St. Dominic's Alumni Association

VOL 26 AUTUMN 2026

ANNOUNCEMENTS

To contribute to the newsletter:Contact:
Joseph Olano (951) 660-9463 Pamela DiMaio (516) 840-3008 or email stdominicalum@gmailcom

Welcome to former cottage kids who are now part of our Alumni Association:
Pedro Calderone, '57-67 | Richard Duck, '74-79 | Marian Elliott, '47-51 | Greg Ludwig | Gina Vitale, '60-63 ?

IN CHARACTER WITH SERVICE

JOSEPH A. OLANO

U.S. ARMY SPECIALIST
COLD WAR/DESERT STORM VETERAN





By Joseph A. Olano

In 1964, I took that infamous Red and Tan bus ride from George Washington Bridge to Western Highway in Blauvelt, N.Y., unaware of how much my life would change.

Living in a barracks-like setting—30 of us in a cottage—meant eating together in a chow hall, showering as a group at a set time, and doing daily chores. Without realizing it, I was preparing for boot camp.

The Boy Scouts of America introduced me to outdoor skills, nature, survival, and wearing a uniform. Advancing in rank was gratifying. I reached First Class, earned about four merit badges, and attended several jamborees at Camp Bulova.

In 1971, I graduated from high school, was not drafted, and attended college. In 1988, at age 34, I was inspired to join the military. Throughout high school, junior college, and trade school, I showed an aptitude for broadcast engineering, media production, and telecommunications.

I enlisted in the U.S. Army Signal Corps and attended basic training at Ft. Jackson, S.C. My first duty station was with the 10th Mountain Division at Ft. Drum, N.Y. I completed my five-year military service in Germany with the 32nd Army Air Defense Command, receiving an honorable discharge there in 1992.

In 1993, I began my federal civil service career with the Army Broadcasting Service at the American Forces Network-Europe in Frankfurt, Germany. I concluded my Department of Defense career at the American Forces Network-Broadcast Center at March AFB, California, retiring in 2018 with 30 years of service.

I currently volunteer with the Arizona Tuskegee Airmen Chapter, assisting veterans, including senior veterans, and their young dependents at the local Veterans Administration Medical Center.

The Editor's Corner



By *Joseph A. Olano*

It's that time of year when we honor our nation's heroes. Last year, we asked our alumni to send in stories about their favorite veterans, whether family members, friends, or other people they know.

This year, we feature stories about three St. Dominic's alumni who are veterans: Army Staff Sergeant William Maldanado, Marine Sergeant Angel Mendez, and yours truly, Army Specialist Joseph A. Olano.

The St. Dominic's Alumni Gala was canceled because of the nor'easter that hit the East Coast earlier this year. As a result, a quarterly Zoom or Teams gathering hosted by the Alumni Association was suggested to reconnect with old acquaintances across generations. More details will follow. We will share a date, time, and link in our next newsletter. To participate, all you need is an email address. Downloading the Teams app is also helpful. If you have any questions, you may call Pam DiMaio or me. Tell us what you think.

Happy Veterans' Day!



SGT. ANGEL MENDEZ

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS VIETNAM WAR VETERAN

THE SON OF STATEN ISLAND

By Joseph A. Olano

In our last Veterans Day issue, we shared the heroic story of St. Dominic alumnus and veteran Sgt. Angel Mendez (1956-1958), who saved his platoon commander's life under heavy enemy fire in March 1967. His story remains relevant as efforts continue to upgrade his Navy Cross to the Medal of Honor.

The Honorable Ronald D. Castille, who became Chief Justice of Pennsylvania in 2008, remembers Sgt. Mendez as a Marine who grew up in an orphanage and called the Marine Corps his family. Castille recalled that Mendez braved heavy enemy fire to pull him to safety as he lay wounded in Vietnam's rice paddies. He also witnessed Mendez bringing other Marines to safety.

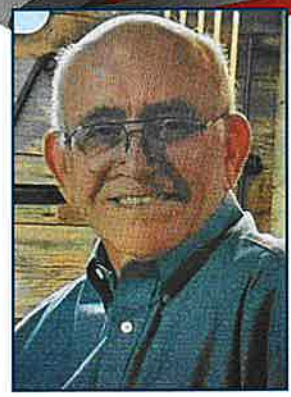
New York Senator Chuck Schumer continuously promotes the process to upgrade the Navy Cross to the Medal of Honor.

