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Oradell Boy Scout enters exclusive company

Thursday, January 28, 2010

LAST UPDATED: THURSDAY JANUARY 28, 2010, 1:19 AM

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TOWN NEWS
MANAGING EDITOR

0 Comments

It took Oradell resident Kevin Ng about four years to become one of a small handful of Boy Scouts to earn all 122 merit badges.



EAMON HARBORD/TOWN NEWS

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Oradell resident Kevin Ng is one of a small handful of Boy Scouts to earn all 122 merit badges.

The 15-year-old sophomore at River Dell Regional earned his first merit badge in May 2005 and completed his final badge this past December.

The National Boy Scout Council does not keep records of how many Scouts earn all 122 badges, but a member of the Northern New Jersey Council, based in Oakland, estimated that approximately four to five Scouts across the country achieve what Ng did.

A member of Boy Scout Troop 47 in Westwood, Ng joined the troop in fifth grade as a continuation from Cub Scouts with the encouragement of his father, Dennis. He also follows in his older brother Thomas' footsteps in the Scouts, although Kevin has surpassed his brother with the amount of merit badges earned.

"I started going through them and trying each one out," Ng said. "Some such as farm mechanics or water skiing are not specific to the area, but were interesting. Then I just decided to go for all of them."

For each badge, Ng first had to learn the requirements and then contact a badge counselor. According to the Boy Scout of America Web site, "merit badges are awards earned by youth members, based on activities within an area of study by completing a list of periodically updated requirements."

Some merit badges, such as genealogy, woodworking, metal working or horsemanship, were easier to acquire, Ng said. For his horsemanship badge, Ng spent time at a stable learning how to care for and ride a horse, along with mucking out the stalls.

The work for his genealogy badge turned up some "eye-opening" family history. Ng interviewed his mother Sally's cousin about family history. What he discovered was that members of his family have been in the United States since 1620, when the English Pilgrims landed. Ng also had three members serve in a New York regiment during the Civil War, specifically at the battles of Antietam and Gettysburg. Only one family member survived the war and went on to have several children – one of which is Ng's great-grandmother.

"Each badge was an interesting process, so there weren't any I didn't like, but some definitely did not turn out the way I wanted," Ng said.

Among the badges that did not work out as planned were sculpture and wilderness survival. For his sculpture badge, he had to make a mold of his hand for a cast, but the plaster would not harden around his hand – so the project was changed to use a lemon.

"For wilderness survival I had to build my own shelter outside at Camp NoBeSoCo out of branches and whatever I could find," Ng said. "I had to sleep overnight in it and it rained all night, so I ended up getting sick. It was not the best experience, but I learned from it."

Some of his badges, such as water sports, motor boating and aviation, took time to accomplish. For each of the water-related badges, liability issues held up the process as Ng and his parents could not rent a boat

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themselves. Once he found the appropriate badge counselors, Ng traveled to New York to venture out onto a lake. For water sports, Ng learned how to get up onto water skis and then travel over the wake.

"For motor boating, we went up to Shepherd's Lake and I had to maneuver the boat through specific turns," Ng said. "I also got caught in some seaweed too."

"It's a relief to be done because now things are going to get busy with school," Ng said. "And it's good to know I got through them all and didn't give up. To know I've achieved something few do is nice."

Ng is still working to sew all the badges onto his Boy Scout sash before his Court of Honor in February.

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