

St. Dominic's Alumni Association

VOL 21

SUMMER 2024



From the Editor's Desk

Alumni,

Thank you for your support and feedback on our last issue. We hope that it was informative and entertaining.

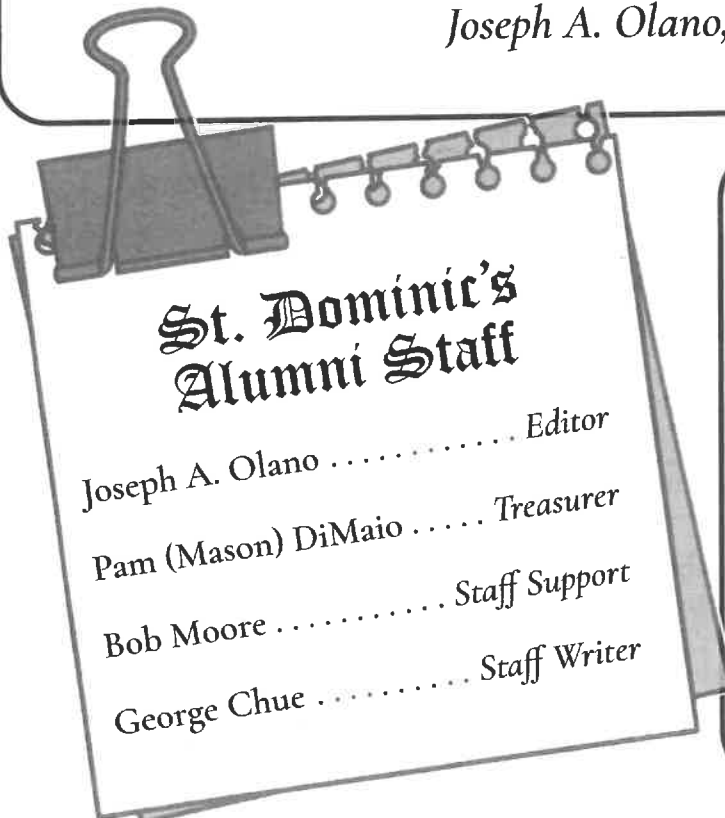
This will be the second issue since Jeanette Earl has been at the helm. What big shoes to fill and we only hope that we can live up to what she's accomplished.

While we write about old stories, news, and share experiences from the past, we want to also make it fun. Although we reflect about our days at St. Dominic's, there's a lot that has happened since we left. Let's also hear more about what's happening today. Please include a photo when submitting a story.

Writing and sharing with our alumni about the positive things that have made us who we are today should be fun. Of course, we are always open to suggestions or story ideas.

One of our readers is trying to connect with someone named Rosetta (no last name available) who used to assist a social worker named Ms. Pereira. The time she was at St. Dominic's was in the 1970's according to our inquirer. If anyone has information on her, please let us know. Thank you.

Joseph A. Olano, Editor



Contributing Writers

Vincent Oppenheimer: *The Bike, Birthday Cake*

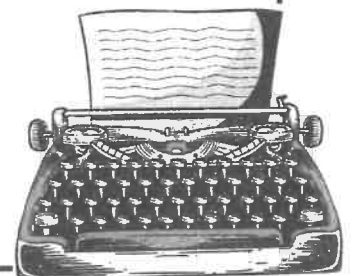
Carol Reda Cavaluzzi: *A Special Memory*

Lydia (Matos) Olano: *Something I Treasure*

Pam (Mason) DiMaio: *On Foot*

Virginia Synan Swartz
*St. Dominic's Home...
A Safe Place to Grow Up*

George Chue
Closer to God



The Bike

by Vincent Oppenheimer



There were 30 boys in Sr. Bartholomew's cottage when I was 12 years old and whoever was up at 6 a.m. had the privilege of going to The Scoop to purchase 10 copies of the Daily News for the sisters and the counselors.

The Scoop's main attraction was its delicious ice cream. Even after it had a different owner and sold newspapers, candy and more, it was well known to convent kids and others for that dairy treat. I became an altar boy and served at the 5 a.m. mass so I could be the first one to make the trip. After mass, Sr. Bartholomew would hand me three dollars and allow me to leave the property on an English racing bike that had been donated and was kept outside our cottage. I never knew such freedom as when I would speed up and down the hills to The Scoop on the slim English beauty; what a contrast to the truck bikes with heavy wheels on which we first learned to ride in summer camp.