Marine Sgt. Angel Mendez has received the following honors:

1. In 2008, his name, Angel Mendez, was inscribed to the Monument of Remembrance for fallen military members at the Capitol of Puerto Rico.
2. The St. George Post Office in Staten Island was renamed "Sergeant Angel Mendez Post Office" in 2011.
3. In 2017, the Catholic Church held a military-style ceremony at Mount Loretto to commemorate the 50th anniversary of his death. Sgt. Angel Mendez was remembered as a "Son of Staten Island."
4. In 2019, South Richmond High School in Pleasant Plains, which he attended as a child, was renamed "Sgt. Angel Mendez Learning Center" in his honor.

We will keep you updated on efforts to upgrade Sgt. Angel Mendez's Navy Cross to the Medal of Honor.





WILLIAM MALDANADO

U.S. ARMY STAFF SERGEANT VIETNAM WAR VETERAN

A SOLDIER'S STORY

By William Maldanado

My name is William Maldanado, and I attended St. Dominic's Home from 1949 to 1959. I lived there with my brother Orlando. The Dominican sisters were very caring and devoted to our physical and emotional needs.

After I graduated from Mount Loretto High School in Staten Island, N.Y., my wife Hortencia and I got married in 1964. In November 1965, I was drafted into the U.S. Army and attended basic training at Fort Bragg, N.C.

I was sent overseas to a combat zone in South Vietnam with the 565 Transportation Company (Terminal Services), operating out of the port at Cam Ranh Bay. I worked as a winch operator on cargo ships, unloading cargo.

In 1970, I joined the U.S. Army Reserves as a combat engineer. I completed my military service in 1992.

From 1972 to 1993, I worked for the New York City Transit Authority. During that time, we lived in Middletown, N.Y., and then moved to Florida. We currently live in South Carolina.

Our daughters are Neline and Neisa, and our son is Jason. We also have six grandchildren. I used to volunteer at the hospital and nursing home in my community and help neighbors, friends, and family as a handyman. Thank you for the opportunity to share my story.

Happy Veterans' Day

My journey started at St. Dominic's and it's been grand!

By Pedro Joshua Calderone *(used to be known as Louis Caban aka "Chicken Legs")*



When I was a kid at St. Dominic's, I had a teacher named Mr. Moloney who was tough taskmaster. I was such a fast runner, I was nicknamed "Chicken Legs." Why was I called that crazy name? Did you ever see a chicken run so hard when it doesn't want to be caught for dinner? I could run faster. Plus my legs were as skinny as that bird's. But I wished the kids had nicknamed me thoroughbred. When Mr. Moloney, my 8th grade teacher, wanted to talk to me, he would ask older kids like Jimmy Russo or Reggie Laurino to bring me to see him. I'd tell my friends, "If you can catch me, I'll go with you to see Mr. Moloney"; they could never catch me.

The sisters looked to Mr. Moloney to discipline the boys, and he usually wanted to talk about my behavior or my sisters' behavior. He learned the only way he could punish me was to take sports away. Nothing else would get me to behave. He knew I was serious about sports and having been a professional boxer himself, I think Mr. Moloney recognized something in me and he saw me push myself to excel. Because I wanted to play, I found gradually I was checking my decision making. Mr. Moloney was old fashioned and he did not accept lack of respect to others or himself, lying (I could be a good liar), or poor sportsmanship. All the coaches, Nick Solfaro, Bob Crable, Bob and Jim Morris, Kevin Moloney and others insisted on high standards of behavior from their players. I learned to be consistent with my behavior and to follow through on my word.

Another form of discipline for misbehavior was working in Mr. Moloney's garden behind St. John's Hall. He had all kinds of vegetables growing there and he taught us how to weed and take care of the plants. Today I have hanging plants in my home I transported years ago from Virginia. I think of Mr. Moloney when I tend them with just the right amount of water and sunlight for each just as he knew just the right amount of correcting or encouragement each kid needed.

Years after Mr. Moloney retired and was living near St. Dominic's, I attended one of the Festivals. He asked another cottage kid to relay a message that he'd love to see me. On another occasion I went to Mr. Moloney's house with some friends. Unlike the times he summoned me as a child, now I went willingly. He asked me to join him in his den and I was surprised to hear Mr. Moloney apologize for being so hard on me. I stopped him. I said, "No, you weren't hard on me. By disciplining me, you got me to behave. Taking sports away was probably the only way to get me in line. Because of you, I have determination, I have character, I have a green thumb (sort of). Now I give back through my work in ministry the important lessons you taught me as a child."

