

Bryan on Scouting

What's life like during, and after, Wood Badge?

After spending a week at Circle Ten's Wood Badge course at Philmont over the summer, I can tell you this: Wood Badge lives up to the hype.

For new Scouters, it'll jump-start your Scouting career faster than you can say "Be Prepared." And the many BSA veterans on my course told me it recharged their Scouting batteries more than they ever dreamed.

For one of my five ticket items, I chronicled the lessons learned at my Wood Badge course (WB 102, held at Philmont Scout Ranch) in a series of posts called Wood Badge Wednesdays.

The five-part series is collected here for your edification and entertainment. I hope you enjoy reading these posts even half as much as I enjoyed reliving the Wood Badge magic.

Well, I gotta go! Back to Gilwell, of course!



Wood Badge Wednesdays, Vol. 1: Living the Values

Posted on September 12, 2012 by [Bryan Wendell](#) in [Scouting Tips](#), [Training](#), [Wood Badge](#) // [59 Comments](#)

Growing up, one thing always perplexed me about our home: What's with all the owls?

We lived in an owlery, it seemed. Owls in every room. I saw owl belt buckles, owl clocks, owl paperweights, owl postcards, plush owl toys — pretty much everything short of a real bird in a cage.

My dad's overt owl obsession made no sense to me — until last month.

After completing a weeklong Wood Badge course at Philmont Scout Ranch, I get it now.

My dad was — well, is — a member of the Owl patrol. And now that I'm a fellow Owl, I see how Wood Badge changes you. The values and lessons embedded in you during those six days stay with you long after the closing ceremony.

So in an effort to share the magic of Wood Badge — and preserve some of my favorite memories — I'm starting **Wood Badge Wednesdays**. My goal with this five-part series is to explore some of the takeaways from my course and help you see how Wood Badge can help strengthen your ability to work with your pack, troop, team, ship, crew, or post.

Never heard of Wood Badge? Considering attending soon? Already wear two, three, or four Wood Badge beads? No matter where you are in the spectrum, I hope you'll find value in this five-part, in-depth look at Wood Badge.

Today, I'll discuss the importance of **Living the Values** and how my patrolmates embody the Scout Law.

Certified Spoiler-Free

“Assume you know nothing.”

That was by far the best advice I got before buttoning up my uniform and beginning my Wood Badge journey. And it really is the best way to approach the training course. So before I continue, I want to stress that I won't be spoiling any of the course's surprises on my blog.

I'm sure if you spend a few minutes with Google, you can find a detailed breakdown of everything that happens at Wood Badge. But why would you?

Wood Badge is as much about the journey as the destination. And experiencing the highs and lows of the week with your patrol is vital to the process. Knowing too much going in devalues the experience.

So I'll be talking more about the lessons learned and less about the unique mechanisms the Wood Badge staff uses to deliver those lessons. For that, you'll have to take the course for yourself. (See below to learn how!)

Values, Vision, and Mission

Working at the Boy Scouts of America's national office, it's easy to feel a little disconnected from the volunteers who read *Scouting* magazine. That's why we encourage and appreciate your feedback about what we do — and how we could do it better.

That's also why it's vitally important for us to get out into the field as often as possible.

Spending a week with some of the most caring, centered, and driven Scouters I've ever met reminded me why I do what I do.

Meeting these awesome Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, and Venturing leaders rekindled the fire, helped me drink the Kool-Aid, and did every other cliché you can think of.

Without exception, every staff member and participant was top-class, but like in any troop, I spent the majority of my time with my patrol. The seven of us, and our troop guide, are pictured above.

And after spending six full days — awake from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. — with these seven folks, I can confidently say they embody the vision of an ideal Scouter.

We talked a lot about our Values, Vision, and Mission at the course. These elements serve as the foundation for everything we do in Scouting. Here's how they're defined:

- **Values:** “Core beliefs or desires that guide or motivate our attitudes and our actions.”
 - For most of us, this starts with the Scout Oath and Scout Law. But it's more than that. These are the principles and character traits and goals that matter most to us. They'll be different for everybody.
 - For me, the Scout Oath and Law have been a part of my life for nearly 20 years. In addition, I see serving others as a big part of my job at *Scouting* magazine. In its best form, journalism is service.
- **Vision:** “States the goal you want to achieve.”
 - What does success look like? Where do you see yourself, your family, or your unit in X number of months or years? If you don't know your destination, how can you start heading toward it?
 - For me, my vision is to empower other leaders to do their best by giving them the tools they need to succeed — through whatever means necessary. That's why I started this blog three years ago, and it's why I love my job so much.
- **Mission:** “The means of reaching that goal.”
 - This defines the direction and steps you'll take to create the change and growth you want to see in yourself, your family, and/or your Scouting unit.
 - For me, this means continuing to get out there and talk to Scouts and Scouters, attend more training, and listen to feedback.

