

Ever a Scout

*By John Karl Zane,
Eagle Scout*

March 15th, 1937 to present

Preface

Greetings Dear Friend,

May I take the liberty of addressing you as friend based on an assumption that we share some level of kinship, otherwise, I think it unlikely that you would have turned the cover on this narrative.

In the course of my 60 year career as a Research Chemist, Development Engineer, and Consulting Scientist; I had the opportunity to fill several hundred laboratory notebooks and pen a considerable number of technical reports, but I never had any illusion that my work might warrant the effort of a biography. The majority of my work was in the field of Polyurethanes. And although probably not of great interest to many people, I enjoyed the versatility of the chemistry. Also, as anyone who has had the enjoyment of performing basic research in a physical science would confirm, at least 25% of their day involves documenting the work. The result of all my technical writings afforded me the pleasure of creating a well regarded primer on the Science of Polyurethanes for The Upjohn Company in 1972.

What got me started on putting this opus together was a box of elementary school type copybooks that I managed to collect primarily over my first years as a Cub and subsequently as a Scout, leading to accomplishing my goal of Eagle. The original inspiration for all the writing came from my Uncle George Heigelmann, who was my first scouting mentor. He had been the editor of a local newspaper and a scoutmaster who also convinced me that someday I would really enjoy reliving my own memories. The box was a bit cumbersome and the legibility of the pencil script on wartime paper was fading fast, so I took on the project of converting the "journals" into a computer file. My ultimate hope in compiling my notes has been the creation of this document which allows me to share the great joys of my exceptional youth.

Frankly, I don't have any idea how much time I spent assembling this story, but it did become an amazing experience as I relived nearly all of my scouting youth. There were so many names, faces, and experiences which flooded through my mind. Even the feelings returned as I re-lived the revelations that became an active part of my life long belief system. I remembered gaining the understanding of Lord Robert Baden-Powell's use of the concept of three; in our service to God and Country, our fellow man, and self; as well as the three functions of program, activities, and people that provide the physical to base make scouting a tangible entity.

Before getting into the saga, I have to offer some explanation for a possible source of confusion. You might notice that I have identified myself as John Karl Zane, but the name on all the advancement cards reads John Zaniewski. My parents had our name legally changed in January 1958, and although I paid my dues and registered every year, I never bothered to change my name with the BSA until 1969, when I became the Cubmaster of Pack 412 in East Haven, CT.

Thanks for reading.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John K. Zane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Ever a Scout

Some of my earliest recollections from the days before the start of World War II include seeing my Uncle George, my mother's brother, George Aloysius Heigelmann, dressed in his Scout uniform. In those times, it seemed that half the population wore some kind of uniform. My dad wore his green Texaco uniform with a peaked hat and a "bright red star with the green T" logo of the Texas Company. Every gasoline company could be identified by the unique appearance of its employees. Shell Oil had brown uniforms with a white shell on a yellow disc. Sunoco had blue uniforms with their name in red over the right shirt or jacket pocket . . . and so on. Of course, police and firemen were obvious, and then there were the mailmen, the milkmen, and even the bakery man. There was an old joke about the fish man not needing a uniform because you could smell him coming.

But, Uncle George's Scout uniform really spoke to me. In those days, all scouts and leaders wore short pants that went almost to the knees, high socks that went up almost to the knees, a shirt with numerous identifying patches, and a large brimmed campaign hat. Everything was a medium brown color except for the large red and white neckerchief which extended half way down the back. (This could hardly be called "Sharp" by 21st century standards.)

"What an impression!" I would continually ask my mom to get me clothes that looked like they were part of the uniform. I wanted to identify myself as scout even to the point of folding a cotton dishtowel like a neckerchief and wrapping it around my neck. When Mom took me shopping in downtown New Haven, I wanted to go to Bessie-Ritchie's and J. Johnson & Sons. These were the stores that sold scout uniforms and equipment. She would sometimes leave me in the "Scout Shop" for an hour or more while I poured over the books and badges, which were absolute essentials. I wanted to be a Scout!

My aspirations started to be realized in May or June of 1941, a few months after my 4th birthday when Uncle George, who was the Scoutmaster of

Troop 4 – New Haven invited me to attend one of his troop campouts at the PRCU Park (Polish Roman Catholic Union) in North Branford. I was ecstatic. We cooked over an open fire, went on a hike, and slept in a tent. The scouts tagged me with the name “Buddy” and I felt like I was one of them. It was a fantastic time!

Unfortunately, within a year, the war had started and everything changed. Scouting at Saint Stanislaus Church came to an abrupt halt when Uncle George was recalled into the US Navy and there were no qualified men to keep the program going. I was disappointed, but the 15 or so scouts in the troop were devastated. For the next four years, they would frequently ask me if I heard from Uncle George. He was a rallying spirit for his scouts, who truly missed him.

Before WW II concluded, I had a real understanding of what a scoutmaster could mean in the life of his scouts. They loved him like a surrogate father. There was a collective sigh of relief when they got to actually talk with him after Mass on Sundays.

Becoming a Cub Scout

I turned 9 years old on March 15, 1946, a month and 13 days after my best friend, John Cuddy. John knew that I was anxious to start Cub Scouts, so in a spirit of friendly competition, he proceeded to join Pack 24 at Saint Joseph’s Church which was within easy walking distance from our homes. He was happy to have beaten me to one of my life’s goals. I didn’t care. I planned to join Cubs with or without him.

On Monday, March 18, I took the five block walk with John to St. Joe’s. John was in full uniform as were all the other Cubs. The Den Mother was a very pleasant and pregnant lady named Mrs. Devine. (I found out later that evening that Mrs.Devine’s husband worked for my father as a drill press operator at the High Standard Mfg. Co.) The Cubs I met that day included George and Jack Gilhuly, Pat Burke, John DeChello, Danny Shine, John Maher, John Valenti, John and Charley O’Hara, and of course Mrs. D’s son Billy. Danny Shine was our Denner and Johnny O’Hara was our Den Chief. They were all surprised that I knew the Cub Scout Promise, Law, and Motto before attending my first meeting.

The first three months were fantastic. I was so into it, I earned my Wolf Badge almost immediately. My parents were proud of my accomplishment but expressed concern that my schoolwork and piano lessons might suffer.

In June, Mrs. Devine delivered a second son and the program shut down for the summer. The picture was taken on Memorial Day 1946, after marching in the New Haven Parade.



When Den 6 restarted the following September there were a few changes. Mrs. Devine had retired and the family had moved to Mount Carmel and Billy joined another Pack closer to home. Mrs. Cuddy became our new Den Mother with my mom as her assistant. Johnny O'Hara quit being our den chief because of his participation in school sports on Monday afternoons. As a 14-year-old First Class Scout, he had been a really fine role model. Mrs. Cuddy performed admirably at the den meetings but had a disagreement with the Cubmaster about attending the Pack meetings on Thursday evenings. (Mrs. Cuddy had a 6 year old, Harold Jr., at home and her husband was on 24 hours call because of his business. The conflict could not be reconciled.) My mom agreed to serve as the Den Leader at the Pack

meetings, but this was unacceptable to the Pack Committee so Mrs. Cuddy and Johnny quit; and at my insistence, my mother became the Den Mother.

The Soap Box Derby

The following year was quite productive in my cubbing career. I earned a bunch of Wolf Arrow Points, my Bear Badge, and some more Arrow Points in addition to doing all of the Arts & Crafts projects, and going on hikes and field trips. And, Oh Yeah! I came in fourth overall in Pack 24's annual Soap Box Derby. The following picture was taken in May of 1947, on the day before the race. My brother Tommy (in the push position) wasn't allowed to even sit in the car until after the race.



By Sept. of '47, things changed again. My mother had to give up her Den Mother position because my dad got a promotion to Shift Superintendent. We were all pretty happy about his new position, but it meant that he had to work from 3 to 11pm. Fortunately, mom was able to recruit a Den Mother named Ella Suprano whose son Bobby was already in another den and wouldn't mind switching to Den 6. Mrs. Suprano was a widow whose husband died about three years earlier and had worked really hard at developing some male type skills to make up for Bobby's lack of a male role model. She told my mother that she was trying to emulate her late husband

activities with her son, so that Bobby would have a reinforced memory of his father. Even as a 10 year old kid I admired her dedication. We did all kinds of art and science projects. She was really inspiring.

Electric Trains

The following spring, Pack 24 ran their annual fund raising program. We were selling magazine subscriptions to raise money to send kids to summer camp. The prize for top salesman was a big set of Lionel Electric Trains. The set had enough track to make three different layouts with switch tracks and operating accessories. It was as they say “to die for.” For most of the kids in our den, there was no chance of being the top salesman and many of us already had American Flyers. The only one who had any excitement over the prospects of winning was Bobby Suprano. One of the guys suggested that we give Bobby some of our sales slips so that he had a chance to win. Unbeknownst to Mrs. Suprano or anyone else we slipped the order forms into Bobby’s pile just before the count. Much to everyone’s surprise, Bobby won. He was delirious.

The day his prize arrived, we all helped carry the numerous boxes into his basement. He wasn’t sure how he was going to set the trains up. The basement was rather unfinished. There weren’t many lights and no tables. There was old stuff all over the place. We helped clean a space for the layout by piling some of the junk in a far corner. After a couple of hours we all went home knowing that Bobby was going to need lots of help if those trains were ever going to run.

About two weeks later, we went to a den meeting at Bobby’s house. After our opening ceremony, Bobby invited us down to the basement to see the progress they made with the trains. It was astounding. There was a new room setup just for the trains. The floor had been painted a light green color, the walls were white and the ceiling was “sky blue”. There was a big table in the middle in the room, fluorescent lights built into the ceiling, and some indirect lights that had a dimmer switch to change the room from day to night. It was perfect.

We all wanted to know how he had accomplished so much so quickly. Then Bobby explained. His mother had a gentleman friend who worked for the phone company, knew all about electricity and was very handy with tools. Later that afternoon we got to meet Mrs. Suprano’s friend. He was a really

nice guy. His name was Joe O'Brien, he had known Bobby's dad and helped Mrs. Suprano prepare some of the projects we did.

As the year passed, we got to see Mr. O'Brien fairly often and he was sort of like an assistant den leader. He had us drill holes in the train table so the wires would be out of sight, screwing down the tracks, and using a coping saw to make mountains and tunnels. We all worked on the project for at least six months and Bobby seemed happier than any kid I knew. Of course all of us cubs had a great time operating the trains during the construction. I don't know if the whole project was ever totally completed, but we had a great experience in the doing.

I often wondered if we did the right thing by "stacking the deck" in Bobby's favor and helping him win the train set. Was it fair to all the other cubs who were trying to win on their own? We never even told Bobby about helping him. We never spoke to any adults about the plan but we later joked about being thrown out of cubs if our plot had ever been revealed. Let's face it, to the eleven year old mind, this was teamwork, and our team won.

About a year later, most of us had aged out of Cubs, but we kept in touch and agreed that it was a happy day when Mrs. Suprano married Mr. O'Brien at St. Joseph's Church.

The Underage Scout

In October of 1948, my best school pal, Tommy Woolley, told me that just joined Scout Troop 24 at St. Joseph's Church. I was green with envy. I was still wearing my blue Cub Scout uniform and he was a SCOUT. And, I was going to have to wait another five months. (Tom birthday was October 13th. and mine was March 15th.) It just wasn't fair. He started talking about attending the Spring Camporee and the Catholic Retreat and the "bike hike" that his patrol was going to take to Sleeping Giant State Park in about two weeks. I practically begged him to find out if I could go on the hike. He said that he'd ask the scoutmaster and let me know on Saturday because his next troop meeting was on Friday night.

It was probably no later than 8:01 on Saturday morning when I called Tommy to find out if it would be OK to make the hike. The answer: possibly, but I'd have to meet Mr. Zimmermann the Scoutmaster. I said "WHEN!" He said Mr."Z" told him to bring me to his house anytime after 4

o'clock that afternoon. Even though Mr."Z" only lived around the block from Tommy's house, I was there at 3 o'clock. At precisely 5 minutes to 4, we jumped on our bike and rode around the corner to Mr."Z's" back yard. Tommy pushed the doorbell and I waited in fearsome anticipation. We were invited into his den and I was very much relieved when Mr."Z" said "I know you, you're George Heigelmann's nephew." You probably could have heard the "swish" as the air rushed out of my over inflated lungs. Oh! And he also knew my mother. (Mom knew just about everybody in New Haven; or so I thought). Mr."Z" was very agreeable and very accommodating. Yes! I could go on the "bike hike" if my Cub Scout registration was current and my parents signed a "permission slip." I never even considered that my parents might object, but that was a matter of dealing with one obstacle at a time.

Mom and Dad said sure I could go on a "bike hike" if I could figure out who was going to take care of my newspaper route. Darn! Another obstacle! There were a couple of kids in the neighborhood who frequently rode their bikes with me as I delivered my papers. There was Richard Formica and Colin Shaw both of whom "knew" the route and were anxious for me to give it to them. Problem! Both were unavailable on the day I needed them. Finally, my dad offered a solution by suggesting I ask my brother Tommy to do it. He also agreed to drive Tommy around the route in his car. Stipulations! Tommy had to agree and, I would have to give him $\frac{1}{7}$ of my week's profit. (Let's see . . . 35 customers at a profit of 5¢ per customer, that's \$1.75 divided by 7, that's 25¢ for the lightest and easiest day of the week.) Tommy agreed, my parents agreed, I had my permission slip, and I was good to go.

The following Friday night I attended my first meeting at Troop 24. Some of the scouts I met that night included the Senior Patrol Leader, Tony Noto, Patrol Leader Frank Noto, Andy and Richard LaCroix, Irving Mitchell, and Donald Gorman. There were also some of the scouts who crossed over from Cubs but had been in other dens like; Billy McNamara, Jimmy Hackett, Danny Sullivan, and Edmund Noto. Mr."Z's" son, Bill, was the Junior Assistant Scoutmaster.

I enjoyed a great meeting. We practiced scouting skills, did some map and compass stuff, played some games, and sang a couple of songs. I sort of laid back and tried not to show off with the things I already knew. I didn't really want to stand out at this point in time by telling them that I had been studying "Boys Life" magazine nearly all my life. That was a big enough

problem in school where I'd been tagged with nicknames like "Johnny Whiz" and "The Answer Man". It was time to put into practice one of my grandfather's Polish expressions: "*Nie pytac', nie kazac'*" which translates as "Don't ask, don't tell". I left the meeting all charged up, application and permission slip in hand, and ready for the trip the next day. They told me that I had to have both of them completed in order to go. I said I would and I did.

It was a good trip and it was an easy trip. The terrain is pretty flat. The route took us about 12 miles north of New Haven and into Hamden on Whitney Avenue (CT Route 10). There is only one small slope next to the Lake Whitney Dam so none of the scouts had to dismount and push their bikes. The trip took about two hours without a lot of strain. When we got to the parking lot at the base of Sleeping Giant Mountain, Mr."Z" was there with a couple picnic jugs filled with hot chocolate. Many of us had canteens with water so thirst was not an issue on an early November ride but the chocolate was a real pick-me-up. Then it was time to "climb the mountain". We took our small knapsacks containing our lunches, drinks (soda), and snacks and took a leisurely stroll up the path to the castle on top. I had done this walk on several occasions with my parents or my cousins when we did family picnics at the park. Somehow this time was different. Definitely more adventurous. This was scouting; almost like exploring. It was doing the kind of thing they showed in "Boys Life."

At the castle, Bill Zimmermann asked if we were exhausted by the climb. We all laughed, but Bill explained that 'THE SLEEPING GIANT' was a dangerous mountain with a long history people being killed falling off cliffs and getting caught in rock slides. He certainly made the place a whole lot more interesting than I had felt it had been as just a picnic spot.

After lunch, Bill pulled some topographical maps from his knapsack and opened one on a picnic table. After orienting the map with his compass, he had each scout try to determine the latitude and longitude of our exact location, how high we had "climbed" from the parking lot to reach the castle, and exactly how far it was "as the crow" flies to the Hamden Town Hall. He also had another exercise for us. We had to determine where the slopes down to the parking lot were steepest. (Does the term contour lines come to mind?) We had to show him the route we planned to take. To a man, we opted for the same path we used on the way up. The ride home was

easier than the ride out. The conclusion was that since we were riding south, it was all downhill.

It was a great day, I got home before sundown, and couldn't wait for the next outing. My brother had no problem delivering my newspapers and was anxious to do it again. Things couldn't be better.

The only difficult part of transitioning from Cubs to Scouts was telling Mrs. Suprano that I was leaving her cub den. Her only admonition was "Make the most of it." I assured her that I would.

It actually seemed that I was living from Friday to Friday and I couldn't wait to get to the Troop meeting. What new activity or scout skill would be next?

On a fast track

The Friday after the Sleeping Giant trip, I received my registration card as a scout even though I was still 4½ months short of my 12th birthday. I reminded Mr."Z" that I was really happy to be able to just attend the Troop meetings but he said that it would be OK if I wanted to start working on my Tenderfoot badge. Three weeks later I completed the requirements and on December 10, 1948, he presented me with my Tenderfoot pin. At that time, they didn't have a card for Tenderfoot and the pin was given sort of like an instant recognition in front of the troop. I got to light the candles as I recited the Scout Oath and Law, and all my fellow scouts lined up to shake my hand even though several of them who had started in the troop back in September hadn't made it to Tenderfoot yet. I was really proud to be on my way to the goal of Eagle Scout.

My mom and dad were suitably impressed by my accomplishment, and although they knew that I was spending a lot of time studying from my Scout Handbook, they didn't realize that I had come so far, so fast. They promised that I would have my complete scout uniform for Christmas. My brother Tommy was not impressed. His comment: "So what, another pin." He had no way of knowing what that pin meant to me.

The following morning I hopped on my bike and went to visit Uncle George. His office was only six city blocks from my house and the Heigelmann Agency was open until noon on Saturdays. We chatted for about an hour about how I met my requirements. Of course he had taught me how to tie the five required "Tenderfoot Knots" some eight years earlier. We went to lunch at a nearby sandwich shop, and talked about our camping trips before he

went back into the Navy and about all of the Scout Skill I had actually mastered at age four. When it was time for me to leave, (Newspaper to deliver you know), his admonition was “Don’t sit on your laurels, on to Second Class!”

Christmas of 1948 was different. For the first time in my life, we weren’t going to *Babci’s* house to celebrate the Polish ritual of *Wigilia*. *Babci* had died the previous June. Their home at 57 Pulaski Street had been sold and *Dziadziu* moved to Aunt Fran’s house with her sons Mitch and Jim. The whole situation creates a segment of my ultimate saga but I mention it here because *Dziadziu* (my father’s father) was a great supporter of my scouting efforts. He grew up on the foothill of the Carpathian Mountains of southern Poland and often relayed stories of the “*Młodzieńczy Rycerz*” or “Young Knights” camping in the mountains or sitting around a campfire singing Polish folk songs. He was active with the organization from 1885 to 1890. The Young Knights apparently preceded Baden Powell’s Scouting for Boy, the Boy Scouts of America and their Polish counterpart the ZHP “*Związek Harcerze Polskiego*” Association of Scouts of Poland by about 60 years.

It was a Scouting Christmas. True to their word, my parents gave me my new scout uniform complete with the obligatory troop numerals, community strips, and Flying Eagle Patrol Patch. I got an army type field cap and a purple neckerchief which was the color used by Catholic Church sponsored units with a silver neckerchief slide. Mom had even installed my Tenderfoot pin in exactly the right position. I also got a new scout flashlight and First Aid kit. My Dad engraved my name on all my scout equipment. Uncle George gave me one of his compasses and several of his scout books. I was all set.

Christmas break from school gave me a fair amount of time to work on my Second Class requirements. By the time we got around to our first troop meeting of 1949, I felt that I was ready to be tested so I asked what I had to do. Mr.”Z” said that there were two choices. He would have Spl Tony Noto check my requirements and then I could wait until the troop held a Board of Review night, already scheduled for the end of March or I could attend a Quinipiac Council Review which were conducted once a month at The Trinity Church Parish House. All I had to do was phone the “Scout Office”, find out when the next Review was scheduled, and ask that my name be put on the list. So, that’s what I did.

A week later, Tony said that I was good to go. I called the office and was told to be at Trinity on January 26th in my full Class A uniform at 7pm. I was somewhat surprised by the number of scouts and leaders who were there.

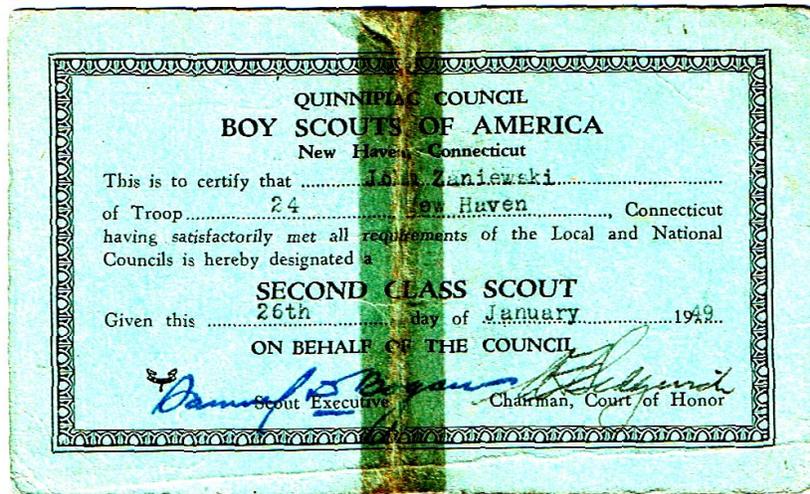
The man at the sign-in table gave me an application for the 2nd class rank, told me to fill it out, and return it to him. I did and was told to go to one of the class rooms. When I got there, there were two other scouts lined up outside the door ahead of me. Two more boys joined us. A man also dressed in a Class A uniform came out of the room and said that they would be ready for us shortly. He also said that we could talk but be quiet so as not to disturb the proceeding in the room.

I was the only scout from Troop 24, but I didn't mind. I got to talk with the others. They were curious as to how I got to apply for 2nd class after such a short time as a scout. One of the guys said that he had been active with his troop for a year and a half. I just shrugged told them I used all my free time to earn the rank.

They called us into the room in alphabetical order, so of course I was last. I used some of the time to review some of the requirements and I was pretty confident that I would do well. I followed Tony Noto's instructions and tried to make a good impression. He had told me to sit straight up in my chair, pay strict attention to which ever member of the review board was speaking and to try to speak directly to whichever man had asked a question. He told me that it was OK to laugh quietly if someone said something funny but definitely not to giggle. Being a Catholic School student, I knew the drill, but his coaching certainly helped.

I passed

At 9pm, the leaders conducted an impromptu Court of Honor and presented all of the successful scouts with their Advancement and Merit Badge Cards. Patches and pins were to be presented at individual Troop Courts of Honor.



I was sorry for the scouts who went through the Review but failed to satisfy the requirements. Of the five going for 2nd Class only three of us got our cards. The others were told to come back next month.

I just couldn't wait for Friday when I could go to the troop meeting and have my advancement recorded on Troop 24's Advancement Report. I was told that I was officially a Second Class Scout but in order to close the loop, my advancement had to go on record with the troop, and the troop had to submit their report to the Quinnipiac Council. Mr. Zimmermann announced my new rank at the meeting and suggested that other scouts take advantage of the opportunity to advance.

Now on to First Class.

The following Monday afternoon I called the council office to find out just when the next review board would take place. The date would be March 2nd and I was going to do my best to be ready.

I had already done most of the "easy stuff". The one requirement that was causing me fits was signaling. So, I called Uncle George. No luck here. He had been a navy signalman on a submarine during the First World War and was totally proficient in telegraphy, semaphore, and wig wag; but he and Aunt Vicky were on a Caribbean Cruise for the entire month of February. There had to be another way. I explained my dilemma to our Spl and he said, "Let's see what we can do."

At the following Friday evening's meeting, after we went through our Opening Ceremony and had been dismissed to our Patrol Corners; when

Tony Noto started tapping on the top of the leaders table. Suddenly he stopped and his brother Frank who was seated at the opposite end of the hall started tapping. Nobody paid any attention at first but in a minute or so, Joe Lynch, our new patrol leader just sort of muttered under his breath, “That’s Morse Code Tony just tapped. Listen for your name.” Every couple of minutes one of the scouts would stand up and walk over to where Tony was seated. Finally, Joe got up and left. When he returned he asked me if I knew what was going on. I said “yeah! He’s working some kind of exercise or game.” Joe said “Right, have you heard your name.” I do remember getting suddenly excited. It would have been something like finding a five dollar gold piece. Tony was teaching me Morse Code so that I could pass the First Class Signaling requirement.