Another person I loved on my journey was Sr. Bartholomew. I call her my second mother. When we couldn't go home for the holidays and we were unhappy, she would bring us breakfast in bed. She also took us to her parents' home at holiday time where we enjoyed playing football in the field with her and playing with her collie that looked like Lassie. We called her "The Eyes" because she could give you a look and know what you were thinking and you did not misbehave when she directed those eyes your way. I was fortunate to have Sr. Bartholomew when I entered St. Dominic's and later on in the Big Boys cottage.

"St. Dominic's Home was a life saver to me. It opened the door for me to go on in life and to have God speak to me through my heart. The teachers, coaches and nuns made me person I am today. God had a plan for me to survive. I was anointed at St. Dominic's and St. Dominic's is holy ground."

You can call or text Pedro at (202) 570-5333 to discuss his article.

A Lifetime of Saint Dominic Connections

by Jim Rooney, *Class of 1949*

My story begins on May 23, 1947, when my five siblings and I arrived by train at St. Dominic's Home. Little did I know then how profoundly those years would shape the rest of my life.

I lived at St. Dominic's from May 1947 until my graduation in June 1949.

I have fond memories of many of the Sisters. Shortly after we arrived Sister Jordan and Sister Marie Therese traveled from Our Savior Parish in the Bronx, where I had previously attended school, to visit all of us Rooney children.

I think often of Sister Louis and Sister John Francis. Both were always supportive while I was living in the cottages.

Another teacher I will always fondly remember is Mr. Moloney, a big, handsome Irishman from Tipperary, Ireland. On one occasion, I was called to his office after he saw me involved in a fight while defending one of my brothers. Dreading a reprimand I was surprised when he closed his office door and he said, "Next time keep your left up." That was Mr. Moloney who became a father figure to many of the boys.

Mr Moloney was highly respected by all. Even the Sisters addressed him as "Sir."

He might take off his suit jacket while teaching, but if a Sister knocked on his classroom door he would put the jacket on as a sign of respect in the same way we would all stand as Sister entered the room.

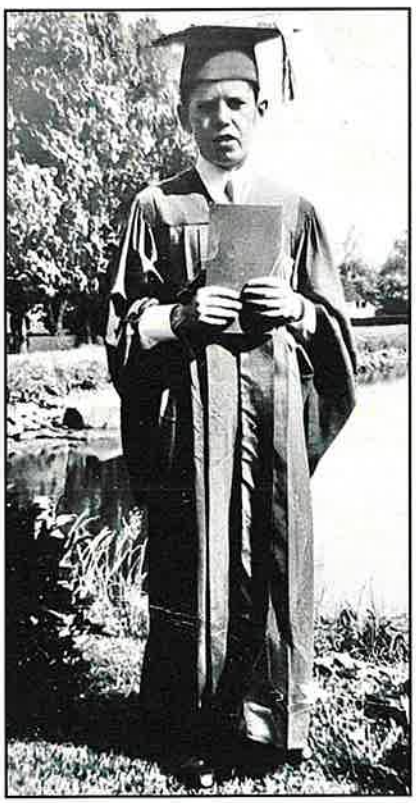
I was almost 13 years old when on October 20, 1948 as editor of the Veritas newsletter, my staff and I were chosen to interview General Dwight D. Eisenhower during his visit to the soldiers at Camp Shanks, just down the road from St. Dominic's.

A photograph taken that day with the General, Jimmy Murphy and me appeared in several newspapers, along with the interview.

Years later, Sister Thomasita gave the photograph to my mother. Little did I know how much St. Dominic's and that photograph would influence the course of my life.

After continuing my high school education, I applied for a job at the Bulova Watch Company. During the interview I shared the story of meeting General Eisenhower (who was now President Eisenhower) and showed the personnel director the photograph Sister Thomasita had given my mother.

I was hired!



My career at Bulova spanned 45 years, beginning as a stock boy and eventually advancing to the prestigious position of a Bulova Salesman.

I married in 1960, and my wife and I raised five children. Ironically I have spent much of my life living approximately 17 miles from St. Dominic's.

Over the years, I attended many of the Fall Festival events often reconnecting with many of the Sisters. Our lifelong friend, Sister Loyola was often there, and we always enjoyed spending time with her.

One year at the festival, my wife and I were walking on the path outside of the refectory when we noticed a Sister walking behind us. We turned and waited for her, and as we began talking, I commented on the cloudy day.

I recalled something Sister John Francis used to say "The sun will always come through the clouds".

Sister looked at me and asked, "You knew Sister?

I answered "Yes Sister was in charge of my cottage, and Sister Fortunata was in charge of the upstairs cottage."

