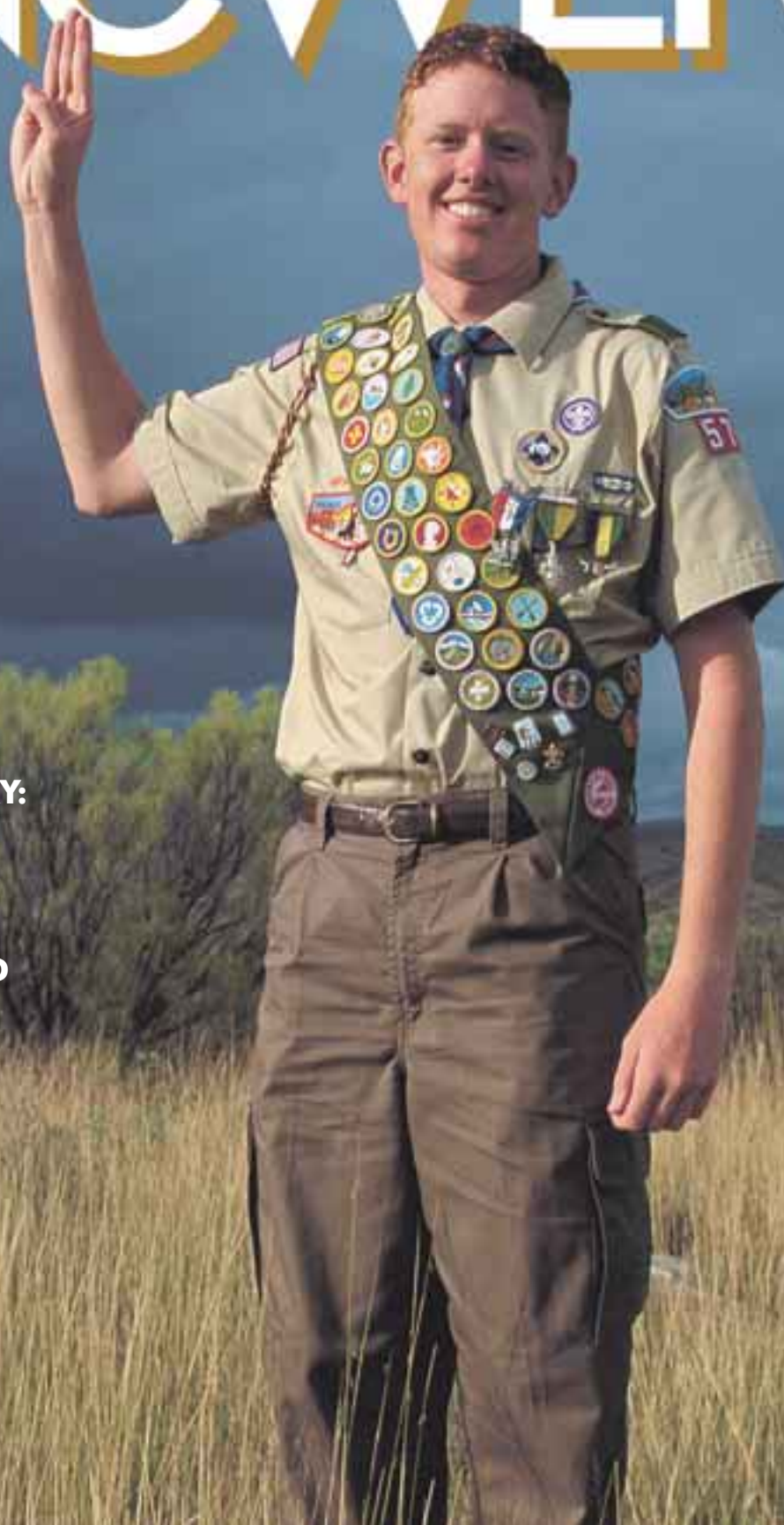


THE New Era

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ON MY
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Cover: *Erik Fagergren
of Patagonia, Arizona,
stands in the cemetery he
helped restore. See
“Badges of Honor,” p. 22.*

*Cover photography:
Matthew Baker*

This Eagle
soared high
enough to
merit a national
award. See
“Badges of
Honor,” p. 22.



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BADGES OF HONOR

Erik Fagergren sloshes along one of the dirt-turned-to-mud roads that crisscross the San Rafael Valley between his home in Patagonia, Arizona, and the United States/Mexico border. The rain has filled the usually dry washes that cross the road into ponds and filled streams and gullies into raging rivers. The four-wheel-drive Suburban plows through one of the small ponds, the exhaust pipe belching bubbles, and the tires churning muddy water.

Erik points through the rain-streaked windshield at the Patagonia Mountains that jut out of the desert. It was in those mountains that Erik led his dad, bishop, and three other Scouts on a 50-mile hike for his Backpacking merit badge.

Impaling the storm clouds to the east are the Huachuca Mountains. On a lake in these mountains, Erik earned his Rowing and Canoeing merit badges.

The road Erik is bumping along passes old film sets where the musical *Oklahoma* and many western movies were filmed. It is also the road Erik pedaled for 50 miles to finish his Cycling merit badge. Some of the other cycling trips he took for this merit badge took him on the highway that leads north out of Patagonia to Sanoita.

