

# East Tennessee Eagle Scout sports all 136 merit badges

By JOHN SHEARER, Knoxville News Sentinel 11:42 a.m. CDT April 20, 2014



(Photo: AP Photo/Eric Gay)

DANDRIDGE, Tenn. — In his years as a Boy Scout, Trey Sealock gained a lot of intangible rewards, and even more tangible ones.

The former Dandridge home-schooled student and third-generation Eagle Scout was not only named Boy Scout of the Year recently by the Great Smoky Mountain Council, but he also enjoyed an even rarer accomplishment.

He is thought to be part of a relatively small group of Boy Scouts in the history of the organization to get all 136 merit badges.

"I wanted to be able to say I did it," the 18-year-old said of his motivation recently via email correspondence from Siberia, Russia, where he has begun a two-year missionary stint for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"I did it because it was something I liked doing, learning new things and skills, and the chance to spend time with my dad."

Merit badges are cloth patches sewn on a Scout's sash. They're given for knowledge and skill gained in learning about a hobby or profession through a multistep process. The pursuit can range from fly fishing to music to chemistry and farm mechanics.

A representative of the national Boy Scouts of America office in Texas said the organization does not keep track of the number of Scouts who earn all the available badges, but said the accomplishment is considered a rare achievement.

Local scouting officials say they have been told that fewer than 200-300 people have received all of the badges since scouting began.

Generally Scouts try to earn only those badges in which they have some interest, but Sealock's father, Charles Sealock, said Trey's interest in all of them began when he transitioned from the Cub Scouts to the Boy Scouts at age 10.

"He saw a young man who had like 40 to 45 badges and he said, 'Dad, I wish I could get that many,' " he said.

Once he started earning a few, Trey Sealock said he enjoyed the process so much he kept going to try to get them all.

"At first it was just for fun," he said. "My troop was doing it, or my dad and I would do some together. It was great bonding time. And before I knew it, I was going before my Eagle Board of Review and I had 55.

"It was then I decided to get them all. I was almost halfway there."

Getting the last two or three ended up being a little challenging, and his father said the bugling badge was the most difficult. Part of the requirement was that he become proficient at the instrument, so a teacher was hired.

"He didn't know anything, but in six months he could play it," Charles Sealock said.

Although he learned to play the instrument, he is not known for blowing his own horn.

"He is very polite and very well spoken," said Gene Gagstatter, his scoutmaster with Troop 77 at First United Methodist Church in Dandridge. "He's a great young man and a great person."

As part of his scouting, Trey Sealock attended the World Jamboree in Sweden in 2011 and the National Jamboree at Fort A.P. Hill outside Washington, D.C., in 2009. He also worked at Camp Davy Crockett in Hamblen County.

Along the way, he found plenty of fulfillment that did not come in the form of a patch.

"For me it is the knowledge that I am a part of a group of millions of other people, all with the same core values of helping other people stay healthy, improving yourself, and supporting your country," he said.

He also found much joy in helping teach younger Scouts at Camp Davy Crockett and elsewhere, he added.

Although his days of being a Boy Scout are over, he said the lessons he learned in earning all the merit badges are now coming in handy in Siberia. This has included learning the Russian language from scratch as well as, of course, surviving the cold winters.

"I have used the leadership and planning skills," he said. "I know how I learn, because I have done all those merit badges."

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