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Area Eagle Scout Earns All 121 Scouting Merit Badges

For the Register

After numerous summer camps, merit badge colleges, troop meetings, and thousands of hours of work, Eagle Scout Parker Luke has completed the very last merit badge that the Boy Scouts of America has to offer—number 121. He is the son of Ray and Tawni Luke who reside in Valley View, Texas, and is the grandson of Lynn and Glenda Vowell who currently reside at Robson Ranch in Denton, Texas, and of the late Dan and Dolores Henzler Luke who resided in Muenster, Texas. A member of Troop 7777, chartered by Cross Timbers Church in Valley View, Texas, Parker has been involved in his troop for a little more than five years. Troop 7777, in the Frontier Trails district of the Longhorn Council, has been Parker's troop from the beginning. Throughout his tenure as a scout, Parker has held the positions of Senior Patrol Leader (twice), Patrol Leader, Troop Guide (three times), Bugler, and Scribe.

"Another scout told me that earning all the merit badges was pretty much impossible," he said, "and that was one of the major influences upon my quest to earn them all. Then in 2005, I attended BSA Aquatic School at Sid Richardson Scout Ranch which focused on leadership training, time management, and several other valuable scouting skills which were very influential in motivating me toward my goal." Parker joined scouts just before his 13th birthday--two and a half years later than the minimum required age to join the BSA program. "I found myself with a lot less time than I really needed to complete all the merit badges. We had a brand new troop, so merit badges were not the top priority in my mind, or in any member's mind. We had to focus on forming a cohesive unit and learning the basic scouting ropes. It took nearly two years before I was whole-heartedly focused on my goal."

To earn the coveted rank of Eagle Scout, a young man must complete no less than 21 merit badges, of which twelve are required, and nine are elective. Merit badges range in subjects from citizenship to surveying to dentistry. In October of 2006, Parker completed all the requirements for Eagle with a merit badge count of forty--eighty-one less than he was shooting for. Now, with the rigorous requisites of Eagle Scout aside, he had just two years to plan, schedule, and implement his course of action. This course would require many hours of studying and learning with nearly one hundred different counselors and mentors, several of which were professionals within the subject that they were teaching. "I had the priceless opportunity of working with doctors, architects, politicians, engineers, lawyers, and a great many others. I was under the tutelage of some of the most hard-working and successful professionals around."

"2007 through 2008 were the two most trying years of my life--both physically and mentally." Juggling a congressional internship with U.S. Congressman Michael Burgess' office, along with a good number of other extracurricular activities, he had to prioritize and make adjustments accordingly.

Speaking of juggling, he is known within his scouting district and beyond as an entertainer. "I have been juggling since I was nine and have been able to use this hard earned talent in so many beneficial ways, including the completion of my merit badge requirements, specifically in American Business and Salesmanship. My entertaining experience has benefited my merit badge quest through public speaking, business skills, and human relations in general."

What has he learned though this journey? "I have had the chance to learn valuable life skills and a little bit of nearly every major mainstream profession. I have learned the basics of drafting plans for a landscape project, how to produce a one to fifteen scale Ferrari Enzo model from original plans, how the organization of an original entrepreneurial venture is formed,



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and so, so many other pieces of knowledge which will help me to not only choose my future vocation, but have given me an understanding of how each and every profession has a place and position in forming a fully functional society." What were his most challenging merit badges? "Backpacking was probably the most physically challenging. It consisted of no less than three fifteen-mile treks and one thirty-plus mile trek. I went to the Guadalupe Mountains in West Texas to complete my thirty miler. Entrepreneurship definitely took the most work. My counselor, who was an entrepreneur himself, expected hard work and creativity. Before we were done, I had an elementary organization plan, three concepts for possible prototypes and patenting, trademarks, slogans, a demographic analysis, and plenty of drawings and spreadsheets. I probably learned the most out of any merit badge while doing Entrepreneurship--- but the learning was fun. Bugling definitely took the most practice. With over nine months of cornet lessons, I had to practice a lot for this one, but I also learned how to play a whole new instrument by doing the merit badge."

This past summer, he was selected by Coserv Electric as one of two students to win a trip to Washington, D.C., went on a month-long mission trip to Ethiopia, and, of course, went to Boy Scout summer camp. "I knew that I had to complete my merit badges while I was seventeen, just as the Boy Scouts of America require, so the three months following my summer abroad were filled with merit badge work and school work. I finished my 121st merit badge just eleven days before my birthday. Still seventeen, it was definitely a great relief that the work was finally done... and what a journey it was."

"This aspiration of mine could not have been completed without the dedication of the scout leaders in my troop, the knowledgeable merit badge counselors, and, of course, the loving support of my parents."

After all this work, what was his favorite merit badge? "I enjoyed the intellectual challenge and learning associated with the Medicine merit badge. I was fascinated by the variety and depth within the field of medicine, and, in part, that merit badge may be the reason why I am so interested in going into medicine as a career."

Completion of all the possible merit badges is not common, but how uncommon is it? According to an amateur archive, there have been fewer than seventy confirmed scouts to do so in Scouting's one-hundred year history...Even if this is a modest figure, it goes to show that this feat isn't at all common. Fewer than 4% of all scouts ever become Eagle, and when it comes to the attainment of all the merit badges, well, let's just say, out of the millions of scouts in history, the figure is below 0.005%!

After completing Eagle Scout and 121 scouting merit badges and being a congressional intern, what are Parker's future goals? "Leading a few environmental conservation projects, keeping up with a demanding undergraduate career at an Ivy League university, getting into medical school, maybe becoming a surgeon, and running for political office in the distant future."



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