

*** May 25 - Eagle Scout Letter of Ambition**

- May 25th, 2024

When I was very young and lived in Florida, I tried Cub Scouts for a night. I loved the outdoors and had always wanted to go camping. Needless to say, I was very excited to attend my first meeting. While in the meeting, I was attentively awaiting the announcement of a camping trip, field trip, etc., upcoming in the pack's calendar, but was disenchanted when all we did that night was trade Pokémon cards. I attended a few more Cub Scout events, but after roughly four months of boring meetings and endless fundraisers, I realized that this organization was not going to provide the adventure I had hoped for.

Throughout the years leading up to 2018, I had a very poor opinion of scouting. When I would hear of Boy Scouts, my mind would immediately recount my own experiences and think of a group of chubby, socially awkward children sitting in a circle on the floor trading little cards made out of paper.

I don't think I was alone in this opinion either. There are, in fact, many troops and packs like that, and unfortunately, those groups seem to define the external perceptions of scouting. While this may be true for some groups, it was most certainly not for Troop 32.

When we moved to North Georgia in 2017, my mom began looking for sports, clubs, and activities for me to be involved with. This eventually led to my mom looking into the local Boy Scout Troop 32. After an extensive conversation with Scoutmaster Mr. Lewis, she was sold on the idea. She promised me that this would not be like my last scouting experience and suggested I try it out. Reluctantly, I agreed and showed up to one of their weekly meetings in November 2018.

When I initially saw the group of kids there, I felt as though my suspicions were confirmed. My immediate impression was that we had very little in common, especially because none of the scouts at that meeting had really ever participated in athletics.

Sitting through the meeting, I was somewhat unimpressed, but they mentioned they were going camping in a few weeks. Interest rekindled, I decided to at least give scouting a chance and got myself ready for the upcoming trip. I think I brought about three different bags, packed with around four machetes, two axes, at least a half-dozen knives, and enough food to last me a month. I can only imagine what Mr. Lewis was thinking when he saw me start unloading my gear at the campsite.

This was actually my first time camping, and everything felt new and ready to be explored, and we did just that. We built shelters out of bamboo, played manhunt, made forts out of

round hay-bales, and much more.

I loved the trip, and when I found out that the Troop goes camping every month, I was sold and subsequently fell in love with scouting. Over the years, those kids I once thought were nerdy and weird have become some of the best friends I have.

As the current SPL of the Troop, I look back to how magical and mysterious my experience as a scout was and realize that it is now my obligation to ensure that new and younger scouts have a similar, if not even better, experience. It is a terrifying responsibility yet an incredible honor to have that opportunity.

On that same note, scouting has given me something very rare and extraordinarily valuable in the development of any man: the potential to lead a group of people. Talk about fear and discomfort. When you are in charge, there is no one to blame. If the group fails, you have failed. If a potential scout attends one of our meetings and decides not to join, I have failed to show him the value of the program. You must take complete and utter accountability for any shortfalls.

There is also the matter of public speaking, pushing through insecurities, and unifying a group of boys under a common vision without dictatorial authority. I have always excelled in one-on-one conversations but stumbled when addressing large groups, possibly due to the varied style of rhetoric. As the SPL, I've had to stand and lead the weekly meetings as well as give comprehensive speeches at Troop-hosted events such as courts of honor or the Christmas banquet.

Additionally, I struggled with delegation and inspiring people to work on tasks they might not be interested in completing. Being SPL, and finding myself in a position where much needed to be accomplished in a short period of time, I was forced to continuously adapt and modify my approaches to leading the Troop.

“Adversity introduces a man to himself,” and “Confidence is rooted in experience,” are old Stoic adages that sum up my experience here perfectly. By no means has it been comfortable, yet I feel as though I am walking away with far more than what I started with. Certainly, I have acquired these skills far earlier than I would have under normal circumstances outside of Scouting.

As my childhood comes to a close, I am witnessing how every endeavor I have ever undertaken— the half-completed projects, academic deadlines, and Eagle Scout requirements— all appear to be converging on my 18th birthday, forming the culmination of my life to this point.

It is a poignant and profound reminder that I will not always have the time to turn my dreams into reality. My life will skate by without my knowing, and I will eventually find myself in old age retrospectively analyzing my life and cursing my younger self for not becoming all he could have been.

“Memento Mori” ~ Remember, you must die.

My greatest fear is meeting God and Him showing me the life He had planned for me that never came to fruition as a consequence of my inaction.

I have discovered that there are only two ways that I will be content in this life: either I immerse myself entirely in the pursuit of my ambitions, or I live a very simple life and spend a great deal of time with my family. There is no in-between for me. In analyzing my mind, I believe this is due to both of those paths offering absolute freedom in my life. In both cases, no one else is writing my story for me; I am the author.

Case 1:

Developing ideas and solving problems is what I love. This directly translates into launching companies and overcoming the many problems that arise along the way. Starting with this raw and abstract thought, expanding and iterating on it, overcoming these seemingly impossible challenges, and watching it materialize into something that has the potential to positively impact the lives of others is incredible.

That's essentially the ambition: idea after idea, company after company. It is the process that I enjoy. The stress, the risk, the uncertainty, the diversity, the dynamism, it makes you feel alive. You are not confined to just this single area; you are free to mold the fabric of reality to your liking.

Many of the ideas I have are incredibly expensive to execute, which is why I have started with the ideas that cost next to nothing to implement. For example, I have been developing an AI-based app, Helios, that is very close to launching. Complementing this, I have an Instagram page with around 40k followers and 16 million views that I will be leveraging to subtly market this app.

That is just one of many projects that I have started. Many of the ideas I had put time into have fallen flat on their face but, much like my role as SPL, have taught me things and introduced me to incredible people who I would not have met or learned from had I chosen not to endeavor.

