



THE RIBBON COLLECTOR

A newsletter for those who value the bits of colored cloth and similar or associated items made of other materials intended as awards of recognition in the U.S. of A.



Garreter Press (formerly Patriot Press) P.O. Box 937, Lompoc CA 93438-0937—Greg Ogletree, Proprietor

Advanced Awards (“Merits”) of the Royal Rangers

by Greg Ogletree

From its beginning in 1962, the youth program for boys in the Assemblies of God (A/G) church, called Royal Rangers (RR), has recognized achievement in specific skill areas with what it calls “merit awards”—small bits of colored cloth worn above the uniform pocket, not unlike service ribbons worn by US military personnel on their uniforms. Initially, merit awards were strictly for those in the older age groups. Today, merit awards still exist, but their number and scope have expanded, and boys in other age groups are now encouraged to earn and wear them too. Over the years, the awards have varied in both design and construction. Using published materials and the awards themselves, the author of this article examines the evolving changes of the RR merit awards from 1962 to the present.

John Henry “Johnnie” Barnes (1927-1989), long considered the father of the Royal Rangers, was commissioned by the A/G leadership in late 1961 to create a ministry for boys in the church. In January 1962, Barnes moved from Texas to Springfield MO, location of the A/G headquarters, and began constructing the architecture of the organization and creating materials for it. Barnes, who earned Eagle Scout rank in the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) as a youth, borrowed certain aspects of the BSA program to aid him in the writing of the first RR leader’s manual and handbooks for the three initial boys’ groups: Pioneers (ages 9-11); Trailblazers (12-14); and Air-Sea Rangers (15-17). He had enough done by September of that year to launch the program nationally,¹ and RR “Outposts” (similar to Troops in the Boy Scouts) sprang up around the country “seemingly overnight.”²

Barnes not only created the Royal Rangers, he also was named its first National Commander and served in that position until his death. Throughout that time, he refined the architecture and added new program elements frequently, including the creation of Buckaroos for 7- and 8-year olds in 1966 and Straight Arrows for 5- and 6-year-olds in 1977. One example pertinent to

¹ Most sources say October, but the announcement was published in the 23 September 1962 issue of *The Pentecostal Evangel*.

² In early 1962, Barnes created a pilot Outpost at Webster Park A/G in Springfield which he used to “field test” program materials. Word got around and another Outpost was started in March 1962 at Springfield’s Bethel A/G. Both were officially chartered in August 1962, but Bethel’s submitted their application first so they were chartered as “Outpost No. 1” on 19 August 1962—and celebrated their 25th anniversary on 19 August 1987.

this discussion was the decision in 1968 to add another division, called Trail Rangers, to the oldest age group. We'll see why this is relevant in a moment.

The Trailblazer Handbook was first published in 1962, and the first *Air Ranger and Sea Ranger Handbook* (a boy chose either the Air or Sea program) was released the following year. Both handbooks reveal that boys who were Trailblazers, Air Rangers, or Sea Rangers could earn what were called Advanced Awards.

Because there appears to be no historical file of either official documents or memoranda pertaining to the creation of advanced awards for Royal Rangers, the only recourse is to use the materials that were published and distributed to its members. These include the handbooks, leader's guides, and merchandise catalogs produced over the years.

The earliest *Trailblazer Handbook* in the author's possession says "Copyright 1962" and contains 112 numbered pages. This is believed to be the earliest edition (1st printing, to use the A/G's terminology; later "1962" editions had more pages). In black ink, it illustrated 24 different merit awards and contained the requirements for earning them. Listed in alphabetical order, these awards were:

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Advanced Swimming | Church | Music |
| Astronomy | Cycling | Nature Study |
| Auto | First Aid | Pathfinder |
| Bible | Geology | Photography |
| Bird Study | Hiking | Physical Fitness |
| Boating | Hobby | Swimming |
| Camping | Indian Lore | Weather |
| Canoeing | Lifesaving | Wildlife |

