

What Royal Rangers Means to me **By: Austin T. Spadaro**



Wow! I can't believe that it has been over 12 years since I joined Royal Rangers. At the age of 5 I had no idea what an important role in my life that the Royal Rangers would play. It has had a positive impact on me socially, physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Being a Royal Ranger has been a big part of my social life. I have attended over 50 camp outings. This includes father/son campouts, POW WOWS, Frontiersman Camping Fellowship, and various Advancement Academies. Some of my closest friends I met at Royal Rangers.

One of my favorite memories is from when I had just started the program while we were camping and I kept getting lost in the woods trying to find my way back to the campsite. Since then I've earned the compass merit and even lived through survival camp. For anyone who doesn't know what this is it is when your commanders leave you in the middle of nowhere without food and you have to build a primitive shelter and find your own food. I didn't get much sleep that night because a bee decided to share my tiny shelter with me and I was so hungry I tried to eat a worm.

Although Royal Rangers has been a lot of fun socially, it means so much more than that to me. Physically it has been very grueling and at times has pushed me to my limits. Many of the campouts and events have been in the rain and below freezing temperatures. The 8-hour canoe trip and spelunking trip where we had to crawl through dark wet tunnels especially challenged me physically. These challenges have helped to build my confidence.

Another way Royal Rangers has helped me to grow is mentally. All of the commanders have been willing to share the knowledge and wisdom that they have gained with us. They each have different areas of expertise from their jobs and past experiences and they are always willing to teach us these important lessons.

But most importantly Royal Rangers has helped me to grow spiritually. My commanders have been good spiritual role models for me. I have enjoyed the time we have spent around the campfires praying and learning more about the Bible and what God's plan is for my life. The message is clear that the choices we make now, can affect us for the rest of our lives.

The Wednesday night meetings and other Royal Ranger events have not only helped me to grow socially, physically, mentally, and spiritually but also have helped me to get through some difficult times in my life. Royal Rangers has helped me to stay focus on what's the most important thing in my life – my walk with God.

At this time I would like to thank my mom and dad – for the money, the rides, chaperoning, fund raising, and especially help with my GMA project. I also want to thank the Kaye family for having the merit club where once a week we meet in their home and they help us work on merits. The Kaye family has also helped me to keep on track, stay motivated, and get more organized so I could earn my GMA. I also want to thank Mr. Joe Larocco, Mr. Simpson, Uncle Stephen, and Cmdrs Fannon and Kington, and all my friends that worked with me on my GMA project. I couldn't have done it without them. I also want to thank our outpost Senior Commander John Larocco, and all the commanders for being so excited about the Royal Ranger Program that it keeps us all motivated and not want to quit. Last but not least, I want to thank Pastor Graban for allowing us to have Royal Rangers at our church The Fountain of Life Center.