

# Advice From an Eagle Scout Mom

By *Laura S. Shortridge*

**How can parents best motivate their sons to continue on the Trail to Eagle? A mother of three Eagle Scouts suggests a one-step-at-a-time approach.**

As the mother of three Eagle Scouts, I know a bit about the ins and outs of the Trail to Eagle. My first advice to Scouts? Don't give up! My first advice to parents? Don't give up!

Some parents bribe or force their sons into achieving the rank of Eagle, but I feel that a true Eagle Scout candidate will have the goal written on his heart. The desire comes from within. But that isn't to say parents shouldn't encourage their sons or that incentives aren't a good idea--especially at crucial times when the goal seems overwhelming or time too fleeting.

Encourage your Scout to take one step at a time. Glance ahead every once in a while to remember the future goal but keep focused on what needs to be done this month, this week, or by the next troop meeting.

The Trail to Eagle may be filled with hurdles to jump and pitfalls to avoid; it was not meant to be easy. The key element in the journey is not speed, but endurance. And every boy's experience is unique.

Our first son, Randall Jr., trod a fairly straight path to Eagle. He set his goals and kept at them steadily so by his 16th birthday, I was tearfully glowing as the rank of Eagle was bestowed upon him.

Our second son, Daniel, also kept faithfully to his objectives until he hit a roadblock at his proposed Eagle project. He had organized a blood drive and set the goal of getting a minimum of 24 pints for the American Red Cross. As we live in western New York State, it probably wasn't a good idea to schedule it in the dead of winter. A snowstorm hit just as the equipment was being set up, and only 14 donors braved the weather.

Dan also discovered he had put the horse before the cart by setting up the blood drive before it had been officially approved by the council. Although it had been accepted, he technically should have waited to make arrangements with the Red Cross until after receiving written notification of approval. So the blood drive didn't count as a service project.

Instead of giving up, however, he chalked it up to experience and moved on. He promptly started thinking of a new project, and by the next year he had successfully completed all the steps (in the correct order). We had two Eagles in the nest.

Our third son, Russell, was tripped on the Trail as a Star Scout. When he thought he had completed all the requirements for Life, it was discovered that the Scout office had no record of him receiving the Star rank.

We had recently moved to a new town and therefore to a different troop, but within the same council. We couldn't figure out what went wrong, but Russ immediately started working on the Star rank again.

He had his merit badge cards, so he could prove they had been earned; but he had to wait out the four-month requirement, perform six more hours of service (never a problem in Scouting), and participate in another



Scoutmaster conference and board of review. Shortly after he had received his Star for the second time, his former Scoutmaster found the green sheet with proof that Russ had earned it almost five months earlier.

Upon taking the green sheet to the office, it was discovered that the wrong birth date had been entered in the computer, and two separate records had inadvertently been made. Within the next two years, we had three Eagles in the nest.

Which brings me to another piece of advice to Scouts and their parents: Keep meticulous records!

Find a place to keep every merit badge card, names and addresses of people who have helped with the journey (such as Scoutmasters, merit badge counselors, camp personnel, etc.), pictures labeled with places, names, dates--anything and everything that might come in handy when filling out the paperwork that goes along with the process of becoming an Eagle.

If in doubt as to what to keep, stash it all and toss unnecessary stuff out after the Eagle ceremony! (Or use the "extra" information in putting together a memorable Eagle scrapbook.)

The Trail to Eagle is filled with opportunities to learn new skills, develop leadership, and experience personal growth and understanding.

It's on that journey that each Scout learns to stretch his limits and become an exceptional individual and a contributing member of society.

My final advice is the same as the first: Don't give up!

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