The next time you have a free hour (ha! OK, how about the next time you have a *freeminute?*) do yourself a favor and write down your Values, Mission, and Vision. Post it in your office, on the fridge, or somewhere conspicuous.

You've gotta come up with all three, because, as Joel Barker writes, “A vision without a mission is just a dream... A mission without a vision just passes the time... A vision with action can change the world.”

The Values in Action



You'd be hard-pressed to find a group that more fully embodies the Scouting values than my six patrolmates and our troop guide (the staff member in charge of our specific group). Here's how each member of the Owls (and our honorary Owl, Jacquelyn) lived the Law:

- **A Scout is Trustworthy:** You can always count on **Jim** to do what he says he'll do. Whether it's finishing an important part of the patrol's presentation or simply showing up at the right place and time, he was Mr. Reliable. I look forward to working with him more in our Scouting careers.
- **A Scout is Loyal:** **Lee**, the master illustrator who created our patrol's totem (seen here), exuded a quiet confidence throughout the week. He wasn't the loudest one in our patrol, but he was the calming presence we often needed to get things done. And he was often the first one at our patrol table when it was time to work.
- **A Scout is Helpful:** A member of our patrol had never packed a large backpack before. So before the troop's big hike, **Jeff** stopped packing his own stuff to patiently help a patrol member in need. Others noticed, and it warmed our hearts. The rest of the week, Jeff's spirituality helped us through trying times.
- **A Scout is Friendly:** Did **Bruce** ever stop smiling? If he did, I didn't notice. He has one of the most genuine smiles I've seen, and it was contagious — an especially important characteristic when it's raining and we're all tired and hungry. Bruce's dry wit kept me laughing all week.
- **A Scout is Kind:** You can tell **Nancy's** a mom in the care with which she addressed each member of the patrol. I was moved when she took the time to personally thank me for attending Wood Badge with her. Really, we should be thanking her for the energy and kindness she brought to our group.
- **A Scout is Cheerful:** During the workweek back home, long days and short nights often mean disgruntled workers. At Philmont, on the other hand, it's tough to be in a bad mood anytime. But thanks to **Dave**, the Owl patrol's enthusiasm never dipped, even when the sun had long dipped below the mountains. He was our Motivator in Chief, and his boundless energy lifted my spirits on numerous occasions. In fact, I saw members of other patrols grin widely as he led us in the Owl's theme song. (Naturally, it was "Who Are You?" by The Who.)
- **A Scout is Brave:** That's gotta be **Jacquelyn**, our troop guide from West Virginia. Just agreeing to be on Wood Badge staff and lead a bunch of Texans is pretty brave, but she put herself on the line for us countless times and strengthened us in the process. Her brave leadership set an example we were proud to follow.

After meeting these Spectacular Seven (as I'm now calling them), I'm convinced that not only does Wood Badge make you a better Scouter, it also attracts some of the best Scouters out there. The course itself has a lot to offer, but so, too, do the people who willingly give up six days of their time to attend.

Great people and great lessons: It's really the best of both worlds.

Wood Badge Wednesdays

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1. **Living the Values (this post)**
2. **[Bringing the Vision to Life \(Sept. 19\)](#)**
3. **[Models for Success \(Sept. 26\)](#)**
4. **[Tools of the Trade](#) (Oct. 17)**
5. **[Leading to Make a Difference \(Oct. 24\)](#)**

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Wood Badge Wednesdays, Vol. 2: Bringing the Vision to Life

Posted on September 19, 2012 by [Bryan Wendell](#) in [Training](#), [What's New](#), [Wood Badge](#) // [29 Comments](#)

I've been involved in Scouting for more than 20 years, and I love trivia.

At Wood Badge, those two forces collided, resulting in one giant, flaming ball of disappointment and public shame.

