

# WHOI Engineer Gives Boy Scouts a Taste of Oceanography



Tom Kleindinst, WHOI

Paul Fucile

WHOI engineer Paul Fucile took some time off in summer 2010 to volunteer at the National Boy Scout Jamboree and give a glimpse of ocean research to boys who had never visited the seashore or heard the sound of the surf. He helped dozens of Boy Scouts from around the nation earn their oceanography merit badge.

“I asked a Scout from Kansas to describe the impact of waves on the coast, and this was a kid who had never seen an ocean wave in his life,” he said.

Fucile has seen plenty of ocean waves; he has spent the

past three decades designing, building, and maintaining instruments at WHOI. An Eagle Scout himself, Fucile said scouting influenced his decision to become an engineer.

He brought microscopes, oceanographic charts, computers, and materials to make tow nets to the merit-badge midway, part of the national jamboree that takes place every four years. More than 45,000 Scouts attended the 10-day meeting at Fort A.P. Hill in Virginia. They could choose from among 124 merit badges to earn for mastering skills on topics ranging from archery to plumbing to stamp collecting.

By the end of the jamboree, more than 600 boys had completed at least some of the tasks for the oceanography badge, and 160 had fulfilled all of the requirements.

To earn the oceanography badge, Scouts met nine requirements that took three to six hours to complete. Under the guidance of Fucile and three volunteers from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, each boy researched and wrote an essay on an oceanographic topic, made a plankton net, and collected water samples from a nearby lake. They set up microscopes and prepared slides to examine algae in their samples. They were asked about ocean physics and wave dynamics and answered general biology and geology questions.

“For some, the requirements were a real challenge,” Fucile said. He estimated that more than two-thirds of the boys who earned the badge hailed from Arizona, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, and other landlocked states. Several boys told him that they had never seen an ocean except in movies and had no one in their home states to guide them through the badge requirements.

That’s where Fucile helped out. Enlisting the aid of other WHOI scientists and staff, he provided Scouts at the jamboree with oceanographic textbooks and copies of *Oceanus* magazine, laptop computers, and a range of loaned laboratory equipment and materials.

“People went a long way to make sure my jamboree was special,” said Fucile, who attended in 1977. “I wanted to do my part to make it special for others.”

Fucile gave each boy who earned the oceanography merit badge a pin emblazoned with the WHOI logo. “Trading pins is a big tradition among these boys,” he said. “But when I was giving this pin out to the Scouts I heard most of them say, ‘There’s no way I’m going to trade this.’”

—Amy E. Nevala



Paul Fucile, WHOI

Boy Scouts earned merit badges in oceanography at the 2010 National Boy Scout Jamboree, with help from WHOI engineer (and Eagle Scout) Paul Fucile.



Michael Moore, WHOI

**A LIVELY DAY IN THE WHOI NECROPSY LAB**—Researchers examine the body of a common dolphin that died the day before in Harwich, Mass., to determine its cause of death. Recording data at far left is Misty Niemeyer from the International Fund for Animal Welfare, Marine Mammal Rescue Research Division. At the left table are independent researcher Gregory Early, Colby Moore, a WHOI guest student and a graduate student at Baylor University, and Rui Prieto, a visiting University of Azores graduate student. At right, Maya Yamato, an MIT/WHOI graduate student, removes the ears for her ongoing research on marine mammal hearing, as Alex Zosuls, from Boston University, observes. WHOI research specialist Andreas Fahlma (far right) prepares the lungs for another study.