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CNY trio ready to soar as Eagles

Longtime friends say Scouting's lessons have prepared them for adult life.

November 29, 2002**By Larry Richardson Staff writer**

Walten Owens, Joe Dodd and Ryan Oot have been friends since first-grade, when they joined Tiger Scouts together. Tonight, the three will receive the Eagle Award, Boy Scouting's highest rank.

This is the third time in the last eight years in the Revolutionary Trails Council that three boys from the same troop will have received Eagle status in the same Court of Honor ceremony.

But it isn't unusual that these three, all members of Troop 33, are together.

"At Chittenango High School, all three of us participated in Science Olympiad, Model United Nations, Math Club and advance placement biology," Owens said. "We hung out together and went bowling, four-wheeling and water skiing together. We did a lot of hiking and camping and spent time together at Boy Scout National Jamborees at Fort A.P. Hill in Virginia."

Dodd is a freshman at the State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry, majoring in forest engineering and environmental resources; Owens is a freshman at Clarkson University, majoring in mechanical engineering; and Oot is a cadet fourth class (first year) at the U.S. Air Force Academy, leaning toward majoring in astronautical engineering.

They all say Bill June helped push, train and influence them to succeed. June, 42, was assistant Scoutmaster in Troop 33 for seven years and now is adviser to the Venturing crew in which they were active.

"All three always had ambition to complete, like the other boys in the troop who earned Eagle (status)," he said. "If I was to have a kid, I'd take any one of these three. They're trustworthy, they're loyal, they have great character and high

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morals. They're willing to go and do for others."

Oot reflected on the years the three have spent together.

"One of the most memorable times we had together was when we were in middle school and we built potato cannons and shot potatoes and apples at things," he said. "We mostly aimed at Walt's barn, or down into a field to see how far we could get it to go. We used starter fluid and fired them out of PVC piping."

The Eagle Award requires a boy to complete at least 21 merit badges, including some specific ones; fulfill requirements in the areas of leadership, service and outdoor skills; and complete a service project that takes a minimum of 100 hours and requires the boy to lead volunteers in completing it.

"The hardest merit badges for me were that ones that required a lot of paperwork, like personal management and citizenship in the community, nation and world," Owens said.

Dodd agreed. "Personal management was my hardest merit badge," he said. "It took me a long time to get it done."

Dodd said Scouting has been a great experience for him.

"It introduced me to what I want to do for my life - working outdoors. That's why I picked ESF," he said. "Scouting has taught me a lot of things, like teamwork, getting along with other people and outdoor skills."

Dodd said he is excited about earning his Eagle rank.

"After all the years and work I put in to Scouting, I have something to show for it," he said. "Mr. June told us that 20 years down the road, it will mean even more to me."

Recalling his trail to Eagle status, Oot remembers events that helped prepare him for the Air Force Academy.

"Eagle to me is a symbol of the finish of that part of my life and moving on to the next level," he said. "I need to be responsible and work hard to do well, and working to get Eagle has prepared me to do that."

Bob Myers, Scout executive for the Boy Scout council, said earning the award is significant.

"It proves a young man has been able to identify an objective and set out on a plan to achieve it," he said. "On the way, he has proven he knows how to lead a group to accomplish a project or task and knows how to meet people, introduce himself and talk to them about his interests. By the time they earn their Eagle, they have stopped taking and are now giving back to their community. And the lessons an Eagle learns stays with him throughout his life."

Fewer than 4 percent of boys who join Scouting earn the award. This year, 47 boys have pinned on the Eagle badge in the council, which serves about 8,300 boys in Madison, Oneida and Herkimer counties. Since 1911, more than 1 million boys nationwide have earned the award.

Troop 33 in Chittenango has a history of high accomplishment. Since 1961, the troop has seen 27 of its members become Eagle Scouts.

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