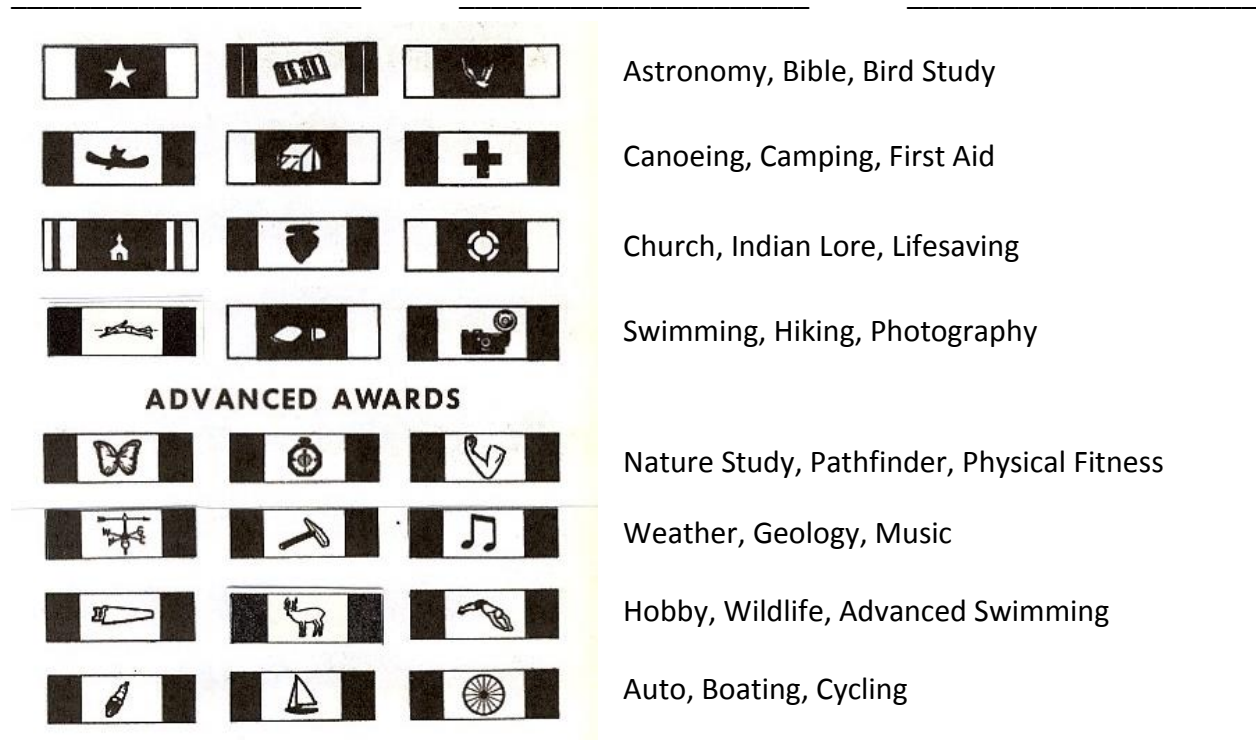


Figure 1

These 24 awards were illustrated piecemeal throughout the handbook's Part III, titled "Climbing the Advanced Trail," next to the requirements for earning each, but only 12 of them were chosen for illustration collectively on the "Advanced Awards" title page (p. 98). Rather than include that incomplete graphic here, the title page of a subsequent edition that shows more than just 12 bars has been doctored and included above (Figure 1) so that illustrations of the original 24 Advanced Awards may be shown. The names of each are to the right in the same approximate corresponding positions. Note that these are *not* in alphabetical order.

In none of the *collective* illustrations contained in any of the handbooks does there appear to be any particular order for the awards. They certainly were not displayed alphabetically.

The next version of the handbook in the author's possession, also dated 1962, has 126 numbered pages, lists 33 advanced awards and, curiously, contains the following note on page 99: "There is only one type of advanced award. (There is no longer a different award for Trailblazer, Air-Sea, and Trail Rangers.)" Because Trail Rangers didn't exist until 1968, this means this version of the 1962 handbook had to have been revised and reprinted either during or after 1968, even though there is no indication of that on the copyright page.³ In fact, between 1962 and 1975 there were a number of changes made to the *Trailblazer Handbook*, but because the handbooks were not marked to indicate which printing they were, it is difficult to determine precisely when changes were made in the awards program during the early years. The only way one can distinguish between the different handbook versions during the 1962-1974 period is to note the number of pages and/or set them side by side and do page-to-page comparisons. Content comparisons allow one to determine, or at least approximate, when a particular handbook was actually printed, and from that we can deduce when specific awards were introduced.

So, sometime after 1962 nine additional merit awards were added to the handbooks for older boys. These were: Amateur Radio, Archery, Athletics, Aviation, Chemistry, Christian Service, Citizenship, Rifle Marksmanship, and Wilderness Survival. (For illustrations of these and some of the later awards, please refer to Figure 7, which shows the actual bars in color rather than just black-and-white graphics of them, keeping in mind the ribbon bars in Figure 7 were not actually made during the 1960s.) Evidence suggests the four underlined awards were likely created near the end of the decade, after the other five, as will be explained on the next page.

The text, quoted on the previous page, from the note on page 99 in the later handbook is part of the following paragraph that contains additional information about advanced awards:

There is only one type of advanced award. (There is no longer a different award for Trailblazer, Air-Sea, and Trail Rangers.) These awards are blue and white in color. Boys with old Trailblazer awards may update them by completing the additional requirements not included in the old requirements. Only four rows (16) of awards are worn on the uniform. (Additional awards may be worn on an award vest.)⁴

³ Also in the author's personal library is a *Trailblazer Handbook* that says "10th Printing 1975 / © Copyright 1962." Obviously, there were eight subsequent printings of the 1962 edition before 1975, but it appears omission of the sequential "Printing" information was standard procedure from 1962 through the early 1970s. Changes were contained in some, perhaps all, of these so-called printings, so they were, in fact, revised editions, even though that term wasn't used for the first time until 1979. The handbook that year was marked "©1962, 1979 / Revised Edition 1979 / 12th Printing 1979." Clearly, someone did not understand the purpose of the term "Printing" in this context because this was, in fact, the first printing of the 1979 edition.

⁴ Incidentally, the 1975 handbook contains this same exact paragraph.

Collectors of early RR merit awards know that two different color schemes were used: red and white, and blue and white. Unfortunately, nothing can be found that specifies which color scheme was used for which program, but we do have some clues. Based upon the fact that the advancement (i.e., rank) chevrons for Trailblazers were red during the early years and for Rangers they were blue, it seems logical that the colors would be the same for both the chevrons and the ribbons within each program. Also, the necktie worn by Air-Sea Rangers was blue. The first (1963) edition of the *Air Ranger and Sea Ranger Handbook* might contain the answer to this question, but so far a copy has proven elusive. Until more information becomes available, all that is certain is that both the blue and the red merits were used during the 1960s, until the red were discontinued, leaving only the blue. When did this happen?



Figure 2

The 1969 edition of the *Air-Sea-Trail Rangers Handbook* provides some additional information on this topic. First, it contains the same note, quoted above, that's in the subsequent editions of the Trailblazer handbook, which means the red-and-white merits were phased out no later than 1969. Assuming the red-and-whites were initially used by Trailblazers, if Trail Rangers earned them at all it wasn't for very long—a year at most. Second, it contains a photograph on page 196 of a Sea Ranger (Figure 2) who is wearing both blue-and-white and red-and-white merit ribbons, meaning those awards that had already been earned could still be worn in their original color (i.e., there was no RR-wide edict requiring that red-and-whites be switched to blue-and-whites).⁵ And third, the merit awards shown in the photograph show the later, pin-back style ribbon bars, which means these were in use no later than 1969. So, what was used before the pinbacks?