I don't want to say too much and spoil a Wood Badge surprise, but let's just say that my Scouting knowledge was put to the test at the weeklong course last month. In fact, it was our whole patrol's BSA proficiency on the line, but I spoke up more than I should've.

"I work for the BSA," I thought to myself. "I got this."

Turns out I was wrong. Three times in a row. Each time I pressed my luck, all I got was another whammy.

From that I learned I have a lot to learn — about the BSA, about myself, and about the right way to receive negative feedback.

In that failure, I realized what the staff meant when they had explained the day before that "feedback is a gift." The feedback wasn't positive this time, but I learned that responding with defensiveness — my fallback approach — would only cloud my ability to accept the gift of constructive criticism.

Chalk it up as another way Wood Badge changed me for the better.

Today's topic: **Bringing the Vision to Life**. I'll discuss the importance of listening and of giving and receiving feedback. Then I'll share a couple of examples of times when communication worked — and didn't work — in my Wood Badge patrol.

It's the second installment of my **Wood Badge Wednesdays** series, which, as Chad correctly guessed **last week**, is one of my ticket items. (I'll share the other four in a my final Wood Badge Wednesdays post.)



Listening to Learn

Have you ever had a boss who needed leadership training just as much as you? In college, I had a supervisor who *really* could've used a week at Wood Badge.

For this guy, even just attending one session — the one on “Listening to Learn” — would've done wonders.

I worked at Target, and whenever I approached my boss with a problem, he would just stare at me. Now this wasn't the quiet, understanding gaze of someone actively engaged in what you're saying.

It was more like my face was a 90's Magic Eye painting, and he was trying look right *through* me to get the hidden message.

No nodding, no encouraging “uh-huh,” nothing but a blank stare. It grated on me.

If you've ever had a fellow Scouter, a coworker, or a family member who is listening-challenged, you know how frustrating this can be.

And you know the power of active, engaged, empathetic listening can't be understated.

That's why the Wood Badge session on Listening to Learn resonated with me. Ever since I quit Target, I've been fortunate to have bosses who understand that listening is our primary means of communicating, solving problems, and making decisions.

By emulating those great communicators, I've tried to enhance my own ability to listen.

Effective communication, as our troop guide Jacquelyn explained, is broken down into two parts: Active and Empathetic.

- **Active listening** reflects what a person is saying to confirm comprehension. By rephrasing the message and bouncing it back to the speaker, the listener confirms that the information has been properly received.
- **Empathetic listening** goes one step further, requiring listeners to:
 - Put themselves in the speaker's shoes.
 - Imagine things from the speaker's viewpoint.
 - Understand how the speaker feels.

The next time someone approaches you to talk, don't be my boss from Target.

Instead, take a quick second to assess your listening situation. If you're tired, cold, late for another appointment, or just downright uninterested, acknowledge that to yourself and ensure your disconnectedness doesn't show through.

By being aware of those communication restraints, you can suppress the less-than-ideal situation and begin listening actively and empathetically. Give it a try!

Giving and receiving feedback

Anyone can give positive, superficial feedback.

Comments like "good job today" are nice to say, but they're the cotton candy of the feedback world. They aren't very filling, and too much of them will rot your teeth.

Instead, here's a few things Wood Badge-trained **feedback-givers** do:

- Deal only with behavior that can be changed. Otherwise, what's the point?
 - *"The way you're washing those dishes isn't the way we learned at the troop meeting."*
- Describe the behavior — don't evaluate it.
 - *"You're not using hot water in any of the wash buckets"* instead of *"This is wrong, all wrong!"*
- Let the other person know the impact the behavior has on you.
 - *"I'm really concerned that this approach will get you and your patrolmates sick."*
- Use an "I" statement to accept responsibility for your own perceptions and emotions.
 - *"The way I've washed pots and pans in the past is like this ..."*
- Ask the other person to rephrase what they heard you say. That'll ensure they understood your message.
 - *"Can you repeat back to me what I said before taking it to your patrol?"*
- Show you care. A slick delivery won't hide the fact that you don't.

OK, so you can dish it out, but how do you handle feedback delivered in your direction?

For me, learning I had given the wrong answers to BSA questions three times in a row was a pretty clear message: Think before you speak.