Birthday Cake

by Vincent Oppenheimer

As I recall our birthdays were special to Sr. Bartholomew who was a good baker. In her cottage, if it was your birthday, she would make you a nice fresh birthday cake. The cake was served with milk on your birthday at "night lunch," the last meal before bed. Sometimes you would have peanut butter and jelly sandwiches or cookies and milk for night lunch, but birthdays were special and that meant a birthday cake with candles. Sister's rule was the birthday boy picked the size of his piece of cake. One year on my birthday, I cut what seemed like $\frac{3}{4}$ of the cake for myself. Later, a boy in the cottage complained to me, "I only got a few crumbs of cake." I told him, "Well, it was my cake." I don't think I had a problem sleeping that night, but I did have a piece of cake that could have served 10 boys!

I may have a few details about the birthday cakes wrong but I described what I remember happening. What do you remember about birthday celebrations at the home?

A Special Memory

by Carol Reda Cavaluzzi

February 7, 2024 was 60 years since the Beatles came to America—and 60 years since a volunteer from St Dominic's took me and a couple of girls downtown for the day.

Don't recall our original destination, but I do vividly remember walking down the long city streets and hearing screams coming from the Plaza Hotel where, unbeknownst to us, the Beatles were staying! We ran over and saw hundreds of screaming girls in front of the hotel waiting for a glimpse of the Fab Four! We never did see them but it was a memorable day and my introduction to the Beatles, who I'm still crazy about 60 years later!

When we arrived back to the convent, we learned about their upcoming concert at Shea Stadium. Within the next couple of months a few other girls and I washed staff cars at Saint Dominic's school parking lot in order to raise the \$4.75 needed for the ticket. This was my first concert and one of my most exciting memories ever!

This fond memory and many others are due to the kindness and generosity of the volunteers who took us on outings.

Thanks from the bottom of my heart to the wonderful men and women who took time out of their busy lives to bring us places to have new adventures giving us the opportunity to create cherished memories and have unforgettable experiences. Thanks, too, to the Sisters for their support.

Yeah Yeah Yeah!

THE BEATLES



Something I Treasure

by Lydia Matos Olano

Do you have an object that you have treasured for 56 years? For me, it is the meticulously made box my brother Umberto made in Mr. Kelly's wood shop class in 1968 as a 7th grader. I was at the convent when I received it, and I always took good care of the box taking it with me to all the places I have lived. Currently it holds the letters from my Pen Pal who was a soldier stationed in Cambodia during the Vietnam War; I started writing to him while at St. Dominic's in 1971. A precious box holding precious mementos.



What possessions of yours do you treasure above all others? Why are they so precious to you?

St. Dominic's Home... A Safe Place to Grow Up

by Virginia Synan Swartz

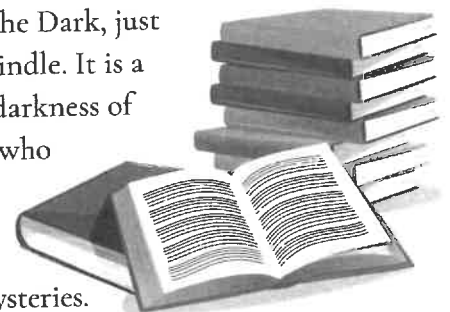
Often, I wonder what would have happened to my brothers, Jackie and Kenneth Synan, my sister Marian Elliott and me, had we not come to St. Dominic's Home when we did. Our lives were beyond the chaos that comes with being homeless in 1947.

And, often I realize just how much our years at St. Dominic's saved us. I wrote a story once referencing that being at the home was like being in jail, but God was the warden. The sisters were kind, but strict. This kind/strict environment is what truly influenced all of us, encouraging us to live meaningful lives. Jackie, the Woodstock icon, and Kenneth, a well known social activist on behalf of the homeless and disenfranchised, had significant impact on the lives of so many.

At a memorial service in Woodstock before his funeral, every single person who talked about Jackie, talked about what he did for them, not what they did for him. There is a Documentary film on vimeo/youtube, entitled First Name: Jogger; Last Name: John, made by a young woman Kayleigh Griffin!

My sister Marian is currently on a book tour to talk and share her book *Out of the Dark*, just published by Northwest Publisher Cirque Press and available on Amazon and Kindle. It is a story of encouragement for all those grieving, to know there is a way out of the darkness of grief. Marian is a living testament to the process, so I would encourage all those who are grieving, or know someone who is, to read the story.

