

BSA's Loneliest Award

The NESA Distinguished Service Award



Proposed NESA Distinguished
Service Award Square Knot

Scouting's many ranks and awards are common knowledge to most people, yet there are some awards that rarely find a uniform.

Eagle Palms are rare. Awards for heroism, merit, conservation, and religion are rare because they often have tough and unique standards that few people can meet. Distinguished service awards have their own unique criteria over long periods of time, such as the Silver Beaver, Silver Antelope, Silver Buffalo, and the Order of the Arrow's DSA.

Two distinguished service awards are limited to Eagle Scouts. The best known is the Distinguished Eagle Scout Award (DESA), which requires a minimum of 25 years of distinction after earning the Eagle Badge. The DESA is also the only adult award that is also a rank. The least known Eagle Award is the National Eagle Scout Association Distinguished Service Award, which was last presented in 1988.

Distinguished Eagles are certainly rare, with only about 2,000 awarded out of more than 1.5 million Eagle Scouts. However, according to available records, the NESA DSA has only been awarded 27 times.

The first NESA DSAs were presented during 1976-78 to early national leaders of NESA from the former Knights of Dumanis, the forerunner of NESA. During 1982, 1984, and 1986, several awards were presented to members of the NESA National Committee until that committee was dissolved in 1986 and its duties assumed by the NESA Board of Regents, all of whom are Distinguished Eagle Scouts. A few of those recipients were also leaders of local NESA chapters. The last award, dated 1988, was presented at the 1989 National Scout Jamboree.

Disbanding of formal local NESA chapters and the National NESA Committee meant fewer people were eligible for the national-level award, and it was apparently discontinued after 1988. Then, National NESA breakfasts where the awards were traditionally presented at the BSA National Meetings also changed shape to become the Americanism Breakfast.

The award itself is a large wooden plaque with a large, full-color NESA emblem and engraved silver or brass plate. It is believed to be the only official BSA distinguished service award without a corresponding uniform item, such as a patch, pin, or knot. A proposal for a red, white, and blue neck ribbon suspending a silver eagle was not approved. Another proposal for a neck ribbon (white with silver embroidered eagles) and a grey twill knot with silver border were also not approved. However, several unofficial knot prototypes were given to the small number of recipients. Copies of the prototypes still circulate among collectors.

Another proposed knot was similar to the new NESAs life member knot with gold trim. Yet another prototype of a red and blue knot on a white background was privately made and distributed to some of the awardees. A proposal suggested wearing a silver NESAs member pin on the current Eagle knot; another proposal suggested a small silver eagle pin of the same size and type as the gold eagle pin now representing the DESA.

Criteria for the award can be found in the original NESAs Chapter Handbook. Here, for the first time, is a list of known recipients:

NESA Distinguished Service Awards

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| 1976 | 1. James A. Cochran, Blacksburg, VA
2. James W. Grebl, Newport, CA
3. John M. Russell, Wash, DC
4. Dr. Lester R. Steig, Palo Alto, CA* |
| 1978 | 5. Donald L. Flanders, Little Rock, AR
6. Art R. Hadley, Long Beach, CA
7. James A. Savard, Grants Pass, OR
8. Arthur L. Stalks, Chicago, IL (presented in 82) |
| 1982 | 9. Ronald G. Aldridge, Ft. Leavenworth, KS
10. Marshall Bryant, Basking Ridge, NJ
11. Charles Clayton, Bham, AL*
12. Gary Lipscomb, Odessa, TX
13. Craig Markinson, San Francisco, CA
14. Jack Osborne, Lake Havasm City, AZ* |
| 1984 | 15. John L. Dyer-Hurdon, Utica, MI
16. William E. Grav, Edison, NJ
17. Richard W. Kiefer, Baltimore, MD
18. Arthur McCarroll, Midland, TX*
19. Robert W. Rapp, Atlanta, GA*
20. Steven Sinotte, Kalamazoo, MI
21. Harold A. Yocum, Golden, CO |
| 1986 | 22. George C. Fant, Columbia, SC*
23. Hugh C. Griffiths, Atlanta, GA
24. Ted L. Johnson, Freemont MI
25. Richard W. Koeb, Scottsdale, AZ*
26. John M. Wright, Irving , TX* |
| 1988 | 27. Daniel L. Coberly, Mons, Belgium |

*believed deceased. Please notify *American Scouting Digest* of any changes in name spellings or status.