I opened my Handbook to the Morse Code and listened intently to the dots and dashes as Tony continued to tap-away. Then I heard:

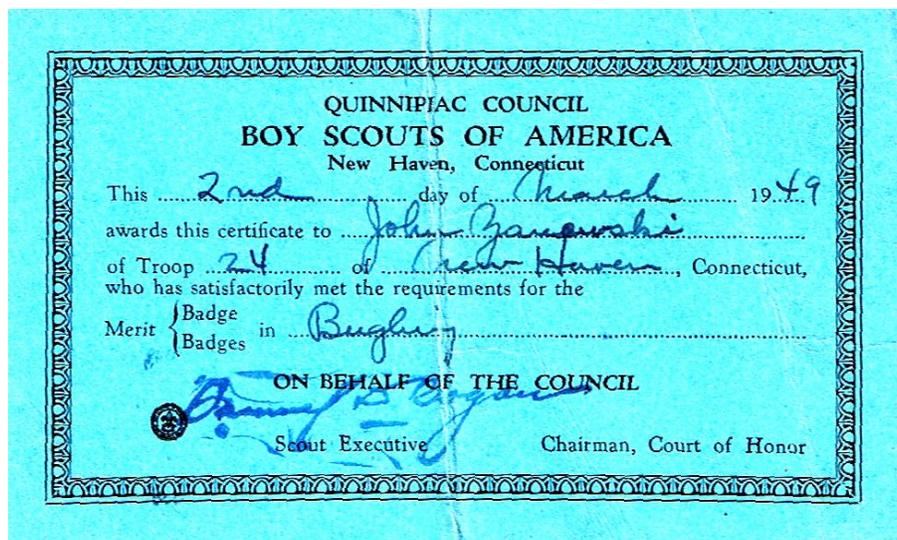
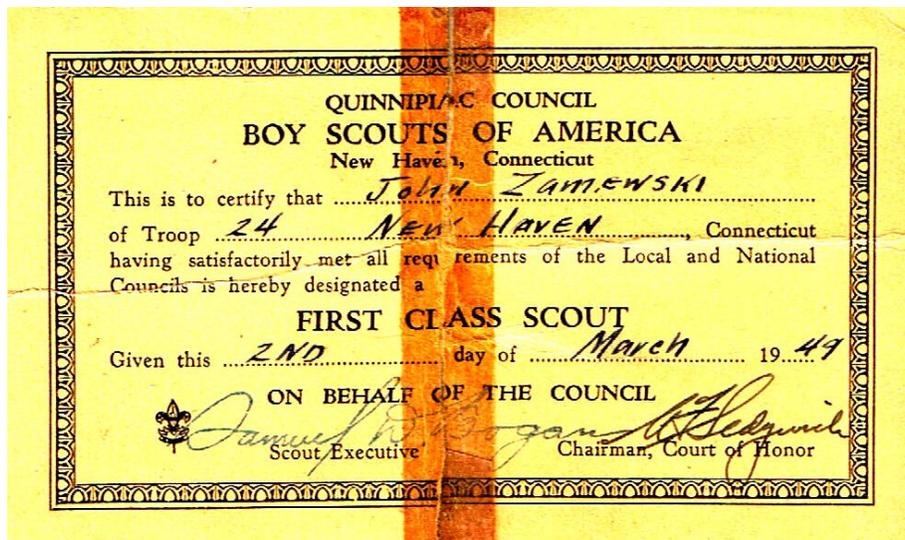
| | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|----------|----------|
| dit dah dah dah | dah dah dah | dit dit dit dit | dah dit | |
| J | O | H | N | |
| dah dah dit dit | dit dah | dah dit | dit dit | dit |
| Z | A | N | I | E |
| dit dah dah | dit dit dit | dah dit dah | dit dit | |
| W | S | K | I | |

And there we have it, “JOHN ZANIEWSKI” just 13 letters, only two repeats, so that night, I learned 11 letters, almost half the alphabet. It was a really good start. Not only did I learn those letters, but I learned something new about learning. It’s better to learn words than just letters, and it’s better to learn concepts than just words.

Two weeks later, I was “copying” Morse like a telegrapher but I was still a little slow at sending. Sadly, I never really got much better because I flew through the signaling requirement using Wig Wag. As a further result of Tony’s inspired approach to teaching Morse Code, I earned my First Class rank, and Troop 24 blew away the signaling competition at the Council’s Spring Camporee.

On Wednesday, March 2, 1949, I passed my Board of Review and was looking at Star. I got another bonus at that Court of Honor.

While I was signing in for my review that evening the leaders announced that they would be testing for the Bugling Merit Badge and any scouts who felt qualified were welcomed to put their names on the list. I did and I passed because I had been playing a bugle in the PRCU Drum & Bugle Corps for three years. Another obvious advantage to having your last name begin with "Z"; I got to learn all of the required calls by merely listening to the first four applicants who weren't even in the same room. I met the requirements but felt like it was a gift.



Mr. "Z" was again impressed when I showed up at the next troop meeting not only with my First Class card but my first Merit Badge. At the closing ceremony that evening, He not only recognized my advancement, but announced that since I was the first scout to earn the **Bugling** Merit Badge, I would get the honor of being Troop Bugler.

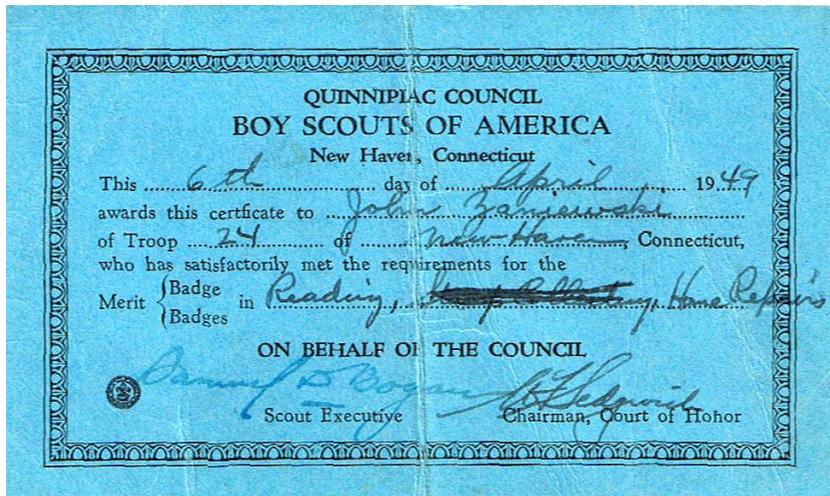


This is the patch I received as the official Bugler for Troop 24. It was my first position of leadership and although I didn't get to blow bugle calls at regular meetings it gave me status and brought me the admiration of the other young scouts. I could have charged them for lessons.

So here I was, 13 days before my 12th birthday and already exceeding my personal objectives. I have to admit that if I had put half as much time into my school work as I did into scouts, I would have gotten terrific grades.

On to my next objective: Star Scout. The step from First Class to Star required a three month interval, any five merit badges, and a troop leadership position for which Bugler would suffice. I had three months to earn four more badges.

On April 6, 1949; I returned to Trinity Parish House with the hope of picking up badges for **Reading**, **Stamp Collecting**, and **Home Repairs**. I should have been able to complete all three, but Stamp Collecting counselor was unable to attend the session.



Two and a half weeks later, the weekend after Easter, we were off to the Catholic Retreat. This was actually my first camping trip with Troop 24. To most of the guys it really wasn't a really big deal because it was at Camp Cedarcrest which is located in Orange, CT which was only a 20 minute bus ride from downtown New Haven. It was a vacation because we were going to sleep in cabins and meals would be served in the dining hall. It was supposed to be a nice fun weekend with about 10 guys from our troop attending.

Disaster

All of the logistics had been worked out, right down to the bus schedule. The times were set so that we all caught the same "Canner Street Bus" as it picked up each of the guys along the route. Tommy Woolley and Irv Mitchell got on first at the beginning of the route and I was the last one to get on at the corner of State and Pearl Streets. After proceeding to downtown New Haven, we transferred to the "Derby Bus" for the final leg of the trip. The bus dropped us off at the corner of Derby Avenue and Mapledale Road. A half mile walk down the street and we marched into camp. We were one of the first groups to arrive so we got our choice of cabins. I don't remember how the decision was made, but we moved into the one closest to the mess hall.

Dinner wasn't anything special. It consisted of macaroni and cheese, a string bean salad, and pudding for desert. I didn't eat a whole lot because my stomach was a bit uneasy and I had a headache. Some of the scouts chose-up

teams and played baseball while we waited for our turn to go to Confession to Father Joseph Grazziani. Father Joe as everyone called him was a young curate at St.Patrick's Church in New Haven and also served as the Quinnipiac Council's Catholic Chaplin. He was the first priest from other than my home parish, St.Stanislaus, with whom I was on a first name basis. (He called me John and I called him Father Joe.) He coached me through my first English language Confession. Previous to that time, I said my Confessions in Polish.

Following Confessions, we had a short Campfire Service, which was sort of meant to remind everyone about why we were there. We sang "Taps", Scout Vespers, recited the Acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity; and listened to a short sermon by Father Joe which was sort of like a pep-talk. Then off to bed. I felt totally exhausted and really cold when I slid into my normally comfy sleeping bag. As I started to warm up, I started to itch. I remember thinking that April 22nd was pretty early for a mosquito invasion, but I felt that I had been attacked by a huge swarm. My stomach was a little upset none the less I knew I was drifting off to sleep.

About an hour later, I woke up with really severe cramps and felt like I was going to vomit. Some of my buddies were still awake. I told them that I was going to be sick and they helped me get out bed and out the door. I managed to get a fair distance from the cabin before I stopped next to a tree and threw up what seemed like all of my supper. I rinsed my mouth with water from my canteen and made my way back to bed. Now, I knew I was pretty sick. I had a fever and shook so badly that the bunk bed seemed to vibrate. I think it was Tommy Woolley in the upper bunk and he didn't have any trouble going to sleep.

Another hour and I was tossing my cookies again at the same tree. Back to bed and the next thing I remember was the guys trying to wake me up for Mass. I told them that I couldn't possibly get up and not get sick again, so go to Mass without me. I had to sleep. Tony Noto checked on me some time later and told me that I should go see Father Joe. He would know what to do. Or he could at least call my parents so they could come and get me. Tony helped me get dressed and walked me to the office where Father was. He took one look at me and said "You look like you've got Measles." I explained that I had measles several years earlier, but I sure felt lousy. He had me sit in a big upholstered chair, gave me a blanket and asked Tony to have some scouts gather my stuff and bring it to the office. Tony also wrote

down my phone number and went to the ranger's shack where there was a phone. A little while later Tony came back and told Father that there was no answer at my house

I got a sinking feeling. Was I stuck here at Cedarcrest until Sunday? Father Joe finally enlisted the help of Scoutmaster Ray Cronogue, from St. Donato's Church who agreed to drive me home. Ray had just stopped by the camp to drop off some supplies for the dining hall and was on his way back home. Perfect! We threw all my equipment in a large cardboard box and dragged it down to the parking lot and into Ray's car.

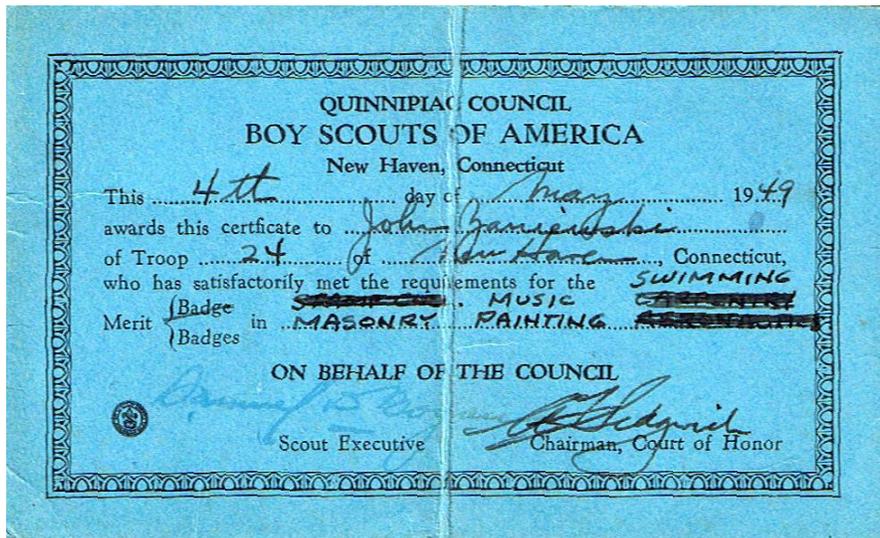
The ride home was uneventful, but I was dizzy all the way. It felt like the trees and telephone poles were flying by and my stomach got real jumpy. Ray tried to keep me distracted by asking where I was from and told me that he lived on Monroe Street and asked if I knew where that was I said "Sure, my grandfather lives on Alton Street." Ray asked grandpa's name, and when I told him Anthony Heigelmann, he said "I know Old man Heigelmann, which one of his kids is your parent." I said that my mother was Anne and he said that he knew her all his life. He also knew Uncle George and Uncle Rudy, and was in the same Knights of Columbus Council with Rudy. He kept my mind occupied and in spite of my fears we made to my house without throwing up. He became a real friend in that he always went out of his way to ask how I was doing and how the family was whenever he saw me. He dropped me at my door and I assured him that I would be fine until my parents got home.

What a relief! I left my camping gear in the kitchen so my mother would know I was home, went into my bedroom, jumped into bed and fell asleep. A couple of hours later the family came home and found me sleeping. They saw immediately that my face looked polka dotted and was burning with a fever. Next, we went to Dr. Serafin who looked at my red spots and said "Chicken Pox." So much for my first Catholic Retreat. I had been hoping that the doctor would give me some pills and I could go back to camp. "No such luck!" I was down for two weeks, and that was that.

No school! My mom made arrangements with Sister Maryella to have Tommy pick up my study assignments every afternoon. He got a kick out of bringing home the list of things I was going to have to read and the list of questions sister made for each item so that I just couldn't have a relaxing vacation while he had to deliver my papers every day.

I had other plans. I would accomplish my study assignments every day by noon and spent the afternoons on scouting. The objectives I set for myself were to earn my *Ad Altare Dei Cross*, Catholic Scout Award, and to earn the two more merit badges needed to advance to Star Scout by the end of June. By Wednesday of the next week (April 27th), the fever and the nausea had passed but I looked terrible all covered with pimples. My dad would plaster my skin with calamine lotion to make the rash stop itching and let me sleep. He did this every night for at least a week before the bumps started to scab over. I knew that the date for the next merit badge was May 4th, which would have been just eleven days after the “pox” presented. I kept talking about like it was a foregone conclusion that I’d be there. But all my mom would say in response was, “We’ll see!”

I went through the day of May 4th almost continuously bugging my mother with “Can I go ma, can I go ma.” I came to dinner that evening in my uniform still not having received permission. Finally she said “Let’s have your father decide.” This could have gone either but my dad understood my drive and said OK, and because it was raining he said that he’d drive me to Trinity and wait until I was done.



Thanks Dad! He not only got me to the review session, he was my counselor for my Masonry and Painting Badges. He had taken 15 or 16 snap shots of me doing the required work and had primed me for some of the questions that reviewers would ask. I got Mr. Skowronski, my piano teacher to go over the music requirements with me and write a letter saying I met and/or exceeded all the items. And, I had already obtained a letter from Jack Sneider, one of the Water Safety Instructors at the New Haven YMCA,

confirming that I met and exceeded all of the swimming requirements. I had in fact earned my Red Cross Junior Lifeguard Certificate during the previous summer. So that night, I came home with *Masonry*, *Painting*, *Music*, and *Swimming* Badges. I now had a total of seven Merit Badges.

On to Star

The next Review Session was scheduled for June 1st. That made it one day short of the three month time interval the requirements stated were necessary to advance from First Class to Star. Would the review board members settle for exactly 13 weeks or 91 days? I'd have to wait and see. I wasn't going to pose the question before the Board of Review. I figured that I could present a convincing argument if the time became an issue.

1949 Quinnipiac Council Camporee

In the meantime, I had to prepare for the Quinnipiac Council's Spring Camporee. This was scheduled for the weekend of May 13th and although I was a First Class Scout, I was actually just two months past my twelfth birthday and felt pretty green. I had the rank and knowledge but I had to admit not much actual experience. I was afraid that I couldn't perform up to expectations. Many of the Tenderfoot and Second Class Scout did a better job than me so I followed their lead. We basically followed the same transportation plan as we had for the Catholic Retreat. All of our personal gear was supposed to be carried into Camp Cedarcrest, but tents and food for the weekend could be "trucked in". Fortunately, "MR.Z's" older son Bobby had a station wagon and was available to haul our necessities.

We all registered at the "sign in" table and were directed to a specified area on the map we received. The guys who attended the last Camporee seemed pretty happy with the location because it was level without too many rocks and tree roots sticking out of the ground. It was also upwind from the latrine and not far from the drinking water. When we got to our site, we quickly set about pitching tents and building fires to cook supper. Troop 24's tents were Army Surplus "Shelter Halves" with two wooden "poles" and wooden tent pegs. The hemp ropes that stabilized the poles smelled like they might have been dragged through camel dung in North Africa. One comfort from home was the fact that I brought my Uncle Phil's canvas "blanket roll" which truly had been dragged through camel dung in North Africa. It did a great job of keeping the dampness from coming up out of the ground and kept my sleeping bag clean. I definitely wouldn't have brought the roll if I had to

carry on my back. Friday night's supper was the old scouting stand by, macaroni and cheese. It tasted OK but I still wondered if I could get Chicken Pox again.

We spent part of the early evening mapping out some of our strategy for Saturday's competitions. We knew about the map & Compass problems and the knot tying challenges. I was pretty confident about both of these, but I really wasn't good with edible plants and berries. Regardless, it would be good fun building a fire and being the first patrol to ignite a string stretched over the fire. Frank Noto and his brother Edmund did a great job of baking bread in a "Dutch Oven" on an open fire. Everybody who witnessed the demonstration got to sample some of the bread.

I did so well with the signaling event that I could have gone to work for Western Union. The competition in the scout skills arena was fierce but overall, we thought we did OK.



Saturday night's supper was Dinty Moore Beef Stew. We had to cook half of the 1¹/₂ lb. can in our mess kits and the second half right in the can after removing the paper label and bending the lid into a pot handle. I don't know what I was thinking, but it tasted the same cooked either way. And, we had plenty of bread from the Notos' demonstration. Desert was canned peaches and corn bread washed down with plenty of hot chocolate.

A New Talent

The Saturday evening program consisted of songs and skits with each patrol responsible to perform at least once. One of the guys had a really dumb skit that took about 30 seconds for two people to perform. The campfire leader said thank you and led a cheer for the performers but said that we would be called on again. Maybe next time a song. Everybody seemed to reject the song immediately. That's when I stood up and told my troop that I knew at least two hours worth of songs. They all agreed that they would sing if I would lead. So I volunteered to do "The Deacon Went Down" We all had a good time with the first ten verses and I tried to end it but scouts from other troops started to offer new verses and the song must have continued for at least 20 minutes before everybody who had a new verse had a turn. We had a great time with the song and all the scouts at the campfire gave me a terrific cheer. After standing down so another patrol could perform, I got up with my guys and we did "I've got Six Pence." Again the campfire leader asked me to do one more song before we called it a night and did the obligatory Scout Vespers and Taps. I had a great time. My patrol had scored some good points for Campfire Performance and Participation. Before turning in we took time to speculate whether we would get a Blue, Red, or White Performance Ribbon. Morning would tell.

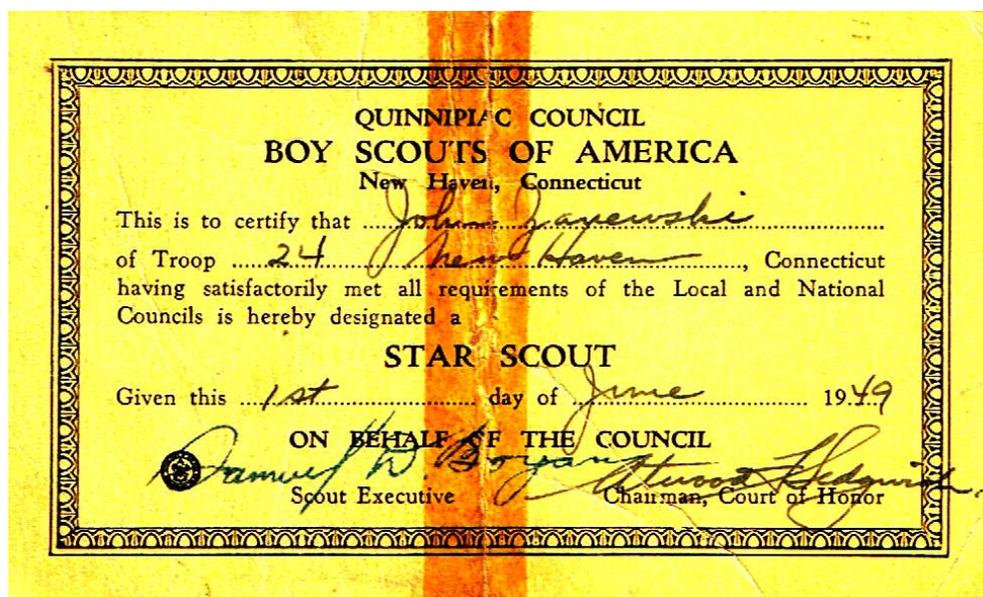
At 7am on Sunday morning, all Catholic and Protestant Scouts were instructed to report to specific locations for religious services. The Jewish Scouts had had their services on Friday so they were allowed to strike their tents and have breakfast at their leisure. We had Mass at an outdoor pavilion. Father Joe saw me before he put on his vestments and asked me to serve as his Alter Boy. I was delighted. He asked Andy Petolo from Troop 12 to serve with me. During his short homily, Father talked about the friends we make in Scouting and how certain events stay with us forever. He jokingly told about at one event when a young scout came to him covered with Chicken Poxes saying this was something he would always remember. After Mass he asked me about my recovery and if I had caught up on my school work and I assured him that I had.

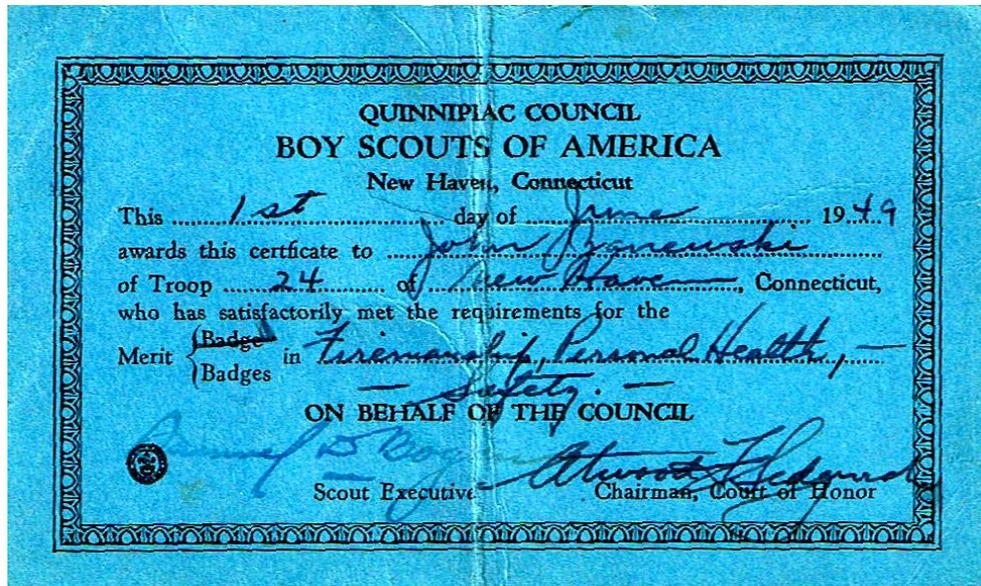
We returned to our campsite to have breakfast, strike our tents, packed up our equipment, and clean up the area so as to make it look as if no one had been there. When we were ready, one of our patrol leaders went to the headquarters cabin to ask for an inspection. A little while later, we were told to line up and one of the Camporee Leaders gave us our critique. We were hoping for a blue ribbon but ultimately got a red with good comments for our "Scout Skills"; and special praises for Scout Spirit and participation

at the Campfire. Overall, not bad, and we would do better at the next Camporee.

Back to advancement

The last Quinnipiac Council Board of Review for the Spring of 1949 was scheduled for Wednesday, June 1st, (90 days turned out to be quite acceptable) and I was ready with all my records and my merit badge cards. I also had my applications and approvals for *Firemanship*, *Personal Health*, and *Safety* Merit Badges and was ready to be reviewed. I didn't realize it during the sessions, but Mr. Zimmermann was at the meeting and when the awards were presented, he came up to present me with my Star Scout Award and Merit Badge cards.





The last of my objectives for the spring of 1949 was yet to be accomplished. The following Monday, June 6th. I was scheduled for a board of review with the Catholic Committee to test my readiness for the Ad Altare Cross. I was pretty nervous about this one because although the main requirement was a record of my service to the church; and I had served at least 300 Masses, a knowledge of certain prayers was required. These included the Apostles Creed, the Acts of Faith, Hope, Charity, and Contrition which I absolutely knew in Polish but had to do a flying translation to say them in English. I was also concerned about having to be tested by Father Joe and other adult committee men. Because of my obvious distress, they told me that I could recite the prayers in Polish and they would know my proficiency if the rhythm sounded right. I rattled off the prayers and spent the rest of the time talking about my being stricken with Chicken Pox at the Catholic Retreat. After about 15 minutes, Father Joe told me that I passed and would receive the Medal. As I was leaving, he offered congratulations and said that he had to confess that he had spoken with Father Edmund Kowalski, who was my catechist at St. Stan's, and knew all about me. I would have felt much better about the whole thing had he "Confessed" when I w .

To The Alter of God



On Sunday, June 12, 1949, I received my Medal at St. Joseph's Cathedral. We drove to Hartford in my dad's 1938 Lincoln Zephyr. I don't exactly remember what the circumstances were, but Mr. "Z" asked if my parents would have room in their car for two older scouts from Troop 24 to ride with us. My mother said sure. One was boys was Joe Clark, the brother of one of my friends, and the second was Tom Doheny, brother of my physician in later years.

It was a great day and mom and dad topped it off for us with a celebration dinner at Howard Johnson's at the north end of the Berlin Turnpike

The next day, I wore my Medal to school. Sister Maryella was suitably impressed and had me stand before the class and describe the whole process which allowed me to earn my Cross. The whole class roared when Joey Stopka asked "Does this make you a saint?" I responded with "Not quite but you can call me blessed if you like."

Fortunately, it was the last week of school and I knew that things would be back to normal in September.

Taking the summer off

That summer of 1949 wasn't a scouting summer, but as Junior Counselor at the YMCA I had a chance to pick up on my aquatic skills. Starting in the

last week of June, I spent five mornings a week in the pool working with 7 to 10 year old kids teaching them to swim. At that time the “Y” had four proficiency levels; Minnow, Fish, Flying Fish, and Shark. Since I had earned my Shark Card the previous summer, they designated me an assistant instructor.

The classes consisted of 20 to 25 kids and the instructor stayed on the deck where he was totally visible and I was in the water to demonstrate the movements being taught. My presence in the water helped the confidence of the students because I could reach any of the kids quickly. It was fun and we only had to do three 45 minute classes each day at the Minnow, Fish and Flying Fish levels. The afternoon program was geared for older kids who wanted to qualify for their Shark Card, Junior, and Senior Life Saver Certificates.