Traveling south on the highway out of Patagonia is Nogales, Arizona, where Erik attended church and Scout meetings. Being active in the Church and Scouting



Scouting helped Erik decide what he wants to do with his life, but more importantly, it helped him figure out who he wants to be.

by Matthew Baker

for so many years, and living 30 minutes from the church, means putting in a lot of miles—especially when there are six brothers and sisters in the family. The vehicle that has taken them to most of their meetings and activities has traveled more than 500,000 miles—the equivalent of about 20 times around the earth or just a little farther than to the moon and back.

But the Fagergren family's dedication to Scouting has done more than rack up miles on the family car. Erik says the standards of Scouting reinforce the standards he has learned in church.

Erik's decision to follow his family's legacy in Scouting earned him the title of Outstanding Eagle Scout of the Year, a national award given by the Sons of the American Revolution. The award came with a check for \$5,000—money Erik says will help pay for his mission. But his passion for Scouting has earned him something more valuable than mission money; it has helped him learn values that make good missionaries.

A love of Scouting

Erik's love of Scouting and his goal to earn his Eagle Award came in part from his dad and two older brothers who were also Eagle Scouts. Their examples helped Erik get involved in Scouting earlier than most people. Before he turned 12, his dad was the Scoutmaster and his



Photography by the author

brothers were active in Scouting. Although he wasn't officially a Scout, Erik went camping with his dad and the troops and anxiously anticipated the day he would wear a uniform.

"I couldn't wait until I turned 12 so I could actually start earning my merit badges and ranks," Erik says. When he turned 12, he began walking in the footsteps of his dad and older brothers toward his Eagle Award. Along with the merit badges and rank advancements, Erik learned important values.

The Scout slogan is "Do a good turn daily," and service is a value that Erik has tried to internalize. During high school, Erik donated time at a farm for injured animals. The owners of the farm were getting old, and their health kept them from working as much as they wanted. So every day after school, Erik would spend time feeding the animals and doing other chores on the farm.

Erik has served in many leadership roles in Church and school. He has served in quorum leadership as a deacon, teacher, and priest. As the only priesthood-holding student in his school, he set an example by living up to Church standards.

When it was time for Erik's Eagle project, he found plenty of people willing to help. "I always went out helping the other guys with their projects, and they helped me in return," he says.

Eagle project

The cemetery in Patagonia sits on a hill and overlooks the town. Although it is still used, the cemetery doesn't receive continual maintenance, and many of the headstones were buried, and weeds and trash had covered others. For his Eagle project, Erik, with the help of his family, ward members, and friends from the community, cleaned the cemetery.

But when he earned his Eagle Award, Erik didn't stop Scouting. "When I got my Eagle, I had about 60 merit badges, about half of the possible badges. My Scoutmaster would always joke around, 'So when are you going to finish them all?'" Although it was just a joke, Erik started to wonder if it really could be done. "I started out just wishing. Then I was talking to my dad and he said, 'Maybe you should try,' so I just started working on it."

Three weeks before his 18th birthday, Erik earned his Bugling merit badge. That brought the total number to 119, all that were available.

Life after Scouting

"Through doing the merit badges, it helped me choose what I want to go into as a career. There is such a variety of merit badges. By doing each one and researching each field, I learned about what I would do in each job," Erik says. Inspired by the Engineering and Computers merit badges, Erik now studies mechanical engineering as a freshman at the University of Arizona.

As well as directing him in his career choice, Scouting helped Erik decide what kind of person he wants to be. He says Scouting teaches values, such as those in the Scout Law. "I haven't forgotten it," Erik says. "A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, reverent," he quotes it without hesitation.

Everybody who knows Erik comments on his high standards, and they often use words from the Scout Law to describe him. Erik believes these standards have helped him fulfill his priesthood responsibilities and prepare for a mission. "Keeping the standards of the Church and Scouting, I was prepared to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood," Erik says. "When you learn values, they help no matter what situation you are in."

When Erik turns 19, he plans to serve a mission, something he has looked forward to for a long time. Although he still has to wait a year, Erik says since he has been ordained an elder, he already has many of the responsibilities of a missionary; he just isn't set apart to do it full-time. "Being an elder means you are in the service of your fellow beings," Erik says. "I'm responsible to let people know the truth of the gospel."

Until Erik is called as a full-time missionary, the skills he learned in Scouting will keep him busy exploring caves, rafting rivers, and biking trails in the Sonora Desert. Once he goes on a mission the climbing ropes, backpack, bike, and raft will have to be put away. But the values he learned will stay with him and help him share the gospel as someone who is striving to live it. **NE**

Everybody who knows Erik comments on his high standards, and they often use words from the Scout Law to describe him. Erik is a freshman at the University of Arizona in Tucson (below), but he still finds time to visit his parents in Patagonia (right).





“It is far better to build boys than to mend men.”

—President Thomas S. Monson
(*Ensign*, Apr. 1988, 77)

The Church adopted the Scouting program in 1913, and the support for this program that helps build boys continues today.

“I am pleased to stand firm for an organization that teaches duty to God and country, that embraces the Scout Law; yes, an organization whose motto is ‘Be prepared’ and whose slogan is ‘Do a good turn daily.’” (Thomas S. Monson, *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 48).