Figure 3



Figure 4

Initially, the blue and the red awards for both groups were small (1-1/16" x 1/2") rectangular segments of embroidered cloth (Figure 3), intended to be sewn directly to the uniform. Since

⁵ Although the photograph is black and white, the color red appears as gray, and blue appears as black (note the medal worn by the boy, with its red, white, and blue suspension ribbon), so it's easy to determine that ten of the merit ribbons are red-and-whites and five are blue-and-whites. Also, note that all ribbons on the bottom row are red; if the merits earned first are placed beneath those earned later, this reinforces the supposition that the red-and-white merits were earned by Trailblazers and the blue-and-whites were for those in the Air-Sea Rangers.

these were the first advanced awards, we'll call them the Type-1 merit bars. The red Type-1 merits have been observed only for the original 24 advanced awards, whereas the blue Type-1 are known to exist for 29 of the awards, the additional ones being: Amateur Radio, Archery, Athletics, Aviation, and Christian Service. This means that these five additional awards were created between 1962 and 1969, probably around 1965. The inconvenience of having to use a needle and thread on such a small piece of cloth is what undoubtedly led to production of the pin-backed merits with printed, rather than embroidered, designs (Figure 4). These Type-2 awards were the standard size (1-3/8" x 3/8") and protected by a celluloid-like soft plastic covering. The aforementioned photograph (Figure 2) tells us these were in use by 1969, so the Type-1 awards were probably discontinued around 1968, perhaps earlier. But there were problems with the "new and improved" versions too—mostly, dissatisfaction with the way they looked on the uniform. The type-1 merits had been sewn in neatly aligned rows, but the new pin-backs were attached individually and it took a skillful hand to attach them in such a way that they presented a neat, uniform look rather than a sloppy appearance. Apparently, their use was so short-lived (possibly just a year or two) that they are extremely difficult to find nowadays. In fact, some collectors aren't even aware the Type-2 merits exist!

By the way, the reason the merits in Figure 4 appear to be upside-down when compared to those in Figure 3 is to make a point. Occasionally, some of the graphics of advanced awards in the handbooks were mistakenly inverted (the author flipped two of those used for Figure 1 so they would be correct) and this inattention to detail even carried over into the manufacturing process on occasion because the fastener orientation on the back of these particular Type-2 awards for the Indian Lore merits is the opposite of the orientation for all the other Type-2 awards—meaning *someone* thought the arrowheads should be pointing up rather than down!

During the late 1970s, the composition of the merit awards was described in the handbook for the first time (note the addition of the word *plastic*): "There is only one type of advanced award. These plastic awards are blue and white in color." Also, whereas before, four merits could be worn in four rows, now a total of 18 merits could be displayed: "Advanced awards are entered over the left pocket in rows of three with a limit of six rows. Additional awards may be worn on an award vest."⁶ The Ranger in the photo at right (Figure 5) illustrates this. So, before the end of that decade, the pin-backs had been replaced by the hard plastic slide-on-style Type-3 merit awards (Figure 6) that are constructed very much like military-style service ribbons. Because so far as can be determined these were never produced in the red-and-white color scheme for the older age group, they are often referred to simply as "blue and whites."



Figure 5

⁶ 1979 Revised Edition, 12th printing



Figure 6

Although the hard-plastic blue-and-whites were not described in print until the late 1970s, it is possible—and, given the scarcity of the Type-2 bars, even probable—they were introduced much earlier in that decade, perhaps as early as 1970 or 1971. But until a source is discovered that can pin their introduction to a specific year, the most accurate way to date the blue-and-whites is just to say they were introduced sometime during the 1970s.

At some point in time, the blue-and-white merit awards were also incorporated into the advancement program for boys in the Pioneers age group. *The Royal Rangers Leaders Manual* of 1983 says, “Boys who have earned the master rating in the Pioneers are permitted to earn advanced awards listed in the *Royal Rangers Trailblazers Handbook*. Real sharp boys may earn the master rating in Pioneers 6 to 8 months before they reach Trailblazer age. In order to maintain their interest, they are permitted to earn the Trailblazer advanced awards. These awards are worn over the left pocket directly under the Pioneer advancement pins.”⁷

Concurrent with introduction of the Type-3 awards was the addition of twelve new merits (Cooking, CPR, Firecraft, Fishing, Hide Tanning, Home Safety, Motor Boating, Ropecraft, Sailing, Scuba Diving, Tool Craft, and Water Safety), raising the total number of awards from 33 to 45. A few years later, sometime in the early 1980s, another dozen awards were added (Bachelor, Bugling, Electricity, Gardening, Home Repair, Horsemanship, Leather Craft, Reading, Safety, Sign Language, Skiing, and Winter Camping), making the total 57, and by 1986 that number had increased again, to 67 (with the addition of merit awards for Art, Carpentry, Computer Science, Foreign Language, Foreign Missions, Model Rocketry, Plumbing, Skin Diving, Solar Science, and Space Exploration). About the only complaint heard regarding the Type-3 ribbon bars was that not all were the same length, so when mounted with others they sometimes presented a non-uniform appearance. Still, nearly everyone in the program considered them a significant improvement over the pin-backs they had replaced.

The 67 blue-and-white merits are both listed and illustrated in alphabetical order on the next page in Figure 7, which was page 9 in the *1991 Royal Rangers Catalog* of merchandise. Note that the names of each are accompanied by a parenthetical descriptive term so there can be no doubt about which ribbon bar is used for any particular award. It should be noted that minor differences in size and/or design resulted in a number of variations for some of these bars, but these differences were not intentional and are usually of interest only to collectors. However, there were significant differences for a couple of the awards, which will be discussed later.