On Saturdays, we had an outing program at the YMCA owned, Camp Hubinger in East Haven. That allowed me to qualify in safe handling of row boats and canoes. I also got to do a mile swim with some of the older camper and to my surprise I received a certificate with the campers at the final assembly during the last week of August.

It had been a pretty busy summer. I managed to spend as much time as I could at the “Y”. I felt good about teaching younger kids to swim, but I still had to rush home every afternoon to deliver my papers. My “boss”, Gil Chadwick, the Program Director, was a Yale Divinity School student and apparently impressed with my conscientious work ethic. He offered me a job for the next summer if I was going to be available. I told him that it would be my plan and I’d be looking forward to coming back.

The Shark Program was really difficult for most kids it included the mastery of several mandatory dives in addition racing dives for competitive swimming, and the retrieval of ten pound rubber bricks from 8½ of water.

The Life Saving Programs took eight full weeks of training and the students were awarded a YMCA and Red Cross certificate on completion with a written exam at the end.

I still thought it was a good time and if it weren’t for my age, I would have been qualified for a paid position next year.



My summer was complete with letters of commendation extolling my competence in swimming, rowing, and canoeing. They also filled out the forms required for the lifesaving, rowing and canoeing merit badges and signed off as Certified Water Safety Instructors. Although I still had to do a Board of Review by Scout Counselors, it would only be a formality.

The Gold Rush

The beginning of the scouting program year offered some new challenges in my advancement plans. Troop 24 appeared to be disintegrating. Several of the older scouts went off to college. Quite a few of the guys my age went on to sports and other activities. My classmate, Tom Woolley, dropped out to work in his step-father's restaurant, and things weren't as easy going. Two of the main Quinnipiac Council activities were scratched from the troop calendar.

There had been a lot of publicity about a "Gold Rush" which was going to be a reenactment of the 1849 California Gold Rush looked like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. My friend John Cuddy who had joined Troop 63 at St. Boniface Church mentioned that he needed a partner for the "Rush" so he asked his Scoutmaster if he could partner with a scout from another troop. I asked Mr. Zimmermann who said it would be OK from his side if the Council didn't mind.

On Saturday, September 17th, John and I along with two more teams, Dick Lipp, and Frank Hollaran, Mike Alley and Donny Harris; took the Whalley Avenue bus out to Westville; then hiked the last mile and a half to the West

Rock Nature Center where the event was to take place. We were six kids dressed like gold miners who were probably ready for a nap because we had to register at the Sheriff's Office by 6:45am. The day almost became a washout because we didn't have any Troop 63 leadership. We were about to be turned away when Don Harris announced that they had Johnny "Z" their Senior Patrol Leader with them. I was dumbfounded. When the Sheriff asked me about my rank, I pulled out my Star card and totally satisfied him about my qualifications to be an SPL.

New Haven's West Rock Nature Center had set up as a mockup of Sutter's Mill and all of the land adjacent to the West River which ran through the had been "salted" with gilded pebbles and small stones. The ground had also been surveyed into numbered "claims" which each pair of Scouts could "stake out" by taking the number card back to the claims office, recording the claim and receiving a title to prospect for "Gold" on that specific patch of ground. (Each parcel of land had the same weight of "Gold" deposited on the site.) Our objective was to retrieve as much of the "Gold" as possible within the 3 hour time limit. Of course there were a few little distractions to deal with. We had claim jumpers who would quietly sneak onto another "Claim" and try to grab a few grains of gold while the legitimate prospectors were busy panning their pay dirt. There were bandits who might try to grab your poke while your back was turned. For any infractions, we had to run to the sheriff's office, report the crime, and hopefully he might recover the lost "gold" and punish the perpetrator.

At the end of the allotted time, the mayor cranked up a siren, we all brought our "gold" to the assayer's office to have the weight recorded. John and I were pretty near the top of the list having found 5.8 out of a possible 8 ounces. I don't know if it was part of the plan, but two guys were arrested by the sheriff because they brought in more than the available 8 ounces. When all of the important stuff had been done, some guys who had been arrested for one infraction or another had to pay fines using a few grains of their found "gold." All the crooks were let out of jail, and we lined up with our partner for pictures then the photographer got up on the roof of one of the buildings so he could shoot the whole group.

The final thing we had to do was help clean up the "claim" sites and restore the nature center so that Mr. Cosenza, who I knew as a friend of Uncle George, could have the area ready for school visits on Monday.

Shortly after 4pm, the six of us from Troop 63 started the hike back to the Whalley Avenue bus stop. We had a great time talking and reliving our adventure of the day. We all agreed that any scout who didn't attend the Gold Rush of 1949 really missed a great experience.

At the following week's troop meeting, I got to tell all the scouts at Troop 24 about the great day. They were all impressed by the pictures and the story that Mr. Bob Leeny wrote in Sunday's New Haven Register. I had the article in a folder for years but sadly I can't find it at this time. Even so, I'll always remember seeing my picture alongside John Cuddy my partner standing right out there in the middle of the first row of miners.

Just as an aside, I would have loved to have participated in a reenactment of the Klondike Gold Rush in 1997. And if I had still been the Quinnipiac Council's VP of Program, it might have happened. Times had changed. The Quinnipiac Council had been merged into what is now the Connecticut Yankee Council, I was working in Michigan, and an opportunity was lost.

Slow Time

The fall of 1949 was pretty light for scouting activities. My old buddies seemed to have disappeared. In October, it was all I could do to organize a "Bike Hike" to Hammonasset State Beach. Several new scouts had joined the troop but they were not in the physical condition to do a 20 mile ride on a single speed bike. In the end, I was joined by Frank Noto, Bob Beaty, and Larry Lynch. Beaty and Noto had three speed bikes while Lynch and I both had big old heavy Columbias. The saving factor was that the roads along the coast were fairly flat.

We started our ride at 7am on Saturday October 15, from St. Joseph's Church, east on Edwards Street then south on East Street (Route US 5) to Water Street (Rte US 1). The first tough hill was on Forbes Avenue, right by the Kendall Castle and the Annex Firehouse. From the top of that little hill, it seemed like we had about a mile of gentle downhill before we started up Branford Hill. This one was more formidable. It seemed like we were pumping up hill forever. The top of the hill was about ¼ mile of fairly flat road before we started down the east side to the "Branford Cut-Off". We were making good time, about 1½ hours to travel 7 miles. There were a lot of ups and downs, but the next big hill was the "Water Tower Hill" on the east side of Guilford. It was difficult, but we all made it up and over in good

time. So far, 14 miles in a little under 2½ hours, and the last 7 miles should be easy.

It was almost 10:30 when we rolled into the park. We started to congratulate each other when Frank Noto realized that his back tire looked a little soft. Fortunately between the four of us we had everything we needed to fix his flat.

It was a nice sunny day at the beach but we obviously weren't planning on going swimming. I suggested that we ride down to the end of Megs Point to see the moraine. The other guys all wanted to know, "what the heck is a moraine?" I told them that it would be easier to show them than try to explain so they agreed to ride the 2 more miles. They were ready to throw me in the water when I showed them the pile of rocks. They were really impressed that I knew it was there, what it was called, where it came from, and how old it was. Of course I had to own up and tell them that I had attended a lecture at the Peabody Museum given by Professor Migdolski who just happened to be a family friend, who grew up on Eld Street, and graduated from St. Stan's with my Uncle Tony. I thought that it was pretty neat when Beaty said "how is it that the youngest kid among us is the one riding around with all this information?" I felt really good about the complement, but the event presented me with the question, "who should get credit for knowledge, the student or the teacher"? I had to admit that I was just repeating information that had freely been given to me.

Lunch that day consisted of US Army surplus k-rations, which really weren't half bad. Our supplies included a small Sterno stove and an aluminum pot which could hold five cans to be heated. The menu was macaroni and cheese, biscuits and jelly, a chunk of chocolate which tasted like it was half wax, and some cocoa which when mixed with hot water was pretty gross. Everything worked out just right. We ate the macaroni right out of the cans and we had just enough Sterno to heat the food and boil the water for our drinks. No dishes to wash. We disposed of all the empty cans in the designated "safety waste receptacles" so we all had a couple of pounds less weight to carry home.

At about 2 o'clock we headed home by the same route we took on the way out. The trip took about 3 hours and we were exhausted when we got back to St. Joe's. The wind that we had to fight on the way out, mercifully was at our back on the way home and it made a huge difference. I was a great day but really my legs and back were so sore that I could hardly pedal the five

blocks to home. I even had to skip Mass the following day because I couldn't kneel.

It was fun at our next troop meeting telling the other scout about our adventure. But, there was sort of a unanimous conclusion that most of the other guys might not have survived the trip. Too much stress on the negatives. Things seemed to have come to a screeching halt. Troop meetings started to get boring. Nobody wanted to do anything and I guess you might say I had too many options.

My Hiatus

During the summer, my mom put me on to a new activity in which I already had a high level of interest. It was the *New York, New Haven, & Hartford Junior Railroad Club*. The club was organized by the president of the New Haven Junior Chamber of Commerce, Richard C. Lee; in cooperation with the *New Haven Railroad YMCA* and of course the NY, NH & H Railroad.

Mr. Lee was a long time friend of my mother. She first met him while she the secretary to Yale Professor, William Lyons Phelps. Mom described Dick Lee as a brilliant man and a protégé of the professor who made a good name for himself by doing great things in the community. (I also learned that he was one of the two future mayors on New Haven who had attended my Christening.)

I tried to get John Cuddy to join with me, but the Cuddys were planning on spending at least a month "up in Maine," where Mr. Cuddy was born and raised. I was invited to go with them.

"Life is choices" and I had to choose between "working" at the "Y" and joining the Junior Railroad Club or going to Maine with the Cuddys. It was actually a tough choice. But, I think I made the right one. I did the "work" to earn a bunch of Merit Badges, I got to go swimming every day, and I got to go for train rides and learn about railroad operations. The starting point for the *Jr. RR* program was always safety.

There were a lot of similarities between Scouts and the *Jr. RR*. We were issued a uniform which consisted of coveralls and a railroaders' cap. The fabric had blue and grey stripes; and jacket and cap had *NY, NH, & H* logo patches. We did a lot of fun things in the *Jr. RR*, but best of all, membership in the club allowed us to ride *NY, NH, & H* trains for free as long as we had our membership cards and were wearing the uniforms. I realize that I've

digressed from my scout story but the *Jr. RR* gave me something of a diversion at a point when scouting seemed to be disintegrating around me.

In the fall of 1949, neither Troop 24 nor 63 were planning to attend the Fall Camporee in early September, so I connected with a small group of guys from the *Jr. RR* who were going to Fenway Park to see the Red Sox. My mother was a little reluctant to give permission, but my dad said “What, is he going to get lost? He’s going to be on a train.” They were both a little more at ease when I explained that two of my fellow Jr. Counselors from the “Y” were also going.

I wasn’t much of a Base Ball fan but the rest of the guys were. The date for the trip came down to two choices. Since Saturdays were the only option, it was either the St. Louis Browns or the New York Yankees. And, since the Sox and the Yankees had been battling for the American League lead it had to be the Yankees.

On that appointed morning, we met at the *RR YMCA* gathered our coveralls, walked down South Orange Street to the station and got on the “9:10 for Boston.” It was a neat ride. The conductor and ticket taker spent most of the trip with us talking about all of the interesting stuff there was to see in “Bean Town”. They also told us that a similar group had taken a train in the opposite direction (to New York) and were headed for the Hayden Planetarium. That sounded like a good trip too.

My family had often driven east on US Route 1 as far as the Mystic Seaport, so I was familiar with all the towns along the way, but the view from the train was definitely a new experience. We were looking down on the roofs of the cars that drove along Route 146 from Branford, through Pine Orchard, Stony Creek, Leetes Island, and the coast of Guilford and Madison. It seemed like we were flying as we passed through the “cut outs” near the granite quarries. The conductor explained these were the “fastest tracks” on the Boston run and that the engineer was cleared to “take it up to 80” if the visibility was good and he thought it safe. But, there really wasn’t much point in going too fast because he’d have to slow down in order to make his arrival time at South Station. I think the ride took about 3½ hours with about a 10 minute stop in Providence. Once we arrived at South Station, we all stashed our coveralls in the same 10¢ locker. It was then about a 10 minute walk and wait for the green “T”; another 15 minute ride; and we got to Fenway a little after 1pm. At that time, you could buy a hot dog outside

the park for 15¢ and a Coke for 5¢. Inside, the dog cost 35¢ and the Coke was a dime. We ate while standing inline for our 25¢ Bleacher Seats.

The game started at 2:15 and ran pretty near minimum time with Boston beating NY, 3-0, in 8½ innings. Not a great day for the Yankees.

After the game, it took us well over an hour to get back to South Station and with no more than about 5 minutes before departure. We jumped into our coveralls, and were the last ones on the train. Perfect timing or really dumb luck? The conductor told us that had we missed his train, it would have been an hour and 45 minute wait to catch the next “local” back to New Haven. No one could possibly schedule things that close.

We rolled into Union Station at about 10:30. Fortunately, were at least 20 phone booths in the station but by the time we made it from the platform into the building, there were lines for each of the four banks of phones. It didn't take long though because most of the callers were calling for pick up and weren't on the line for more than a few seconds. I asked my dad to meet me at the “**RR Y**”, and our group headed down the street to return our coveralls. We hung out stuff in the assigned closet, said our good-byes, and went back outside to wait for our rides. Dad arrived in no more than a couple of minutes and it was about 11pm when he pulled the car into our driveway.

Mom and dad were thoroughly interested in my exploits of the day. I knew they were happy that I had a great time; but said that they would have been happier if I had gotten home earlier. It was a good thing (for me) that Boston was my first **Jr. RR** outing, because the later outings to Yankee Stadium, Ebbits Field, and The Polo Grounds to see the Yankees, Dodgers, and Giants got me home before 9pm. Each outing was a terrific experience which cost me a dollar or less.

Other New York trips took us to The New York Museum of Natural History, The Hayden Planetarium, and the Guggenheim. We also went to Battery Park, hopped on the Staten Island Ferry just to listen to some of the really good itinerant musicians. I stayed with the **Jr. RR** for just about a year before the leadership started to recycle the basic aspects of the “training” and I felt that it was time to redirect my efforts back to Scouting.

A different kind of scouting

Another diversion I got to enjoy over the 1949 – 1950 winter was Ice skating at the New Haven Arena. Every Sunday afternoon I would join a group of

friends at the back door of the stadium with skates slung over the shoulders, ready to be selected for the ice scraping detail. (This was in the days before the Arena got their first “Zamboni.”) The guys who always got picked first were the hot shot hockey players from Wilbur Cross, Hillhouse, Hamden, East Haven, & West Haven High Schools. Most of the time Bill, Pete, Frank, Donny, Louie, and I would also get picked for the second line along with two or three younger boys. (Bill, Pete, Donny, & Louie later became “Hot Shots.”) Anyone who didn’t make the cut had to walk around to the front of the building and pay their 60¢ to get in to skate.

For the most part, Sunday afternoon skating wouldn’t offer much attraction if it weren’t for the fact that some girl would always grab me to be her skating partner. Much of the time it was a classmate, but often it was one of the girls from my Tuesday evening dancing class. (My mother thought it a good way to improve my “social graces”.) Occasionally though, some girl I’d never met before would invite me to be her “ladies choice.” As a result, my buddies tagged me with another nickname, John Juan. We had a good laugh when I explained that “John Juan” was like saying John John and the real name of the Spanish lover was Don Juan.

Most of the time, I scarcely knew the names of my new partners, but one gal sort of became a regular. I thought she was beautiful and smart. And, after just a couple of weeks of skating, I could have written her biography. Bridgette lived on Lincoln Street, went to Prospect Hill Day School, and her parents were both Yale Professors. She played both Piano and Harp, and offered to teach me some basic chords so I could play the piano by ear. To accomplish this, she invited me to walk her home, have supper with her parents spend an hour at her piano. I asked if her parents would mind. To which she responded that they already said OK! So, I called home, got permission then sort of shuddered a bit at the idea of being scrutinized by a pair of professors.

In retrospect, it wasn’t a bad experience. I never thought my “social graces” were all that bad. I had learned to introduce myself to groups of adults at my Scouting Boards of Review, played the piano at several recitals, and approached many potential newspaper customers. This was different. M./M. Lambert turned out to be a stereotypical French couple, very hospitable and engaging. We had a light French meal; salad with oil and vinegar, small tasty sausages, bread, fresh seedless grapes, and Vichy water. The most important feature of the meal was not the food, but the conversation. It was

practically structured. Monsieur Lambert started with a question with each person in turn adding to the subject. Very interesting.

Bridgette and I spent about an hour at the piano. She taught me to play arpeggios, how to match chords; starting with fifths, sevenths, and augmented; and how to do a rocking bass to keep time. Actually, I couldn't wait to get home and see if the same stuff would work on my piano.

I said my thanks to the Lamberts , promised Bridge that I'd be at the Arena on the next Sunday so that we could skate together, and she gave me a kiss on the cheek. That really surprised me, but it was sort of a sisterly kiss so I said "Thank You".

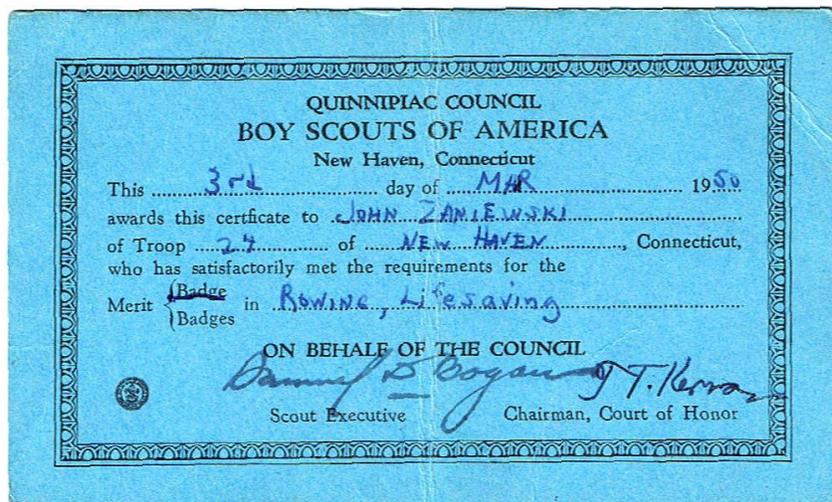
The next Sunday, we spent the entire 2½ hours skating and holding hands. She even taught me how to hold her in the skaters dancing position. I didn't think it was a big deal, but my buddies and classmates sure did. Bridgette and I were the main subject of their conversations. The boys as well as girls wanted to know all about my new "girlfriend". I would just say, "It's no big thing, we're skating partners; that's all." I blushed almost purple the first time one of the girls said; "The way she looks at you says more than No Big Thing." After that, a number of the girls who wanted to see me blush would "push the button" by saying; "No big thing, Huh?"

Bridgette and I had fun together for about 10 weeks. Then without warning, she matter of factly announced that her parents had accepted professorships in Paris and that they would be leaving on an Ocean Liner out of New York in three days. I never saw or spoke to her again. I never enjoyed ice skating after Bridge left, but I continually enjoy the piano playing techniques she gave me. My friends were confused and sympathetic. I only told three or four people that she was gone and just about everyone who knew of my relationship with Bridgette offered condolences. Some girls asked if I was looking for a new partner. I thanked them for their concerns but told them that I was "going it alone" for now.

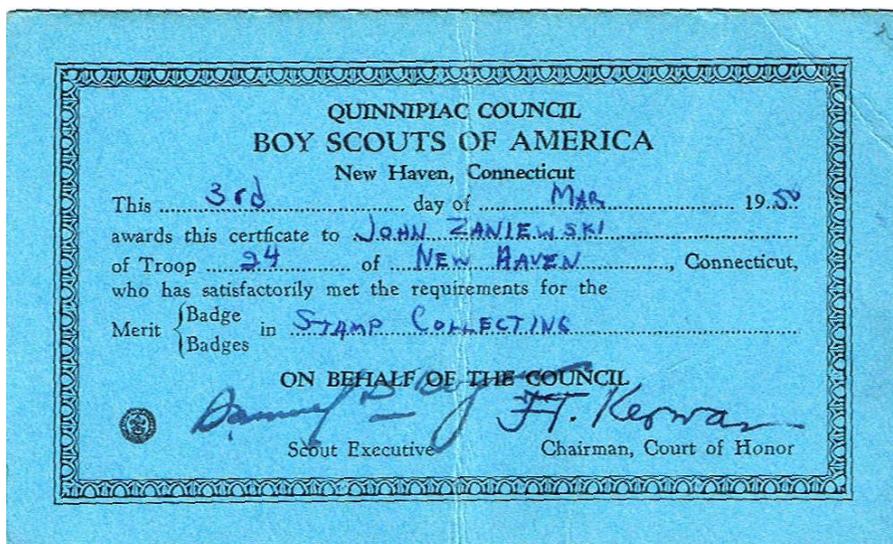
Back on Course

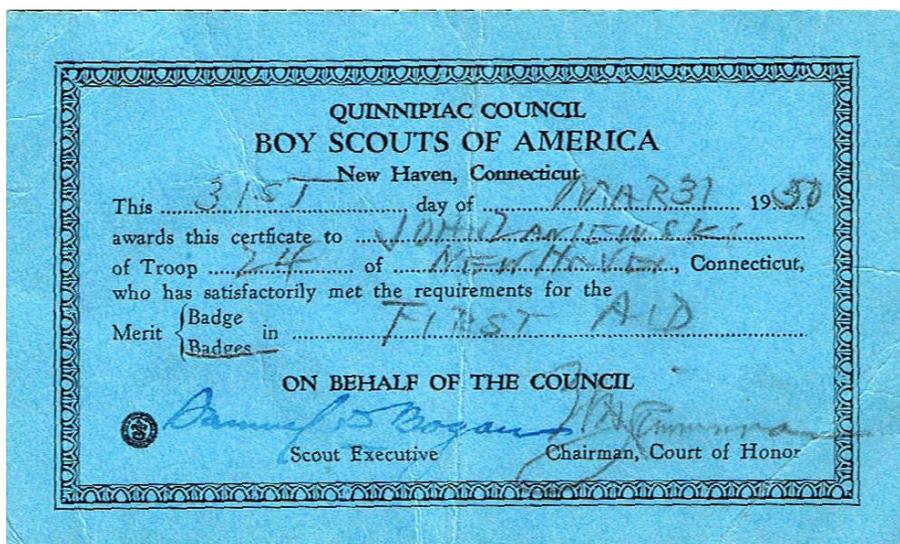
I actually was devastated, but Bridge's departure sort of forced me to reevaluate my original Scouting objectives. By the end of February, I had my documents ready and planned to apply for three more Merit Badges at the March board of Review. The Board accepted my certificates from the Red Cross and the YMCA for the *Rowing* and *Lifesaving* Badges, but

Stamp Collecting turned out to be one of the most difficult badges I ever earned. As it turned out the Merit Badge Counselor for *Stamp Collecting* was the owner of the Lincoln Coin and Stamp Shop in New Haven. I had been in his store many times but had never met him before.



March of 1950 was one of those months that helped reinforce my drive of make it to Eagle. Mr. Zimmermann arranged for a local fireman who was qualified to teach First Aid to come to our Friday night troop meetings and give a course which would allow his scouts to earn both a Red Cross card and the *First Aid* Merit Badge. Everyone who participated in the three sessions made it.





I was feeling pretty proud of myself. I had been a scout for just a little over a year and had advanced to Star, earned 14 Merit Badges, and been awarded my Ad Altare Dei Cross. The next steps would be more difficult.

Spring Activities

The 1950 Catholic Retreat

Troop 24 being sponsored by St. Joseph's Catholic Church always participated in the annual Catholic Retreat. This year, we were tent camping at *Cedarcrest* because the camp was in the process of being repaired. By the time we set up our campsite and had supper in the dining hall it was dark so we just stayed for a Benediction and opening Homely by Father Grazziani. We finished the evening singing religious songs.

That Saturday morning, breakfast was brought to our campsite by the sponsoring troops. (Troop 12 from St. Michael's and the troop from St. Laurence's in West Haven). They delivered scrambled eggs and sausage links in pans with portions for eight, loaves of bread, and covered containers

of hot chocolate. It felt more like a picnic than a Scout encampment. Just before 9am, we secured the site, and gathered all the leftover food for the trip back to the dining hall. The staff took all our pans, scraped the remnants into a bucket and dropped them into a couple of 55 gallon drums. Looking back, it was a pretty efficient process. The garbage was taken to a pig farm and the trays were returned to St. Laurence's kitchen to be washed in their big dishwashing machine. Paper plates, napkins, and wooden forks were thrown into the middle of a big log crib which would be fuel for that evening's camp fire.

The day's activities were organized so that after dividing us into four teams, we had about two hours of religious education followed by two hours of physical activity. Troop 24 was assigned to team #2 so we started off two hours of Soft Ball played against team #4. At 10:30 we switched to religion. Teams #1 and #3 took over the ball field and we went off to a designated area with a canvas fly, some easels, and logs to sit on during the lessons. There were about 20 scouts in team #2. The instructors were recruited from several local churches, one of whom I recognized from St. Joe's. We had 25 minutes of class followed by a 5 minute break. Our designated class area was close enough to our camp site so that we could run, grab a snack and get back to class with plenty of time. At 12:30 we stopped for a lunch of Hot Dogs, Chips, and Kool Aid. One o'clock it was back to class and at three o'clock, back to the ball field.

At about 4pm, Father Joe came by and asked if anyone wanted to go to Confession, they could form a line over by his tent. The end of the line stopped about 30 feet from his "door" so that each penitent would have their privacy.

When it was my turn, father asked me if I had a full uniform with me because he wanted me to serve as an Alter Boy. The Confession finished with our reminiscing about my experiences of the last year and whether I was still considering a vocation to the priesthood.