Case 2:

The more you experience the world, the more you realize the tremendous lie that has been purported to you through mass media, through people's skewed perception of an idealized life, through movies and shows, etc. The lie that one becomes happy when he is accomplished, when he has great wealth, when he has all the women, when he has 50 sports cars and 10 villas is the greatest fallacy of all. Some of the seemingly most happy and fulfilled people are among the most depressed and hollow. This is because these material and primal items are simply distractions. They are empty. When you experience this utter bleakness, you come to realize that there are only a few things that are of meaning: God, beauty, family, and the people you help as well as those who help you along the way.

"If you cannot find contentment within yourself when you have nothing, possessing the world will only bring you greater misery."

This is why I say that I could be happy living out my days on a small farm with my family. It is an admirable and fond thought to me.

Oddly enough, regardless of whether the trajectory of my life falls within the bounds of case 1 or 2, I do foresee myself, much later on, becoming a priest. Honestly, I can't quite justify this one as rigorously as the others, but I feel drawn to it. I just know that at present, it is not yet time for me to pursue this. In the meantime, I will do my best to live true to God and His callings.

"Science and reason cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature. And that is because, in the final analysis, we ourselves are a part of the mystery that we are trying to solve." - Max Planck

Regardless, the key to achieving my many ambitions is through focus and consistent effort. In a world rife with distractions and entertainments so impossibly captivating as to occupy nearly all of our intellectual potential, focus, persistence, and deep-set purpose have become the modern superpower.

"If I have ever made any valuable discoveries, it has been due more to patient attention than to any other talent." - Isaac Newton

Among some of my other crazy goals are becoming a chess grandmaster, composing classical piano music, climbing Mount Everest, running across the length of the United States, competing in the 435-mile Adventure Racing World Championship, and conquering the world while I'm at it.

Finally, I would just like to reflect on how absurdly lucky I am to be in the position I find myself in now.

First, I was born in the USA, a 4.125% chance. I also had loving, financially stable, and married parents. If we look at some statistics in the U.S., ~45% of children live with divorced parents, 43% of married couples consider themselves financially stable, ~24% of married women have a single child, and ~6% of students are homeschooled. The probability of each of these few conditions being met can be computed by the product of their individual probabilities. That means that there was a $0.04125 \times 0.55 \times 0.43 \times 0.24 \times 0.035 = \sim 0.000140481 = \sim 0.014\%$ probability that all the mentioned conditions would be satisfied.

Those examples are not even scratching the surface of the blessings I find myself enjoying. If all of them were somehow listed, the zeros before any significant figure would extend off the page.

The point of this is that I, and many others for that matter, have been afforded luxuries that many have not been so fortunate to receive. When I wake up in the morning and see the sunrise glisten off the blades of grass in our pasture, or watch the wind gently sway the trees, I realize what a flawed and imbalanced world we live in. While I enjoy the serenity and Arcadia of the North Georgia Mountains, children in Africa wake up and gather cobalt with

their bare hands daily. I am not mentioning this as some cry for social justice, but rather to put things into stark juxtaposition. We all, as Americans, are ridiculously privileged and have blessings that many would kill for. I suppose the concept I am attempting to convey is that we all have an extraordinary opportunity to impact this world in a positive and remarkable way. It would be a sin to let that go to waste.

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With that, dear reader, I would like to conclude this letter by thanking you. I thank you for bearing with my bizarre rants, listening to my life story, contributing to the incredible organization that is Boy Scouts, and considering me for the rank of Eagle Scout.

Boy Scouts has been a staggeringly positive force in my life, but I fear that in recent years the organization as a whole has been taking a turn for the worse.

Like the United States, and most of the free world for that matter, the BSA seems to be slowly forgetting the principles upon which it was founded and is merely echoing the ideals it once stood for. In particular, the BSA seems to be abandoning tradition in favor of political correctness. It is gradually becoming an organization of acceptance instead of one of standards and principles, much like modern-day Christianity.

"By means of ever more effective methods of mind-manipulation, the democracies will change their nature; the quaint old forms - elections, parliaments, Supreme Courts and all the rest -- will remain. The underlying substance will be a new kind of totalitarianism. All the traditional names, all the hallowed slogans will remain exactly what they were in the good old days. Democracy and freedom will be the theme of every broadcast and editorial. Meanwhile the ruling oligarchy and its highly trained elite of soldiers, policemen, thought-manufacturers and mind-manipulators will quietly run the show as they see fit." - Aldous Huxley

"We must depend upon the Boy Scout Movement to produce the MEN of the future." - Daniel Carter Beard

"The Boy Scouts lay out a set of values that the boys are expected to uphold. The Scouts provide one of the few remaining bastions for the kind of male mentoring that is essential for a boy's journey to manhood." - Harry R. Burger

Iron sharpens iron.

"If we seek merely swollen, slothful ease and ignoble peace, if we shrink from the hard contests where men must win at the hazard of their lives and at the risk of all they hold dear, then bolder and stronger peoples will pass us by, and will win for themselves the domination of the world." - Theodore Roosevelt

Additionally, it seems that the BSA has become overly concerned with defining what scouts can and can't do. Frankly, I despise bureaucracy and feel the BSA is becoming ever more concerned with procedural correctness to the point it is taking the fun out of the program as

a whole.

"It is risky to order a boy not to do something; it immediately opens to him the adventure of doing it." - Robert Baden-Powell

I point these things out only because of how much value Boy Scouts, more specifically, Troop 32 has imparted to me. I wholeheartedly hope for the preservation of the components that made scouting great for me and millions of others, guaranteeing that young men continue to have the opportunity to experience the same.

Kind Regards,

C W. Roll