

Scoutmaster of Troop 240 shaped boys into leaders, dies at 57

By Maria Clark

Joseph G. Acquafredda, who died on April 29 at age 57, took over leadership of Boy Scout Troop 240 in 1999 with the aim of guiding young men to become better citizens and leaders.

“Being a leader is not an easy task. A leader is responsible for the well-being of the people in his charge, a leader puts the needs of his people before his own, and assists other leaders for the overall well-being of the Troop,” he wrote in a letter that was published in the Troop 240 1999 Annual Journal.

He took the scouts and his role as their leader very seriously. He increased Troop 240 from 10 scouts in those early days to close to 60 scouts, adding four new Eagle Scouts this year alone.

“For me, seeing them come in at 11 years old as children and then watching them leave at 17 as leaders, that’s what this is all about,” Mr. Acquafredda told The Press in 2007.

Mr. Acquafredda, a Bronx native and longtime Riverdale resident, died at Montefiore Medical center after succumbing to a brief illness.

“Aside from being scoutmaster he was a key trainer of boy scouts and adults throughout New York City. There are hundreds of scout leaders he has been responsible for training,” said Jay Schnapp, Troop 240 assistant scoutmaster.

Arthur Pann, a former Troop 240 scout member, had recently been in touch with Mr. Acquafredda regarding coordinating a reunion of all former and current scouts from Troop 240, but Mr. Acquafredda died before the date arrived.

“He would tell me about [the troop] today and I was telling him about [the troop] yesterday,” Mr. Pann said. “He was excited about naming four new Eagle Scouts and bringing so many people together who grew up in the troop.”

Weeks before the planned reunion, Mr. Acquafredda sent an e-mail to Mr. Pann telling him he was suffering from a life-threatening illness and might not be able to make the reunion planned for May.

“He wanted to keep it private and didn’t want to let the scouts know,” said Mr. Pann. “He was always thinking of them.”

Mr. Acquafredda served as a staff sergeant in the United States Army on active duty in West Germany, Dallas Ft. Worth and Ft. Hamilton, from 1973 to 1984. He was also employed by the United States Social Security Administration for over 25 years, working most recently as a Field Service Representative. He earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Fordham University in 1980.

He began his scouting career in 1965, as a Boy Scout with BSA Troop 200, based in the Bronx. He started out as an Assistant Scoutmaster with BSA Troop 300 in 1996 and finally became Scoutmaster to BSA Troop 240 in 1999. The troop recently celebrated its 90th anniversary at the Riverdale Presbyterian Church.

“Throughout his life, Joe exemplified a desire to teach and to serve others; in this way, he created and nurtured many families, both his own and his Scouting family,” his friend Ellen Beltran said in a statement.

Despite Mr. Acquafredda’s passing, Troop 240’s reunion is scheduled for Friday, May 14 to Saturday, May 15, and will start at the Riverdale Presbyterian Church at 7 p.m.

“Troop 240 is an incredible and important fabric of Riverdale. There are people all over this country that are doing important things for this world, who grew up in Troop 240,” said Mr. Pann. “And he was a part of maintaining that.”

Mr. Acquafredda is survived by his wife, Edna; his sons, Joseph, Javier, Jaime and Albert; and his grandchildren, Joseph Anthony and Leah. He was predeceased by his parents, Joseph and Paula.

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