

BE ACTIVE.....

Over the years, the question has come up regarding the interpretation of the phrase “be active in the troop and patrol.....” as one of the requirements for rank advancement.

If you look at the requirement in the first three ranks in scouting you will notice that there is no specific time requirement. There are a number of requirements that are very difficult to achieve unless you are very active in your participation in meetings and camp outs so in essence there is a participation requirement.

As a scout moves into the three advanced ranks – Star, Life and Eagle, he finds an actual time requirement listed for advancement. For example, the requirement for Star Scout is that “While a First Class Scout, serve actively for 4 months in one or more of the following positions of responsibility (or carry out a Scoutmaster-assigned leadership project to help the troop): - several positions are then listed as qualifying for this requirement. The time requirement is increased to six months for the Life Rank as well as the Eagle Scout Award. I would encourage all of you, parents as well as scouts, to read page 169 of the Scout Handbook for the explanation that covers “Be Active In Your Troop and Patrol”. To quote part of that page, “To gain full advantage of all that Scouting has to offer, you need to be present when things are happening.”

This sounds very simple and matter of fact, however, when you aren’t very specific about what “taking part” means, or how many meetings or outings constitutes being active, hard feelings can arise when someone is denied advancement due to lack of participation. The last time our troop committee revised our Troop Handbook (1999) a requirement was included that scouts had to be at 70% of all meetings and outings to advance in rank. Changes in troop leadership since that time have caused us to deviate from the letter

of that rule but not the spirit of the requirement in the Scout Handbook.

As boys move into High School their time has many competitors. Sports, jobs, increased homework; other extra curricular activities challenge a young man's schedule. Balancing these time constraints and still achieving your long term goals is a significant challenge but also the mark of a highly successful person. Multi tasking is a buzz phrase in today's business world. It requires successful people to do several things at one time. This is exactly what is required of a young man with many goals such as scholar, varsity athlete, economically independent, and Eagle Scout.

How can you best handle this task? My advice to you is to start early. Scouting has found that the success rate of boys who achieve 1st class after one year in Scouting is several times greater than boys who do not. Although I think this task is somewhat ambitious, I certainly feel that an active scout can achieve 1st class by 18 months of work. If you joined the troop in May of your 5th grade year, by November of 7th grade you can be 1st class, maybe even earlier. Star Scout requires you to be active for four months as mentioned previously. You probably have already earned the required merit badges so advancement can easily be reached by April of your 7th grade year. Now you have a six month requirement for Life Scout as well as your merit badges. That will put you at November of 8th grade. You have most of 8th grade and most of 9th grade to work on your Eagle Rank **BEFORE YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO GET a JOB OR A DRIVER'S LICENSE!!**

Personally, I feel a scout should be at least 15 to have experienced enough of Scouting and matured in his ability to lead before achieving the rank of Eagle Scout. Ideally, a Scoutmaster would like to see a scout achieve the rank and remain active in the troop while earning Eagle Palms and providing the true leadership a

junior or senior in high school can provide younger scouts. That is a rarity for many reasons and all Scoutmasters understand that.

What happens far too many times is that scouting is put on a low priority. This may happen for a variety of reasons. One of them is that we are very flexible and less demanding than many other organizations are or can be. Any time the scout is still eligible to participate by reason of age, he can decide to activate his participation at the point he left off in his advancement. However, the requirement for participation still must be met and if he has not left himself enough time to complete all of his ranks then the goal of Eagle Scout will be out of reach. A scout who has been inactive for a long period of time has a challenge to prove to the troop that he is sincere in his desire to become an Eagle Scout. As Scoutmaster, I cannot accept your participation as a 6th and 7th grader as bases for higher rank advancement when you have been almost totally inactive for several years.

I would like all of you – scouts and parents alike – to consider these three points regarding advancement – especially the three advanced ranks:

1. What are your motives for wanting to complete your rank advancement if, in fact, you have been inactive for a period of time? What has suddenly moved you to pursue advancement?
2. Can you really make up for the time that you have been inactive by the amount of time you have left to be active before you age out? What are you planning to commit to in order to achieve this goal?
3. If you find that your motive is misplaced; for example: “My councilor said it would look good on my college applications” are you really approaching this high honor in the spirit of the scout oath and law?

Over the years we have tried many things to keep our older scouts active in scouting. We will continue in our efforts to provide program for this age group. However, as the boys mature they must also learn the lesson that things do not come without a price. Program at their level is not for adults to set up and run. Rank advancement and high honors are not handed out because your name was on the roster. One final thought, a rewarding and memorable career in scouting does not have to culminate with earning the Eagle Scout Award. It is a shame when you put a great deal of time into scouting and don't earn it but if other things pull at your time, enjoy the scouting experience as long as you can and take the good memories with you. I was a scout for four years. I never received the rank of Eagle but I have the kind of memories that lead me to a career as an adult scouter that has given me the chance to pin that award on over two dozen young men including my own son.

I will continue to do my best to do my duty to see that everyone in the troop that advances in rank does so because he has earned the right to do so. I hope that all of you can understand and support me in this responsibility.

I'll See You On The Trail,

Mr. G.