



## Leading us Through the Wilderness

By Steven L. Anderson, Ph.D., MBA

"The Viper is coming, the Viper is coming!" yelled the terrified youth as he stormed out of the hallway and through the throng of stupefied onlookers. Seconds later another tenderfoot appeared screaming the same declaration, "The Viper is coming! The Viper is coming!" As I looked down the hallway I could only wonder in amazement what the heck was so scary and when would it be here. After several more seemingly terrified youngsters departed the hallway in a similar fashion a figure appeared in the doorway wrapped in toilet paper from head to toe. He was tossing a full roll of toilet paper up and down in his hand and then he said, "I'm the Viper, anybody want a vipe?" This was greeted with choruses of laughter by the delighted Boy Scouts sitting in a semi circle in front of the doorway.

This small story is one of a thousand vivid memories of one of the most influential and rewarding experiences of my life, scouting, which was led by an equally influential leader, Joe Dollman. To give you an idea of this man's dedication, scouting has been in existence for 100 years. Joe Dollman has been a scout leader for 55 years!

Recently, Joe Dollman, who is now 90 years old and still sharp as a tack, had a grandson become an Eagle Scout. This is the highest honor in scouting which only 4% of scouts achieve. My cousin, Dan Anderson, now scoutmaster of troop 104, my former troop, saw this as an opportunity to honor Joe. So Dan called all of the former Eagle Scouts of Joe Dollman to the ceremony of Joe Dollman's grandson to surprise him. I was one of those Eagle Scouts, so I was invited.



I have included a picture of Joe Dollman with all of his Eagles surrounding him. The picture was generously donated by Michael McCarthy of the Mirror News of Maumee, Ohio. Joe is the one with the red coat on.

I love Joe Dollman. I am not ashamed to admit it. Why? Because he helped lead me through one of the most difficult periods of my life with his passion, love and shining example of leadership. When I joined scouting as an eleven year old my mother had cancer. As this disease ravaged her body and eventually claimed her life three years later, I was lucky enough to belong to Troop

104 in Maumee, Ohio. Joe's leadership is what made our troop so special. When we went to summer camp most troops had 10 kids and did not seem to have a lot of pride in their group. We would bring 50 kids to camp and we were a proud unit that had a strong sense of camaraderie. We had our own song. We built things together. We played and laughed and sang together. In competition with other troops we never lost.

We loved being around each other and we loved being around nature. This community saved me through my mother's illness. I had somewhere to go where I knew I would belong. I had something worthwhile to throw my energy into.

Thanks, Joe, I can never fully repay you for what you have done, but I will never forget you. Hopefully, in some small way I can share with others some of what you taught me about leadership.

As I think about the Viper and a thousand other incredible experiences I had in scouting I realize that while all that was happening I had no idea that I was learning vital lessons that serve me today. Here's a little of what Joe Dollman taught me about leadership.

- 1) Set high standards. Being a part of our troop was not easy. Joe really pushed us to be the best.
- 2) Be passionate. It was obvious that Joe loved what he was doing and he loved us.
- 3) Keep it fun. Joe really loved to laugh. Here's another example. In every awards ceremony Joe would get all of the Tenderfoot Scouts up to induct them into the order of Siam. He would have them all bow down and start slowly chanting, "OH WA, TA GOO, SIAM." As the scouts said this faster and faster the audience would slowly realize that the scouts were really saying, "Oh what a goose I am," and they would start laughing until tears came down their cheeks. Slowly the scouts would realize that they had been had and they stood up and laughed and everyone cheered. Great memories!
- 4) Know when to be spiritual. Joe always tied faith into what we were doing. He's bring a priest along on our campouts and we would have mass. There's nothing like a spiritual connection to build a team.
- 5) Make it sustainable. Joe never let us forget that we were guests in nature and we must leave it as we found it and treat it with respect.