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127 Merit Badges x Two

by Lowell Durham, Jr.
Associate Editor

Lowell Durham Jr., "127 Merit Badges x Two," *New Era*, Feb 1975, 6

Goals are great! Almost everyone sets goals, and everyone reaches some level of success or failure in his efforts to reach them. Some goals seem almost unattainable—like running the sub-9-second 100-yard dash, or vaulting over 18 feet. Some goals are strange—like wanting to make the longest banana split in the whole world. And some goals are just downright ridiculous—like seeing how many live gold fish you can swallow.

But two young men from Ogden, Utah, set a goal that was a learning experience, a great character builder, and a goal that, as far as we know, has never been achieved before, especially by two brothers. Since they have been Scouts, Chad and Craig Carson, ages 15 and 16, have each earned every merit badge that has been offered by the Boy Scouts of America. Each has 127 merit badges. This is actually more merit badges than are now offered because some have been discontinued since Chad and Craig earned them. Both boys are Eagle Scouts and have found the Scouting program an exciting general education in itself. Their dad has figured that they have done enough reading, research, and study to qualify as sophomores in college.

Craig and Chad didn't start earning all those merit badges until two years ago. Chad, the younger of the two, had a little catching up to do, but once the brothers were working together, they spent some time almost every day working toward their common goal. During one summer they earned 48 merit badges. It took more than half an hour to read them all at the Court of Honor. They now have all 127, and they each need two merit badge sashes to display their awards because there is only room for 100 per sash.

When asked which merit badges had given them the most trouble, both Chad and Craig said that beekeeping was the greatest challenge. It wasn't so much doing the work as it was finding someone who was qualified to teach them and pass them on the badge requirements. After some searching and one unsuccessful attempt to get together with a beekeeper, they finally found a man who was teaching a class in beekeeping at Weber State College, and they were able to complete the merit badge requirements with his help. By the way, Chad and Craig are still beekeepers.

Cotton farming was also a tough one. When the brothers decided to work on this, they had to send away for the book because it seems that no one really raises cotton around Ogden anymore. And after they got the book, they just couldn't find any cotton seeds. But their mother remembered that she had been in the South some 17 years before and had picked a ball of cotton as a memento. And there are seeds in a real cotton ball. Chad and Craig took the seeds that were in that 17-year-old cotton ball and grew four cotton plants.

Craig and Chad say that the physical skill merit badges have been the most fun to earn. They have learned how to ski, swim, shoot, water ski, and do many other things that they otherwise might not have had the opportunity to do.

When asked if they thought they had missed out on anything because they had spent so much time working on all those merit badges, Chad said, "No, sir! We've been able to do more ourselves and as a family because we have set goals. When we were going to get our skiing merit badge, Dad had to drive us up to take lessons, and he decided that instead of just waiting around, he might as well take lessons with us. Now we all ski. It has been great for the whole family."

Craig said, "It's not really hard to earn the merit badges if you put your mind to it. Scouts could earn a lot more merit badges if they tried, and if they did, they would be glad they put forth the effort."

So, on September 21, 1974, Chad and Craig Carson received the last of the merit badges they could earn. Both brothers give a great deal of credit to their mother and father. Chad said that his mom was always saying, "Come on! You can do it!" She would help them schedule appointments and drive them wherever they had to go. At the beginning of the summer, she would help map out a plan for which merit badges they could earn. Both boys also had high praises for their Scout leaders. The leaders challenged them and helped in every way possible.

Now Chad and Craig think there should be a merit badge given to help Scouts like themselves figure out where they can keep all the projects, models and charts that it takes to earn all those badges.

[photo] Photo by Frank Gale

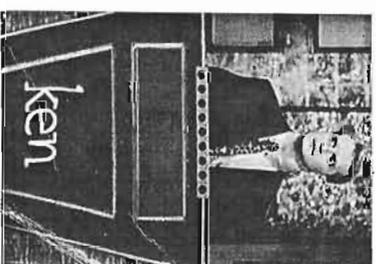
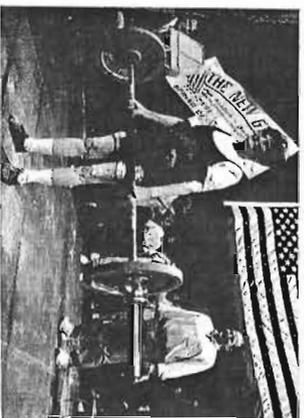
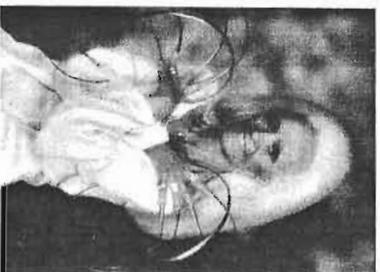
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lion people at the time. Pakistan's Rover Scouting program is part of the Boy Scout program for young men over age 18. (CN 8/17/91)