Sister Fortunata then said, "You were one of our boys! I am Sister Fortunata." She then collapsed and died in my wife's arms.

I often wonder was I put on that path that day so that Sister would not be alone in her final moments.

St. Dominic's continues to be a part of my life through the generations of my family. Over the years my daughter became the Assistant Athletic Director at Dominican College. My youngest son, following a career in Major League Baseball, earned his teaching degree from Dominican College. Today, my granddaughter is attending the Accelerated Nursing Program at Dominican University.

And so, the connection continues.

Ironically, the very train that brought my siblings and me to St.Dominic's Home all those years ago still passes through my town. Its whistle can be heard from my home, a familiar sound that takes me back to where this remarkable journey began.

I will turn 91 years old on Halloween, and even after all these years, I remain grateful for the lasting influence St. Dominic's and the Blauvelt Dominican Sisters have had on my life. God Bless

If you would like to share your thoughts with Jim about the influence St. Dominic's and the Blauvelt Dominicans have had on you, you can email him at jeanarooney@gmail.com.



Woodpecker Farm Sign

Vacationing at the "Farm House"

Mark Griffith's Memories

I remember when I accompanied a group of cottage kids, along with our house mother and two other counselors, on a summer vacation at the "Farm House" in Greenville, Greene County, New York. Entering Greenville was a large sign that read, "Greenville – The Emerald Isle of the Catskills."

The whole cottage went, 12 boys in all. Our youngest was four years old, although he turned five by the time we went to the Farm House. Margaret Scott, our "house mother," and counselors Rick Conka, Richie Kramer, and I went with them.

We would always take the cottage kids somewhere for a week of summer vacation. The previous year we had gone to the "Beach House" in Ship Bottom, Ocean County, New Jersey, not far from Surf City.

At the Farm House, we went swimming at some beautiful waterfalls, and we found a swimming hole where I spotted cliffs that we dove from. I'm sure that wouldn't be allowed today. In fact, I don't think the nuns would have approved back then, but we all survived.

One of our boys, Michael Rosario, was only 12 but very artistic. Each boy seemed to have his own talents. Michael painted a big, colorful sign for us and labeled it "Woodpecker Farm," which we proudly posted out front. Because we were in an old farmhouse in the middle of nowhere, there wasn't much to do, so we got creative. We rigged up a sturdy clothesline on the side of the barn, about 10 feet up, with a pulley, a skill I had learned in Boy Scouts. We made a zip line that we called the "Slide for Life." Richie Kramer, our "full-sized" counselor, tested it out to make sure it was safe. It wasn't dangerous, just hours of fun.

There was one serious incident. Joey Hansen cut his foot on a piece of glass while playing under the waterfall. I took our van and rushed him to the nearest hospital, then carried him in my arms into the emergency room. The bleeding was substantial. I had applied direct pressure, something I had learned through my Boy Scout and Eagle Scout training, but the hospital initially refused to treat him because he was a minor and I was not his guardian. They tried to get authorization from St. Dominic's, but had no luck. After a lot of convincing, they finally agreed to stitch him up. In no time, the brave little guy was feeling fine and showing off his heavily bandaged foot. There were no complications, and he enjoyed the rest of the week.

Even with no amenities, we had as much fun at the Farm House as we had at the Jersey Shore Beach House in Ship Bottom the year before.



Eric Hansen (Burns), Margaret Scott, Rick Conka, Angelo Rosario, Derek Rosa, and J.J. Lowther at the swimming hole.

Do you see the cliff in the background? Angelo went up and dove off it into the water, which was very bad for me because the boys shamed me into doing the same thing. I was terrified, but I couldn't let on.



Slide for Life

Reach Mark at nyearthman1@gmail.com to discuss his article.

Lately, I've Been Thinking

by Virginia Synan Swartz

Lately, I've been thinking about my life so many years ago at St. Dominic's Home for Children ... and the Alumni Association, the Alumni Reunion, and the Alumni Newsletter. Most of all, however, I'm thinking about all the people who give so generously of their time and talents to make all the Alumni Events happen. What a gift they are to all of us.!!!

My mother often said, "the road to hell is paved with good intentions,". So, I won't name most of those people because I'm sure I will leave out someone, whose feelings might be hurt and I would surely be on my way to you know where.

However, these Alumni Events have given me the greatest gift of memories long forgotten, and remind me of what a blessing it was at the time for my sibs and me to be able to live at St. Dominic's Home under the care and guidance of The Sisters.