Scenario time. Let's say a parent comes up to you after a troop meeting, furious that her son wasn't selected as the next Senior Patrol Leader. Before you immediately go on the defensive, consider these tips for **receiving feedback**:

- Listen carefully. Be willing to accept what's coming with open ears and without prejudging the person.
- Listen actively. This is where you restate in your own words what the parent said. (Try not to do it sarcastically, OK?)
- Listen empathetically. Consider the speaker's reasons for offering the feedback, and assess her body language to see the hidden message.
- Notice how you're feeling. If you're angry or defensive, that's natural. Just try not to let it show.

Communication in my Wood Badge patrol

Most of the time spent with my fellow Owls was a hoot! (I know, I know.)

But there was one time when the Owls didn't all see eye to eye. Again, without spoiling anything, I'll just say we were given a problem that had multiple solutions. When it dawned on us to bend the rules and take a shortcut to solving that problem, the tension level rose.

Not everyone in the group agreed with the rule-bending approach, and these individuals shared their displeasure with the group.

With time constraints looming ("Two minutes!"), we weren't in the best environment for communication.

In the end, though, it worked out fine. I give credit to Dave, Jeff, and Jim especially. The three weren't on the same side of the issue, but they succeeded in casting the conversation in a positive light. I encourage you add the same positive spin by monitoring your body language, showing empathy, and even cracking a joke to lighten the mood.

I'll talk more about team development on a future Wednesday, but without listening and feedback skills, our team wouldn't have made it past the "Forming" stage.

For the Owls, even with multiple Type-A personalities in our group, each of us managed to "shut up" long enough to listen.

Once that happened, we really soared.

Feedback welcome

What do you like about these Wood Badge Wednesday posts? What isn't working? I haven't written the other three posts, so there's time to make them better with your help. Your feedback is welcome — both positive and negative. Don't worry; I can take it.

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Wood Badge Wednesdays, Vol. 3: Models for Success

Posted on September 26, 2012 by [Bryan Wendell](#) in [Scouting Tips](#), [Training](#), [Wood Badge](#) // [24 Comments](#)

As anyone who's watched *Survivor* can attest, grouping a bunch of people together and giving them a name doesn't make them an effective team.

No, if you want to morph a collection of individuals into a cohesive group, you'll need good leadership, willing teammates, and ample time.

That was certainly the case for the Owl patrol at the Wood Badge course I took in August at Philmont.

We arrived as strangers and left as lifelong friends.

I know, I know. I could've taken that line right out of a Hallmark card. But Wood Badge veterans know this is true: The course offers a better firsthand lesson in effective team development than anything else out there.

That's the concept behind my third installment of Wood Badge Wednesdays: **Models for Success**. (If you want to catch up, please read [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#).)

Wood Badge allows Scouters to *experience* Baden-Powell's vision for a perfect, youth-led Scout troop. Participants don't just read about how Scouting should be run — we eat, sleep, and drink it for six full days.



As Models for Success go, it's tough to top course Scoutmaster John Stone (left) and Senior Patrol Leader Bill Hemenway.

By the end of the course, each leader walks away with practical skills that instantly apply back home. But that concept of “strangers to teammates” only describes the beginning and end. What happens in the middle? Well, let’s just say it’s no cake walk.

Stages of Team Development

This is the true story... of seven strangers... picked to live in a patrol... work together and have their lives changed... to find out what happens... when people stop being polite... and start getting real.

Move over, MTV. Wood Badge is closer to *The Real World* than anything you’ll find on TV.

Wood Badge patrols — and all teams, really — are developed in four distinct stages, as Scott Rohrman, an assistant Scoutmaster on our course, explained.

Take a look, and as you’re reading, consider how they apply to both your work and Scouting roles.

- **Forming:** Like a pile of pickup sticks, everyone’s moving in several directions without any sense of where to go or who does what. Everyone is tentative and polite.
 - Major issues: personal well-being, acceptance, and trust
- **Storming:** The group is at odds with one another. Disagreements are common, and subgroups form that polarize the team. Communication breaks down.
 - Major issues: power, control, and conflict
- **Norming:** Issues from “Storming” are addressed and resolved, boosting morale. Technical skills increase, and there’s more clarity, trust, and cohesion. Team members start saying “we” more than “I.”
 - Major issues: sharing of control and avoidance of conflict
- **Performing:** Productivity and morale are high. Purpose, roles, and goals are clear. Mutual respect and trust abound.
 - Major issues: continued refinements and growth

Us Against the World

The entire Wood Badge course is designed to be an obstacle course for your emotions.