Youngest to Earn All Merit Badges. The Boy Scouts of America doesn't track ages for earning merit badges, but it appears that Christopher Haskell, Elk Ridge, Utah, First Ward, is the youngest to earn all 120 offered badges by age 13. (DN 7/29/03)

Hollywood Honors Scouting. In Disney's feature-length movie about the Boy Scouts, "Follow Me, Boys," co-star Vera Miles, Hollywood, California, Stake, played not only the wife of the Scoutmaster (played by Fred McMurray), but as "mother" to dozens and dozens of Boy Scouts. The Boy Scouts of America honored the film production company and actors for depicting in a realistic manner the positive influence Scouting can have on a community and a boy's life. (CN 4/8/87)



Howard C. Moore, Deseret Morning News

Vera Miles, star of Disney's "Follow Me, Boys," was a frequent visitor to Salt Lake City.

Most Merit Badges. Who earned the maximum number of merit badges first? Since the number of available merit badges has changed, the records have been difficult to nail down. Here are those we know of:

1958: Byron G. Mills, 22nd Ward, Salt Lake, Utah, Stake, is believed to be the first LDS Scout to earn all 101 Boy Scout merit badges. He completed his last merit badge, Agriculture, in December 1958 after a seven-month effort to grow two varieties of cotton. (CN 2/14/59)

1974: Craig Carson, 16, and his brother Chad Carson 15, Ogden 55th Ward Ogden, Utah, Weber Heights Stake, each earned all 127 merit badges. (CN 9/14/74)

1981: Kent Bates, 15, Heber City 5th Ward, earned all 119 offered merit badges. (CN 1981)

1984: John T. Alquist, 15, and his nephew, Joshua J. Peterson, 14, both of the Hunter 6th Ward, each earned all 119 offered merit badges, plus two no longer available, for a total of 121 by 1984. (CN 2/12/84)

1988: Steve Sweat of the Iona, Idaho, 1st Ward, earned all 119 offered merit badges. (CN 2/28/88)

1988: Art Finch of the Idaho Falls, Idaho, 25th Ward earned all 121 offered merit badges. (CN 12/17/88)

1990: Troy Jens Pugh, Ferndale 2nd Ward, Bellingham, Washington, Stake, earned all 126 offered merit badges. (CN 7/14/90)

1993: Michael Arsenault, 17, of Oakridge 1st Ward, Farmington, Utah, Oakridge Stake, earned all 131 offered merit badges. (CN 5/29/93)

1993: Jared Toone, Crystal 1st Ward, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Stake, earned all 127 offered merit badges. (CN 7/19/93)

1996: David Wilson, 15, South Hill 3rd Ward, Puyallup, Washington, South Stake, earned all 124 offered merit badges. (CN 9/21/96)

1996: Jacob Walters, of the Hyrum 3rd Ward, Hyrum, Utah, North Stake, earned all 124 offered merit badges. (CN 9/21/96)

Youngest Eagle Scout? Who is the youngest to receive the Eagle Scout award? In 1985, the youngest was David Heidenreich who, at age 12, had completed all the requirements for his Eagle. He was presented his Eagle by his father, Richard Heidenreich, who was the Scoutmaster. They were members of the Freeport Ward, Rockford, Illinois, Stake. (CN 2/24/85)

Highest-altitude Boy Scout Camp (1930 World Record). As of 1930, the highest official Boy Scouts of America Scout camp continues to be Camp Steiner at 10,400 feet above sea level in the Uinta Mountains of Northern Utah. The camp was acquired for the Boy Scouts in 1930. Today, more than 55,000 Scouts use the facility each summer. (DN 2/6/02)

Largest Encampment. More than 9,000 LDS Boy Scouts and leaders, the largest such gathering ever, came together at Camp Pendleton, California, for the Sept. 3-6, 1982 "Mormon Trails Encampment." Sunday sacrament service required 100 priests, 100 teachers and 300 deacons to bless and pass the sacrament. Opening day was 100 degrees in the shade, prompting the sale of 120,000 soft drinks, 80,000 chocolate malts, 50,000 chocolate milks, 81,000 big stick Popsicles, 75,000 cartons of milk, 15,000 cartons of orange juice, 30,000 bags of chips and 25 tons of ice. (CN 9/11/82)

Cub Scout Officer. The highest position held by a Mormon in the Cub Scout program was chief executive over the entire program. Rodney H. Brady, at the time the Los Angeles, California, Stake president, was appointed "Top Cub" in July 1977. His task was to oversee the 1.9 million Cubs in the United States and their 625,000 leaders, plus prepare for the 50th anniversary celebration of Cub Scouting in 1980. (CN 8/6/77)

First Cub Scout Three-Time "World Athletic Champs."

Gregory Weichers, Derek Schiffman, and Kevin Armstrong of Pack 353, Union 5th Ward, Sandy, Utah, Willow Creek Stake, won the 1978 National