport Beach and back to Huntington Beach. Requirements also

include two 20-mile and 15-mile trips.

Scoutmaster Eric Lessley said he noticed Grant Bagne's hard work on the tasks given to him as he inched closer toward his goal of 137.

"I thought he was determined. It wasn't a sporadic thing," Lessley said. "This was part of his daily life."

So strong was his focus that Bagne quit the Valencia High band, in which he played the clarinet, after his freshman year to concentrate on the Boy Scouts.

Lessley said most of the other Scouts in the troop average around 25 to 30 badges.

Boy Scouts of America doesn't track how many members obtain all 137 badges because new ones are always being added. The website meritbadgeknot.com says it has confirmed that 221 members have done it in the organization's 103-year history. Included on the list are Andrew and Benjamin Croy of La Habra.

During the summer, Scouts go to camp for one week where there's the potential to earn up to eight badges in small class sessions.

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The rest of the year, Scouts have to seek out a counselor who is specialized in the particular badge they desire.

"For the business merit badge, the counselor would be in that field of work, like an expert," Bagne said.

Though Bagne said he is undecided on which college to attend, he wants to remain involved with the Scouts, although it depends on how close he is to the nearest troop.

"It's one of my dreams to be come a merit badge counselor and help other Scouts earn badges," he said.

The Scouts plan to add digital technology, mining and animation badges this year.

As per policy, badges can no longer be earned after a Scout turns 18, so Bagne will have to cap his career at 137.

"They will be coming out after I turn 18 on Feb. 12," he said. "So unfortunately I will not be able to earn them."

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EUGENE GARCIA, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

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Of the 137 merit badges he earned, Grant Bagne says scuba diving was the most difficult. Merit badges cover a range of disciplines, including welding, chemistry, public health and movie making.

a glance

