

Carlson brothers join elite group by earning every Boy Scout badge

By Mark Anderson, News Editor

Since 1912, 2.48 million scouts have earned the Eagle Scout award, the highest level for a Boy Scout. But only 367 scouts had earned every single badge in scouting, until the Carlson brothers of Motley increased that number by three.

Garrett, Jordon and Zachary Carlson have earned all 137 badges available, and Zachary actually has more at 142, as some were discontinued after he earned them. To earn the Eagle Scout award, scouts must earn a total of 21 merit badges, with 12 required categories.

Earning nearly seven times that many badges has put them in elite company. It is the first time for any scout in the Central Minnesota Council to accomplish this feat. Just five percent of Boy Scouts earn the Eagle Scout award, and just one ten-thousandth of one percent of Eagle Scouts earn all the merit badges. It is the fifth time that three brothers have earned all the badges.

The Carlson brothers said many of the badges they earned were memorable experiences.

Jordon remembered his small boat sailing badge earned at Many Point Scout Camp. He said the toughest part was having to tip the sailboat and try to bring it back up. "It took a really long time, but we finally got it," he said.

Garrett said his favorite was Indian lore, the first badge he earned at Many Point. Part of that badge was, "I had to teach another person a game we learned called 'Indian knife fight,'" he said. He also enjoyed the veterinary medicine badge, where he was able to give a shot to a cat and watch a sur-



Scouting honors earned

The Boy Scouts of America Central Minnesota Council honored the Carlson brothers for earning all available merit badges in scouting, at a council dinner on April 22 where they each received an antique silver eagle pin and a spoof merit badge for fun. To display their combined 416 merit badges, they have completely filled one sash on both front and back, plus started a second sash for their other badges. From left are Zachary, Jordon and Garrett (Submitted photo)

gery.

Zachary said his favorite was wilderness survival, in which they had to build a shelter in the forest out of sticks and sleep in it one night. It started raining in the middle of the night, and the shelter held up pretty well "until someone kicked out a portion of it in his sleep," he said. They had to repair it on the fly in the dark, but they got it done and stayed until morning.

The scouts also remembered some of the hardest badges to earn.

Jordon said his radio badge was tough, because not only did they have to learn about the mechanics of radios, they also had to create their own radio talk show that was broadcast over the camp's radio program.

Zachary thought his first ever badge, in law, was boring because he had to sit through a court session in Brainerd.

Garrett thought his citizenship in the nation badge was the hardest because "it took forever to do," he said.

For all of them, the scuba badge was hard to earn because they had to get scuba certified in order to get the badge.

Merit badge adventure

With just three years separating them in age, the brothers worked on most of the merit badges together.

The Carlsons said many of the badges have been helpful for activities that they continue to use even after earning a merit badge in that subject. They

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'You learn a lot of things, kind of like a Jack of all trades,' said Zachary

quickly rattled off a few of them: swimming, life-saving, first aid, canoeing, kayaking, shooting, emergency readiness, archery, camping and rock climbing.

One badge came in handy immediately. Right after earning their lifesaving badge, the family was swimming in the river when one of their cousins started getting taken away by the current. Zachary plunged in and saved her from being swept downstream.

But even the badges they don't plan to keep using have been beneficial, they said. "You learn a lot of things, kind of like a Jack of all trades," said Zachary. "you know a little about a lot of things."

Garrett said it helped them to make decisions about their life path. "It helps you get closer to what you do and don't want to do," he said.

Their merit badge odyssey has taken them around the state and across the country. Besides accomplishing some badges at home in Motley, they have spent a lot of time at scout camps, Many Point and Camp Cuyuna in Minnesota. They toured the Sea Life Aquarium at the Mall of America for their fish management badge. They had a behind the scenes tour to see how the fish are fed and cared for.

The boys have also traveled to West Virginia for the Boy Scout National Jamboree, with Jordon attending twice.

While Eagle Scout is the highest award in the Boy Scouts, they still earn a palm award for completing the next five badges within a certain amount of time. Zach earned 16 palms, while Jordon and Garrett earned 19 palms.

Besides Boy Scouts, the Carlsons are involved in school, sports, community, and jobs. So when do they have time to work on merit badges?

"Whenever we have free time," said Garrett.

"We don't have any free time," corrected Zachary.

The final merit badge

As the Carlsons kept checking badges off their list, area leaders began helping them out by lining up opportunities to work on different badges that



Scouting family

The Carlson brothers have been guided along their scouting path by their parents, Jace and Holly Carlson, front, who were honored with the Silver Beaver Award, the highest award the council can give to volunteers. Jace received his award last year and Holly was honored this year.



Bear, Wolf and Cub

Zachary, Jordon and Garrett Carlson all started scouting at an early age, rising up through the ranks from Cub Scouts, to Wolf and Bear and finally to Boy Scouts. (Submitted photos)

they still needed.

But their final badge fell right into their lap, when two new scouts, Luke and Lyle Brownell, joined the troop. "The last badge we needed was surveying, and it's amazing that their dad is a surveyor," said Zachary. The dad, Loren Brownell, volunteered to be their counselor for that final badge.

They were able to complete it right there in Motley, and just in time, because Zachary turned 18 two days after earning the badge, as all badges must be earned before the age of 18.

After earning every single merit badge, the Carlsons plan to continue with scouting, helping other scouts earn badges and set up service projects.

They all hold officer positions in the Central Minnesota Council Order of the Arrow. Zachary is the Chief, in charge of monthly meetings, and Jordon is Secretary, in charge of their newsletter and meeting minutes. Garrett is Vice Chief of Native American Affairs, in which he runs ceremonies, including regalia and drums, and is also the games master.