The number of awards stayed at 67 until the blue-and-whites, still illustrated in the *1992 Trailblazer Handbook*, were replaced during the early 1990s. That happened because of a change in leadership.

When Barnes died in 1989, the Rev. Ken Hunt was appointed to take his place as National Commander. One of Hunt’s initiatives during the early 1990s was the expansion of the RR advancement system. Additional awards were added to encourage more young men to earn

⁷ This accommodation may have been allowed prior to 1983, but earlier leader manuals are presently unavailable for review.



ROYAL RANGERS—Uniform Accessories



Advanced Awards. Given upon completion of the requirements designated for each category.

- Advanced Swimming (Diver) 15MR0420
- Amateur Radio (Radio) 15MR0421
- Archery (Arrow) 15MR0422
- Art (Palette) 15MR0266
- Astronomy (Star) 15MR0423
- Athletics (Winged Foot) 15MR0424
- Auto (Spark Plug) 15MR0425
- Aviation (Plane) 15MR0426
- Bachelor (Knight) 15MR0368
- Bible (Bible) 15MR0427
- Bird Study (Bird) 15MR0428
- Boating (Sailboat) 15MR0429
- Bugling (Bugle) 15MR0369
- Camping (Tent) 15MR0430
- Canoeing (Canoe) 15MR0431
- Carpentry (Hammer) 15MR0267
- Chemistry (Test Tube) 15MR0432
- Christian Service (Torch) 15MR0433
- Church (Church) 15MR0434
- Citizenship (Striped Shield) 15MR0435
- Computer Science (Keyboard and Monitor) 15MR0268
- Cooking (Kettle) 15MR0479
- CPR-Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (Heart) 15MR0455
- Cycling (Wheel) 15MR0436
- Electricity (Lightning) 15MR0370
- Firecraft (Fire) 15MR0488
- First Aid (Cross) 15MR0437
- Fishing (Fish) 15MR0454
- Foreign Language (Globe with "L") 15MR0269
- Foreign Missions (Open Bible and Candle) 15MR0270
- Geology (Pick) 15MR0438
- Hide Tanning (Hide) 15MR0459
- Hiking (Footprint) 15MR0439
- Hobby (Saw) 15MR0440
- Gardening (Shovel) 15MR0371
- Home Repair (Pliers) 15MR0372
- Home Safety (House) 15MR0489
- Horsemanship (Saddle) 15MR0373
- Indian Lore (Arrowhead) 15MR0441
- Leathercraft (Punch) 15MR0374
- Lifesaving (Buoy) 15MR0442
- Model Rocketry (Rocket) 15MR0271
- Motor Boating (Helms) 15MR0478
- Music (Note) 15MR0443
- Nature Study (Butterfly) 15MR0444
- Pathfinder (Compass) 15MR0445
- Photography (Camera) 15MR0446
- Physical Fitness (Arm) 15MR0447
- Plumbing (Faucet) 15MR0272
- Reading (Book) 15MR0375
- Rifle Marksmanship (Target) 15MR0448
- Ropecraft (Rope) 15MR0456
- Safety (Cross) 15MR0376
- Sailing (Anchor) 15MR0453
- Scuba Diving (Diver) 15MR0477
- Sign Language (Hands) 15MR0377
- Skiing (Ski) 15MR0378
- Skin Diving (Underwater Diver) 15MR0273
- Solar Science (Sun) 15MR0274
- Space Exploration (Spacecraft) 15MR0275
- Swimming (Swimmer) 15MR0449
- Toolcraft (Ax and Log) 15MR0458
- Water Safety (W.S.I. Life Saver) 15MR0457
- Weather (Weather Vane) 15MR0450
- Wilderness Survival (Campfire) 15MR0451
- Wildlife (Elk) 15MR0452
- Winter Camping (Igloo) 15MR0379

\$1.25 each

Advanced Award Ribbon Mounting Bars.

