

Group of Eleven Makes Eagle Scout Together

Armonk Troop Accomplishes Rare Milestone

By Martin Wilbur

For a Boy Scout troop to have one of its members attain the rank of Eagle Scout is quite an accomplishment. Multiply that by 11 and not only do you have an unusual achievement but a memorable one as well.

Last Saturday, Armonk's Troop 94 attained a rare milestone by seeing 11 of its scouts arrive together at the pinnacle of the Boy Scouting program. Before a crowd of about 200 friends, relatives and dignitaries at St. Patrick's Church in Armonk, the new Eagle Scouts were celebrated in a nearly two-hour ceremony.

"I think it's the community," Scout Master Emeritus Harry Tompkins said in trying to explain the feat. "We have a community here that really encourages achievement and dedication to a task. And it's families. You can almost tell which guys are going to be an Eagle Scout but some of them fool you. Some of them come in and you say, 'Well, I don't know.' But a lot of them persevere."

For some of the scouts, the camaraderie and the dedication they experienced growing up together explains part of the reason behind the troop's collective success. Plus, they credited their adult leaders, including Tompkins, Michael Marin



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

The 11 new Eagle Scouts with North Castle supervisor William Weaver were honored during a special ceremony Saturday in Armonk.

and current Scout Master Rich Baris for helping them through tough times.

Julian Weisner said the closeness of the troop and having the leaders make it fun helped keep the scouts intact over the years.

"We were real close, we were good

friends, it was fun, lots of working together, lots to eat and all the activities I had," Weisner recalled of some of his best scouting experiences over the years. "After I got to a certain point it just made sense to go all the way."

Along with Weisner, Leonard Baratta, Michael Baris, Pedro Batalla, Paul Baumann, Robert LeDone, Joseph Mandel, Michael Partelow, Arjun Patel, Brandon Rosenblum and John Wellington made up the group of 11 new Eagle Scouts.

During the ceremony, each of the scouts received certificates from the Town of North Castle and Westchester County and were presented with gifts and their Eagle Scout neckerchiefs. Rep. Nita Lowey led a contingent of officials who praised the scouts' dedication and encouraged them to continue their service. She said as a congresswoman she has the responsibility of recommending young men and women from her district to the nation's military academies and one achievement she looks for is scouting.

"I know you will continue to contribute to our great country and whatever the next goal is you will get there because you have shown you can do it," Lowey said.

North Castle Supervisor William

Weaver said it gave him great pleasure to see the scouts achieve their success because they are members of the community and he knows many of them and their parents. All 11 Eagle Scouts live within the Byram Hills School District.

"I think these young men all have a great future ahead of them and with this commitment and the work they've shown they could do, I think we can expect a lot of great things out of these people in the future," Weaver said.

One of the most difficult aspects of attaining the rank of Eagle Scout is completing the 21 merit badges, including 11 required badges, said Neal Baumann, himself having become an Eagle Scout in 1969 and the father of Paul Baumann, one of the 11 scouts. Aside from progressing through the scouting ranks by completing certain tasks at every level, each scout needed to complete an independent community service project to become an Eagle Scout.

"It is a rank not easily earned," the Scout Master, Rich Baris said. "They have exhibited extreme dedication and a sincere desire to better their community. They will become the future leaders of their generation and their lives will be guided by the scout oath and law. I am very proud of each and every one of them and wish them the best in the years to come."

It is estimated that less than 5 percent of all scouts will achieve the rank of Eagle Scout. President Gerald Ford, 40 NASA astronauts and current Defense Secretary William Gates are some of the more notable Eagle Scouts over the years, Baumann said.

For his service project, Paul Baumann cleaned gravestones at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and created a database of those who are buried at the church's cemetery. Mandel constructed a pathway at Winkler Park. He said having the group stay together actually helped each other reach the Eagle Scout.

"I think having all 11 of us graduate together made it a lot easier," said Mandel, whose grandfather encouraged him and whose father is also an Eagle Scout. "We're always there to help each other and push each other."

While most of the group will be headed to college, Paul Baumann said the group will always share this special bond.

"We got along really great and I think we're going to be friends for a long time," he said.

Fundraiser for Pleasantville Police Officer Nets \$6,000

By Sam Barron

By all accounts, last Friday's fundraiser for ailing Pleasantville police officer Robert Gokey was a smashing success.

Aaron Hess, the officer who organized the fundraiser at the Washington Avenue firehouse, estimates that more than 300 people attended, raising more than \$6,000 for Gokey.

"We're still collecting," Hess said. "There were people who drove by and were donating money out the window to Bobby."

Gokey has been off the force since March, leaving his job because of a rare blood disorder. Gokey departed two months before he would have reached 10 years of service with the village, making him fully vested and entitled to receive full benefits.

Having used up his sick time and vacation pay, he is currently not earning a pay check. He has been attempting to collect additional sick pay and have time from his previous career as a Bronx court officer count toward the 10-year requirement. Recently, he was granted Family Medical Leave, entitling him to 12 weeks of health insurance.

At the fundraiser, Gokey said that village officials told him they are doing everything they can to assist him. Hess and Gokey were both grateful for the community's support.

"When a police officer is on the street and he's calling for help on the radio, sometimes all you have to do is yell out a location and you have 30 cops there helping you," Hess said. "The fundraiser was the same thing, but imagine the community showing up as well. There are way too many people to thank."

Gokey said the number of people who attended was amazing and it made him feel like he was truly part of the community. He said he didn't even know many of the people who attended.

"I couldn't thank them all personally. I wish I could've," Gokey said. "No matter what my status with the police depart-



Pleasantville residents responded last Friday night at the spaghetti fundraiser for police officer Robert Gokey, above, who was forced to leave his job in March while suffering from a rare blood disorder.

ment is or my health, I would do anything for the youth of the community."

Gokey, 44, said that the turnout and response meant more to him than the money raised, which he said will be a tremendous help for him and his family. The Mount Kisco resident has a wife and two children.

"I want to express my gratitude and family's gratitude for the turnout," Gokey said. "It was hard for me. I was brought up to take responsibility for whatever situation I'm in and be strong and silent about my hardships and not to advertise it. I'm glad I did, it took the weight of the world off of my shoulders."



Eagles Are Soaring

Hawthorne Troop 1 celebrated four of their members attaining the rank of Eagle Scout at a ceremony on June 13 at the Mount Pleasant Community Center in Valhalla. Scout Master George Peborde is flanked by the four scouts, Eric DiNome, Brendan Haywood, Conor Jones and Jonathan Puccini, at the special evening.