I told him that I hadn't totally given up on the idea, thought that it was too early to make a lifetime commitment. I also told him that I would pray for enlightenment but I wouldn't make that kind of decision until I was at least considering where to go to college. He thanked me for my "well considered response" and said a well thought through answer was always better than a hasty answer. I was taking a lot more time than the other guys so when I was leaving, Father Joe told me that if I had any questions in the future, that

could help make up my mind, call him at St. Patrick's Church. Someone there would always know how to reach him.

At 5:30pm, the whole camp got together on the baseball diamond with a temporary altar set up on home plate. In the unusual setting, Father "sang the Mass", with the other Alter Boy, again from St. Mike's, and I, singing the Latin responses and leading the entire congregation. It was great fun, and possibly the most noteworthy feature of the whole weekend. It also made me continue my interest in the priesthood. We had a really nice campfire, with skits and songs that we practiced during our religious meeting sessions. The log crib that had been constructed to take the trash lit up like it had been dosed in kerosene. It was beautiful! And, all the trash was gone.

Sunday morning breakfast was cereal in little one serving boxes that when you cut them open according to the instructions became their own "serving bowl." They had enough cereal and milk to serve an army. I don't think anyone ate fewer than two.

After breakfast, we did a short "nature hike" with one of the scoutmasters pointing out some of the features found in camp. The fact that the identity of a tree could be known by the shape and color of its buds was more amazing than the idea that people could commit this to memory.

At noon, we all gathered in formation on the ball field with all of our personal equipment. The troop owned items were distributed to each of our members so nobody stuck with too much. Father Joe returned from saying Mass at St. Pat's in time to lead us in a parting prayer and shake the hand of every boy as we walked off the field.

My dad was waiting for me when I got to the parking lot, so I got to relay this entire story (plus a whole bunch of stuff I've obviously forgotten) to him on the ride home.

1950 Quinnipiac Council Camporee

May 12, 13, & 14 was the scheduled date for the Camporee. This was a totally competitive event where we earned points for just about everything. We got about 25 points per mile per boy for hiking from a starting point at the corner of Chapel and Temple Streets in downtown New Haven. The Camporee Committee had checkpoints all along the route so that scouts could choose the number of miles and earn they wanted to go. We got our ticket punched at the start and each time we reached a checkpoint. In other

words, a patrol of 10 scouts could earn 2500 points for the 10 mile trek. The points on each scout's ticket were logged in when we registered at the Camp Cedarcrest Gate. There were more points to be had for the fastest campsite setup and the quality of the site appearance. We were allowed one cooking fire for each four boys, and got points for each "fire bucket" placed next to the fire pit.

Of course we got points for the usual scout skills; like fire building, map and compass, first aid, and knot tying. On top of that, there always seemed to be someone walking through our site with a clip board in hand. They would peek into our tents and write their notes and ask us questions like; what we had for lunch or what songs we were going to lead during the campfire. Nobody seemed to mind. We just figured they were trying to make our experience better



I was the Patrol Leader of the Flying Eagle Patrol, but because of my rank and experience, I was assigned to serve as an Assistant Senior Patrol Leader. I shared a Pup Tent with Tony Noto our SPL., which was OK because Mr. Zimmermann told him to start training me for a senior leadership position. Tony was just about the last of the older boys and most of the 14 other scouts from our troop were just 2nd Class and didn't have a lot of camping experience.

Tony was a great teacher; he explained that leadership always had to have more than just one objective. He said, for example, if we have to do a job, we need to be able to recognize and understand what the outcome will be, before we start. In other words, know your objective and know when you completed the task. His simplest description for this idea was; "know where you're going and know when you get there."

His second precept was something like “make the job fun (if possible)”. He said “if you have to involve others, don’t down play the importance of the task.” Remember we’re asking for the help of brother scouts not demanding that they do an unpleasant job for you. Always give a complete description of what needs to be done and smile while you’re speaking. You shouldn’t discourage your team mates because it’s not like they’re your slaves; they’re your partners.

I would say that the most important part of leadership I learned from Tony at that Camporee was; “Never insist that a subordinate do something that you wouldn’t do yourself. And, if someone refuses to do an assigned job, do it yourself and smile while you’re doing it. Other guys will see you and know that you place the team’s reputation above your own position.”

I’m still amused that these ideas remain with me after so many years. I still see myself sitting with Tony on a canvass tarp and taking notes. This guy was the same Tony Noto who got me to learn Morse Code with his innovative method. He was a leader I hoped to emulate during my years in Scouting.

Well! The Troop didn’t really do well in the competitions that weekend, but all did learn a lot, and we promised to improve on all the skills where we came up short.

Disintegration

Attendance at our weekly troop was getting worse through May and June of 1950. Almost all for the guy who were of my age were graduating from elementary school. Almost of none were interested in camping or hiking, many felt that they had gotten all they wanted from “the scouts.” I kept up with my weekly patrol meetings, only had four loyal attendees. These guys included Dave King, Russ Malone, Carl Evans, and Joey Ruggerio. We worked on rank requirements and I got all my guys ready to advance to 1st Class, but the two other young patrols just gave up.

The last activity for Spring 1950 was a bus trip to Rye Beach in Rye, New York. Mr. “Z” made all the arrangements. It was a Wednesday, (June 20th) when about 35 boys made the trip. The amusement park had a huge

swimming pool and a high diving board. After about two hours in the water, many of us were pretty well sun burned so Mr. "Z" chased us out of the pool, suggesting that we get the troop's money's worth by moving to the rides and games. He had an arm's length of admission tickets for each of us and told us that if we ran out, he would be in the pavilion and we could get more. It was a great fun day and some of the older guys expressed their pleasure by saying, "This is what Scouting should be all about." There were Roller Coasters, Bumper Cars, Fun Houses, and "Airplanes" that bumped up and down as they flew around in a big circle on long cables. Actually, I would have preferred another bike hike to Sleeping Giant. You don't get to see much when you're just going around in a circle. The first two trips on the coaster were fun, but it didn't do much for my stomach. In all honesty, I do think that the trip did provide a bonding experience for most of the guys, but for me, I think the best ride was the bus ride home.

The Summer of 1950

The summer of 1950 was a pleasant repeat of '49. I was once again invited to join the YMCA Junior Staff. I had one stipulation allowing me to take one week off so that I could go to Camp Sequassen with John Cuddy. It worked out well because the "Y" allowed for each of their "Jr's" to be absent for one week of the nine week program. Fortunately, I was the only guy who wanted the first week of August so I submitted my application to attend Sequassen as a "provisional camper" with Troop 63 for just one of the two weeks that the troop had reserved. As the time came to go to camp, I was excited over the thoughts of participating in the real scouting experience of summer camp. Of course, I had hiked over much of the camp with Uncle George on several occasions, but idea of being a camper and involved in the activities and scout craft program was really got my blood pumping.

It was a short stay. We checked in at the camp registration desk, were sent to the "health lodge" where a nurse took our temperature and Dr. Wallack did a quick check of our throats and eyes and put a check on the health form. At the door, one of the Jr. Staff guys put a big "CS" on our chest with some purple stuff called Gentian Violet. Everybody thought the "CS" meant Camp Sequassen, but it actually meant "Can Swim". We had to have a "CS" in order to do the swimming test. From the health lodge, it was a jog down to the water front.

One of the “water front” staff explained the requirements to qualify as a white, red, or blue swimmer. Whites were in the shallowest water. Reds could swim a little and had to stay in a confined area under a lot of supervision and were encouraged to take the swimming lesson program. Blues had to dive off the dock the groups of six or eight, swim six laps of the crib which was the size of a 20 yard pool, and then tread water for two minutes. It was a piece of cake for me, but three of the boys who swam the test with me didn’t make it. They got a red tag as a consolation prize.

Having earned a blue tag meant that I could test for using the canoes and row boats on the next day. It was now time for supper. Since we were already at the water front, we were told to change into clothes in the “crew room” (under the mess hall) then go upstairs to eat. Sunday evening supper was boiled hot dogs with sour kraut and chips with “Bug Juice” and chocolate pudding for desert. After supper, we went back to the registration desk area, picked up our equipment and bedding then proceeded to “Maple” Campsite where we set up our bunks and went to bed. I fell asleep thinking about the promises of the week to come.

The next morning was a huge disappointment. I woke up burning and convulsing with a high fever. The provisional Scoutmaster ushered me off to the health lodge where the nurse took my temperature and made notes on my health form. They sent for the Camp Director, who said that he would call my parents and told me that I would have to be quarantined in the health lodge. The way I felt, I was glad to be able to go back to sleep. The next thing I knew, my mother was nudging me awake. I felt quite dopey as my mom and dad walked me to the car. Johnny Cuddy helped dad gather up my stuff and carry it to the car. I fell asleep again and woke up as the car turned into the driveway at home. Dad was on his second week of his shop’s shutdown and he was half way through painting the house. He had left a ladder against the side of the house and in my delirium, I remember questioning if I would have to climb the ladder to get into the house. Sometime later mom was asking me if I could eat some soup and saying we were going to see Doc Serafin. I got my face washed, and made it back to the car. Dad drove me down the street to the doctor’s office where we learned that I most likely had a case of strep. I told him that Dr. Wallack had seen me the previous day and I wasn’t sick. He said “Yes you were but didn’t know it.” He gave me a shot of penicillin and said; push fluids, get plenty of sleep, and don’t go swimming until next Sunday.

I woke up Tuesday morning in my own bed, pretty darn mad that I was going to miss the week of my dreams. I had been anticipating it for so long.

The following Tuesday, I was back at the “Y” with kids and adults asking me how I enjoyed my week at Scout Camp. I gave the “the short version” and got all sorts of condolences. It wasn’t a week, it was more like 25 hours. The summer finished quickly and as always, I enjoyed playing games, working with crafts and hobbies, and as always, teaching swimming.

Back to School

September 5, 1950, was my first day at Fair Haven Jr. High. About half of the scouts from Troop 24 were there at our first assembly. Another new classmate who attended that assembly was a friend named Bill “Fuzzy” Faoro who I met in the *JrRR* and went on all our past train trips. We hadn’t seen each other in several months and he was anxious to know if the *JrRR* planned any more outings.

Fuzzy and I made a couple of trips to New York on our own that month. One was for another ride on the Staten Island Ferry and another to the Central Park Zoo. That was the end of the train rides. We both found ourselves too busy. Fuzz started working in his family’s Masonry Business, and I wanted to resume my quest for the Eagle.

Junior High was a new experience I had English with Miss Dillon, Latin with Mrs. Shiff, Algebra with Mr. Conquest, Science with Miss Dwyer, Wood Shop with Mr. Wallace, General Shop with Mr. Williams, and Gym with Mr. Garrity. The days went by quickly especially since school ended at 2:15pm. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday were for the academics; while Tuesday and Thursday were for activities. Days went by really quickly especially since I didn’t have time to look out the windows. September and early October were a real disappointment in Troop 24 nobody wanted to do anything. No hikes, no campouts, no bike trips, no training sessions, and nothing in the plans; you might say I was disenchanted.

I talked with Mr. “Z”, but he said: “You know how scouting works, the boys have to make the plans.” and it seemed like I was the only one making plans. He said, “Why don’t you see if anything is going on at Troop 63.” He knew about my going to the “Gold Rush” the previous Fall. The following week I went to “63” with John Cuddy and even started working on my Physical Development Merit Badge.

Troop 63 Scoutmaster, Harry Cavallaro, told me that if I wanted to take part in their activities, I would need to register with the troop. But, since I was already a registered scout, I would need to complete a transfer form. He helped me do Troop 63's side of the paper then said that I would have to go back to Mr. "Z" to complete the transfer. One of the items on the form was "reason for transfer". It almost broke my heart to have to provide an excuse for "jumping ship" but I wrote that too many of my friends had dropped out and I wanted more activities.

I felt really bad for Mr. Zimmermann. The previous December, he had been awarded the Silver Beaver by The Quinnipiac Council and now it was obvious to him that his troop was dissolving. His son Bob and Tony Noto were off to college, the weekly attendance dropped from about 35 to fewer than 10, and one of his Assistant Scoutmasters had taken a job transfer to another state. Now, one more was leaving. He told me that he had great hopes that I would make it to Eagle and that he was sorry that I wouldn't be making it from Troop 24. I almost felt as if I were abandoning my religion.

New Troop, New Friends

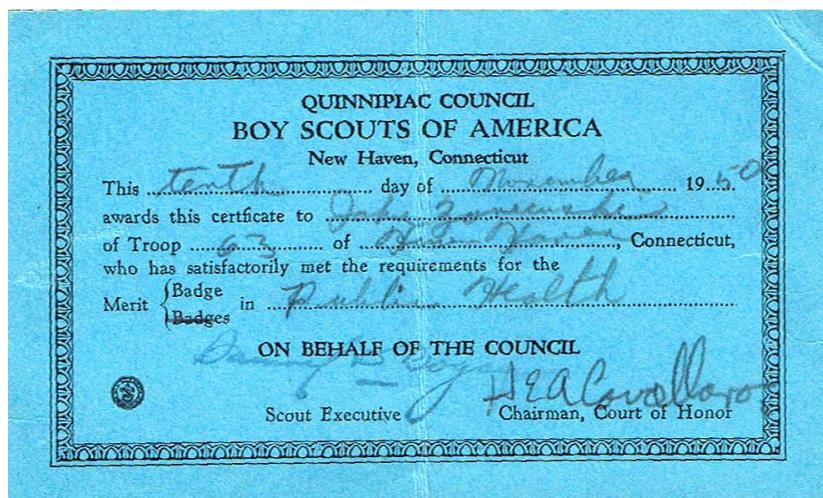
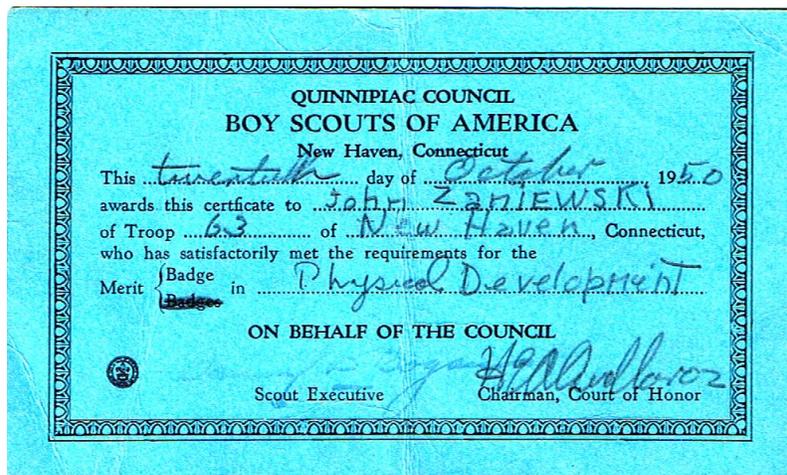
I certainly had no difficulty in adapting myself into Troop 63 although I may have offended my friend John by being so quickly accepted by the other boys as a leader. As a Star Scout, I was the highest ranking scout in the whole troop. Most of the other boys were Tenderfoots and 2nd Class. There were only two guys, Richard Lipp and Jerry Pfeiffer who had reached 1st Class. Frank Holloran, Mike Alley and Donny Harris, some of the guys who did the Gold Rush with John and I, welcomed me like an old friend told the others that I had been their Senior Patrol Leader. Many of the others, Donald Arpine, Paul Hipson, Tommy Farrell, John Asmus, Harold "Bubby" Breitmann, John and Willie Heimann, and Tony Latella were boys who attended St. Boniface School and lived within walking distance of the church. (In those days, distances of a mile and a half or less were considered walking distance.) Johnny Cuddy also a graduate of St. Boniface was the Patrol Leader of the Hawk Patrol so I joined his patrol.

Gaetano Gavagnini was the Patrol Leader of another patrol of younger scouts. "GG" was also a new classmate at school and a really good drummer so we struck up a friendship pretty quickly. Scoutmaster Cavallaro always liked to arrange competitions between the patrols and my scouting background sort of made me a ringer. Our patrol rarely lost in skills tests. As a result, I was asked to change to "GG" patrol and serve as his assistant. I

told “Harry” that I wouldn’t mind, but I felt that I should talk to Johnny before just quitting the Hawks. “Harry” said “of course, after all what’s the second Scout Laws?” I said “Loyal”. He said, “I’m happy that you’re able to leave your friend to benefit the troop.” Johnny was not at all upset; he thought everyone might enjoy tighter games and more competitive skill activities. And, so it did.

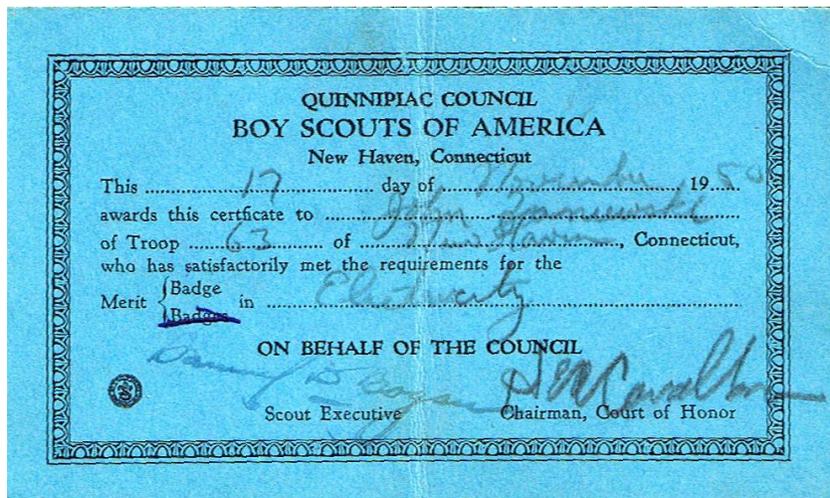
At the end of October, the troop held its’ fall Court of Honor. I’m happy to say that I helped a lot of new Tenderfoot scouts advance to Second Class, and I earned the **Physical Development** Merit Badge which was one of the badges required for Eagle.

By the end of November, I earned two more Merit Badges. **Public Health** was another Eagle required badge which had taken me almost three months to complete.



The *Electricity Badge* was practically a gift. John Cuddy's father was an electrician and was more than happy to explain all the concepts that were presented in the Merit Badge Pamphlet. We had a class of six or seven scouts who met with Mr.

Cuddy at his house. All of us passed, and Mr. Cuddy offered to work with us on any of the badges which were related to his primary profession as a Licensed Stationary Engineer.



The winter of 1950-51 was a pretty busy one all around for me. I started swimming competitively at the New Haven Boys' Club. I had been going swimming at the Boys' Club for about 3 years with my friends Pete Cottiero and Frank Diza. It was just splashing around and playing water tag or sometimes one of the lifeguards would organize a Water Polo game. There were no real rules, just rough stuff and get the ball in the net. In one game, I renewed my acquaintance with Tony Bivona, he had been one of the "Water Front" guys at Camp Sequassen and had seen me do my swim test the previous summer. Tony introduced me to Mr. Lou Colucci, the Boys' Club team coach. Mr. Colucci was also the coach at Wilbur Cross High School where I expected to go the following September. Tony was a "Breast Stroker" and suggested to the coach that I would make a good number 2 for those events. It worked out fine. The coach, with Tony's help, started grooming me not only for this year's competitions but for next year's High School team.

I had one full schedule. Come home from school, deliver my papers, then; Monday, Wednesday, and Friday – swim practice; Tuesday - piano lesson; Friday night - Scouts. Saturdays were either Swimming meets or Scouting activities. Fortunately, the swim competitions took place between 10am and noon, every other Saturday, starting in the middle of December and continuing to about the middle of February. It was a good time; I was improving my form and preparing for a place on my High School swim team. My strength and endurance improved substantially that first season. I only took two 1st. place finishes out of the nine starts, but Coach Colucci said; “Don’t worry and don’t get discouraged, you can only get better.” I felt really good about this because I was afraid that he might say; “Go away and stop wasting my time.” I continued to work hard and improved my skills.

My scouting objectives were still pretty much on course. I had all of the Merit Badges needed for advancement to Life Scout, but I was a little concerned that my leadership requirements could be considered lacking. As it turned out, I shouldn’t have worried about it.

In the middle of January, 1951; Harry Cavallaro was recalled into the Navy and his brother Bill who had been the Assistant Scoutmaster, took over as SM. Mr. Joseph Hock who had been the Troop Committee Chairman also became the Advancement Chairman, and I was elected by my fellow scouts to be the Senior Patrol Leader. I felt really good about my new position, not just for the elevation to the major scout leadership but because of the confidence the troop members has shown in me. The election was a landslide. I got all but three votes. I don’t know, but I would presume that they went to John Cuddy, “GG” Gavagnini, and Joe Hock, Jr. voting for themselves.

Everybody seemed happy with the election except for Mr. Hock who appeared to be mildly annoyed that his son had not been chosen. He was overheard to have made a remark questioning how a Polish kid could be Spl. at St. Boniface. On a later occasion, I found an opportunity to tell him (in my best *Hoch Deutsch*) that my grandfather’s name was Anton von Heigelmann and that my uncle and aunt owned the Heigelmann Agency which was across the street from the church. I also made sure that he understood that I had been raised a 100% American.

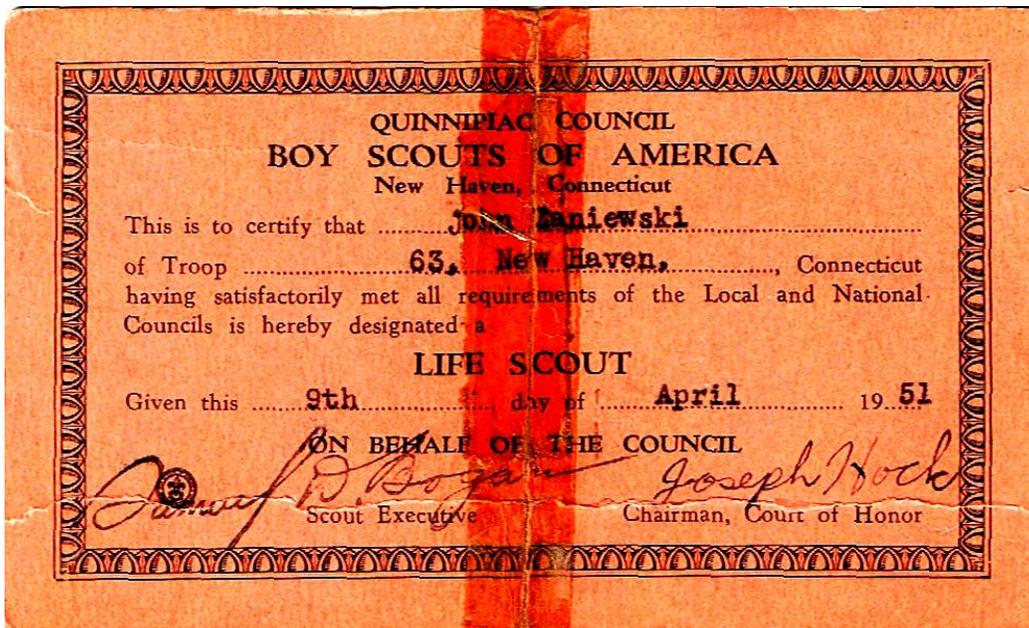
On to Life

Our spring Court of Honor took place on a Monday that year (1951) . The date was April 9th. and of course all the parents were invited. My mother had me iron my washed and starched uniform. In those days, our uniforms were made of limp but serviceable cotton, so they always looked like they had just been slept in. Not this night, I was sharp as could be. The creases in my shirt and trousers made me look like a military officer. I was wearing my Spl pins on my collar and my AAD insignia hung perfectly on my left breast pocket. My merit badge sash had all 17 patched in perfect alignment. I was ready to serve as the Master of Ceremonies of a Court of Honor for the first time.

The program had been worked out and approved by Bill Cavallaro; and all of the members of the Troop Committee were seated in the front rows. We even had a number of older boys who had been active in the troop as much as 10 years earlier. There must have been 200 people in the church basement. I was actually afraid that everyone could see (and hear) my knees chattering as I asked everyone to rise and called for the Color Guard to post the colors.

We went through our opening ceremony and I knew that my voice had an extra tremolo when I led the assembly in singing “America”. From then on, I just had to introduce each of the presenters for each award. I was the last scout to come up to get his award and it was presented by Mr. Hock. I wasn't too sure how I felt about him doing the deed, but he had some very nice things to say about me and how I was setting a good example for the younger boys by working hard to achieve my personal goals.

After my mom and dad came up to pin the Life insignia on my shirt, Father Raymond Mulready spoke about the importance of the Scouting program and the value of the Ad+Altare+Dei Cross. He talked about the things we learned from scouting and concluded by saying that he believed if Jesus were an earth as a teenager today, He would be a Scout.



The day after that Court of Honor, Mom sewed my red heart on my uniform. It was much larger and brighter than the little metal pin and stood out on my chest like a real jewel. I was happy to have made it to Life, but Eagle was still my goal.



Camporee 1951



In this spring of 1951, as Senior Patrol Leader, I was the “ranking” scout in Troop 63. The position didn’t offer much by way of privileges, but it did help me acquire leadership skills. I tried very hard to develop and practice one of Lord Baden-Powell’s principles which said; “The best leader leads best when everybody knows who he is, but nobody knows when he’s around.” He also said that Leadership isn’t a privilege, it’s a responsibility. I will admit that at age 14, the demands of SPL were often overwhelming especially when we would have differences of opinion between one or more of the Patrol Leaders. I recall asking myself if these guys were setting up conflicting situations just to see if I could resolve them. I actually thought I did a good job.

The end of April (April 27, 1951) was Camporee time again. The troop had been working hard to get as many boys as possible to advance to Second Class because one of the minimum requirements for attending the Camporee was Second Class Rank. The people at the check in table were going to look for the badge on every scout’s left pocket. The Friday night before the Camporee, we had a “critical” uniform and equipment inspection. And, as expected, there was a lot of “grousing” about black pot bottoms and greasy cups, utensils, and canteens; as well as empty First Aid Kits. A rule had been established by the Troop leadership many years earlier that every scout had to have his own standard kit. The US Army practice had been set whereby if a scout was injured in any way the scouts rendering first aid had to use the injured boy’s kit. Usually injuries were limited to cuts, scrapes, and an occasional burn. The big complaints about the preparations were, “We’re only going to Camp Cedarcrest,” and “Nobody ever get hurt at a Camporee.