Every bump, U-turn, and roadblock along the way is placed there intentionally by the creators of the course. And the purpose behind all of these obstacles becomes clearer and clearer the farther away I get from Wood Badge.

It’s like that old Rube Goldberg-like game **Mouse Trap**. The Wood Badge participants are the marble, and the course designers and staffers build the machine. Each action propels us right into the next action, which sends us into the next one, and so on. We’re just along for the wild ride.

During the course, though, I can’t have been the only one wondering what kind of sick, twisted person designed this crazy course.

I mean, 10 minutes to complete a task that needs at least an hour? Come on!

But as it turns out, the course designers weren't crazy. More like evil geniuses. They realized the group-strengthening power of forcing a team into an "us against the world" mentality.

Throughout the course, staffers rushed us from task to task, intentionally creating the same kind of stress we often put on our Scouts.

But the Owls became united in our defiance. We said: "They think we can't finish this in the amount of time we have. Let's show them they're wrong!"

By then we were Performing like a well-oiled machine. We turned chaos into opportunity, and it bonded us with permanent glue.

But Wood Badge doesn't let up. It introduces more crazy contraptions into the course, nearly enough to make us lose our marbles. That's intentional, too.

As Rohrman told us, "It's good to introduce things that cause our Scouts to 'Storm.'"

This can be an activity that challenges their minds or a trip that tests their physical limits. Either way, know that if a team isn't moving forward, it's regressing. What stage are your Scouts in?

Wood Badge Wednesdays

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Wood Badge Wednesdays, Vol. 4: Tools of the Trade

Posted on October 17, 2012 by [Bryan Wendell](#) in [Scouting Tips](#), [Training](#), [Wood Badge](#) // [11 Comments](#)
In Scouting, as in life, change is inevitable.

You've got new merit badges, new locations for campouts, new roles in your unit, new health and safety regulations, and more.

That makes change the only fact of life guaranteed to never change. And these days, both in and out of Scouting, change happens at a faster rate than ever before. Resistance is futile, but how you respond to it is entirely up to you.

Let's say change is a bucking bull; do you: (A) Jump off and run away, (B) Hold on and try to survive, or (C) Grab the horns and steer. In other words, do you resist change, accept it, or *lead* it?

At Wood Badge, we learned how and why to try the third approach. It's one of many **Tools of the Trade** I took home from the course in August, and it's the focus for this edition of Wood Badge Wednesdays. (If you want to catch up, please read [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), and [Part 3](#).)

Consider this:

Experiencing Changes

What kinds of changes affect those of us involved in Scouting?

- **Scouting program** — Joining a new unit or transitioning from one Scouting program to another.
- **Team development** — Small groups within Scouting — dens or patrols, for example — coming together as a team.
- **Locations** — New spots for meetings, summer camp, weekend trips, etc.
- **Responsibilities** — New leadership roles for Scouts or Scouters — especially tough if you're the first one in a position new to your unit.

Possible Reactions to Change

There are three basic ways to respond:

- **Fear/resistance** — Allow change to control you and intimidate you.
- **Acceptance** — Try to make the most of what's happening by adapting what you do.
- **Leading** — Starts with acceptance but evolves into determining the outcome of change.

Six Steps to Lead Change

Ready to try leading change? Here's how:

Step 1—Recognize that change happens.

It's inevitable. Once you can accept that "different" doesn't always mean "worse," you're on the right track. The more quickly that realization happens, the easier it is to accept the challenges the future presents. Eventually, you'll learn to savor the new opportunities.

At Wood Badge: Change happened not daily but hourly during my weeklong Wood Badge course at Philmont. In the first 24 hours alone, I met 50 different people, heard Scouting terms that were foreign to me, and played games meant to keep us off-balance.

Step 2—Empower others to help you lead change.

You've got friends in life and in Scouting. Use them. Just as a politician surrounds himself/herself with trusted advisers, you should find a close contingent of people with the willingness, expertise, leadership prowess, and credibility to help you enact change.

At Wood Badge: This happened naturally. As I've said before, Wood Badgers are a self-selecting bunch. The only people who bother paying for this course in time and money are the most dedicated volunteers. (Nobody else is crazy enough to try!) In my patrol, I was the clear rookie, meaning I had plenty of opportunities to learn from others' experiences. As the days passed, we found common ground and grew stronger as a team.

Step 3—Lead change based on vision, mission, and values.

