

Bountiful Boy Scout earns every merit badge available

Bountiful boy accomplishes what few Scouts attempt

By Alicia Greenleigh
The Salt Lake Tribune

Salt Lake Tribune

Updated: 04/27/2010 11:36:43 AM MDT

Boy Scout Troop 220 has a legend in its midst: Walker Lansbarkis.

He's the first scout in his troop to earn every single merit badge -- an impressive feat considering that Troop 220 is more than 55 years old.

Walker's done it all, including aviation, white-water rafting, geology, space exploration, scuba diving and horsemanship. He also completed requirements to earn badges in carpentry, tracking, signaling and pathfinding -- four badges Boy Scouts of America brought out from retirement this year to celebrate the organization's 100th anniversary.

In total, Walker earned 126 merit badges, which are displayed on two patch blankets in the Lansbarkis home.

It all started 10 years ago when the now 18-year-old senior at Viewmont High School in Bountiful joined Cub Scouts. After graduating to Boy Scouts in 2003, Walker decided to pursue the colossal task of earning all possible merit badges when he discovered how much he enjoyed completing the tasks.

"I thought merit badges were really fun, so I thought why not do all of them?" Walker said.

His father, Jim Lansbarkis, who is one of seven Scout leaders in Troop 220, said earning all badges is a rare accomplishment because many boys stop at 21 -- the number of badges required to become an Eagle Scout.

For Walker, it was a welcome challenge.

"Walker has always been goal-oriented," Jim said. "He stuck with karate for five years to get his black belt, and that drive just carried over to Scouts."

But, says Jim, getting all the badges was definitely a family affair. Younger brother, Randall Lansbarkis, 14, has 52 badges so far. Only time will tell if Jim and wife Nona Lansbarkis will go the distance with Randall.

"It was a lot of work for the parents, because we had to find all the opportunities for him to get the badges," Jim said. "You have to formulate what you'll do in Scouts kind of early on, and so you have to come up with a plan and be organized if you want to get the most out of the program."

Walker attended seven summer camps, as well as several extended backpacking, hiking and exploration trips with his father. One of Walker's favorites was a four-day rafting trip down the Colorado River which earned him white water and geology badges.

But, no matter the task, Walker said he appreciates all of the badges for how much he's learned.

"I find that something I learned in Scouts comes in handy in just about every circumstance," he said.

Nona said earning badges allowed Walker to discover new interests and things he'd rather stay away from.

"He's actually very good at pottery, and he may never have known that if it weren't for Scouts," she said. "But after the law badge, discovered that he definitely does not want to become a lawyer."

Walker said earning the space exploration badge stands out because it reinforced his desire to pursue a career in aerospace engineering. He plans to major in aerospace engineering when he attends Utah State University in the fall.

Walker said now he's searching for his next big challenge.

"When I come to the end of a goal, I feel really proud and impressed with my accomplishment," Walker said.

"But once I'm done, I look for the next big thing to go for."

agreenleigh@sltrib.com

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