I have my own story, which I will share at another time, but I thank heavens every day that the only books I ever read (donated) at St. Dominic's were Nancy Drew mysteries.



Our Membership

The following represents only those members of the St. Dominic's Alumni Association who have authorized publication of their name in the Association Membership List. Release of a member's address and/or phone number will be made available as per member's instructions (call Pamela: 516 840-3008.) Names listed are in alphabetical order of the first name and as we knew the member while at St. Dominic's. Current name usage appears in brackets and bold type, followed by the years the member was at St. Dominic's.

- Abe Escobar, '59-61
Ana Pizarro (**Bracero**), '52-58
Anthony (**Tony**) Fontaine, '53-62
Antoinette Koklas (**Barbarino**), '42-50
Bernard Matos, '51-59
Betty Stephens (**McKee**), '41-51
Bob Moore, '62-67
Carol Reda (**Cavaluzzi**), '61-65
Carol Steiner (**Kingan**), '48-56
Catalina Santiago,
(**Cathy Rodriguez**), '49-52
Charlie Clavijo, ???
Charlotte Guarine (**Schumann**), '43-55
David MacMillan, '41-51
David Ramirez, '57-62
Diane Boo (**Bartley**), '58-62
Dianne Thomson (**Borg**), '48-56
Dora Echevarria, '45-50
Edwin Corniel, '66-79
Eileen Ogden (**Mary Eileen Tolve**), '45-51
Elsa Gonzalez (**Rojas**), '55-65
Eric Hansen (**Burns**), ???
Francisco Albarren, '59-63
Gerald (**Jerry**) Merna, '42-44
Gerard (**Jerry**) Rogers, '52-56
George Chue, '57-68
George (**Happy Hooligan**) Jacek, ??-54
Ginger (**Gysella**) Cordova, '64-73
Gladys Echevarria (**Felice**), '45-50
Harry Perez, '59-63
Haydee Rivera, '59-62
Hector Malave, '69-74
Irene (**Margaret**) Moore (**Morris**), '62-67
Isabel Arce, '59-69
Jeannette Borgia (**Earl**), '48-56
Jim Rooney, '47-59
Jim Thomson, '49-57
John Cataneo, '53-56
(**Rev.**) John Lundberg, ??-44
John Scannell, '44-49
Jose Bracero, '52-58
Jose Pizarro, '52-60
Joseph Kubrick (**Joe Mastro**), '50-53
Joseph A. Olano, '64-67
Joseph Orlando, '49-56
Judith Salinas, 70s
Kitty Barber (**Scadura**), '48-59
Leo Cintron, ??-58
Linda Ludwig, '63-67
Louis Malave, '70-74
Lydia Matos (**Olano**), '58-72
Margaret (**Peggy**) Alvarez, '43-55
Mark Griffith, Counselor, '74-77
Mario Claudio, '63-66
Mario Miraldo (**Roche**), '42-49
Marisela Ramirez (**Marti White**), '56-62
Mary Ellen Stephens (**Graham**), '42-53
Michelle Reyes, '75-77
Millie Izquierdo (**Stanton**), '67-71
Nick Reginella, '47-53
Nieves Rivera, ???
Pamela Mason (**DiMaio**), '59-64
Patricia Mason (**Kubinski**), '59-64
Patrick (**Pat**) Moriarity, '48-51
Patsy Borgia (**Patti Mazzella**), '48-56
Patsy Smith (**Faunce**), '40-50
Peter Borgia, '48-57
Priscilla St. Paul (**Anderson**), '64-72
Reinaldo Olano, '64-67
Richard Gherri (**Road Kid**), '45-53
Richard (**Ritch**) Ryan, '45-54
Rocky Pizarro, '52-63
Rosemary Barber, '48-54
Seán Corrigan, Counselor
Sean-Lean Chue (**Tompkins**), '57-72
Sonia Vasquez (**Jimenez**), '51-55
Sr. Jo-Anne Faillace, O.P.
Sr. Liz Engel, O.P.
Steve (**Tommy**) Casey, '75-77
Tazewell Thompson, '58-62
Teddy (**Ted**) Mason, '59-66
Thomas (**Tom**) Murphy, '44-54
Tyrone Ludwig, '61-74
Victor Matos (**Dino Rivera**), '51-59
Vincent Oppenheimer, '55-67
Virginia Synan (**Swartz**), '47-51
Vivian Merna (**Rendes**), '42-51
Wanda Rivera, '59-62
William Maldonado, '49-59

Obituary

Sr. Michaela, OP

Sr. Michaela, OP, passed away suddenly on February 24, 2024. While serving her Community as Prioress (formerly known as Mother Superior), Sister maintained her long term interest in the alumni and their activities. She was welcoming and receptive to all our suggestions.