- Single 15MR0250 50¢
- Double 15MR0251 60¢
- Triple 15MR0252 70¢

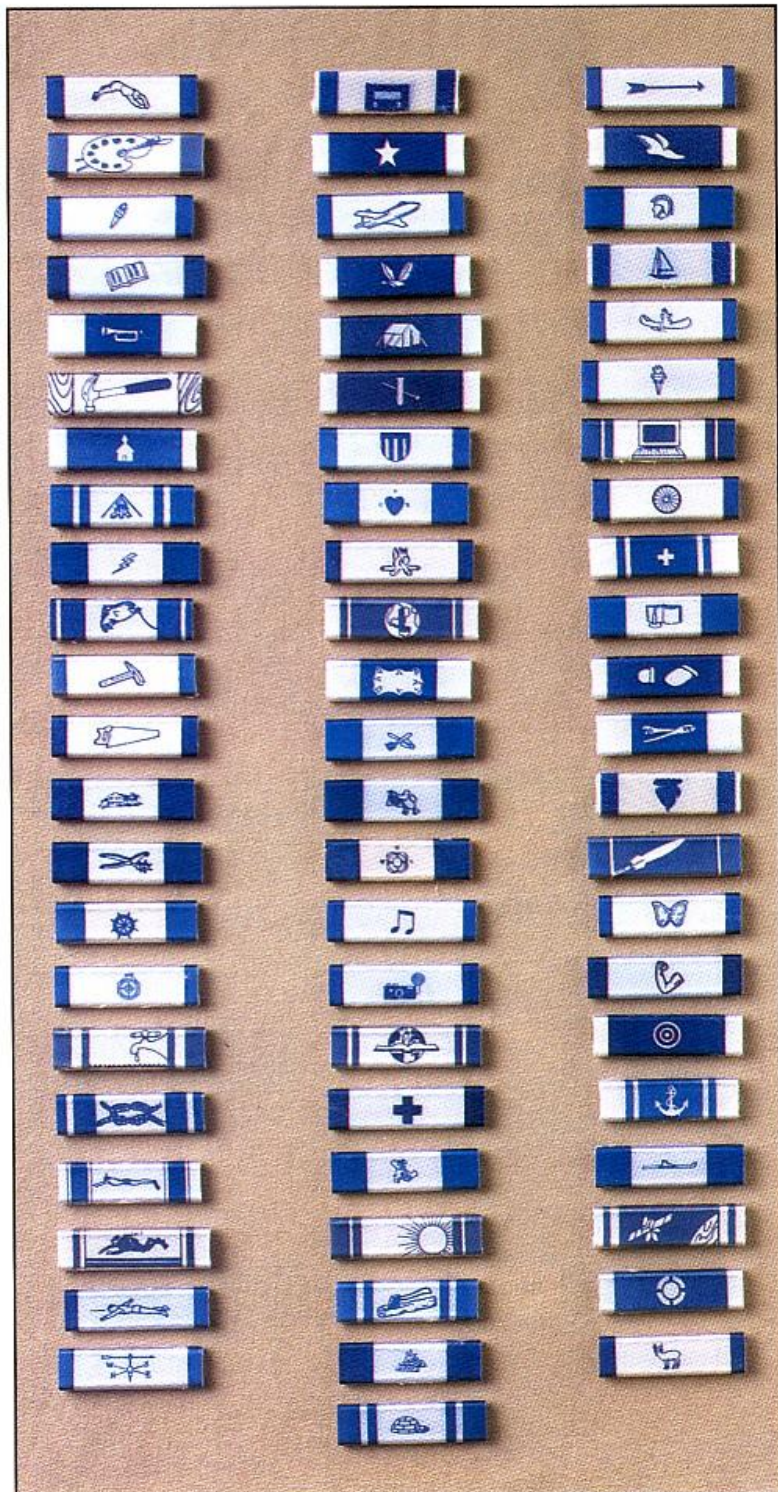


Figure 7

the Gold Medal of Achievement (GMA), the RR equivalent of the BSA's Eagle Scout medal. Furthermore, the design of all merits was revamped and a new multi-colored array of merit awards appeared, making the old blue-and-whites obsolete. Some of these colorful new merits were illustrated in the *1995 Royal Rangers Catalog*. In the welcome to readers inside its front cover, several "all-new items" were mentioned, but not the merits, so it seems likely the newly designed merits were introduced a year or two earlier in a previous catalog (i.e., the 1992, 1993, or 1994 edition). Until these catalogs can be reviewed, the exact year the new awards debuted can't be determined, so for now, "early 1990s" will have to suffice.



Figure 8

Unlike the blue-and-whites, the newer, Type-4, awards (Figure 8) introduced in the early 1990s not only came in a variety of colors, they were no longer covered with plastic, although they did retain their slide-on characteristic, meaning they could still be mounted on the military-style metal mounting bars that had been used for the blue-and-whites. By and large, the design printed on each merit remained basically unchanged, but the assortment of colors (as can be seen on the next page) gave the "ribbon rack" on the uniform an entirely different look. Some liked it; others didn't. In the minds of some, the panoply of colors reduced, by a considerable amount, the degree of uniformity in the boys' uniforms (it's called a *uniform* for a reason), but the most common complaints seemed to be about a lack of standardization (Figure 8 illustrates this by showing two versions of the Type-4 merit for Indian Lore) and the low quality of workmanship on many of the ribbons (some images were so sloppy they could be recognized only by those who knew what they were supposed to be). This was especially a challenge for some of the 31 newly created merit awards, with which members were understandably unfamiliar, introduced along with the new-style ribbons. These newest awards were:

Ambassadors in Mission*	Golf	Pioneering*
American History	Handicapped Awareness*	President's Award
Animal Husbandry	Hunter Safety*	Public Speaking
Baseball*	Insect Study	Puppeteer
Basketball*	Journalism	Reptile Study
Black Powder	Law Enforcement	Senior Citizens
Camp Safety*	Light-for-the-Lost	Tennis*
Christian Missions	MAPS DFM	Track*
Environment	MAPS DHM	Wrestling
Football	Model	
Forestry*	Pioneer Lore	

Compounding the problem was that less than a third of the new awards were illustrated in the catalog (those listed above with an asterisk) along with 44 of the preexisting awards, none of which was even labeled! The addition of 31 new awards brought the total number of merits



Collection of Greg Ogletree

Key for Fig. 9 (Figure 9 shown above)