The start of the Camporee was a lousy, rainy, cold, windy day. Bill Cavallaro received a phone call from a member of the Camporee Committee saying that scouts should not attempt to hike into Camp Cedarcrest. Patrols could drive to camp and register up to 9pm on Friday or between 6am and 9am on Saturday.

I made some urgent phone call and recruited some fathers to provide rides. I should say, I got some boys to prevail on their dads. David King lived just down the street from me and his father was already home from work that day. Mr. Asmus had a panel truck and could easily transport nine boys with equipment. Bobby Zernitz's father had a big station wagon and would take six more. All the boys were told to bring a sandwich or eat before leaving for camp.

Mr. King got David, Russ Malone, and I to Cedarcrest at just about 5pm and ahead of the crush. We were able to claim one of the best campsites for Troop 63. So despite of the weather, we pitched our tents and laid out the site before the others arrived.

Troop 63 had some really nice equipment. Each scout was issued a two man Nylon mountain tent. The Saint Boniface Men's Club contributed the money and one of the club members was able to get sporting goods at wholesale. They got us tents which were even reversible with forest green on one side and white on the other for camping in snow. They also had sewn in waterproof floors which would keep out water up to about 1½ inched deep. The doors on either end had draw strings which could make a tight enough seal to keep out a pretty good wind. There was plenty of room inside for one person with all their bedding, clothing, and personal stuff.

As the evening wore on, we began to wonder if we were the only ones brave enough to take the weather. Sometime after 8pm, a runner came down from headquarters informing me that I had 12 scouts checking in. I grabbed my poncho and flashlight and went to gather my troop. When we got to the site, all they wanted to do was huddle under the 8x8 foot "cooking fly" and wait for the rain to stop. That wasn't going to happen, so Dave, Russ, and I started helping the boys pitch their tents. The first four tents went up easy. Then the fifth and sixth didn't have their tent poles or pegs. We got number 7 and 8 up OK, but the last one didn't have any ropes. Finally, we had enough tents set up to accommodate 15 scouts with two guys in each. Dave and I got our Headquarters tent and Russ got to sleep with all the heavy equipment. We all got some sleep but it was tight.

The Sun didn't shine on Saturday. Cooking was a major chore. We probably would have starved if Mr. Asmus hadn't brought us his Coleman gas stove and a huge "coffee pot". We made hot chocolate at about a gallon a batch, and the guys drank it about as fast as we could get the water to boil. The pancakes weren't too bad, just soggy.

After breakfast, I was called to attend the leaders meeting at headquarters. We were told that, in the interest of safety, most of the scout skill competitions had to be scratched. The main theme of this Camporee had shifted to foul weather survival. (No Kidding) We were pretty much on our own to run whatever activities would keep our troops occupied. While I was at the meeting, four more scouts arrived. Dave and Russ had them all set up with 2 guys per tent.

"GG" came up with the idea of making a foul weather fire, starting with wet wood. He and I had attended a training session where the methods were taught as part of wilderness survival. At that time, sheath knives and hatchets were included in a scout's personal equipment. So GG set up an axe yard by roping off an area. He then brought the boys into the yard one at a time to demonstrate the proper use of the hatchet. He chopped up pieces of branch wood about three inches in diameter by about 18 inches long and lashed them together to make a wind break. Each of the boys got to try their hand by cutting at least one piece of wood. The next step was to prepare enough dry kindling to start a good hot sustainable fire. Smaller pieces of the branch wood were cut to about 10 inch lengths and then split into quarters then eighths.

Things were going beautifully until Bubby reached for the hatchet while GG was chopping. He bumped GG's arm and the sharp cutting edge of the hatchet went directly into the calf of Bubby's leg.

"All Hell Broke Loose"

I told my scouts that it was time for the First Aid demonstration. I got Bubby to lie down on a tarp under the dining fly, sent Russ to headquarters to explain that we had an emergency and were going to need professional assistance. The gash was two to three inches long, about half an inch wide in the center, and bleeding profusely. The only encouraging thing was that there was no pulsing. It just bled. I grabbed a sterile pad from the troop First Aid kit, stuffed it into the hole in his pants and applied a firm pressure over the wound. Bubby said it was throbbing but didn't hurt. That was, until I

released the pressure so that we could elevate his legs. Then he screamed out from the pain. I reapplied the pressure and he calmed down. Within two minutes, we had about 12 adult leaders running down the path to our site. One guy said he was a doctor, took a quick look at the wound, told me to maintain my pressure and told everyone else to step back, everything would be fine. The doctor told me that he wanted to change the dressing so that he could see how fast Bubby was losing blood. That was going to help him decide how big an emergency we had here and how we were going to proceed. He did what he could to put Bubby at ease and told me to just keep up the pressure at the same rate. After about a minute, we changed the dressing again, and the doctor asked me if I had any adhesive tape. He started wrapping the tape right over the pants and below the wound and had me continue my pressure until he had gone another eight or so inches above the top of the dressing. For a moment, I wondered if he was going to tape my hand to the dressing, but he had me change hands as he completed the wrap. He then told me to remove my hand. It didn't look like much blood was coming from the wound, but Bubby grimaced and asked me to continue what I was doing. The doctor nodded and said the emergency crew should be there in minutes to take Bubby to the Emergency Room. He told Bubby not to worry, he asked him if Headquarters had his emergency information, and said that he would stay with him in the hospital.

A couple of Firemen showed up carrying a collapsible stretcher. They put Bubby on the stretcher and although he wasn't happy, he now seemed able to tolerate the pain without my hand on his leg. The doctor asked me who was going to accompany them to the hospital and I asked GG to go. The poor guy was more unglued than he might have been had he been the one on the other end of the hatchet. I took GG's hand and put it on Bubby's wound and they both seemed to relax a bit. The doctor told the firemen that he would meet them at Yale and off they went! The doc stopped long enough to say "Good job Scout, you earned your First Aid Merit Badge."

Back to the Camporee

It was time to get Troop 63 back on track. The time was about 11am and the big question was; what to do next. We definitely weren't going to try and top Bubby's performance, but his mishap did provide a plethora of opportunities for training topics. To this day, some scouts who were at that 1951 Camporee will ask me if I remember the day that GG hit Bubby with his axe.

We completed GG's foul weather fire and by noon, we had a really good cooking fire on which to make our Chili con Carne lunch in the Troop's large Dutch Oven. The Troop also had a cast iron pan with a steel cover which worked well as a conventional baking oven. We would place dollops of dough on the cover, place the flat plate on a bed of coals, then turn the pan upside down like a raised cover over the "flat" and add more coals on top. You knew when your rolls or muffins were ready when the steam stopped coming out. This thing was a fixture at all but our back packing and biking trip. It took two guys lifting by means of stainless steel cables to remove the hot top with coals in place. Definitely a team effort. One of the unique games practiced by members of Troop 63 was to lift and move the top without spilling a dozen or so marbles rolling around on top. The fact was that the contraption made the best baked goods at any campground and people were attracted by the delicious smells.

It was a good thing that we followed through with GG's plan because we got an Honorable Mention for our resourcefulness.

Around 3 o'clock, GG and the doctor came back to camp and let us know that Bubby would be OK. Russ Malone, in his usual comedic way, commented that "Bubby might live but he'll never be OK". The doctor had been really great with both GG and Bubby all the time they were together. He kept GG with him all the time they were in the hospital and even let GG watch as he stitched up the wound. He explained his every action so Bubby was at ease knowing that he wasn't going to die or have to have his leg amputated. When it was all over, doc drove the nicely bandaged Bubby to his house, told his mother what had happened, told her how to take care of the wound, and when the stitches would need to be removed.

He gave Mrs. Breitmann a card and told her to call him in three weeks if everything seemed OK; sooner if necessary. He then drove GG back to Cedarcrest.

Almost all this information about Bubby's emergency care came to me second hand. The doctor gave me something of a debriefing from what he had learned talking with both Bubby and GG. Bubby admitted that the incident was completely his fault. He was standing behind GG when he reached around him and tried to grab the hatchet. It was a great relief when doc said that he would take care of all the paperwork. He asked me for my name and address, the scoutmaster's name and address, and said had all of

the info he needed. He had collected Bubby and GGs' names and addresses while they were at the hospital.

I learned an amazing lesson that day. **You don't ever want to have a serious accident while camping.** Just the paperwork could kill you! The following week, the mail started coming to my house. It also went to the Town of Orange, where Cedarcrest is located and whose firemen responded to the scene; The City of New Haven, which owns the camp; The Quinnipiac Council, which sponsored the Camporee; The Chairman of the Camporee Committee; Breitmann family whose son was injured; Bill Cavallaro, Scoutmaster of Troop 63; Father Wirkus, pastor of St. Boniface Church which was our sponsor. I was later told by Herb Neucomb, our Council Field Executive, that several insurance companies were involved. The doctor's final report stated that Bubby's injuries were the result of a simple accident. The only contributing condition was the weather. He concluded that Bubby's right foot slipped on the wet ground causing him to lose his balance while he reached for the hatchet.

On a strictly personal note, I was really glad that nobody asked me my age. Although I felt personally competent, I might have questioned whether a 14 year old should have been in charge of such an expedition.

GG took quite a ribbing for about a year. Some guys would "whisper" so he could hear; "Don't mess with GG or he'll hit you with an axe." GG and I graduated from high school together and after 60 years I still see him several times a year.

Fun and Games

For Troop 63, there really wasn't much by way of fun and games at the Camporee of 1951 unless you consider playing cards in damp tent. We kept GG's fire going, cleaned our Dutch Oven, and filled our water jugs, For supper, we opened eight cans of Dinty Moore Beef Stew, dumped them in the Dutch Oven and suspended the pot over the fire. It took about half an hour, but to have placed the pot directly on the coals would have given us burnt stuff on the bottom and cold stuff on top.

We also heated up the "bakery oven" again for more sour dough muffins and boiled up another couple of gallons of water for more hot chocolate. All but

the finickiest eaters had more than enough to eat. Their best complements to the cooks were that the food was hot and it tasted good. I had to agree.

The Camporee Schedule for the evening was to be campfire visitations. The plan here was to have each troop build their “perfect campfire” and have all the scouts from the other units circulate in mass to participate in songs and skits at each site. As all our other scouts migrated to visit the other troops, Tommy Farrell and I decided on three songs, a quick Abbott & Costello schtick, and a couple of cheers that would be our offering to the assembly. Tommy had a good voice and was completely at ease in front of the group. We also had a nearly perfect fire in our pit by the time it was Troop 63’s turn as host. I obviously didn’t have the chance to observe the other troops, but our guys insisted that our troop was the best. The younger scouts said that the Campfire was the best event in an otherwise washed out weekend.

Before we could “hit the sack” we had to plan our activities for Sunday morning. The Catholic and Protestant scouts were invited to attend an Ecumenical Mass with Father Grazziani at 10am. Since we were a Catholic Troop we were expected to attend the Mass as a unit. It was further decided that everyone would get up at 7am, have breakfast by 8am and then strike our tents and clean up the site by 9:30. That was to give ourselves half an hour to clean up and get to the mess hall for Mass. The Camporee Closing Ceremony was to take place on the ball field at 11am after each site had been inspected by the “housekeeping committee”. The usual rule was that no scouts were supposed to leave the camp until they had been cleared.

So much for plans; Sunday morning was a nightmare. It was a deluge. Dave King, my tent mate had had it. He flatly refused to get out of his sleeping bag until the rain stopped. He wasn’t going to eat. He wasn’t going to pack up. He wasn’t going to help me strike the tent. The only thing he would do was stay in his sleeping bag until Tuesday. At 9:30, I offered him one last chance to get out of the tent. He refused and I started to take the tent down around him. I pulled out all the tent pegs, released the tension lines, and pulled out the tent poles. In less than a minute he was laying there with the damp tent on top of him. At the head end, I started rolling the tent with him in the heap, still zipped in his bag and probably wondering if I was going to bundle him up like so much trash. It was a thought but I knew I’d never get away with it. In my most irritated voice I yelled “Dave! It’s now or never!” With that he came slithering out the foot of the tent into the pouring rain. I

continued to roll the tent so it could be taken to the parking area with all of his stuff wrapped inside.

We got to Mass just in time. Father Joe gave me a really strange look as I stood there in the mess hall surrounded by a growing puddle. I felt like I'd just emerged from a swimming pool fully clothed.

When Mass was over, I had just enough time to say hello to father before running back to our site for the vacating inspection. The committee requested a couple of minor corrections then gave me clearance. At the parking area, Mr. King already had most of our gear loaded. Mr. Asmus had all of his scouts and equipment loaded and Doctor Zernitz was somewhat reluctant to put all that muddy stuff in his nice neat Packard Wagon. I couldn't blame him. Fortunately, Bill Cavallaro arrived with a pickup truck, so we just dumped the wet stuff in the bed, covered it all with "cooking fly" and headed for St. Boniface.

The day was by no means over. We still had to take care of the equipment. The St. Boniface property had a three car garage behind the church. Bill was able to remove the cars so that we were able to separate the Troop's gear from our personal stuff. Tents were stretched out before being hung on bamboo poles suspended from the roof ties. After the tents, the poles were counted and tied together in bundles of 12 using the tension cords. Pegs were just collected in a wooden box. We all breathed a sigh of relief when Bill said that the rest of the gear could sit in the garage until next Friday's meeting. Most of the boys just dumped their personal equipment into their sleeping bags for the trip home.

Mr. King dropped me off at home just in time for supper. It had been a long day, I hadn't eaten since wolfing down a cup of oat meal about 10 hours earlier. We had done some pretty heavy work; lugging our gear, cleaning up the camp site, and hanging the tents. I was ready for a hot shower and a long sleep in my own bed.

Not over yet

Things went as normal for about three weeks before I received a call from Mr. Newcomb telling me that he was trying to set up a meeting between Chief Bogan, the Quinnipiac Council Executive, Bill Cavallaro, and me. He asked me what evenings might be convenient. I told him any evening except

Monday because I had to attend religious instructions. He said OK, he had the chief's schedule but would call Bill and get back to me.

The next troop meeting was a whole lot of buzz about how GG hit Bubby with an axe. In order to put the matter to rest, I had everyone listen to the whole story and assured everyone that GG was not a bully who had lost control of himself and was trying to punish Bubby for grabbing the hatchet. The lesson was well received.

Right out of the Scout Handbook; **You don't mess around with sharp tools and implements.** A second lesson to be learned was that you make the best of a bad situation. The weather had been miserable, but it was a good learning experience. And third; you have to be extra careful when conditions are less than ideal.

Bill said that he spoke with Mr. Newcomb and said that he was waiting for a call. He also said that it appeared that the following Thursday would work for "all concerned". My only thought was "All?"

Thursday evening came with Bill and Father Mulready picking me up in father's car. We didn't talk much during the short seven block ride to the scout office. Father asked if I would be able to answer questions about the accident and I assured him that I was comfortable with just telling the truth.

The meeting had more than just four people. There was "Chief", "Neuc", Father, Bill, and me; along with the man I recognized as the Camporee Chairman, a man who was introduced as the Council President, two more men who were introduced as representatives of the insurance companies, finally Mrs. Breitmann was there. There was another lady who was there to take notes and record the conversations. I was sorry that the doctor wasn't at the meeting because I would have liked to thank him for all he did.

After a few pleasantries by "Chief", he explained that "events" like the accident involving Harold Breitmann were fortunately few and far between. He then asked me to "review" the relevant events of that afternoon. When I was finish, he said that everything was consistent with the doctor's report. He asked the insurance men if they any question they would like to ask, but told them not questions requiring conclusions. They said "Understood!"; then proceeded to ask me how slippery the ground in the axe yard was. I looked at "Chief" and he said, "try another question." They wanted to know how big the axe was. I held my hands about a foot apart, and Bill announced

that he had the hatchet out in the car. Chief said that we could take a short break while Bill went to get the hatchet.

The insurance guys commented that it was a pretty small tool and said that they envisioned a much larger more ominous item. Finally, they asked if they could take a picture of the hatchet. Bill said sure and “Neuc” said “you can get a picture and a complete description of the hatchet from any catalogue of scouting equipment.

Some additional discussion followed among the others at the table, but nothing for which I could offer anything. Bill received a “mild” reprimand for sending out his troop without more adult supervision, but “Chief” said “all of the things that took place following the accident proved that scout training works.”

Before the meeting was over Mrs. Breitmann thanked everyone for taking care of her son. In particular, she thanked me for keeping Bubby “calm and unafraid.” Chief thanked me for “forthright presentation of the events” and again asked the rest of the people if they were satisfied. They were, and as far as I knew, story over. On the way home, Bill and Father Mulready said “good job”. My mom and dad ask if things went well. I said “yes”, and that’s where it ended.

The saga of our 1951 Camporee was a long one but it was a life altering experience in my scouting career. Thanks for letting me share.

Back to my goals

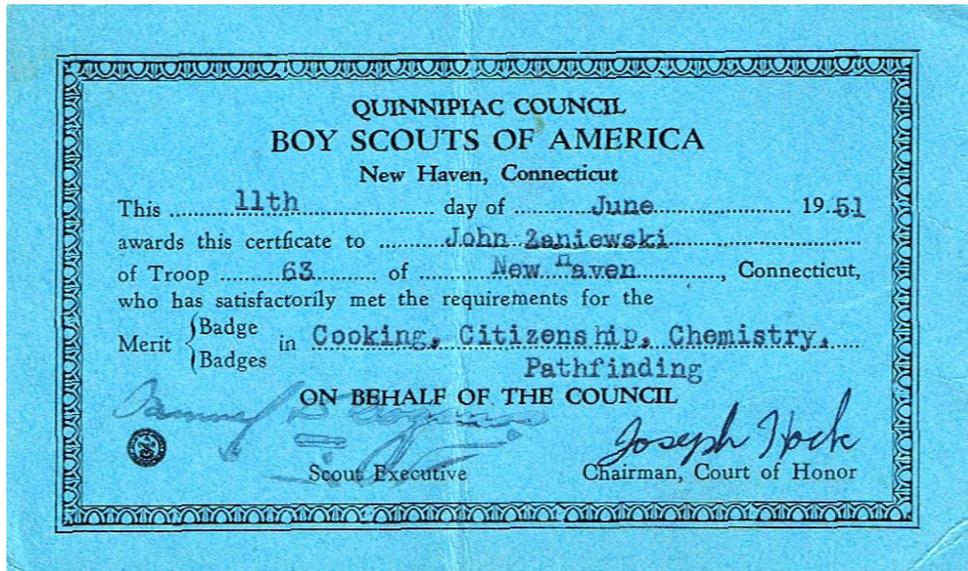
By the end of May, I had just about completed work on four more Merit Badges and accompanied the troop on another Bike Hike, this time the trip was to one of Mr. Asmus’ Spring Water properties just off Bradley Street in East Haven. It wasn’t all that far, probably less than 10 miles from St. Boniface’s but there was not a flat spot on the whole trip. We carried all our basic necessities on our bikes so although there was a lot of “pushing”; we had a lot of fun. Fortunately, Scoutmaster Bill took all the heavy stuff in his truck.

The big objective of the weekend was to learn and practice the skills required for the Cooking Merit Badge. We had all the food we would need to complete the requirements and everything else that was spelled out in the book. It had to have been the best eating campout I ever experienced. The rest of the time was spent on Pioneering. We worked on lashing and making

fencing and tripods and small scale bridges and “fire towers”. In the end, we judged each other’s work. The weekend was perfect. The campsite was perfect. The weather was perfect. Johnny Elengo had his guitar so we sang songs around the perfect campfire for about two hours.

On Sunday morning, we hopped on our bikes and rode over to St. Vincent’s Church for Mass. It looked like an invasion and we all smelled like wood smoke. In his sermon, the priest welcomed us to the Mass saying how nice it was to see a group of scouts complying with the 12th point of the Scout Law. At the end of the Mass, father came down from the alter to give us a blessing for a safe trip home. The most important result of the weekend was that it restored my enthusiasm for camping.

Over the next two weeks I qualified for four more Merit Badges. The Chemistry Badge was one of the most difficult one ever. I was a ninth grade student and the requirements were probably equivalent to the amount of knowledge a student would have learned by taking a whole year of high school chemistry. Fortunately for me, Russell Churchill, Mike Alley’s brother, was a Chemistry Student at Fairfield University and took on the challenge of teaching me a lot of chemistry as we went through the book. Russ was a very patient teacher and he helped maintain my desire to pursue chemistry as my life’s profession.



On June 15, 1951, Troop 63 held another Court of Honor and I had my *Chemistry, Citizenship, Cooking, and Pathfinding Badges*. As part of our program we tried to recruit all the boys to attend summer camp as a unit at Camp Sequassen. As it turned out, only John Cuddy and I actually made it to camp that summer.

A life defining time

Towards the end of June scouts ended for the year, school recessed for the summer, and except for my paper route my time was my own. I had made arrangements to work at the “Y” for the month of July and I would be free to take another try at Camp Sequassen from July 29th. to August 12th. then back to the “Y” for the rest of the month. July had me again as a Junior Counselor working 10 to 12 year olds on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings and 8 to 10 year olds on Tuesday and Thursday. I really felt that I was making good use of the leadership skills. I was practicing as a Senior Patrol Leader. So much for my schedule. The time period is best defined by the fact that I became emotionally bonded with the most important person in my life.

That last week of June, 1951 was a whole free week. My only obligation was to do a few chores around the house and deliver my papers which only took about half an hour and ended with passing David King’s house. On that first Monday, I saw Dave and his sister Pat playing cards on their front steps and took the opportunity to stop and kibitz. It was early in the afternoon and it was suggested that we take a bike ride down to East Rock Park. We had a chance to talk about our summer plans and I got to visit with them every day that week.

I thought Pat was the nicest girl I’d ever met. I had seen her on numerous occasions but we never engaged in conversation. She always seemed shy and retiring but not at all dull and snooty like so many of the girls she went to school with at St. Boniface and St. Mary’s High School. I enjoyed being with her and took the liberty of holding her hand as we walked around the neighborhood. She was tall, freckled, blue eyed, and crowned with long wavy deep auburn hair. I felt attracted to her enough to ask her if she would be my girlfriend. The situation was as serious as it gets with 14 year old kids. Adults thought it was so cute.

“Back To Sequassen”

It was a delightful summer and on July 29th I left for Camp Sequassen and as Yogi Berra said, it was “déjà vu all over again.” We went through all of the preliminaries. The “check in”, the “health lodge”, and the swim test; it was all a breeze. I passed the Blue Swimmer requirements and because I had all the “water front” merit badges I was allowed to sign up to do the Scout Life Guard Program even though the normal age requirement was 18. My friend and team mate Tony Bivona who was on the water front staff again this year assured the “Skipper”, Ed Leary, that I could out swim most of the senior scouts who had registered for the course. As it turned out, I was the only camper with six or seven junior staff members and kitchen staff guys who wanted to be on the waterfront next year.

From the waterfront, we went to our new home at Maple Campsite. Since we were the first to arrive, our staff SPL., Jimmy Graham, told John Cuddy and me to pick our bunks. We actually moved into the same Adirondack shelter and took the same bunks we had last year. I had the bottom, John wanted the top. We were shortly joined in our cabin by Neil Blanos and Art Koines who were scouts from St. Barbara’s Greek Orthodox Church. After a while Scoutmaster Paul Falcigno arrived with eight of his scouts from Troop 12. I already knew Lenny Pecararo, and Andy Petolo from the Catholic Retreat; and Tony Bimonte and Santo Ratinieri from the New Haven Boys Club. Santo lived on State Street near the corner of Pearl, so we were practically neighbors. It was a very congenial group and we functioned like an established troop from day one.

After supper, we built a small campfire in the designated area and did our strategy session. The Scoutmaster had action plans for all of his scouts but told John, Neil, Art, and me that we each had to give him a list of items we expected to accomplish over the next two weeks. I told him that I had signed up for Scout Lifeguard, hoped to earn my Pioneering Merit Badge, and wanted to hike to the “Lost City” visit the Hermit Grave, and drink from the Hermit’s Spring. John also had a short list which included swimming, rowing, and canoeing; but Neil and Art just said “Have Fun!”

Paul said the “Having Fun” was the main part of the program, but there were things to do that were considered mandatory. The first one was survival training which would take place after breakfast on Monday morning. Vinny Vanicola ran the program and even John who had attended the class last year

said he was anxious to go again. The two other activities which everyone wanted to go to were the Crevy Sing and the Hermit's Pilgrimage.

The Crevy Sing was a song fest when we honored the Crevy family who were benefactors of Camp Sequassen. They contributed a lot of money and a big chunk of land. Almost all of the land west of the Workcoeman Road and north of the near point was supposedly part of the Crevy estate. The gift was said to have doubled the size of the camp sometime back in the 1930s. The "Sing" took place at the Crevy mansion which was located off Route 219, south of the center of New Hartford. I think that the short two or three mile trip was called a pilgrimage because of the way we all got there. The camp truck was a 1939 Ford pickup with a wooden flat bed on the back. Ten scouts would sit back to back on the deck, two leaders in the cab with Mike Bonwill driving. The 85 or so scouts in camp and the leaders would start out hiking towards Crevy's with the truck ferrying the first load. Upon arrival, the truck would leave the first load and return to the head of the line of march. Taking the second load would be shorter followed by successively faster trips. By the time the last load had been picked up, the group was less than ½ a mile from the destination. It was a really fair scheme because the order of the groups was reversed on the way back to camp and everybody got to walk the same distance. The reason I mention the logistics of the trip is because no matter how many times it was explained, at least half the walkers believed that they actually walked farther than any other group and no one was going to convince them otherwise.

The songfest itself was a lot of fun with Bob Macklin and Vinny Vanicola doing most of the leading. Bob had a great voice with near perfect pitch and took every opportunity to perform the "Cape Cod Shanty" and "Our Paddles Clean and Bright". Vinny was really animated and always did "The Cat Came Back" and always recited "The Cremation of Sam McGee" by Robert Service. The Crevy family home was a real spectacle. The porch and veranda were all decked out in colored lights and the people with their guests sat on wicker furniture sipping tea. They courteously applauded each presentation. And, when the program was over a frail Mrs. Crevy stood up to thank the scouts for their "delightful performances" and invited us to partake of the generous platters of cookies and fruit punch.

