



THIS STORY HAS BEEN FORMATTED FOR EASY PRINTING

A good deed done -- 120 times over

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16-year-old Milton Boy Scout earns every available merit badge

By Christine Wallgren, Globe Correspondent | July 9, 2006

MILTON -- Chris Talutis can tell you the difference between a comet and an asteroid, navigate a raft through rapids, fix a leaky faucet, bake a meatloaf, perform a little on-stage improv, nurse an injured dog, swim a mile, offer reliable advice on soil and water conservation, change the oil in your car, identify a rare coin, and play reveille on his bugle.

No, he can't do them all at the same time. But most will agree this 16-year-old is still one remarkably well-prepared, multitalented Boy Scout.

Talutis, a member of Troop 3 in Milton, recently became the first Boy Scout in the Northeast, and one of very few nationwide, to earn all 120 merit badges offered by the Boy Scouts of America -- from agri business and astronomy to woodworking. Assistant Scoutmaster John Campo says that's a considerable achievement.

"I see the amount of effort that it takes to earn one badge, and this kid has earned every one," Campo said. "The work involved is just incredible."

Talutis, who joined the Tiger Cub Scouts as a first-grader, has always been a step ahead. He finished all that the Tiger Cubs had to offer several months before his peers and moved up to Boy Scouting when he was just 10 1/2. He said he was inspired to make a bid for all 120 merit badges by a story he read in the Globe when he was 12.

"I read about a kid from Utah who had earned all 120 badges, and I figured if he could do it, I could do it," he recalled. "I set my goal right then."

By 13, Talutis had earned his Eagle Scout and accumulated 90 merit badges. Most Scouts earn only the 21 badges required for Eagle, then slow down after achieving that high status.

Some of his merit badges -- those for winter sports and various sciences -- reflect his interests. Others, like stamp and coin collecting, introduced him to new hobbies. But a few, like theater, took considerable discipline to complete.

"I'm not a big fan of it, because remembering lines was not something I liked to do," he said. "I did an improv [routine for the badge], and that was enough for me."

It was, "Exit . . . stage left," as they say, for Talutis.

Troop 3 Scoutmaster Dan Melville said Talutis had to seek out people qualified to act as his counselors for each of the badges, which was a task in itself. "And he wasn't just grinding away to meet the minimum requirements either," Melville said.

"He's a fine young man, and a great citizen, and great Scout," added Melville. "He's very much appreciated by the other Scouts, the leaders, and the people in the community."

Melville's wife, Sandra, served as Talutis's counselor for one of his merit badges, and she, too, was impressed.

"Chris has earned all 120 badges in just 5 1/2 years," she said. "Most Scouts don't go beyond about 30 merit

badges, so it's quite an accomplishment."

Joe Morise, Troop 3 assistant scoutmaster, said Talutis is dedicated to the principles of Scouting. "He helps all the other Scouts with their merit badges," Morise said. "He's got a gusto for Scouting. He's really into it."

Talutis, who is set to enter his senior year at Xaverian Brothers High School in Westwood, plays lacrosse, participates in the school's peer ministry program for those with leadership qualities, and is a member of the National Honor Society. He is an avid camper and hiker. And during his Scouting career, he has received the Den Chief Service Award and four Silver Eagle Palms for achievements beyond Eagle.

He plans to go on to college, but he is not yet sure what his specialty will be. His exposure to a number of fields, from veterinary medicine to law, as part of his merit-badge work has helped him to narrow his options, he said.

"I'll probably major in biology or biochemistry and then look at some aspect of law," he said. "I'm also leaning toward business."

Talutis, who can remain in the Boy Scouts until he is 18, said he will now concentrate on tasks other than merit badges, since there are no more for him to earn.

"When we start in the fall, I'll see what I can do," he said. "I plan to help out with the new Scouts coming in and share my experience with younger Scouts. I've been doing leadership things for four years, so now I can offer guidance to others."

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