

## To the Scouts of Troop 442

When asked, "What does Scouting mean to me?" I find myself thinking of words like trust, respect, and friendship. Trust not only means trusting in yourself, but in those around you. Scouting has helped me see people for who they are and accept their diversity. I have learned that everyone, no matter how small, has something to contribute and through Scouting I have experienced those contributions. Through trust comes respect. I have developed a respect of people and what they represent. Scouting has brought me together with people of all races and religions, ultimately developing in me a respect for other ways of life. Scouting has also taught me, through tough times and fun times, to respect Mother Nature for all she has to offer and for the dangers she creates. Finally, Scouting has helped me establish life long friendships with more people than I can name. It is almost synonymous with friendship and the way people relate to each other. Scouting is truly special.

The second question I was asked refers to being an Eagle Scout. Words don't do justice to the pride Eagle Scouts share in their accomplishment. The statistic, "2 of all scouts will become Eagle Scouts" shows the rarity of being an Eagle Scout, but not the feeling of knowing you are one. Being an Eagle Scout has become a personal character reference for me. When people learn that I am an Eagle Scout, the scout oath becomes a characteristic of my being. Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, and Reverent now has become my label to live up to. Once it was a saying to memorize, (yes, I still have it memorized), but now that I am an Eagle Scout it is a creed to live up to. I am proud to be an Eagle Scout, and I am proud of all the other Eagle Scouts, especially the number that have come from Troop 442. Congratulations to all, and for those still climbing, we welcome you when you make it.

In closing I want to share one of my numerous adventures in scouting. I could tell you about Lyle Cain dumping a canoe only to find when it rolled right side up, he was still sitting in it clenching the side rails. I could tell you about Brian Williams looking all over for his fork only to find it in his hand. I could tell about my brother, John, learning to cook bacon, he fried his fingers instead. By the way, all three are Eagle Scouts.

Instead I choose to tell you about the Mt. Pinos outing. As you will see, this outing demonstrates what I have discussed earlier. The outing was simply to camp out Friday night at the base, do some trail work in the morning, hike to the summit to camp for the night, and descend the following day. Simple, right? Well Mother Nature earned her respect this trip. Friday night met us with rain. By morning the rain had cleared, but the trail work was a little muddy. We started up the trail only to have my dad slip and twist his knee. Another leader escorted him back to the cars as we marched on. As we hiked the rain began to fall. Not heavy just steady enough to soak through every layer. Then came a cold piecing rain that blew through to your bones. Cold and wet, the fatigue began to set in. We knew there was trouble when we stopped for lunch and had to use our knives to open the plastic cheese and crackers. Our fingers were too cold. By the time the first group reached the summit camp site, hypothermia was being discussed. The younger scouts, myself included, began to fall behind and show signs of hypothermia. The group at the summit made a decision that may have saved some lives. We would make the two day hike in one, because if we stayed on this mountain overnight, we may need a rescue team to get us out. My group was at the end and thoughts of hopelessness ran through our minds. Our hands were numb, our feet were numb, and our minds were numb. We kept pushing on. The leader with us, Bruce Williams, kept talking to us, telling us about anything to keep our minds off how we felt. I didn't think we could make it, but he got us back to the cars. By the time we reached the cars, we were so numb that we could not undo any buttons to change into dry clothes. We had to be undressed and dressed. Obviously we came through it and earned our Puddle Duck High Adventure patch for our efforts. But looking back, I learned to trust those around me to help, I learned to respect Mother Nature, and I found what true friends will do for each other. We all became a little closer from that outing.

To end I would like to say Congratulations Troop 442 and thank you for all you have given to me and ultimately making me a better person.

Eagle Scout Mike Walcott