In Memoriam

ALUMS

Robert (Bobby) Barber, C'55 died March 6, 2023
Thomas (Tommy) Barber, C'53 died March 15, 2024
Michael Candal, C'64 died March 22, 2024
Norma Candal died May 4, 2022
Cynthia (Bone) Chataing, C'54 died June 11, 2022
George DeVarennes, C'58 died September 25, 2019
Julius Joseph Gonzalez died March 4, 2024
Luis Guarini, C'50 died June 2, 2023
Joseph Quinones, C'47 died February 3, 2022
Esther (Mena) Rosner, C'57 died July 27, 2022
Pat (DeVarennes) Smyrychynski, C'54 died June 30, 2023
John (Jackie) Synan, C'57 died November 27, 2022***
Stella Zolkas C'68 died October 3, 2021

*** If you want to read about John's life, you can visit this site

<https://hudsonvalleyone.com/2022/11/29/woodstock-mourns-the-loss-of-one-of-its-own/>

SISTERS

Sister Amadeus, O.P. died January 27, 2024
Sister Angelus Healy, O.P died December 29, 2023
Sister Maureen Gibbons, O.P died August 10, 2023



Please pray for

all deceased Convent Kids and their families
the many who are fighting illnesses
those struggling with life's challenges
all sisters, priests, and laypeople who have mothered, educated and cared for us
all families who have lost loved ones while serving their country

ON FOOT *by Pamela Mason DiMaio*

My father never owned a car so we were a family who walked everywhere. It is a habit I still have today.

When we started elementary school in Staten Island, my sister Pat and I had to climb a steep hill every day after a mechanic named Mickey took us across busy Jersey Street. The trip to school seemed so long and tiring up that hill; I was glad to have my sister with me.

At the convent we enjoyed walking to an unnamed general store on visiting days (at this point in my story, I so wish I had the encyclopedic memory of George Chue or Vincent Oppenheimer; they could name the store and describe the fixtures!) There was a huge wooden barrel filled with real dill pickles and each time our dad came up to see us, we would walk to the store, four of us talking to him at the same time. Along the way he would point out the historic markers teaching us about some significant event in Rockland County. I do not remember any name or date he thought important. My mind was on our destination where we would each get a pickle wrapped in paper. No pickles today taste as good, crunchy and sour as the ones we munched walking back to St. Dominic's. We also each got a big bag of candy.

Years later, living with our parents in Sunset Park, we would all walk two miles to the construction site of the "longest suspension bridge" ever to be built. The pillars of the Verrazano Bridge were unbelievably enormous and workers looked tiny as we gazed up at the structure. What a convenience for those who once could only travel from Brooklyn to Staten Island by ferry. I cannot recall how often our father walked with us to the bridge site. but I do know most places we went, we walked. The exception was our weekly visit to the social worker's office downtown on Joralemon Street. Then my siblings and I would pay 15 cents to ride the RR train on our own. Perhaps the responsibility we were given to travel by ourselves was unwarranted. One day my sister Barbara and I found it entertaining to spit water at each other while waiting in



the office; I slipped and broke my tibia. After the huge cast covering my thigh to my ankle came off, I was horrified to see a dry, shriveled leg. The first step I took after being in the cast for six weeks was painful and it was like relearning to walk. Each step to the subway station and up and down the sidewalk curb was a sharp pain through my leg. I thought my father was just being mean forcing me to walk, but I realize now I had to exercise that limb. So he slowly walked with me encouraging me not to cry. I don't remember my father being a patient man but he was that day, and the time spent alone with him (finally no siblings present!) is time I look back on fondly.

My father was not a rich man but he left me and my siblings several precious legacies. One is the close bond we have. The four of us are spread over only two years of age; we have a great deal we share. The other legacy he left us is a love of walking. Often when I am troubled or anxious, I feel a need to get outside for a long walk. I may even talk on the phone with a sibling while walking. I work out the problems as my legs cover ground; the hill is not as steep then and I have company for the journey.