During that summer of 1951, I got to lead my favorite camp song, "Bill Hall's Goat at Sequassen. As it happened, I was doing the song with all its machinations and Bob Macklin ambled into Maple campsite and joined in

the singing. He was so taken with the audience participation song that he insisted that I do the song in the dining hall after the following night's supper. I was pretty excited when Bob serving like a master of ceremonies announced that he had a new song leader in the camp and we were all going to have some fun with a new song.

My song went over really well, Bob called for a "Class A" cheer and I felt really pumped. Not only that, "Bill Hall's Goat became the most requested song for the remainder of our camp stay. It seems like I started a new activity where campers and junior staff members were expected to introduce new songs each week. Some guys thought it was a major imposition, others thought it was great fun.

Lost at The Lost City

So much for the high points! A low occurred when I was asked to lead an overnight outing to "The Lost City" on that first Thursday. I had camped at the site at least four times so I knew several ways to get to the location which had never been mapped. The whole idea behind the lost city was that it had to remain lost.

"The Lost City" really wasn't really lost and it wasn't a city. It was an area in the northwest corner of the camp where some Hessian soldiers were supposed to have settled for a short time after the Revolutionary War. As the lore would have it, there were no more than a dozen handsome fair skinned young men who had no difficulty in attracting and marrying some of the local girls, who took pity on them and helped them survive for a couple of years, near big lake with sweet water and plenty of fish and game in the surrounding forest.

There wasn't really a lot to see at the site. There were four or five depressions which were about 15 feet square. One of the depressions still had the remnants of a crude foundation. There was a large enough clearing in the area to allow pitching eight or ten two man tents. On this occasion however, we were fortunate enough to be able to sleep out under the stars and didn't need to carry tents, just sleeping bags, flashlights, pillows.

The plan was to have Thursday evening's supper in our campsites (It was the chef's night off.), assemble in the parking area at 7pm, and then start off on the ½ hour walk to the "City". We arrived at the site with plenty of time to pick our spot and build a small campfire. We sang some songs, did some

skits, retired to our sleeping bags just after sunset. I guess that I was one of the first guys to fall asleep because the next thing I knew it was day light and a lot of the boys were asking about food. The leaders managed to organize the situation and I went out from the immediate area to locate the North trail. I wanted to use a route that would get us back to the mess hall right on time for breakfast.

Back in 1951, the area around The Lost City was crisscrossed with deer trails so I had to find one that had piled stone markers. I found the trail and hung my small knap sack on a tree branch and went back for the rest of the group. I didn't have any difficulty finding them because they made so much noise.

At that point I told the leaders to follow me and I headed back to the place where I left my pack. The only problem was that I couldn't find my equipment, and since time was getting short, I had to give up looking and head for the mess hall.

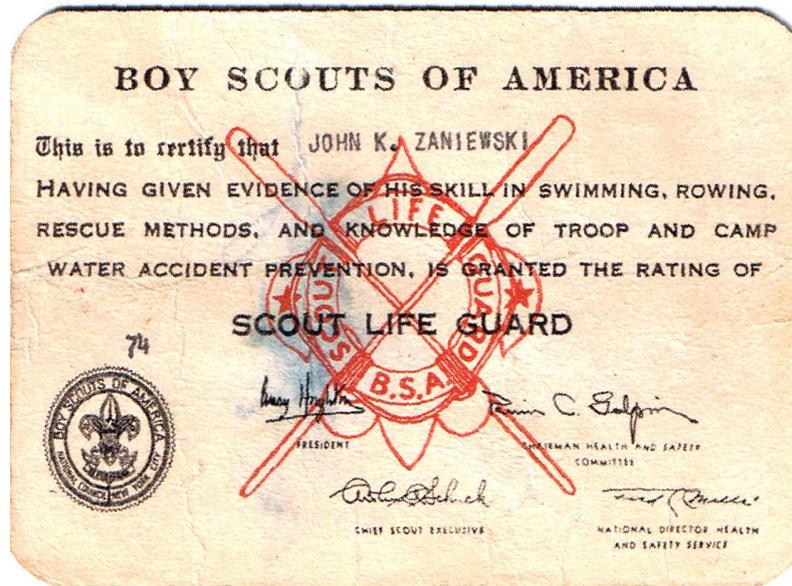
I took quite a ribbing over losing my stuff and because of all of the activities I was involved in, it was Saturday afternoon before I was allowed to return to the area with staff SPL. Jim Graham. I wasn't permitted to go alone even though Assistant Camp Director, Frank Savino, knew that I wouldn't get lost. Before we left to do a search, Mr. Savino said "Make sure you bring Jimmy back in time for supper." Sadly, after scouring the area for about an hour we never found the pack and for all I know it's still out there 60 years later.

I felt pretty bummed out over losing my sleeping bag and had to find Vinny Tuscano the store keeper to loan me some blankets to use on my bunk. I still had nine more nights before the end of the camp session, Vinny had been a classmate at Fair Haven Jr. High and he knew I'd certainly return them when it was time to leave camp. Of course he laughed hysterically when I told him about my experience.

Scout Life Guard

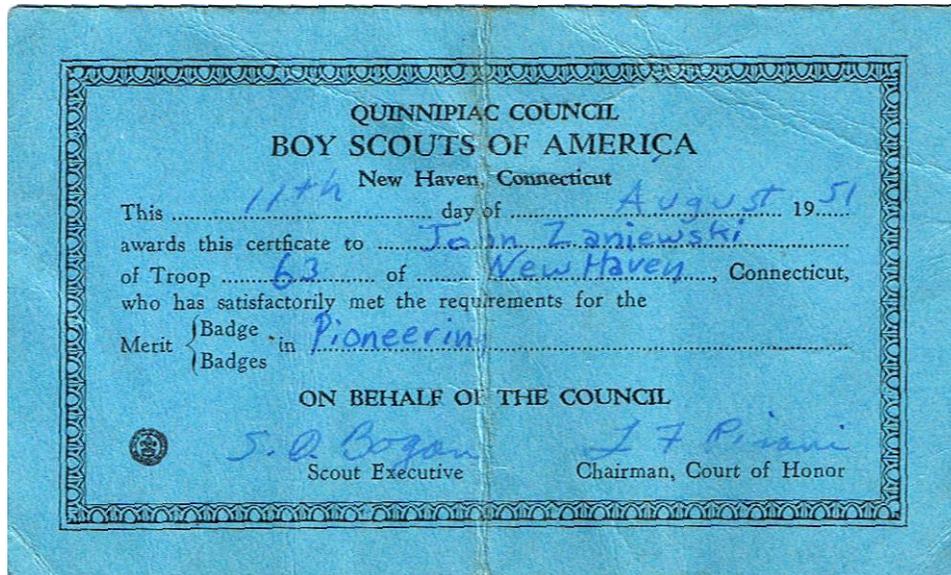
The rest of my stay at Sequassen was as productive as I hoped. The Scout Lifeguard program went great. It required a mile swim and mastery of skill called "gunwale pumping". This can best be described as standing on the sidewalls of a canoe and bouncing for a half mile. Of course, this was in addition to rescue methods and the first aid skill as needed. The program

was substantially more difficult than all of the **Red Cross Water Safety Instructor** courses I had taken.



The Patch looked really good on the baseball cap I wore while I worked at the "Y"; and the aquatic leaders were quite impressed.

My 1951 summer encampment at Sequassen brought me a little bit closer to my ultimate objective. Earning the *Pioneering Merit Badge* really left me with only Bird Study and Camping as required for my Eagle. I pretty much had a new timeline that meant I could anticipate completing the requirements next summer. I set my sites on joining the Sequassen Junior Staff next summer. I believed that I could do it.



Order of the Arrow

My election into the Order of the Arrow was actually the highpoint of my first real camping at Sequassen. In every two week camp cycle, each campsite conducted a secret ballot to select three or four scouts who were supposed to have displayed the best examples of “Scouting Spirit”, lived up to the 12 points of the “Scout Law”, and were considered worthy to enter the “Brotherhood of Cheerful Service”.

Much to our surprise, John Cuddy and I were both selected for the honor, even though we were like foreigners from a different troop. Andy Petolo and Lenny Pecararo from Troop 12 were also elected.

Admission into the lodge required an initiation ordeal. Candidates had to perform 12 hours of service to the camp, on a ration of bread and water, in total silence, while carrying a small hand carved arrow between their teeth.

Friday, August 10, 1951 was my Ordeal Day. "Arrowmen" in Indian regalia woke us abruptly at 6am and told us to put on moccasin or sneakers, camp shorts and a T-shirt and follow them. The only other item permitted was a small pocketknife. We were led to a small clearing in the woods, told to sit down cross legged on the ground, and from that point on, we were not permitted to speak or even give hand signals. When spoken to, we could nod or twist our heads, yes or no. After receiving these instructions, some of the brothers went around the circle passing out twigs about $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch in diameter and about 18 inches long. We also got a leather thong also about 18 inches long. We were then told to carve our own arrow with the only requirement being that the shaft had to be long enough to fit in our teeth with the ends of the thong attached to the shaft by the arrowhead and the fletchings. I immediately cut my stick down to about 6 inches in length, notched out the arrowhead and the forward edge of the fletching and proceeded to scrape the shaft down to a diameter of about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. I had to admit that it looked pretty good compared to most of the one I was able to see. The total time they gave for this little activity was less than ten minutes. Some guys barely completed tying the thong on their stick.

The Arrowmen then went around the circle with what looked like cans of paint inspected the arrows and painted the Greek letters Chi and Sigma ($X\Sigma$) on our foreheads. One of them looked at my arrow and said "nice job"; I responded with "thanks!" He put his finger to his lips and said "that could have cost you your first notch." We hadn't yet been told that if we got three notches, we were disqualified.

By 7am, after a breakfast which consisted of two pieces of white bread smeared with peanut butter and a paper cup of water, we were told to fall into a single column and led up to the parking lot to find a large pile of logs which had been cut lengthwise at a sawmill. I was assigned to a group of six candidates who stayed with the wood while other groups were assembled and led off in different directions. We weren't told what the other groups tasks would be, but we were each given a pair of high cuff work gloves and instructed to break off into pairs and transport all the logs down to the English Chapel site. My partner turned out to be a kid about half my size. His name was Harvey Hofman and he was pushing his limit by having to carry about half his weight. We were able to work out the balance of the logs as I positioned myself about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way towards the end and Harvey was on the very front. It was heavy work for me, but he really struggled as we made our way over the irregular ground because there was no clear path

when we started. By the time our group had completed our task, it was lunch time and the quarter mile path had been beaten into the ground like a long established trail.

Lunch was another surprise; two pieces of white bread smeared with peanut butter and a paper cup of water. The one comforting thing was that there was no shortage of water.

After lunch we arranged two logs together, flat side up into six rows with a center isle. We had to wedge and wrestle each log into its intended position by stuffing rocks and dirt to form a support system. After about an hour, Mike Bonwill brought us a long framing level which was taped to an 8 foot long 2 x 4. I knew immediately what it was for but nobody asked and I couldn't tell. I had already gotten one notch in my arrow.

I grabbed the level and started extending it across the rows at all different angles lifting the logs so that all of the logs benches were level on both sides of the isle and from row to row. I must have been nearly 5 o'clock by the time the whole task was completed. We now had six rows of benches with about two feet of space between them and a four foot wide isle all flat and level. It was a job to be proud of and in following years, I was always pleased to tell other scouts about our accomplishments of that day.

Our taskmaster told us we were done and to go to our campsite, clean up, get dressed in our Class A uniform and report to him at the craft shop. He also told us to wear our arrow and be careful not to speak because any of the OA members could give us a notch if we slipped up. I thought that they were going to give us a meal, but all they did was scrub the XΣ off our foreheads with alcohol and told us to help ourselves to a box full of milk crackers and a couple of pitchers of water.

No one could eat more than four or five crackers before it was impossible to swallow. We were in the open sided building for more than an hour before all of our markings were removed. Some of the guys who had been working in the sun, still had marks which changed from red on white skin to white on red skin. A few candidates accidently commented on the change and promptly received a notch. Several were spared the fatal third notch with only a stern warning. I received my one notch early in the day when a scoutmaster passing through our work area complemented me on the nice job I did in carving my arrow. I responded with "Thanks!" and was snapped back with an admonition from one of the taskmasters.

The sun had set and it was starting to get dark when we were told to form a single line by height; shortest in front, tallest to the rear with our left hand on the shoulder of the guy in front. If our hand were to slip off that shoulder we had to just stop, but not speak.

Initially, it was light enough to see the trail. However, in a short time, it turned pitch black and you had to step where the scout in front of you stepped in order to keep from tripping. I was so intent on not losing my leader that they could have been leading us to New York and I wouldn't have noticed. I didn't have any idea if we were still in Sequassen. There was no moon so I never knew which direction we were headed and we made several right turns. We stopped 12 or 15 times in the course of the walk so the guides could reconnect the chain. Shortly after we stopped for the last time, we started seeing small burning logs, which were positioned to light the trail. (I remember seeing pictures of these fires described as "Swedish Torches" in "Boys Life" Magazine.) A couple hundred more feet, we turned the corner of a large out cropping and we were welcomed to the "OA Ground".

I don't think it would be proper to further describe the ceremony, save to say; we were accepted as "Ordeal Members" and the white sash with a red arrow was placed over our right shoulder. After the last candidate received his sash, we were told it was OK to speak and that we should take our carved arrows from around our neck

After the ceremony, we got back in our line and were led by Arrowmen with flashlights on a "short walk" to the dining hall where a buffet was set and we had a feast. We all talked about our experiences of the day, but the big topic was "Where was the ceremonial ground actually located"? It took so long to get there and so quick to get back. I was anxious to learn all I could about the OA.

The following day all of the new brothers were introduced at breakfast by the Lodge Chief Tom Schnerts. We lined up in the front of the dining hall wearing our new sashes and were applauded by all the campers as our names were called.

Over the past few years, I had become aware of Order of The Arrow and the sash they all wore at scouting events. I learned from Uncle George that they were also called the Red and White and that he had been inducted into the Brotherhood of Honor Scout Campers in 1939. I actually had no expectation

that I would ever be considered worthy to be chosen for induction into scouting's most prestigious fraternity.

My very memorable scout camp experience was almost over. That Sunday was a great day, with a last dip in the lake, a last stroll down to the Hermit's spring, attending Mass at Camp Pioneer, and a canoe ride over to the "near lake store" for one last "Orange Crush". Lunch seemed like the best of the week and afterwards, we said our good byes and exchanged phone numbers and addresses with the new friends we made over the last two weeks.

By 2pm, the camp was abuzz with new scouts arriving and "old scouts" leaving. Departing scouts were told to just collect themselves with all of their gear at the west end of the parking lot so that parents making pick-ups could load their boys and depart as quickly as possible. My parents arrived around 3pm; the car was loaded in less than a minute and we were off for New Haven. I was sorry to leave, happy about my experiences and the new friends I'd made, proud of my accomplishments, and looking forward to visiting with Pat again. I missed her.

Back Home

Monday morning had me back at the "Y" at 9am. I got a Royal Welcome because in my absence, two of the staff had to leave. One of the guys was a young ordained minister who received an urgent call to report to a church in Vermont. The second was a junior counselor whose father, a professional army officer, got reassigned. They were gone and I felt bad that I didn't have a chance to say good bye.

There were only two weeks left to the "Summer Building Program" which ended with a big picnic and a big Camp Fire on Saturday, August 25. I got to be the Master of Ceremonies and lead some of the new songs I learned at SEQ. Bill Ressler, The Program Director, practically made me promise that I'd come back next summer; but I told him that I had set my sights on working at Scout Camp. It wasn't good bye to Bill Ressler because I knew I see him when I would be at swim team practice sessions.

Pat and I had a week to hang out before school would start again on the Wednesday after Labor Day.

Wilbur Cross High School

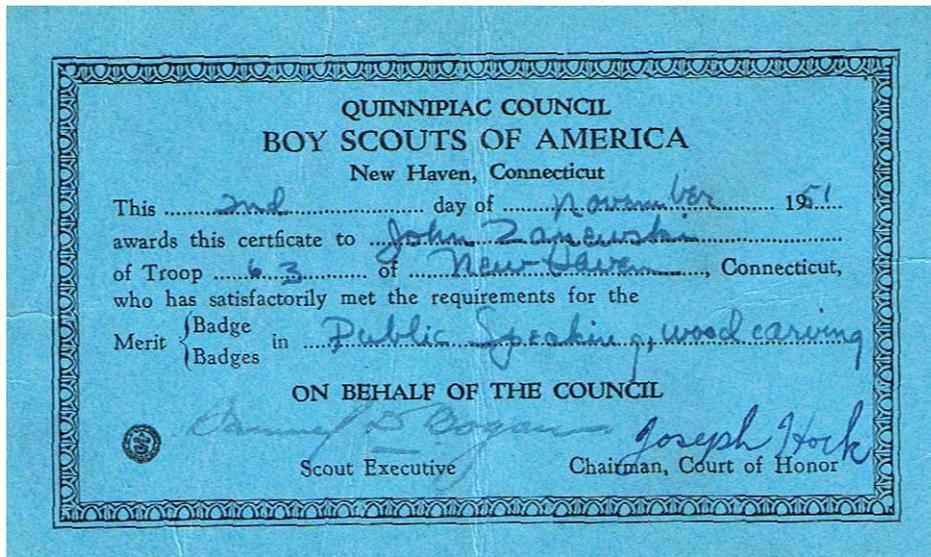
September 1951 was a major readjustment as I started high school. Classes ran from 8:20 am to 2:15 pm with a 20 minute lunch break. My schedule included; Geometry, English, Biology, Latin II, Ancient History, and Public Speaking alternating with Physical Education. It seemed overwhelming, but I'd make the best of it. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons were consumed with swimming practice at the New Haven Boys Club followed by delivering my newspapers. Tuesdays and Thursdays were a little easier and I was able to convince my parents to allow me to attend religious instruction at St. Joseph's with Pat on Tuesday instead of St. Stan's on Monday. Thursday evening was time for choir practice at St. Stan's, and Friday evening was scouts at St. Boniface. Saturdays schedule include collecting the weekly payments from my newspaper customers. Fridays and Saturdays had 11pm curfew. It wasn't too long before Pat and I had a standing date schedule for Tuesdays and Saturday. On top of all this, my parents and teachers thought that I should dedicate some time to study and homework. In hindsight, I should have spent more time studying.

As much as I enjoyed my scouting activities, my choices became difficult. Fortunately for me as the Senior Patrol Leader of Troop 63, I was able to pretty much control the activity schedule. I still wanted to participate in the Jr. Railroad and pursue my interest in bike riding along with tent camping and some hiking. We attended a fall "Mini Camporee" out at Sleeping Giant State Park over the last weekend of September. The neat thing about this event was that we were all expected to arrive by bicycle. Tents and heavy equipment could be brought in by car, but sleeping bags and personal stuff had to be on the bike. There was a check in station where we earned points for the weight of each biker's "stuff" and the number of miles traveled.

My dad had helped me make an extension for my rear fender carrier that was 20 inches wide by 30 inches long which was made of aluminum tubing so it was very light but strong. Part of the reinforcing attachments included gussets and 4 inch wide end plates. It was so rigid that dad tested the thing by lifting it off the floor on a 6x6 and standing on opposite corners without having it flex even a little bit. On the back plate there were four evenly spaced red reflectors. Any amount of "Stuff" could be lashed to the carrier with the objective being balance and the limit being weight. After all, the bike still only had two wheels.

The funniest thing about the carrier was that I had about 20 scouts and leaders who wanted to know where they could buy one, or if I wanted to sell mine. When I got home after the camp out and told my dad, his response was “Why didn’t you sell it?” I would never consider parting with it. I still cherish the memory of the time and instruction my dad gave me with the project.

Back on the quest towards my Eagle, I managed to complete my **Wood Carving** and **Public Speaking Merit Badges** in time for Troop 63’s November 2nd. Court of Honor.



Continuing into 1952 our scouting activities were pretty similar to past years. The difference was that I found myself the main instructor in “scout crafts” for our younger boys. I admit that I enjoyed their admiration was happy to share my stories and spark their desires to gain their own unique stories. I took a page from Uncle George by encouraging them to keep a journal so they could share their scouting experience with the next group of younger scouts looking for adventure.

January 1952, I saw my last winter campout with Troop 63. We spent two nights at “Oak Lodge” (which during the summer months served as the refreshment stand) at Chatfield Hollow State Park. It was a neat place with metal bunks left over from the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps. Damn it was cold. Mr. Hauser had a thermometer that showed -4°F. We must have burned half a cord of wood in the heavy stone fireplace and by lunchtime on

Sunday, it was finally warm enough for us to take off our parkas. And wouldn't you guess, after lunch, it was time to clean up, pack up and go home.

Got The Job!

In the middle of February, I received a small envelope in the mail from Mr. Newcomb asking that I call him about setting up an appointment for an interview with Chief Bogan with regards to a "Position" at Camp Sequassen for the summer of 1952. Needless to say I call Neuc as soon as I read the note. He laughed as soon as he heard my voice saying he knew I'd be the first to respond because the invitations had gone out the previous day. I told him that my schedule was open for any day except Friday and Saturday of that week when I had two Swimming Meets. He asked me to come to the Quinnipiac Council Office on the coming Monday at 7pm sharp. I said "I'll be there", thanked him, hung up the phone, and savored the moment. I never considered a possibility of not getting a job and completing my Eagle requirements. In my mind, it was a done deal.

I appeared at the appointed time and place in my freshly pressed class "A" uniform. I looked good enough to have been the cover boy on Boys Life Magazine. I even impressed myself. I felt a deep stab of anxiousness when the first words from Chief Bogan's mouth were "I remember you from an incident we had a couple of years ago" (obviously referring to Bubby and the axe). I thought it was all over. No way was he going to give me a job now. The second thing he said was that he was really pleased with the way I handled myself in taking charge of a bad situation and that I conducted myself as he always hoped a good scout would. He told me that I was one of the boys who made his job and his life worthwhile. I could hardly believe what I was hearing. ME? He also told me that he had shared the whole story with George Heigelmann. I told him that my uncle had never mentioned anything about it. He said "I didn't think he would."

He asked how my swimming was going, and I told him how the season ended this past Saturday with the New Haven AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) Championships. I was able to tell him that I took Second Place in the 100 yard Breast Stroke, Third in the 50 yard Butterfly, and Third in the 150 yard Individual Medley all in the 15 and under age class. Chief went on to say that the position they had in mind for me was that of a Staff SPL and

Camp Hike Master. He explained that higher ranking first time staffers are usually offered the SPL spots. First Class and under get kitchen and maintenance jobs and although I was more than qualified for the waterfront, Skipper Ed Leary had already requested Tommy Sanderson who had been on waterfront the previous year. I had to tell him that I knew Tommy quite well and he had beaten me by one place in all three of Saturday's swimming events. I consoled myself with maybe Camp Hike Master was as exalted as Assistant Water Front Director.

Chief's final question for me was, "Do you have a girlfriend?" I was sort of stunned by this, but I answered "yes." He went on to ask if it was a secret attraction or if I had an "actual relationship a young lady." I said "we have a relationship. We go to dances at each other's schools, we go to movies, we go roller skating, you know, that kind of stuff." And further, "do her parents approve?" To which I responded "Her parents never voiced any objection that I'm aware of, and her brother is a fellow scout in my troop."

I knew the interview was over when he said "You got the job but if anything happens that you're not going to be able to commit 10 weeks to the camp, you've got to tell Neuc at your earliest possible time. The last thing he said as we parted company and he turned me over to his assistant Frank Savino was, "Can you still find your way to the Lost City". My response; "Absolutely!"

As engaging as Chief had been, Frank Savino was stern and direct but not threatening. I had been in Frank's company on numerous occasions with the OA. He actually had a good sense of humor and got along very well with Bill Farat who was an old family friend and one of Uncle George's former scouts. Frank told me that he and Bill were neighbors and that he had asked Bill for a recommendation regarding my job.

OK by me!

The Radio King Bike

Early in April, the weather was warm and we planned another Bike Hike to Mr. Amsus' well in Cheshire. The site was located about half a mile up Peck Lane from West Main Street. Most of us had hiked the property so the location which was about twice as far from New Haven as Sleeping Giant

“seemed” to be a “flat ride”. Not a problem without equipment. Mr. Asmus took everything in his truck. We only carried a couple of canteens. Very pleasant! We rode out on Saturday and back on Sunday with a stop for 11am Mass at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. An interesting side feature of this trip involved a very fancy Radio King Bike.

Not long ago, a friend asked me if I remembered the Radio King Bike. I certainly do! The thing weighed about 50lbs.

One of the boys in Troop 63, Bobby Zernitz, got one for Christmas 1951. At the time, he was a small kid who could just about start off on level ground even though the bike had a Bendix Two Speed Coaster Brake.

I got to ride "the King" fairly often because whenever our troop went on bike hikes, the "poor kid" could only ride down hill. So I used to swap bikes with him when we went up hill. Keep in mind that Connecticut is all hills. On any trip, I rode the King half the time.

The radio in the tank was a modified Philco which had wire retainers to keep the six small vacuum tubes from falling out. The radio chassis was mounted upside down. How could one tell you might ask? Because, the name on the radio looked like "oclyd". The tank also held 4 "D" batteries which connected to the radio and 4 more which were held in reserve and attached by clips. The metal "Power Pak" mounted on the carrier contained a 22volt "B" battery and when you opened the case, there were warning notices printed on the inside of the cover The notices said "Remove Battery when not in use"; "Do not park bike in direct sun"; and "Inspect this case for corrosion frequently." They also had instructions for washing the case with baking soda and water and a warning to make sure the case was thoroughly dry before reinstalling the battery.

The antenna was a piece of metal tubing which hinged down from the lower cross tube but was insulated from the bike frame. The system worked OK except when you were riding in the city and near parked cars. Then the signal would cut out. The other problem with performance was that a lot of cars would cause static noise. My friend's dad had a 6 foot whip antenna attached to the back of the bike with a red flag on top. I do remember the Radio King Bike.

