

Classmates:

We are planning a reunion of B-CC alumni who are also alumni of Boy Scout Troop 496, led by the late Rudy Dominic. The attached write-up and pictures may refresh your memory of that ancient glory. Plans are to meet at the home of Eric Seline at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 15: 6819 Benjamin Street, McLean VA 22101. Now expecting to attend are Eric, Tom Price, David Danko, Ray Mecca and John Dunton. Also Steve Gates from the Class of 1962. If we have forgotten you, please add your name to the list and plan to be with us. Also greatly appreciated would be any surviving photos.

Tom Price





Here's an old snapshot that might mean something to David Danko and Eric Seline (both pictured) as well as Ray Mecca. We were in a Boy Scout troop run by one Rudolph J. Dominic (also pictured). Mr. Dominic was a man who was never so fully alive as he had been while serving as an infantryman in World War II. He had assumed control of the scout troop in order to recreate at least a faint echo of his military experience. Our life was governed by bugle calls and we stood at attention for long periods whenever assembled, and could not move until "at ease" and then dismissed. He would impressively dress down the perpetrator of any infraction and order him to "police the area." The military discipline was a bit over the top, but we enjoyed complaining about him among ourselves. I suppose it would be called "bonding" now.

Mr. Dominic would have nothing to do with established Boy Scout camps but took us out into undeveloped areas where he could work his will. One feature of every trip derived from his combat unit in the war having contracted severe dysentery. The first thing we had to do at every camp was fill a metal garbage can almost to the top with water and build a fire under it to bring it to a rolling boil. (That required a serious number of BTUs three times a day and we were frequently scrounging for firewood.) Each of us was issued a metal plate, metal cup, and metal silverware. After each meal we had to clean those items until spotless, then put them into a thin basket made of wire mesh (one is in the picture in front of Dave), and then, after inspection, hold the whole thing by a short handle in the boiling water while Mr. Dominic watched intently and *slowly* counted off the required time, our knuckles getting more and more red and steam-cooked. You can see just from Eric's posture that he has a bluff "Who me?" expression in case Mr. Dominic finds a speck of food on his plate. But it must be conceded that, so far as I am aware, we never contracted severe dysentery.

Between the military and sanitation formalities were good-sized chunks of the day where we could go out on our own, hiking, swimming, catching reptiles, or just mooching around

looking for trouble. In that respect, camping trips led by Mr. Dominic were significantly *less* structured and supervised than would be the case at a regular Boy Scout camp, and we made the most of it. That of course was the real draw of this scout troop.

Mr. Dominic's fierce devotion to his military service made him laughably easy to tease and provoke. "Hey, Mr. Dominic, tell us the story again about how you had to dig a hole with your hat." "Damn it, I've told you a *hundred* times it was my *helmet*, not my *hat*! And it was a foxhole, and under enemy fire!" In those days "Damn it" was a pretty strong oath to use around children. Now, about 55 years later, it is striking how, just a decade after it ended, the war sometimes was to us hardly more than a source of mirth, perhaps part of the great forgetting of the 1950's. Or maybe it was just boys being silly. In any event, only recently has the generation that went into foreign lands to be shot at been properly honored, and Mr. Dominic did not live to see it.

A few years after the photo was taken, while we were in high school, Eric, David, Ray, and I, and two others, squeezed into our old (Explorer) Boy Scout uniforms and, on a chilly, foggy, drizzly winter day, carried Mr. Dominic's coffin up hill and down through Arlington National Cemetery to a raw grave. Somewhere out of sight in the mist a bugle played taps. Now we weren't children any more. Mr. Dominic had died of a heart attack while building a house, leaving a young family.

I hesitated to send this picture because it shows David Danko, the nicest of persons, in an uncharacteristic moment of apparent anger. He in fact was the one who brought me into the scout troop. I had just moved to the school district and knew no one, but a few days into 7th grade, as we were walking up Massachusetts Avenue from Western Junior High, Dave suggested that I come camping to see if I liked it. I did and I did and still do.

This scout troop was based at a Catholic church and most of the other boys went to parochial school, not Western or BCC. Two other BCCers were Charley Hoffman (Class of 1959, brother of our classmate Barbara and now deceased) and Steve Gates (Class of 1962, alive and well and living in Princeton, NJ). Charley, Steve, Eric and I were, I think, just about the only non-Catholics in the troop. It seems odd that our group was chosen as pallbearers (the service was a Catholic funeral Mass); perhaps it was because we had stayed the longest in the scouts (mainly in order to have access to the little mountain of camping equipment that Mr. Dominic had wheedled or bullied out of the Army), even though by the time we were 14 or so we basically never had formal meetings or bothered with adult leaders, but just went camping on our own.

Tom Price
September 2011