A1	Amateur Radio (radio)	J5	Horsemanship (saddle)
A2	Ambassadors in Missions (AIM)	K1	Hunter Safety (sighted deer)
A3	American History (monument)	K2	Indian Lore (arrowhead)
A4	Animal Husbandry (horse)	K3	Insect Study (ant)
A5	Archery (arrow)	K4	Journalism (ink & quill)
B1	Art (palette)	K5	Law Enforcement (sheriff's badge)
B2	Astronomy (star)	L1	Leathercraft (punch)
B3	Athletics (winged foot)	L2	Lifesaving (buoy)
B4	Auto (spark plug)	L3	Light-for-the-Lost (Bible/torch)
B5	Aviation (plane)	L4	Missions Abroad Placement Service*
C1	Bachelor (knight)	L5	Mission America Placement Service*
C2	Baseball (baseball)	M1	Model (battleship)
C3	Basketball (basketball)	M2	Model Rocketry (rocket)
C4	Bible (Bible)	M3	Motor Boating (helms)
C5	Bird Study (bird)	M4	Music (note)
D1	Black Powder (powder horn)	M5	Nature Study (butterfly)
D2	Boating (anchor)	N1	Pathfinder (compass)
D3	Bugling (bugle)	N2	Photography (camera)
D4	Camp Safety (fire/hazard sign)	N3	Physical Fitness (arm)
D5	Camping (tent)	N4	Pioneer Lore (fortress)
E1	Canoeing (canoe)	N5	Pioneering (tower)
E2	Carpentry (hammer)	O1	Plumbing (faucet)
E3	Chemistry (test tube)	O2	President's Award (Washington silhouette)
E4	Christian Missions (cross points to world)	O3	Public Speaking (gavel)
E5	Christian Service (torch)	O4	Puppeteer (puppet)
F1	Church (church)	O5	Reading (book)
F2	Citizenship (striped shield)	P1	Reptile Study (snake)
F3	Computer Science (keyboard & monitor)	P2	Rifle Marksmanship (target)
F4	Cooking (kettle)	P3	Ropecraft (rope)
F5	CPR (heart)	P4	Safety (cross)
G1	Cycling (wheel)	P5	Sailing (sailboat)
G2	Electricity (lightning)	Q1	Scuba Diving (underwater diver)
G3	Environment (cloud/sun/rain)	Q2	Senior Citizens (senior citizens)
G4	Firecraft (fire)	Q3	Sign Language (hands)
G5	First Aid (first aid cross)	Q4	Skiing (ski)
H1	Fishing (fish)	Q5	Skin Diver (diver)
H2	Football (football)	R1	Solar Science (sun)
H3	Foreign Language (globe with "L")	R2	Space Exploration (spacecraft)
H4	Foreign Missions (open Bible & candle)	R3	Swimming (swimmer)
H5	Forestry (trees)	R4	Swimming Advanced (swimmer w/bars)
I1	Gardening (shovel)	R5	Tennis (tennis packet)
I2	Geology (pick)	S1	Track (runner)
I3	Golf (golfing flag)	S2	Toolcraft (ax and log)
I4	Handicapped Awareness (wheelchair)	S3	Water Safety (W.S.I. life saver)**
I5	Hide Tanning (hide)	S4	Weather (weather vane)
J1	Hiking (footprint)	S5	Wilderness Survival (campfire)
J2	Hobby (saw)	T1	Wildlife (elk)
J3	Home Repair (pliers)	T2	Winter Camping (igloo)
J4	Home Safety (house)	T3	Wrestling (arm wrestling)

*Missions Abroad Placement Service bar says "MAPS/DFM" – the latter stands for Division of Foreign Ministries in the A/G church.

Mission America Placement Service bar says "MAPS/DHM" – the latter stands for Division of Home Missions in the A/G church.

**"W.S.I." stands for Water Safety Instructor.

to 98, shown in Figure 9. (Significant variations are not shown and will be discussed later.) The number of merits stayed at 98 for about a decade.⁸



The various colors served a specific purpose. All advanced awards were now divided into categories and each category was identified by a color. All attempts to locate a list of the specific categories have been fruitless, but the colors used on the ribbons were: Blue, Brown, Green, Orange and/or Yellow (may have been called “Gold”), Purple/Magenta, and Red.

Figure 10. Type-4 merits on a Royal Ranger’s uniform.

Before moving on to the next generation of merit awards, we’ll first address other changes that occurred up to this point. Note that the merit for Boating now displays an anchor, previously used on the Sailing merit, and the Sailing merit now displays the sailboat that had been used for the Boating merit—a very logical and long overdue change. This switch was made prior to 1992, while the blue-and-whites were still being used. Similarly, the Scuba Diving and Skin Diving merits were finally switched, probably around the same time;⁹ the Scuba Diving award had depicted a snorkeler ever since its introduction back in the 1970s, at least that’s the image that was used in the handbook illustrations, but then again, it could have been a mistake that ended up being repeated over and over again. In the 1980s when the Skin Diving award was created, a scuba diver was depicted on the bar for that award; it would have been the perfect time to switch the two but that wasn’t done then.

Mistakes, and not just with orientation, definitely occurred in the handbooks. For example, the 1979 *Trailblazer Handbook* shows the diving swimmer used on the Advanced Swimming award from the 1960s through the 1980s not only for the Advanced Swimming merit but also for the Swimming merit. And this error was repeated in the 1986 and 1988 editions. In the 1992 edition, it was still used on the Swimming award, but the Advanced Swimming award was inadvertently omitted. Speaking of the Advanced Swimming award, whoever was in charge of the awards program couldn’t make up their mind about whether it should be called the Advanced Swimming award or the Swimming Advanced award, which means it was found in different places on the alphabetized lists of merits, depending on which name was in vogue at the time a list was printed. In fact, the award’s absence from the 1992 handbook was likely the result of its being cut from the “A” position and then being forgotten before it was “pasted” in the “S” section. The design of the Advanced Swimming merit changed completely with the introduction of the multicolored Type-4 awards; an additional stripe was added to each end of the Swimming bar on the redesigned merit award—again, a logical and long overdue change

⁸ It should be noted that one unofficial online source (royalrangershistory.org) indicates two additional awards—Backpacking Basics, and Kayaking—were added prior to implementation of the current (Type-5) merit awards, and intuitively it seems logical that someone may have wanted the total number of merits to be an even 100, but these have not actually been observed in the Type-4 style, and the dates on the only official documentation that can be located that pertains to these two awards indicate they were not created until the Type-5 merits were introduced. Furthermore, when the Type-5 merits premiered, which included these two additional awards, the total number of merits was just 99 because First Aid and CPR had been combined.