Everybody thought the flag was a nice safety idea so one scout whose uncle owned a junk yard managed to get us all antennae so that we could all attach flags to our bikes.



My bike was a plain vanilla "Columbia". The only accessories were heavy metal hooks which clamped on the handle bars just below the grips, the custom make carrier I described earlier, and a fully adjustable head lamp. The hooks were to hang my newspaper bag and the light was so I could park the bike and still see where I was walking while delivering my papers in the dark.

Camporee 1952

The spring Camporee of 1952 was actually my last “overnighter” with Troop 63 and in comparison with most of my previous adventures it was calm and relaxed. I was asked by the Order of the Arrow to serve on their staff in running part of the program. Richard Lipp, my Assistant Senior Patrol Leader, happily took over my spot and did a great job. No mishaps of any kind. No injuries requiring First Aid happened. Nobody even got homesick. The troop did very well, earned a blue ribbon, and everybody had a great time. Richard was a great protégé. He had a lot of questions and I had the chance to coach him in ways that allowed him to appear as having full authority. We became much closer friends although we rarely saw each

other outside of scouts. He had graduated from St. Boniface School with Pat and was in her class at St. Mary's High School. A couple of years later he and I were classmates at New Haven College. Richard went on to join the administrative staff of the college, but on seeing each other always took the opportunity to reminisce about our scouting years together and his unexpected promotion to SPL at the Camporee of 1952.



Following the Camporee, I asked, then Scoutmaster Joseph Hock if we could have an election for a new SPL, explaining how Richard had done such a great job the previous weekend. He said OK but sort of hoped that his son Joe would be chosen. Joe was an alright kid, but really hadn't been involved in many of the Troop functions. He was a Star Scout and Richard who was First Class had done it all and won the vote at about 25 to 1.

Summer at Sequassen

Over the time interval between accepting the job and the opening of camp on June 29th. we had several staff meetings at the scout office. Besides me, John Zaniewski; the Staff SPLs included Bill Phillips, Andy Petolo, George Everit (Jevvy) Woods, Bill Collins, and Howie Rose who was also the Camp Bugler; Kitchen staff guys Jimmy Gibbons, Don Cornwall, Paul (Peaches) Lasko; Billy Hunt who ran the Trading Post; Dave Marshall who ran the Craft Shop; Cliff Maxwell who ran the rifle range; Assistant Ranger Mike Bonwill; and of course, Assistant Waterfront Director Tommy Sanderson. These guys made up the main cadre and trained junior leader base to act as guides for scoutmasters who had come to camp with their troop. Senior staff

guys who spent the entire camp season at Sequassen included: Larry Pisani, Adam Festa, Bill Cuff, Vinnie Vanicola, Bob Macklin, Bernie (Doc) Wolf, and Ed (Skipper) Leary. There were a lot of other volunteers who came to camp and served in several capacities for varying periods of time as their own schedules permitted. There was never much doubt that the men who were really in charge were Chief Bogan, Frank Savino, and Ranger Hal (Cap) Kellogg.

On Wednesday June 25th, my Mom drove me up to camp with my now 9 year old brother Tommy, serving as the navigator. Mom was certainly a capable driver, but she could get lost four blocks from home. I had packed all of my gear in the car the night before because we had to drop Dad at “High Standard” (his place of work) before 7am.

The route was easy enough and we had plenty of time before Mom had to be back to pick up Dad at 3pm., so we proceeded east on Dixwell Avenue to the corner of Whitney and stopped for breakfast at the Brownstone Restaurant. The place was very busy at that time of day, but they knew how to handle the crowds. While Mom, Tommy, and I sat at a small table eating sandwiches of fried eggs on hard rolls, I couldn't help but be impressed with what had to be the hundreds of people who lined up at the takeout counters for their morning coffee and buttered hard rolls. A couple of “Short Order Cooks” went through their motions with total efficiency. An order clerk stood at a cash register writing orders on a pad while workers to her left and right were putting stuff in white paper bags and filling paper coffee cups.

The items would come together in seconds and the customers would pay (5¢ for coffee, 15¢ for the buttered roll) and be on their way in seconds. We by contrast had a leisurely breakfast.

The ride was also pretty leisurely. We drove north on Whitney Ave. (Ct Rte 10) through Cheshire and Southington, almost to Plainville where we took a left fork onto Rte 177. This was a rather slow road with a long way to go. When we got to Canton, we took a sharp left turn onto US Rte 44 and headed Northwest all the way to Winsted. Next, we drove South on CT Rte 183 until we came to the signs for Camp Sequassen indicating a left turn on West Hill Pond Rd. This was a road just about two cars wide with steep hills, sharp turns, and lots of bumps. It was about 10am when we arrived at the familiar wooden post at the entrance to the camp's parking lot. There didn't seem to be anyone around, but the instructions on the postcard I

received said to check in at the Trading Post, there would be someone there to greet all new arrivals.

Billy Hunt was hard at work when I walked in the door. When I commented about how busy he was Bill said that he had lots to do before he would be ready for camp opening on Sunday. He pointed to a clipboard on the glass counter and told me to sign in then haul my stuff to Maple campsite and pick out an empty bunk for the rest of the week. I actually found that the one I had occupied during my stay the previous summer was available, so Tommy helped me pile all my stuff on the bunk and we went back to the parking lot. Mom gave me a litany of instructions before she and Tom left for home.

I checked in with Billy again and he told me that the whole crew was down at the waterfront unloading the boats and canoes from the mess hall. He gave me a new pair of work gloves and an indelible pen. I printed my initials on the gloves then headed off to join workers. The guys were about half done setting up the canoe racks while Cap Kellogg and Skipper Ed examined each of the canoes for cracks in the ribs, breaks in the fabric. Defective ones were segregated for maintenance. Cap was also working like a traffic cop directing each item to an assigned spot as it came out of the building. There were piles of row boat oars, whale boat oars, and canoe paddles.

Once all the heavy and fragile stuff had been removed, we went to work at removing mattresses and loading them on Mike Bonwill's truck for distribution to their designated camp sites. We were working at such a feverish pace that I wondered if we were going to stop for lunch and whether we were expected to do all the setup work that day. Fortunately, the guys on the kitchen crew had been working on cleaning up the kitchen and they had fixins spread out so that we could make our own sandwiches. We stopped for lunch about 1pm and took a half hour break before setting up all the tables and benches. Don Cornwall and Paul Lasko cleaned and inspected all the furniture and marked all the surfaces that were stained or had splinters where someone could be injured. When we got back for supper at 6pm, they had the dining hall in good shape except for the repair work that was needed. Supper for the crew was a big 12 gallon pot of beef stew, from which everyone ate their fill, washing it down with gallons of "Bug Juice". After dinner, we all loaded our military type metal dining trays and flatware into the "dishwasher" and returned to our tables to hear a progress report and action plan from each of the senior staff members. This was followed by individual assignments for junior staff members for the following days work.

I think that choices were made on the basis of size. At 5 feet 10 inches and 175 pounds, I was assigned to Bill Cuff's tenting crew.

It was suggested that we all clean up with a dip in the lake because the shower house didn't have its water lines connected yet. Boy! That water was cold but it was better than putting this filthy kid into a nice clean sleeping bag. By the time we exited the water it must have been after 8 o'clock and some of the guys looked like they were asleep on their feet. We were told to get a good night's sleep because we were going to get an early call the following morning.

It was about 6am when the bugler sounded reveille, and after quickly dressing, we jogged back to the mass hall for a breakfast of eggs, sausage, oatmeal, and "Bug Juice". Following the meal, we went off to our first assignment. I joined with five other guys at "the old office" to load tent platforms onto the back of the "camp truck". Two guys went with Mike Bonwill in the truck to unload and position the platforms in their proper locations. The remaining four of us sorted out the right number of tents, poles, pegs and ropes that would be needed at each site. Bill Cuff had a clipboard with every step in the process checked off as completed. It was hard and fast work and by the time we had everything in order, I was ready for a nap. Unfortunately, it was only about 10:30 and it would be two hours to lunch. My only real thought was that I would be dead by Sunday if we kept up the pace.

Thursday afternoon, Friday, and Saturday morning were all about the same. At lunch on Saturday, Chief Bogan and Frank Savino announced that the camp was ready for the arrival of the first campers the following afternoon. My thought was; "Ready? How did it happen?" I was so intent on what was going on around me that I never saw what the other work groups were doing. "Good job guys!"

We were given our living assignment, told to move in, clean up, get some rest, and be ready to "go to work" on Sunday afternoon. My initial assignment was South Camp. We were also told that any of the Catholic boys who wanted to go to Mass would meet at the parking lot at 7:30, in class "A" uniform. There would be enough cars to take us to Winsted. Protestants would attend a service at the English Chapel, and breakfast would be at 9:30am. It was also announced that Saturday evening's dinner would be in class "A" uniform with an informal inspection so that the leadership would be able to put their best foot forward for the new arrivals.

My New Home

It was finally “opening day”; Sunday, June 21st. 1952. After breakfast, the staff Spls were told to return to our assigned campsite and prepare for the campers. We were to check for general “housekeeping” items like brooms for each cabin and “squad tent”, a shovel and rake, paper for the latrines, and number 10 cans full of water for immediate fire fighting. I was a little bit ahead of the curve on this one because this was the first thing I did when I got to “South” the previous evening. I also took the time to arrange the rock circle which made up our site fire pit located directly in front of the Totem Pole, the unique feature of “South Camp.” As I stood in the doorway of the “leaders cabin”, I couldn’t help but think this was going to be a nice way to spend the summer.

A little before noon, I ran down to the mess hall. Lunch was a “grab and go” so I grabbed a tuna salad sandwich, some chips and a cup of “bug juice” and headed for the parking lot to meet some of the early arrivals.

A little after 1pm with cars arriving by the dozens, I got a call to come to the sign in table where I met Scoutmaster Bill Hopwood whose Milford Troop would occupy South Camp for the next two weeks. Mr. Hopwood asked me to lead his scouts to our site while he finished his paperwork and waited for his last three boys. I got a real chuckle when after telling the boys that we were supposed to be quiet on the trails so as not to disturb the wildlife, a few of them started to whisper: “lions and tigers and bears, oh my!” This continued until we arrived at South. I then asked if they had planned out their sleeping arrangements. They had three patrols with six, and seven boys so they fit conveniently with the two “Adirondack Shelters” with six bunks and one “Squad Tent” with seven bunks. It seemed they had it all planned out before they left home.

The main order of business for the afternoon was to get checked by “Medical”, then get to the waterfront for the swimming tests. Several of the older scouts who already “knew the drill”, were anxious to get started. So once they had stowed their gear, we headed back up the trail to the “Health Lodge”. We passed Mr. Hopwood on the way and he assured us that he and his “Stragglers” would join us shortly.

The Health Lodge was the busiest place at check in time. The boys were told to remove their shirts and break into two lines. As they got to the door of the Lodge, each boy had a thermometer placed in his mouth and as they got to

the first stop a nurse would read the thermometer then check his blood pressure. If they were OK, they proceeded into the doctor's office where Dr. Wallack would listen to their heart, check their ears and throat, then check for a hernia. This last step earned the good doctor the nickname of Dr. Cough-cough. Passing all the tests got the scout a big purple "CS" printed on his chest with gentian violet by Bernie "Doc" Wolf. Everyone initially thought that "CS" stood for Camp Sequassen but it meant "can swim".

Following the check up the fun began. The line of scouts marched out onto the waterfront dock. They were in turn told to jump into the water and swim to the ladder on the opposite end of the "crib". This was a totally enclosed swimming area for scouts who needed swimming instruction. If he just made it, he was a "red" swimmer. Boys who couldn't swim at all or refused to jump in, were automatically designated a "white" swimmer. If they said they had passed the test last year, they would ask to test for "blue". That required swimming four lengths of the swimming area (60 feet); three laps of free style, one lap of back stroke, then 60 seconds of treading water.

Earning the "blue" designation was important because in order to test for boating, canoeing, sailing, badges; you had to be a pretty good swimmer. If you didn't get the "blue" swimming lessons were mandatory. The "blue" also meant that because the camp rigidly enforced the "Buddy System", a "blue" could buddy with a "red" or "white" as long as they stayed in the area of the lower designation.

As each scout completed his test, he would advance to the registration table where Tommy Sanderson or Don Cornwall would write their name on a small round white tag along with the name of their campsite. They would then color the lower half of the tag with a red pencil or the upper half in blue. They would then place the tag on a peg board with campsite names. The opposite side had blue, red, and white sections with numbers above the pegs.

The system worked really well because if you wanted to go in the water, two buddies had to hook their tags on the same peg and remember the number when they entered the swimming area. For purposes of the "Buddy Check", the waterfront crew could tell at a glance how many of each class of swimmers were in the water.

Every 10 or 15 minutes or so a waterfront director would blow his whistle. Everything would stop and everybody raised his buddy's hand. If there were any kind of irregularity, a number check would be called. At this time, the boys would call out their numbers in order. If a number was missing from the order, the whistle would sound again and everyone would be herded out of the water. Fortunately, in all my time at Sequassen no one ever went totally missing. Every once in a while, some scout would exit the water to use the latrine and leave his buddy. Or occasionally the two boys would leave the water and forget to remove their tags. This was a minor annoyance, but unfortunately it meant that everybody had to get out of the water for a closer check. Finally, the waterfront crew would give the OK and the boys could go back in the water. No harm done, but nobody wanted to be the cause for alarm.

When all of the boys had been tested, South Camp had only two white swimmers who would be obliged to take the swimming lesson at 9am each morning until they advanced to "red".

We got through the classifications in good time so that we were able to go back to the campsite and organize activity schedules with each boy (or group of boys). I initially thought that this process would take hours but the Scoutmaster had prepared his scouts well. Virtually all of the required "Scout Skills" were covered so that every scout would have been able to advance by one rank within the two week time available. And the really great thing was I would be able to work on the Camping and Bird Study Merit Badges I still needed for my Eagle.

Summer camp life at Sequassen quickly settled into a routine. Reveille at 7am; Campsite clean-up 7:15 to 7:45; Breakfast at 8am. Then on to scheduled programs, starting with the obligatory Monday morning orientation program presented by Vinnie Vannicola at the amphitheater on the hill adjacent to the assembly area. Then on to advancement; I think that it was an unwritten rule that every scout below First class had to earn his next rank within the two week camp program.

After the first orientation class, I asked Vinnie if I could join his Bird Study Merit Badge Class and if I would be able to meet the requirement before Summer Camp ended. He said sure! Just like the book says, the hard part is keeping track of the bird species we observed, by identifying their colorations and their songs. Easy! Right! According to Vinnie, all you had to do is "pick the right spot and listen for birds between 5 and 6:30 am and the

birds will come to you.” The magic number was 50, and I was determined that if they were out there, I would be able to add them to my log. I think that it was the last week of camp when Vinnie personally took me out for a morning hike so that I could “catch” my quota. He was confident, we found the birds and I met the requirements. After that I told all the scouts that Vinnie just silently called the birds and they appeared. “It was amazing” and I practically believed it myself. He was a real hero of mine because without his help I might never have met that Eagle requirement.

The first two week of the camp season were really fine the boys did their thing and all I really had to do was help, be a guide, and see that they enjoyed Sequassen as much as I did. Of course it was always stressed that we had to keep the campers safe.

Transmission Rock

There were some extraneous chores that the junior staff participated in during the week. On one of these “tasks” Mike Bonwill, the assistant ranger was told to remove a stump from the foot trail which went from the assembly area to Clark Field. It was a fair size chunk of wood, the roots of which had managed to entangle themselves in some rather large boulders.

We had managed to loosen the roots by driving steel pikes into the ground and loosening the dirt; we were able to get some movement after shoveling away much of the soil; but the darn thing wouldn’t come out. Mike told me to “jump into the truck” and position it so that we could wrap a chain just below the soil-line and get a straight pull. It made perfect sense. I did as I was told but as I started to put some tension on the chain, the rear wheels spun, the truck slid sideways and the transmission pan bumped a sharp pointed rock and it cut a nice clean slice in the metal. Disaster! The camp truck was going nowhere. Anything we did was going to make the situation much worse. The poor old 1939 Ford pick-up seemed doomed. Even lifting the truck would be no help unless we could remove the rock.

Mike and I put our heads together and decided that if we could completely jack up one side of the vehicle to the point where tie oil wouldn’t leak onto the ground, we could drain the oil into #10 cans, remove and replace the pan, slide the truck with the “come-a-long” into a position which would allow the transmission to clear the rock, lower the truck, replace the gear oil and drive it away. It was a plan; but would it work?

I sat down at the scene to make sure none of the scouts tried to examine the situation and Mike went off to get help from Ranger Cap Kellogg. It took like what seemed forever, but pretty quickly Cap and Mike came back in Cap's car. Cap surveyed the situation and said that our plan might just work. He had a heavy duty floor jack and all the necessary tools in his shop, but finding a replacement tranny pan could be a problem.

Mike and I started digging out the space we wanted the truck to slide into after we replaced the pan, and Cap went back to his shop to gather the tools and call some of the local junk yards to locate a tranny pan for a somewhat rare 1939 Ford four speed transmission. He actually got a hit on the second call to a yard in Burrville which was less than 5 miles from camp. When he came back with the good news, he told us to decide which of us was going to accompany him to the yard and remove the replacement pan from the junk.

The owner of the "yard" was a big burley red headed guy who gave us the pan as a contribution to the BSA. He even cleaned the part by dipping it in his 55 gallon wash tank and finally donated a new pan gasket for good measure.

Back at camp, Mike had drained all of the gear oil and was ready to lift the truck. All this activity took place over the course of three hours so that when Cap and I returned to "the scene" it was time for lunch.

While wolfing down our food, we laid out our final plan of attack. Cap explained that he had a cache of firewood stacked about 50 feet from the truck and we could use the logs to make cribs which would support the side of the truck so that we could safely work underneath. The actual time it took to jack up the truck build the safety cribs, change the pan, and pull the truck sideways to clear the rock was about 20 minutes. Cap said that he could safely drive the truck down to his shop without replacing the gear oil as long as he drove slowly. So off he went while Mike and I restacked the wood and straightened the area. The work on the original offending stump was put off for another day.

The top of the sharp pointed rock was broken off with one quick smash with a 16 pound sledge hammer, and Mike said he was going to rout out a sign reading "*TRANSMISSION ROCK*". The episode ended, we all went back to work.

Crash

The “crash event” was one of the highlights of my summer. I actually thought that I had blown my chance to make it to Eagle. The date was Sunday August 10, 1952 and it was a busy day with all of the new arrivals and departures from camp. The previous two weeks had been a “full house” and now it seemed that arrivals were coming in faster than departures.

One of my jobs for that Sunday afternoon was to direct traffic on the road and in the parking lot. Not a big deal. The rules; No parking on West Hill Pond Road; Cars were to be parked nose to tail to maximize the space in the lot. And, drivers had to leave their keys in the ignition so that their car could be moved in the event of an emergency or to help clear a way for departing vehicles. Mike Bonwill was in charge of this operation and had always requested that I join his crew after I settled in my campers. He knew that I could drive and if needed I could get behind the wheel and jockey cars.

OK! So this is how it happened. Normally, we might ask people who wanted to leave, to wait a few minutes to see if the owners of later arriving cars would return and clear a path. However, after half an hour, we had to go to “plan B”. I got into the car behind the departing family, and Jevvy Wood took the car behind me. Jevvy was to move the dark green Buick Special so I could back out the 1946 Chevy. Problem! I started the engine, put the gear shift in reverse, eased down on the gas pedal and slowly let up on the clutch. Nothing happened! I tried it again. I depressed the clutch, moved the gear shift lever back to neutral then to reverse, pressed down on the gas pedal revved up the engine somewhat faster than I had the first time, and slowly eased up on the clutch. Again nothing happened and my left foot was completely off the clutch pedal. It wasn't until I took my foot off the gas that stuff happened. The car lurched backwards with wheels spinning and the rear bumper caught the right rear fender of a bright shiny tan 1951 Ford. The metal was pressed in against the tire and although I was uninjured, I thought I was going to die.

Mike came running over to the scene. It was the only time I ever saw him get excited about anything. He told me to go find Cap Kellogg and explain what happened. Cap threw some wooden blocks and a pry bar in the back of the truck along with the trusty “come-a-long” and we rode back to the scene. He tried to assure me that the damage was probably not as bad as it seemed. When we drove into the parking lot I was amazed how many cars had gone.

(But for about 10 minutes, there would have been no need to jockey any cars.)

Frank Savino had arrived and I could see that he was trying to calm the owner of the Ford. They both had serious faces but their voices were relaxed. I walked directly to Frank, but he essentially turned me around by just saying, “we’ll talk later.” Rejoining Cap and Mike, their conversation was focused on whether the owner of the Chevy had insurance, would the camp have to pay, and should the State Police be called? The questions which most disturbed me were; did I need a driver’s license to drive motor vehicles on camp property and could my parents be held responsible?

It was only a few minutes later that the owner of the Chevy returned to the lot. I expected him to be totally crazy. But he wasn’t! He actually took responsibility for everything. The Ford owner seemed relieved. Frank and Cap seemed grateful.

Mike and I were on the verge of collapse. The man explained that he was a mechanic, owned an Auto Body Shop in Milford, and if the Ford owner allowed; he would do a complete repair to the satisfaction of the owner. Everybody agreed that this was definitely the best outcome for all concerned. To my astonishment, he went on to explain exactly what happened and why.

The man had installed a new clutch in the car the previous day and was actually on a “shake down” cruise by driving to camp. The 1946 to 48 Chevrolets had rather unique feature known as a “self adjusting, vacuum actuated clutch.” Vacuum from the engine’s intake manifold was directed through a valve to a diaphragm which pulled on the clutch fork. The events I experienced were totally consistent with a leaking vacuum line. That was confirmed by the mechanic after he removed a short piece of black rubber tubing and found a split which caused air to be drawn into the system, preventing the clutch from engaging normally. I was exonerated. I still wound up taking a lot of ribbing from fellow camp staffers and even scouts who were told to tell me that the State Trooper was looking for me.

The most embarrassing part of the day had worked its way through but I still had issues for which I sought Larry Pisani’s assistance. He put me at ease by answering my two points of concern. The first was “They don’t put scouts in jail for stuff like that.” And the second was “No!; This will not keep you from getting your Eagle!”

That evening, I had a “conference” with Frank Savino who said he was sorry that I had to go through the stress and anxiety of the day, but his report would say that the car was a booby-trap and he was glad no one was injured. He also said that hereafter, unlicensed staffers would not be permitted to drive anywhere on camp property.

Two days later, I was demonstrating knots and lashing for my scouts in South Campsite when Chief Bogan came walking through. It was the first time that summer he strolled in so I knew immediately we were in for another “conference.” He asked if I could take a break for about half an hour to walk with him. The Scoutmaster at the site said he’d take over and off I went with Chief. As we walked down toward the Hermit Shack he told me he was very unhappy about the events of the previous Sunday, but he was still pleased with my performance as a staff Spl and he personally enjoyed my song leading skills. I knew that he would never chastise a scout without praising his strong points and I was anticipating the drop of a second shoe, but it didn’t happen. As we returned to South Camp he said he still had great hopes for me and someday I’d do the camp proud. He shook my hand as we parted company and said, in a voice loud enough for some of my scouts to hear; ”keep up the good work.”

Settling Into The Routine

The time really flew by once the routine had been established. Breakfast, assembly to update the day’s schedule, and campsite clean up; followed by morning swim and swim, canoeing, and rowing lessons; then lunch. After lunch and a short rest period, it was off to Merit Badge classes or personal preferences. (This was the time shooting at the rifle range or sports activities at Clark Field. Base Ball, Foot Ball, Soccer, or Lacrosse were regular favorites.) I always felt that these were home activities and that time at camp was supposed to be used for scout skills and hikes etc.. Four to five in the afternoon was another general swim time. As much as I enjoyed the water, Thursday afternoon was hike time. I had hike over so much of the Sequassen woods that the scouts who hiked with me used to say that “The trees knew Johnny Z by name.” For each two week cycle, the first week was like a shakedown and the second Thursday was usually an overnighter. My favorite camping spots included the “Far Point” located on the water’s edge at the most northern point of contact for the camp’s lakefront. My second favorite was a grassy clearing at one of the most southern points of the camp known as “far outpost”. It was on a high knoll with lots of small cedar trees

which seemed to keep the mosquitoes away. We also camped at “four corners” which is where the towns of Barkhamsted, New Hartford, Torrington, and Winchester intersected. Not far from that spot was “The Lost City” where I was frequently asked to lead “after supper hikes.” Many scouts who had been at camp the previous year were aware of my “lost pack story” and when asked about it I would respond by saying that there was a standing \$5.00 reward for anyone who found it.

The first Thursday evening schedule included the “Hermits Pilgrimage. This was a well attended ritual conducted by Professor Larry Pisani where he would recite the legend of the Hermit who was believed to have inhabited the area a hundred or more years ago. Larry was credited with having perpetuated this feature of the camp lore. The activity started by the flag pole in Clark Field just before dark with a short saga about the Hermit, his “shack”, his spring, and his grave. The scouts were asked to walk in silence so as not to disturb the Hermit’s slumber. I frequently took part in the program by echoing the voice of the hermit from a hidden place in the woods.

To me, the stories about the Hermit and the Hessian Village gave the whole camp a mystique reminiscent of stories by James Fennimore Cooper and Sir Walter Scott combined.

By the end of the third week of camp, I had completed the requirements for my Camping Merit Badge. That meant ironically, I had only Bird Study to finish and the **Eagle** would be mine. That simple fact was more difficult than it sounded. I had only four weeks left and three morning sessions per week to spot eight more different birds to complete the 50 species required.