Once we came home to Amityville in 1951, St. Dominic's Home was never really mentioned and I'm not sure why that was so. However, a number of years ago, I happened to be in the area, stopped by on impulse, met Sister Francis, who graciously gave me a tour of my old Dormitory Four, told me about an upcoming Fall Festival, and mentioned the Alumni Association. Eventually, I made contact with Jeannette Earl and the door was opened to my past. What a joyful experience it has been, and continues to be thanks to Pamela DiMaio since Jeannette retired from her Alumni responsibilities.

So, lately, I think mostly about two categories: what has become of former residents; and, in addition to the care and kindness of The Sisters, the many activities that got me through what was probably a difficult and lonely time. The Newsletter gives good information about The Formers; where they are, the roads they've travelled to overcome the situations that brought them to St. Dominic's, and what they are doing now ... like my sister Marian Synan Elliott, whose recently published book Out of the Dark has won a number of awards.

Editor Joe Olano's Note in the Autumn'25 issue of the Newsletter talks about Veterans Day, and more importantly Veteran's Affairs and activities. St. Dominic's has so many Alumni who are Veterans, and I'm thinking how wonderful it would be to hear their stories. Who would ever think that so many residents from The Home would find their way into the military, to serve, thrive, and grow beyond the difficulties that colored their young lives.

And then there are the other careers former residents pursued that also pique my curiosity, and I would love to hear those stories as well. AHA! The benefit of the Alumni activities.



Here is a short list: of some of my favorite activities, all of which give me joy:

- Riding in the back of the dump truck on the way to Tallman's State Park for a week of summer camp.
- Walks in the early evening with Sister... to the cemetery, or the grounds of Rockland State Hospital ...giving us an opportunity to think about other people and their stories.
- All the activity, celebrations, and pomp and circumstance surrounding the days when the Postulants became "NUNS".
- Glimpses of Sister's hair sticking out from under her head covering.
- Field day competition against other "homes".
- Visiting Sunday and School girl crashes
- Jumping the pipe fence which surrounded The Plot.
- I could go on, but I'll let everyone else add to my list.

You can call or text Virginia at (646) 734-6037 to discuss her article.

In Memoriam

ALUMS

Ann Edman (formerly Sr. Stephen Elizabeth) died June 15, 2026 | Rich Gherri died May 19, 2025
Mary Ellen (Stephens) Graham died December 15, 2025 | Rich Ryan died April 14, 2025
John Scannell died July 1, 2025 | Thomas (Tommy) Thomson died August 11, 2026
Eileen Wieland died October 2021

SISTERS

Sister Mechtilde Doherty, OP, died September 10, 2026

Sr. Victoria Sloane tribute

written by Ray Olano



I lived at St. Dominic's Home from the mid 60s to the mid 70s and in 1974, a group home opened and I chose to live there. I was told a nun would run the group home. Her name was Sr. Victoria Sloane. Being raised as a teenager by Sr. Victoria was a joy to say the least. We learned from each other and she was always a very supportive "mother." I had the pleasure of meeting and getting to know her family (Helen, Kathleen, James, Mary, Michael, John and her wonderful nieces and nephews.) Her family became my family. In fact, when I attended Hofstra University, I was so nervous going to the first day orientation, Sister's brother-in-law, Tom accompanied me.

I was lucky to know all those loving family members. I will miss Sister Victoria, but I am so thankful she was such a big part of my life even after I left St. Dominic's. Rest in peace, Sister, until we meet again.

Ann Edman

Ann, formerly Sr. Stephen Elizabeth, was warm and supportive and as a young woman, she was able to enter into the active lives of children in her cottage.

After she left the convent, Ann married. She joined the social ministry of St. Mel's Parish in Flushing, overseeing religious education programs and heading the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

St. Dominic's Alumni Staff

Joseph A. Olano ..... *Editor*
Pam (Mason) DiMaio .. *Treasurer*
Bob Moore ..... *Staff Support*
George Chue ..... *Staff Writer*

Contributing Writers

William Maldanado: *A Soldier's Story*

Pedro Joshua Claderone:
My Journey Started at St. Dominic's and it's been grand!

Jim Rooney: *A Lifetime of St. Dominic's Connections*

Mark Griffith: *Vacationing at the "Farm House"*

Virginia Synan Swartz:
Lately I've Been Thinking



St. Dominic's Alumni Association
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St. Dominic's Alumni Association

20th Anniversary

has been rescheduled for

Saturday, April 3, 2027 at 12 pm

in the Huston Room of the Convent.

The procedure to obtain your records while living at St. Dominic's has changed.

Please write to Pamela at stdominicalum@gmail.com to receive the necessary forms to obtain your records.