⁹ In the 1991 merchandise catalog, a snorkeler was still depicted on the Scuba Diving award and a scuba diver was still depicted on the Skin Diving award, but these had been switched by the time the 1992 edition of the *Trailblazer Handbook* was released.

(after all, the Advanced Swimming merit had actually depicted someone diving, not swimming, and there were already two other merits with “Diving” in their name). And finally, readers who are familiar with chemistry equipment will have noticed that the “(Test Tube)” description for the Type-4 Chemistry merit should have been changed to “(Beaker)” when the blue-and-whites were replaced because the image on the ribbon was changed.

In 1998, Hunt announced his resignation and in 1999 Richard Mariott became the third National Commander of the Royal Rangers. Mariott was charged with taking the expansion of the advancement system Hunt had begun and broadening it to reach a new generation. The result was a complete revamping of the entire RR program, which including rearranging and renaming the age groups: In 2000, Straight Arrows and the first year of Buckaroos were combined to become Ranger Kids; the second year of Buckaroos and all Pioneers became Discovery Rangers; Trailblazers were renamed Adventure Rangers; and Challengers (formerly Air-Sea-Trail Rangers) became Expedition Rangers. Furthermore, for the first time the advancement system of each age group became merit-driven, allowing boys new to the RR to begin advancing immediately.



Figure 11

The current (Type-5) merit awards were instituted beginning in 2002, with a transition period cutoff date of 31 December 2004 for those already working on their GMA requirements. The design of the awards was a radical departure from all the previous merits. Merit awards were now patches, but the patches could be represented on some uniform combinations by ribbon bars (Figure 11), now devoid of the various artful depictions that had adorned merit ribbons from the very beginning, leaving just plain ribbons of a solid color. New merit categories were established, with a corresponding ribbon color for each, as follows:

DISCOVERY RANGERS:	Core Skill Merits (12)	Red
	Supplemental Skill Merits (10)	Blue
ADVENTURE RANGERS:	Core Skill Merits (18)	Gold
	Supplemental Skill Merits (28)	Green
EXPEDITION RANGERS:	Skill Merits (31)	Silver

Total number of merits: 99

(Backpacking Basics and Kayaking have been added, but First Aid and CPR were combined)

Note that all Skill merits were now represented by just five ribbon bars: red, blue, gold, green, and silver. Shortly after the debut of the single-color Type-5 ribbons, the Bible merit award was pulled from the Skill category (it had been in the Adventure Rangers Core Skill category), expanded into multiple levels of 15 different merits, and given its own category with its own color of ribbon (orange for Discovery Rangers and Brown for Adventure Rangers).¹⁰ The new chart looked like this:

DISCOVERY RANGERS:	Core Skill Merits (13)	Red
	Supplemental Skill Merits (10)	Blue
	Bible Merits (15)	Orange
ADVENTURE RANGERS:	Core Skill Merits (17)	Gold
	Supplemental Skill Merits (29)	Green
	Bible Merits (15)	Brown
EXPEDITION RANGERS:	Skill Merits (31)	Silver

Total number of merits: 130

Concurrent with introduction of the new solid-color merit ribbons was the renaming of several of the awards. Most are close to the former name but those that differ significantly are: AIM is now Youth Missions; Athletics is now Sports; Foreign Missions is now World Missions; MAPS/DFM is now World Missions—Construction; and MAPS/DHM is now Home Missions—Construction. Additionally, Pathfinder was split into both Compass and Orienteering; Rope Craft was split into Rope Craft and Lashing; and First Aid and CPR were combined into just one award, called First Aid-CPR (as mentioned previously in Footnote 8).

A further breakdown of the color-coded categories for the Skill merits was contained in the 2005 catalog listing, which had them categorized as shown in the chart on the next page. The asterisks indicate that some shifting between categories was occurring for the first few years after the Type-5 awards were implemented. For our purposes here, the category color for each specific award isn't really all that important; what's relevant is that the merit awards were categorized by color and these colors indicated the age group: Discovery Rangers earned awards in the red and blue groups; Adventure Rangers earned awards in the gold and green groups; and Expedition Rangers earned merits listed in the silver group. The 2005 catalog also contained an "Old-Merit to New-Merit Conversion Chart" and stated that:

Rangers who are currently working on either the old GMA or the Transition GMA may continue to use old-program merits requirements they have completed toward their GMA work until December 31, 2004.... Starting January 1, 2004, only the new color bordered merit or the old equivalent merit identified in the conversion table can be used to complete work toward the new GMA (March 15, 2003 revision). Also, Royal Rangers should not start new merit work using old merit requirements after January 1, 2004.

¹⁰ According to information currently on the RR Website, the new, multiple Bible Merits were introduced in 2002; however, guidance posted on the Website in 2005 did not list the new "Bible Merits" categories for Discovery Rangers and Adventure Rangers, and still showed the Bible Merit as a skill award for Adventure Rangers only. Curiously, the online catalog at that time did show the orange and brown merit ribbon bars though!

created.¹¹ The Bible merits were rewritten and new Leadership merits were created, six each for Discovery, Adventure, and Expedition Rangers. In order to accommodate the addition of Leadership merits while maintaining the same color categories already in use, all Discovery Ranger skill merits were moved to the Blue category and all Adventure Ranger skill merits were moved to the Green category. The new merit categories under the 2010 system are shown below.

2010 Merit Awards

DISCOVERY RANGERS:	Leadership Merits (6)	Red
	Skill Merits (53)	Blue
	Bible Merits (15)	Orange
ADVENTURE RANGERS:	Leadership Merits (6)	Gold
	Skill Merits (75)	Green
	Bible Merits (15)	Brown
EXPEDITION RANGERS:	Leadership Merits (6)	Sky Blue
	Skill Merits (85)	Silver

Total number of merits: 261

In order to facilitate the transition from the 2002 advancement system to the 2010 system, the changes were implemented over a period of time rather than immediately. The 2002 system was finally discontinued 1 January 2013 (1 June for Expedition Rangers). Understandably, there was quite a bit of confusion about this, and much guidance was published on the topic before, during, and after the transition period.