It had taken a whole 2½ years to reach 42 birds and I was becoming totally distressed over the possibility of failure. Nonetheless, I got up every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday morning at 5am to join Vinnie Vannacola’s Bird Watching hikes along with five or seven campers who were trying to build their collections of sightings recorded in their books. It was Thursday, August 14 that I sighted, identified, and recorded my last bird. As it turned out, it was a species that I had seen many times but never had a positive identification. The bird which I had previously thought to be a summer female Cardinal turned out to be a Cedar Waxwing which Vinnie was able to positively identify by the yellow color on the tips of its tail feathers. I confused the peachy color with faded pink. And so it went, two days later I received my Bird Study Badge at the Saturday night Court of

Honor. Knowing the importance of this accomplishment, Vinnie was nearly as excited as I was. I never would have earned my Eagle without his help, enthusiasm, and encouragement.

The last week of camp began on August 17 and my fellow scouts from Troop 63 were scheduled for Pine Camp that week. (Fortunately the parking lot traffic was light because the population was the smallest of the season.) I had requested and was allowed to move to Pine and was able to participate with my friends for the whole week. The scouts included John and Harold Cuddy, Johnny Ellengo, Richard Lipp, Russ Malone, and Dave King.

Knowing that my troop was coming to camp that afternoon, I was given the time off.

To share the joy, my mom and dad decided to take the ride to SEQ to celebrate my accomplishment. In addition to that, Mr. and Mrs. King arrived with Dave and Pat, my heart throb. After going through the regular check in procedures, I got to escort the families through some of the new features at camp





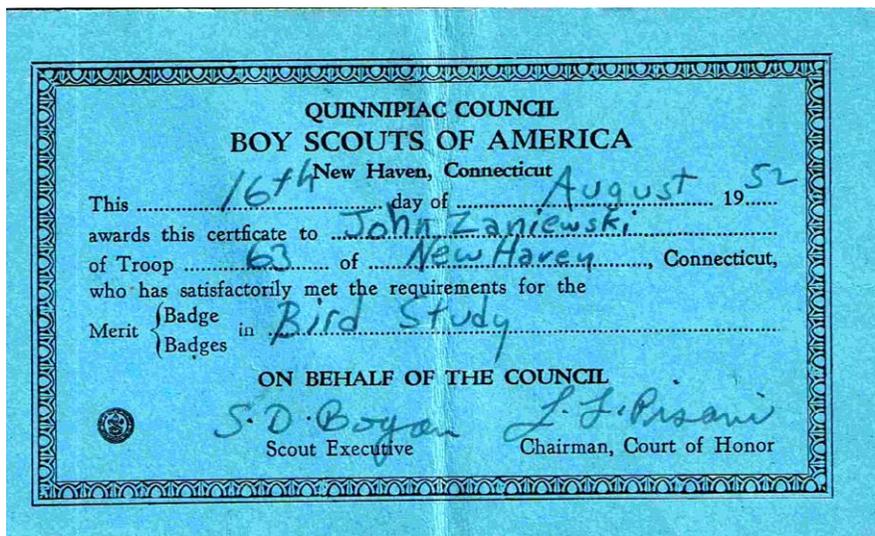
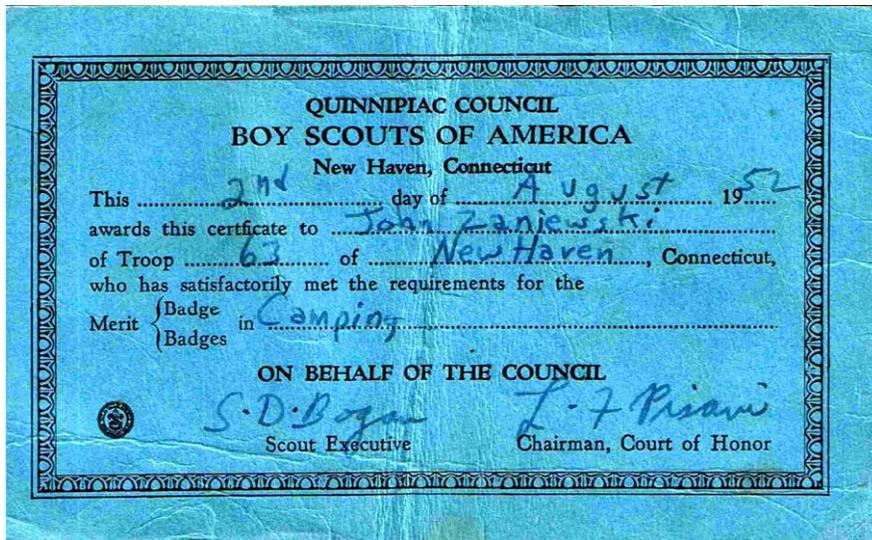
The pictures above are of my mom, dad, brother Tommy, and me; and Pat and me. The picture below is of David King with me canoeing towards what is now called “The Bogan Waterfront.”



The canoe ride was one of my regular Sunday afternoon activities. Along with a couple of other junior staffers, we got to take a few scouts who expressed an interest in earning canoeing merit badge out for a quick 10 minute ride. Starting from the canoe dock located out of view to the left side of the picture, we would paddle north out around “Curitol Island”, then east to the “Teddy Bear” which is a pile of rocks which stick up about 40 feet from the lake bottom to just below the surface, then back to the place where this picture was taken. In addition to Dave, I got to take Harold Cuddy and Russ Malone on the tour that Sunday.

It was great fun having my buddies in camp for the week. Even though we didn’t have a whole lot of time together, I led them on a hike to Lost City that Thursday afternoon.

To make the trip really memorable, Harold Cuddy found the remains of an ivory brush handle most likely lost by a Hessian soldier. The authenticity was later confirmed by a Yale professor and the item placed on display in the Manley Chester Craft Shop.



On Saturday evening we had the normal Court of Honor at which all of the awards were made to the scouts who had been in camp for the last week and staffers who had been at camp for the summer. I was proud to step up and receive the **Camping** and **Bird Study** badges which officially completed my Eagle requirements.

They announced that a special Eagle Court of Honor was going to be held on Sunday evening for all the boys who had completed their program at Camp that summer. Chief Bogan told the assembly that there were 11 scouts who made it and their parents would be asked to attend. Of the scouts who were named, Andy Petolo and I had been in camp all summer had been in camp all summer. Two other boys, Don Fowler and Harvey Hofman, I knew not

only as campers but from the Order of The Arrow. I really didn't know the remaining seven. I had heard their names and realized some as had hiked with me. I'm really sorry that I can't include their names at this point. I received congratulations from all of the Eagle Scouts who had been in camp that weekend as well as the scouts who knew me from all the activities we had shared.

That evening's Court of Honor/Campfire program ended as usual with "Scout Vespers" and "Taps" but with the difference from the previous weeks was a lot of the boy had tears in their eyes because summer had finished. It wasn't quite over for me. I still had my Solemn "Eagle Court", the camp shut down, and the staff banquet yet to come, but my big day would be the following day, Sunday, August 24, 1952. I called my folks and asked them to come to camp to be there for my award. This was the first they knew that I had made it. My mother let out a glorious scream for joy. I had cautioned them that if I didn't complete everything, it might not happen this summer. She was concerned that if I didn't do it at camp, I might not sustain my interest for another year.

Once again we followed the regular Sunday morning schedule with breakfast, Church Services, (Mass at Camp Pioneer) followed by the scouts packing their personal equipment and moving all their gear to their designated spot in the parking lot. By 1pm, lunch was finished and parents began arriving to collect their kids. We all said our goodbyes promised to follow through with our commitments to support the activities with the Order of The Arrow, meet our personal advancement plans, and return to Sequassen next summer because we all had consumed gallons of Hermit Spring Water. Everybody knew that if you drank from the spring, you'd have to return to camp.

Sunday afternoon brought a change in the weather. The previous week had been nearly perfect late summer camping. The days were warm enough for swimming but the nights were pretty darn cold. Overnight temperatures went down to near 50°F. Now the rain was starting and by 4pm, most of the campers had gone. The exceptions were the staff members and the Eagle Candidates. I remember expressing a concern to Larry Pisani about whether the Council had had enough time to get the Eagle Badges on such short notice. Larry just smiled and said "Don't worry about it, they've got you covered." His words were reassuring but I still had pangs in my gut over the

possibility of my parents showing up and not being able to pin the Eagle on my shirt.

None the less, I grabbed my dress uniform, took it down to the health lodge where I knew there was an ironing board and iron, and proceeded to remove the wrinkles and restore the perfect creases in the shirt and trousers. My deep purple neckerchief and merit badge sash also got touched up. I was going to look like the perfect scout I wanted to be.

Supper that evening was a make your own sandwich board, between 5 and 6pm and without dress requirements. It was just “show up to eat” then leave to prepare for the evening’s program which was to begin at 7pm. After rushing through the meal, I ran back to Pine camp, took a cold shower and dressed for the formalities.

My Eagle Court of Honor

By 6:45pm I was standing on the Trading Post porch with my rain poncho on waiting for mom and dad to arrive. According to plan, I jumped in the car and told my father how get to the Dining Hall. Mike Bonwill who had the job of directing traffic, told us where to park, and told me to take one of the large golf umbrellas to escort my parents to the door then return the umbrella. The turnaround circle next to the door easily held the 12 or so cars that brought the parents and guests.

We were sent to tables with the candidate’s names on a small sign and just follow the direction of the master of ceremonies. The senior camp staff was seated at the head table facing the audience. The honorees were seated on the benches with their backs to the tables with one table for each family. Friends were seated behind the families. Some of the non recipient junior staff who were to serve as honor guards and escorts also sat at the tables. I hope I’ve given you enough information to visualize the picture.

The actual program began with Bob Macklin calling the Court of Honor to attention and asked for the posting of the colors. He then led the assemblage in the singing of the National Anthem and the recitation of the Scout Oath. Bill Philips lit the three candles signifying the three elements of service to God and country, fellow man, and self.

Chief Bogan gave his welcoming speech to the parents saying how proud he personally felt over the accomplishments of the candidates and how proud each parent should be because their sons were marked men of whom great

things would be expected. The words burned into my mind as I wondered if I could ever measure up. I was always glad to face a challenge, but he was talking about challenges in the adult world where things really mattered. He concluded his remarks by assuring us that he was totally confident that we were very well prepared for whatever came our way.

Bob then call each candidate to come up before the assembly and stand in a row behind the table with a large scout medallion holding 12 more candles. Eagle Scout Vinnie Vannicola lit the first candle announcing “A Scout is Trustworthy” then each candidate took a candle, announced the next element of the Scout Law. “As always I was last”, but that’s how it is when your name starts with the letter “Z”. It was a circumstance I had long learned to live with. After all, Lord Baden-Powell is credited with having said “We remember longest what we hear last.” So, I was glad to make the pronouncement “A Scout is Reverent” as I lit that last candle. We were told to take a seat on the benches in front of the head table, facing the audience.

In turn, Bob asked each of us to stand and requested that the honor guards escort the parents to stand behind their son while he read off a short profile included our name, our parents names, our town, age, troop, school, the date we earned our Life Rank and the list of all the Merit Badges earned.

That completed, he asked the moms to pin the Eagle Badge on the upper edge of our left shirt pocket flap.

The next item on the program was the dubbing. Chief Bogan stepped up facing each boy in turn and gave the following pronouncement. “By the power vested in me by the National Court of Honor of the Boy Scouts of America, I dub you an Eagle Scout for Gilbert Jerome, William Zimmermann, and George Heigelmann.” Each time he said a name, he looked me straight in the eye, and dropped his hands on my shoulders I don’t know the names of the men he invoked for the other boys, but the names he used for me were very important to me. Gilbert Jerome had been the first Executive of our Quinipiac Council and a First World War Aviation Hero. Mr. Zimmermann was my first official Scoutmaster and Uncle George was my first true scouting Mentor.



After the dubbing, Chief asked the parents to return to their seats that we had one more thing to do before concluding the Court of Honor. He called on Vinnie Vannicola to lead us in the “Eagle Promise”. Vinnie had a card in hand, gave the Scout Sign, read each line of the promise, and we repeated his words in unison. Chief stepped up again and spoke for no more than a minute about how we were now marked men, “destined for greatness” with the fortitude to accomplish the best of our life’s dreams. He concluded by saying; “You have proven to us that you can do great things, now make proving it to the rest of the world part of your life’s objectives. And remember, there are no former Eagle Scouts. ”

Bob Macklin returned to the podium, closed the Court of Honor, and requested that the color guard retire the colors.

Next came greeting all the attendees with a reception line. Vinnie was first in line and when he got to me. I learned of another Sequassen tradition. He told me to look in the fold of the Eagle Badge ribbon I was wearing. There I found a very small folded piece of paper with VV written on it. He gave me a cloth Eagle Patch and said; “You’ve got my badge. I’ll need it back after the reception and you’ll get a nice clean new one when they come in from

National. I told him that I was really honored to have been dubbed an Eagle while wearing his badge especially with all of his help in meeting the goal. I also said that I would always consider him one of my honored mentors. He said he was glad to have the opportunity to have me take the honors wearing his badge and hoped that I would have the same chance some day. (Shown below is scanned copy of my original 1952 Eagle Patch. I was given two, the second was sewn on my uniform shirt and saw the ravaged of 2½ years of happy use. I wore this patch longer than any other in my time as a boy.)



The festivities ended with coffee, bug juice, cake, “smores”, and cookies served by the kitchen crew. I was really happy when mom and dad told me how proud they were of my accomplishments how impressed they were with the whole Court of Honor. My dad said; “it looks like you’ve got some big things to live up to.” I only wished that Pat and Uncle George could have been there.

Mom and dad left camp, dad had to be in work at 7am the following morning, it was nearly a two hour trip in those days, and they would be coming back to take me home on Thursday evening when clean up week ended. I shared some congratulations with the other new Eagles and thanked Chief and the staff before stumbling my way back to my bunk at Pine Camp. I berated myself in thinking; “you dummy, some Eagle Scout, are you prepared, where’s your flashlight?” To make matters worse, the sky was dark and the rain made rocks and stepping stones slippery. My shins got pretty banged up and it was sort of a surprise to find the site deserted. Oh yeah! Everybody had gone home. I found my flashlight, my note pad, and a pencil, made some notes for my journal, and got into bed.

I remember thinking that clean up week was going to a breeze without having young scouts to contend with. Little did I realize what had to be accomplished in just four days.

At Monday morning breakfast we were told to move our gear down to the shelters at Maple campsite and we would get back together at the “Old Office”. I haven’t described this building but it was located between the PX and Maple Camp. Used as the Nature Center during the summer and because it was a “permanent” building it was used for off season storage of soft goods like mattresses and blankets

We worked like beavers with Cap Kellogg, Mike Bonwill, and Billy Collins calling the shots.

I went with four other guys, up to Cedar Camp where we took down the tents, rolled them as Billy directed and stacked the mattresses on a picnic table. By the time we had completed these tasks, Mike arrived with the truck. We loaded the stuff, he headed down to the Old Office, and we made our next stop at Pine Camp. The routine was the same at Ledge, Hillside, Trail, and South Camp. The most difficult task of the day was Trail which had five big pyramid squad tents, each with four collapsible bunk beds, and four square platforms. The tents each seemed to weigh at least 100 lbs. and had to be folded precisely. All fold lines had to match at lines of double seams. By the time we got to the third tent, I would have been ready to roll the things into a ball and tied a rope around the heap.

Everybody worked really hard, but by the end of the day, we were given a choice as to whether we wanted to finish the job or stop for supper. The vote was to keep going so the sun was setting about the time we loaded the last of the stuff to be stored and stacked the last of the 20 platforms at Trail.

Finish at South or not? We finished. It was a breeze. Three Adirondack Shelters, and one wall tent, only took about half an hour. After all of the feverish activity of the day, we were really happy to jump into the bed of the truck for a ride to the mess hall and a hearty meal of barbequed burgers and corn on the cob. This was the quietest meal we had had over the entire summer. Cap Kellogg announced that were actually well ahead of schedule and that if we continued to maintain the pace, we could finish a whole day early. He also said that we could also plan on our usual Tuesday night outing to Louie’s Ice Cream Parlor down on the Torrington – Winsted Road.

Not So Proud

Most of the escapades which I participated in as a young scout were on the positive side, but here in the week after camp had closed, I came up with a scheme to “gross out” Louie.

Louie really wasn't a bad guy, but he was always quick to tell all of the junior staffers from the local camps to clear out of his shop as soon as they finished eating their favorite confection.

To the guys on the Sequassen junior staff, it was our only opportunity to “chat it up” with the junior staff girls from Camp Berkshire. Some of them were pretty cute but they weren't permitted to fraternize with any boys on the lake, so Louie's was the only opportunity for any of our guys to meet them one on one. As might be said, I really didn't have a dog in the fight because I had a girlfriend at home. The way the scenario would run was; the junior staffers from the several summer camps in the area would all get one evening a week off site. Ours was Tuesdays. A group of 7 or 9 guys would sign out at about 7pm and take the mile or so hike down to Louie's, order a sundae or a float and go meet the ladies. Most of the time Louie would seem to wait until we had almost finished our treat before insisting that we clear out of the shop. The problem became evident the first time we went outside to wait for Mike Bonwill to come down with the truck and give us a ride back to camp.

Louie's was in the middle of an upland swamp which produced mosquitoes which seemed to be about the size of small birds. So there we were stuck outside waiting, slapping, and scratching. Everybody said that we had to do something to let Louie know how unhappy we were with his hospitality. My plan: give him something to remember us by, and it went as follows: I borrowed a hot water bottle from the camp health lodge, and on that fateful Tuesday morning, stuffed a fair amount of the breakfast oatmeal into the bag, then poured in some maple syrup. Lunch which included hot dogs and creamed corn provided more goodies. Kneading the bag produced a rather disgusting appearance of vomit.

As the plan developed, Bill Montgomery agreed to be the perpetrator by secreting the bag inside his favorite grey sweat shirt. Since he was “of substantial size” the bulge would never be noticed.

The execution went beautifully. There, on August 26, 1952, we made our trek down to Louie's. We ordered and consumed our ice cream and waited for our fellow junior staffers. Unfortunately, their camps had closed so we had the place to ourselves. None the less and true to form, Louie started his chant. "OK guys, clear out, time to go, hit the road." This was Monty's cue. He unscrewed the top off the water bottle, squeezed his chest and loudly announced. "I don't feel so good!"

With that the mixture erupted onto the counter. It was a perfect shot and aside from the fact that there was no odor, the delivery couldn't have been better. Louie's face was priceless. He looked like he was going to be sick himself. The diabolical scheme was still incomplete however. The final action took place when we took the spoons we had eaten our ice cream with and started gobbling up the apparent emesis. Poor Louie was actually retching as he ran for his back room. The skit having achieved a suitable result, we exited the shop and ran almost all the way up Pinewood Road. We probably could have run all the way back to camp if we hadn't been laughing hysterically. And, to the best of my knowledge that was the last time any of my fellow conspirators were ever in Louie's.

As time passed I couldn't help but feel that we might have been tough on the man and did he really deserve so drastic a prank. Was it something an Eagle Scout should have perpetrated? Maybe not, but I still can't help giggling a bit whenever I share this anecdote.

The End of Summer Camp

Wednesday morning started just like the previous two days. We had breakfast in the mess hall then stacked up the tables and benches. This was to be the last meal in the hall because the kitchen crew was going to sanitize the area. The rest of us joined the waterfront crew and helped with the job of pulling the swimming docks out of the water. They were spread out in rows along the beach area so that they could dry before we could store them in the crew area under the dining hall. Late in the morning, Jimmy Gibbons came around taking orders for "subs" and drinks which he would buy at the "near lake store." We had a leisurely lunch at the craft shop and when finished, hung the battens that enclosed the normally open workshop.

A little later, parents of a number of staffers started arriving to take their kids home. We said our sad goodbyes with all expectations that we would all be seeing each other at scouting events during the coming year. Mike Bonwill,

Billy Collins, and I were the only teenagers left, so we returned to finish the chores.

Within an hour or so everything that we could do was finished. Mike told me that if I wanted to leave that day and my parents could pick me up he was sure that Cap would give the OK. I located Cap asked for and received his clearance. He said I could leave any time I was ready and that he would be happy to have me on the ranger crew next summer. It sounded like a good opportunity, but I was pretty sure that I would be looking for a better paying job next year.

I went down to Maple Camp to collect my personal stuff, but on the way. I stopped at the craft shop to use the phone. I had a momentary panic because it was all closed in. Since I had been the one to install the last batten, I quickly gained access to the phone made my call. My mom was due to pick me up on Thursday but was more than pleased by the fact that she wasn't going to drive the distance with Tommy giving her the directions. She also said that they would be leaving as soon as dad got home because they could beat the heavy traffic, and would probably be ahead of the early Labor Day traffic when folks might be looking to celebrate the holiday in the Berkshire Hills. There was no work in convincing her that my early departure from camp was a good idea.

Finishing my call, I reclosed the craft shop and carried my mattress to the "Old Office".

I ceremoniously brushed my hands together, hoisted my foot locker up on my shoulder and schlepped the short distance to the parking area and left my stuff on the Trading Post porch. One more trip with my back pack and sleeping bag; and I was good to go. Only Johnny Mantz and his father (John Mantz Sr.) would be sleeping in Maple that night, I'd be home in my own bed.

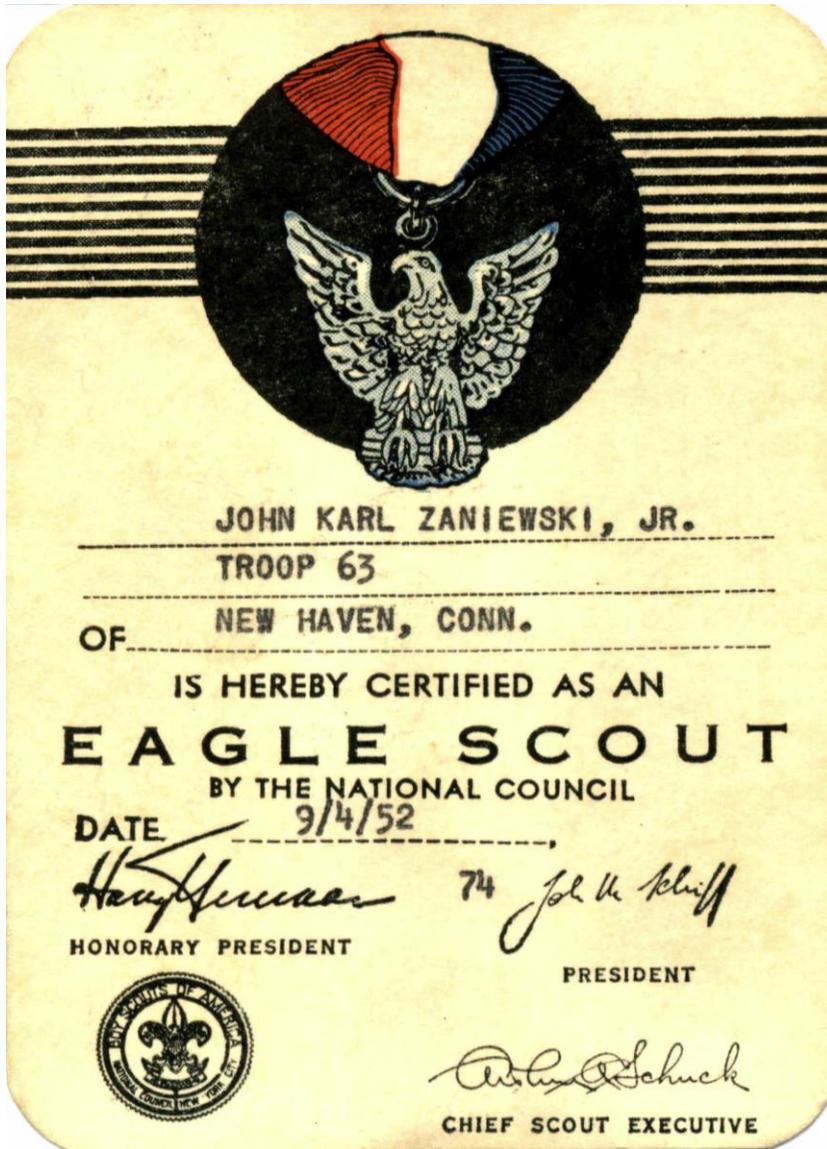
Mom told me that since she had the car that day, she would pick up Dad after work and they would drive directly to Camp Sequassen. The estimated time of arrival would be 5:30pm. It was really a relaxing afternoon. I joined the "working crew" put on a pair of swim trunks from the lost and found box and jumped into the lake. I helped Bonwill and Collins by diving to the lake bottom and retrieving the flat rocks which were used to support the vertical dock posts. When that job was completed, I got dressed, said good bye to Mike and Bill and took a walk down to the Hermit's Spring to fill my

canteen. By the time I got back to the parking area, it was a little after 5 o'clock. I grabbed one of my books and settled back to relax and wait to be picked up.

It wasn't long before the family's Pontiac rolled in. Mom and Tommy didn't even have to get out of the car. Dad got out; unlocked the trunk and helped me load my locker and backpack. I gave my mother a kiss, jumped into the back seat, gave Tommy a hand slap, and we were on our way. Tommy didn't say hello. He just asked "OK where are we going to eat." Mom asked, "Isn't there a Howard Johnson's around here somewhere?" Dad knew just where to go and headed the car for New Hartford and US Route 44 east to Canton. Sure enough, we arrived at the restaurant right where dad and I expected to find it. Normally, we would have ordered "take out", but Mom said it was too hot and sticky to eat in the car. We all had Hamburgers, French Fries, and ice cream for dessert. As far as I was concerned, the nicest feature of the meal was the fact that HoJo's was air conditioned and it felt like the first time I'd been in an atmosphere of less than 90% humidity in weeks.

It was almost 10pm before we got home. I would have liked to call Pat, but at that hour it was out of the question, so I separated all of my soiled clothing and equipment for tomorrow's clean up job. I spent some time telling my parents about the break down operations at camp then took a quick shower and went to bed. My final thoughts were a quick review of the past 9 weeks. I felt like a pre-planned segment of my life was now complete. I only had to wait for my Eagle Ribbon and certificate to arrive from BSA National Headquarters. They actually showed up at QC Headquarters on or about September 10th, and I picked them up on my way home from school the following day.

And so for me, my main objective for the summer of 1952 was completed. It was a great summer, but most important of all; I am now and forever an Eagle Scout.



To Be Continued