UNFORTUNATELY THERE WILL BE NO ALUMNI PICNIC IN JULY.

If anyone has suggestions for a get together in the fall, contact Pamela (516 840-3008) (stdominicalum@gmail.com)

Closer to God

by George Chue



I became an Altar Boy to be closer to God. When I first started in 1964, almost all the prayers were recited in Latin at the foot of the altar. We had to memorize the prayers as part of Sister Agnes' prerequisite test to become an Altar Boy. I can still recite some of the Liberate, one of the key prayers. Luckily the prayers were on a plastic card we carried with us, but during High Mass, we wore red robes that covered the card. Sister asked each of us, "Why do you want to be an Altar Boy?" I answered, "I want to be closer to God." Hey, I was only 9 years old. So many changes were happening in the church in the 1960s: Kyrie Eleison became Through My Fault, more songs were sung in English, the altar eventually faced forward, and the Sunday gospel for the kids' mass would be a story Father Farrell thought up. There was also a change in how communion was served. The sisters went from a single file line down the aisle to kneeling along the front railing and we served from left to right, typewriter style. In my opinion it was a terrible change to the communion service because of what happened on my watch. Thankfully, they switched back to single file service.

That year as an Altar Boy, I encountered one of the worst nightmares an Altar Boy could face. A lone postulant, all in white, was kneeling along the center railing awaiting communion that never arrived. She simply started a new "line" far to the left and Father Farrell, not noticing her, briskly walked away after serving the last of the white-veiled sisters to the right. I was tugging on his garments and trying to gain his attention at the rearward facing altar creeping up the steps as he was putting things away. And to add insult to injury, I glanced to the left and saw nuns in the sacristy gesturing for me to gain his attention. Glancing over my shoulder, the lone postulant was reverently awaiting our return, head bent in prayer. I'm not a very loud person to begin with; some might even say I'm shy, so all my tugging and whispering went unheeded. I don't know why I didn't blurt out, "You missed one," but I didn't. It was just not part of my nature. Plus I was always taught to revere the altar so calling out seemed wrong. Then suddenly one of the sisters burst onto the scene walking right up to the altar confronting Father Farrell and pointing to our last angel. He served her communion.

I had become an Altar Boy while in Sr. Francis Elizabeth's 4th grade cottage. She reluctantly agreed after long discussions with Father Farrell. Pairing up Altar Boys was done alphabetically that year and Eddie Boo happened to join at the same time. It was the Boo and Chue team from then on. Boo-Chue as Altar Boys in church and Boo-Chue at school during roll call. One of us would catch any "incidents," or irregularities while we were serving, but this particular day, Eddie was sick and I served alone. I guess without my partner, I did not catch the incident or react to it in the best way. And everything had happened so fast. I remember standing in shocked silence as Father Farrell skipped the lone sister. I was rather dejected after the incident knowing my infraction had been noticed. Over the years, I can recall having being described as the "Devil Incarnate." Those words affected me; I was sensitive and wanted to be thought the very opposite of those negative words. I tried not to pay attention to those who voiced that opinion of me. To be honest, I don't think I ever fully bought into that very negative assessment of myself. Yet I did not feel very confident either and I thought I had messed up that day of lone Altar Boy service.

When I was finally freed from the upper cottage and in the 7-8th grade cottage, the last stop before "graduation" from St. Dominic's, Sister Bartholomew called me up to her. Thinking I was in trouble, I approached her at the head seat in the refectory. "Mr. Chue," she stated, "I've heard a lot of bad things about you, but I can say, I don't see it! I just see a happy, hard working man, that's all!" I felt the world lift off my shoulders and I seemed to be walking on air. Her capacity to understand my struggles, worries and fears gave me hope. And to this day, I view it as a turning point in my life. Sr. Bartholomew eventually retired from the big cottage that same year, but her words lived on for me. Moving on was sometimes a painful experience, but her capacity to see me through her own eyes and dismiss false judgments of others lives on with me to this day. I know if I ever were to stand by her headstone, I would leave a rather big bouquet of flowers and maybe tear or two. Thank you, Sister Bartholomew.

St. Dominic's Alumni Association

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OUR MISSION STATEMENT

To Rekindle Old Friendships to Make New Ones