



## Steve Falcone: Remembering a man who changed kids' lives

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You didn't know John "Jack" Haynie, but, if you were as lucky as I was when I was growing up, you knew someone just like him.

Mr. Haynie -- I never knew him as anything but Mr. Haynie -- was my scoutmaster.

Over the years, hundreds of young boys passed through Mr. Haynie's Troop 30, and later Explorer Post 30. Some stayed for just a few years; some, like me, hung around until adulthood led us to cut the ties; and still others followed his example and devoted much of their lives to helping youngsters just as he did -- my best friend from those days has continued to be an active Scout leader into his 60s.

Mr. Haynie taught us to tie knots, pitch a tent and cook a meal over an open fire. He was a Morse Code whiz.

More than that, he taught us to be leaders and, by extension, parents. I am a better man because of his long influence.

The last time I saw Mr. Haynie was at Christmas 1970. He invited a group of his former Scouts to the troop Christmas party

as sort of a reunion. He flashed slides on a screen of us as youngsters at ceremonies, on camping trips and hikes. It was good for a few laughs and red faces for most of us, as well as a few tears for Mr. Haynie, especially when my father, who'd died two years earlier after a long tenure as liaison between the troop and its sponsoring PTA, appeared in a picture. His sadness as each of us left that evening for other activities we thought were more important was palpable.

A month later, the Navy sent me to Spain, my mother and sister moved to Las Vegas, and my last connection to my hometown was severed. I returned only rarely and always promised myself that I'd pick up a phone book and start calling people when I got there, starting with Mr. Haynie. I never did.

Then, a few years ago, I saw that his wife had died. I left my condolences to the family in the funeral home's online guest book.



One morning, a few days later, the phone

rang while I was getting ready for work. "He says to tell you it's 'your old scoutmaster,'" my wife said as I tried to wipe away the shaving foam.

He and I had a good talk that morning as I caught him up on my own family. I was saddened when he asked me how my father, gone for nearly 40 years, was, but Mr. Haynie was approaching 90 after all -- his memory wasn't perfect, but the chance to talk to him one more time was priceless.

A couple of weeks ago, I came across his obituary in my hometown newspaper. The obituary didn't -- couldn't -- do him justice.

What it didn't say was how lucky we were to have had someone like Jack Haynie in our lives when we were young. If everyone had known him as I did, this would be a far better world.

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