If we don't know where we're going, how will we get there? To lead change, we need to know where we're headed. This means understanding our values (the Scout Oath and Law), our vision (the desired end result), and our plan (the steps necessary to get there).

At Wood Badge: Before we arrived at Wood Badge, our Scoutmaster, John Stone, asked each participant to write down his/her vision, mission, and values. As I said in [Vol. 1](#), mine is built around empowering other leaders to do their best by giving them the tools they need to succeed. I really need to print that statement out and hang it in my office, just like corporations do with their mission statements. That way those words watch over everything I do.

Step 4—Establish urgency.

People need a compelling reason to change. Without urgency, great ideas sit idle for months or years. This makes Scout units stagnant and gives Scouts a reason to drop out. To create urgency, show others the vision of what change can do, and outline the steps needed to make that change possible, necessary, and desirable.

At Wood Badge: When was urgency *not* a part of Wood Badge? As I've said before, the course is designed to put us through the fire as a group. When we came out on the other side, we were all stronger because of it. By the final night, we didn't even need the staff (no offense, y'all!).

Step 5—Move ahead, regardless.

You're going to encounter some sticks-in-the-mud along the way. People unwilling to accept the inevitability of change. Your approach, to paraphrase Dori in *Finding Nemo*, is to "keep swimming." Bring these Scouters along for the ride (but let them sit in the back seat at first). As change occurs, they might come around and get pumped. If the lightbulb stays off for them, they'll eventually remove themselves. Call it survival of the fittest.

At Wood Badge: Fortunately, there were no sticks in the Wood Badge mud. But each of us — myself included — had moments of crankiness and reluctance where we dragged our heels a bit. Thankfully, everyone stayed pointed toward the goal, threw our arms around the stragglers, and moved forward.

Step 6—Create a culture that embraces change.

Whether we're talking about a small team of people, a Scouting unit, a business, or an entire organization, it's important to actively seek out change. Those who stand still get left behind. So in your pack, troop, team, ship, post, or crew, make sure you're seeking out ideas. A good reminder: There are no bad ideas. Nothing stifles innovation faster than a brainstorming session where participants feel uncomfortable.

At Wood Badge: Because we had just six days, this applies less to the actual course than to the aftermath. Each Scout leader experienced these steps firsthand and left with the tools to bring home. Now they can create that change culture in their own unit.

The Importance of Lifelong Learning

There's a reason they update the dictionary every year to add new words ("man cave," "bucket list," "mash-up").

The world is constantly changing. That's why lifelong learning is such an important concept, and it's the best way to embrace change at a personal level. The best leaders are the best educators. They seek out training opportunities for others, but they don't stop there. They're also responsible for seeing to their own continuing education.

If you're a veteran Scouter, ask yourself: When's the last time you got trained?

Your Turn to Share

What changes have affected your Scouting career? How did you handle them? **Share your stories of change below.**

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Wood Badge Wednesdays, Vol. 5: Leading to Make a Difference

Posted on October 24, 2012 by [Bryan Wendell](#) in [Scouting Tips](#), [Training](#), [Wood Badge](#) // [33 Comments](#)

It's amazing how quickly a whisper turns into a roar.

Take Wood Badge tickets, for example. Each one leaves a lasting legacy, but 50, 500, or even 5,000? That kind of impact reverberates across the Scouting universe for generations.



At my Wood Badge course in August, 50 Scouters each crafted five tickets. That's 250 boosts to Scouting in North Texas from our course alone.

Some of you might be wondering: What is a Wood Badge ticket? Well, after the six-day course ends, participants aren't done. To earn those iconic beads, a Wood Badger must complete five projects, called tickets. The tickets allow Scouters to give back to the program and to "realize their personal vision of their role in Scouting."

That focus on **Leaving a Legacy** is a huge part of the spirit of Wood Badge. And it's the subject of today's fifth and final Wood Badge Wednesdays post.

Leaving a Legacy

Chances are anyone who's heard of Wood Badge knows about the Wood Badge ticket. It's the most outward-facing element of the course, and — if you ask me — the most important.

Think of tickets as the Eagle Scout projects of the Wood Badge world. Once an Eagle Scout has moved on (gone to college, moved to an adult volunteer role, etc.), his Eagle project lives on.

Similarly, Wood Badgers get five opportunities to dramatically improve Scouting — and themselves.