Figure 12

Additionally, as stated earlier, by this time all merit awards were actually patches whose borders corresponded to the colors listed above, with the solid-color ribbon bars worn on dress

¹¹ The new Skill merits are listed online so there's no need to list them all here.

and utility uniforms merely as a means of representing merit patches earned in a specific color group. One award ribbon is worn representing all merits of a particular color category. If more than one patch is earned in a color group, metal numerals may be added to the corresponding colored ribbon to indicate the total number of merit awards earned in that group.¹² Figure 12 shows a typical RR “ribbon rack” containing most of the Type-5 merit award bars and also some numerals indicating additional awards. So now, just eight ribbon bars (the eight shown in Figure 11) have replaced what otherwise would be more than 250!

Now, as promised earlier, we’ll turn to a discussion of the significant variations of the earlier merit awards. Most of these appear on the Type-4 awards, but there are at least two Type-3 merits that warrant a mention, the Bible award and the Church award. Both of these are shown in the top row of Figure 13, below.



Figure 13

Compare with the same awards shown in Figure 7 and the differences are readily apparent: This Bible merit here has two blue stripes (rather than one) on each end, and this Church merit has two white stripes (rather than one) on each end. For the Type-4 merits: Camping appears almost black rather than brown; Geology is magenta (or purple) rather than yellow; Electricity is green rather than magenta/purple; and Astronomy is yellow rather than magenta/purple. The remaining merits, above, have opposite orientations: Tool Craft has the ax handle to the left rather than right; Plumbing has the faucet on the left rather than right; Photography has the flash attachment on the left rather than right; Athletics depicts the winged foot pointing to the left rather than right; Canoeing has the paddler facing the other way; Basketball shows the ball rotated 90 degrees from the one shown on the other ribbon; and Bachelor depicts the knight facing to the right rather than left.¹³ The Baseball award was skipped over intentionally because it actually has two significant differences: It is golden-yellow/orange (not sure what was intended) rather than green, and the ball has been rotated 90 degrees so that the seams are displayed on the top and bottom rather than the left and right. Color changes on these had

¹² Wear of the metal numerals is optional rather than required.

¹³ In all of these, “left” means the viewer’s left and “right” means the viewer’s right, not the wearer’s.

to have been intentional, but one can't help wonder why the orientation changes were made. Hopefully it wasn't for political purposes like the bison on the Department of the Interior seal!¹⁴

Also, changes in orientation were made to some bars when the transition was made from the Type-3 to the Type-4 awards. For example, compare the bar for the Art Type-3 award in Figure 7 to the Type-4 award in Figure 9 (the palette's notch is to the left on one and to the right on the other). Other apparent orientation changes between the two figures are more likely the result of inattention to detail when setting up the bars for photographing. For example, Archery, Gardening, Hiking, Indian Lore, and Leathercraft most likely were all inadvertently turned 180 degrees so that they appear "upside-down" in the photo; this was certainly the case with the Astronomy award, which should have the single point of the star pointing up. Proper orientation of some merit bar graphics in the handbooks was also a continuing challenge over the years.

A discussion of proper orientation leads naturally to one of proper display, so let's now address the official order of precedence for the Royal Rangers advanced awards. Nothing could be found in print on this topic, but there is an online source addressing the subject—a page on the RR Website that's titled "Medals & Ribbons Order of Wear." It has two lists, one for adult leaders and another for the boys. Merit ribbons are not specifically listed for the adults, but an adult may wear the highest advancement award earned as a boy, other than the GMA, which he may also wear. For the youth, the "Order of Wear" for the merit ribbons, from highest to lowest, is as follows: Sky Blue, Silver, Gold, Green, Brown, Red, Blue, and Orange—just as shown in Figure 11 (the ribbons in Figure 12 are not in correct sequence and may have been assembled before the "Order of Wear" was established). This page of the RR Website appears to be a relatively recent creation because the *Royal Rangers Awards and Recognition Book*, published in the 1980s, makes no mention of precedence, nor do any of the handbooks that were reviewed while researching this paper. Photographs contained in handbooks indicate that most Rangers tended to place the more recent awards above awards earned earlier, but otherwise there was little commonality in the wearing of the advanced awards. In earlier times, other than placing a limit on the number of ribbon bars that could be worn above the pocket, there was simply no guidance provided to wearers of the awards.¹⁵

In conclusion, a word to collectors: The current merit ribbons are quite easy to obtain because they are not unique; numerous organizations across the country have awards that use ribbons of just one color. The challenge is locating and acquiring the earlier merit ribbons, those used from the beginning up through the end of the 20th century. The diversity of these earlier awards, and especially the apparent scarcity of some of them, makes that challenge formidable. Nevertheless, the attempt is sure to be not only educational but rewarding because the earlier awards, worn in the 1960s, are now fetching premium prices on the secondary market—when they can be found. Hopefully, this treatise will help facilitate that endeavor. Good Hunting! ❖

¹⁴ During the 1980s, Interior Secretary James G. Watt directed that the Bison face the opposite direction, to reflect "the political orientation of the department." It was switched back after he left office. (See Sources for reference)

¹⁵ Boys in the Royal Rangers may also earn medals and other awards, most of which are represented on the uniform by a corresponding ribbon bar. At this writing, there are 23 other such awards, the highest being the Medal of Valor. The official order of precedence places the eight Merit ribbons at the bottom of the list, making a total of 31 ribbons. These additional 23 awards explain the other ribbon bars on the "rack" shown in Figure 11, to be covered soon in a different article on RR awards.

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