But to fully understand the profound impact Wood Badge tickets have on the nationwide Scouting movement, we need to do the math.

Each year, 300 Wood Badge courses take place across the country, with an average of 36 participants per course.

That's 10,800 Wood Badgers. Now, 80 percent of those Scouters will complete their tickets, giving us 8,640 Wood Badge graduates per year.

Multiply that number by five tickets per person, and you get an incredible 43,200 completed tickets *each year*.

Wow! That's 43,200 tangible improvements to Scouting. It's 43,200 significant steps toward helping packs, troops, teams, and crews run smoother and have more fun. That's a 43,200-piece orchestra, and each instrument's played by the Scouting equivalent of Yo-Yo Ma.

In short: Wood Badge is an opus that would make Mr. Holland proud.

Why a 'Ticket'?

Why are these personal goals called tickets? Here's how the Wood Badge staff explained it:

In Baden-Powell's day, those in the military were expected to pay their own way back to England at the end of their service. If a soldier was stationed on a remote Pacific island, that could be quite an expensive trip home.

So in the interest of thriftiness, soldiers nearing completion of their duties would seek assignments closer and closer to England. Once their service was officially over, those who did this had short, cheap trips home to their family.

This process is called "working your ticket," and those words play a big, fun part in the Wood Badge course. That's all I'll say...

My Wood Badge Tickets

Each Scouter's ticket items are personal, and there's no requirement that they be shared with anyone other than the course's troop guide (the staffer who guides each Wood Badger).

But I'd like to share my five with you, including the rationale behind each.

1. **Wood Badge Wednesdays:** Incorporating one's professional skills is encouraged, and that was my thinking behind including this blog series as a ticket item. I had two goals in mind with these five posts: First, I wanted to summarize my most memorable Wood Badge lessons and rekindle the fire within myself and others who have completed Wood Badge. Second, I wanted to encourage others who haven't taken the course to consider signing up — without giving away any of the surprises that make the course so special.
2. **Journalism Merit Badge:** I have a degree in Journalism, but I never actually earned this merit badge as a Scout. I'm looking forward to making up for that mistake at my troop's winter camp in February when I teach Journalism merit badge to a group of Scouts. I've never taught a merit badge, but I'm excited at the prospect of sharing what I know to the next generation of reporters, editors, or consumers of news.
3. **Blogging and Social Media Course:** Please, call me "Professor Bryan." But seriously, I'm going to co-teach a course at Circle Ten Council's University of Scouting in January, giving me a chance to share what I've learned when creating Bryan on Scouting and helping run *Scouting* magazine's Facebook and Twitter channels. I'm expecting an engaging discussion where the participants teach me as much as I teach them.
4. **Writing Conference:** One of the five tickets can involve personal growth, and so I'm attending a writing conference next year. My thinking is that by improving my skills in writing and editing, I can make *Scouting* magazine and Bryan on Scouting even better tools for volunteers.
5. **Troop Web Site Redesign:** Like most Scout units, my old troop's Web site could use a little work. A great Web site is well-designed, easy to navigate, and has the information parents and Scouts need. Ours has the information but needs some help on design and navigation. That's where I come in. I can't do the backend, technical "stuff," but I'll prepare a written report of ways in which the Web site can be improved, including a sample design.

What's Your Legacy?

If you've completed your tickets, I'd love to hear about them. Please use the comments section below to describe your favorite ticket or recount some of your best memories from completing them.

About Wood Badge Wednesdays

This is **Part 5** of a five-part series called Wood Badge Wednesdays. Here's the schedule for the entire series; each week I explored one of the five central themes of Wood Badge for the 21st Century:

1. [Living the Values \(Sept. 12\)](#)
2. [Bringing the Vision to Life \(Sept. 19\)](#)
3. [Models for Success \(Sept. 26\)](#)
4. [Tools of the Trade \(Oct. 17\)](#)
5. **Leading to Make a Difference (this post)**

It's Your Move

Ready to take Wood Badge for yourself? **Start by contacting your local council** to learn how.

You'll either take a weeklong course, like I did, or a course that spans two weekends (some consecutive, some not). Either way, you're in for the time of your life!

Anyone from any council also has the opportunity to sign up for Circle Ten Council's Wood Badge course at Philmont. The next course is held in August 2013 at Scouting's paradise in New Mexico. [Here's the course link!](#)

This article can be found on-line at <http://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/wbw/>