

Honoring Mr. Douglas H. Niece

First Cubmaster, Cub Scout Pack 61 – Flemington, New Jersey

The story of Cub Scout Pack 61 in Flemington is inseparable from the life and legacy of its first—and longest-serving—Cubmaster, Mr. Douglas H. Niece.

Born in Flemington on April 12, 1920, Douglas was the son of the late Harmon and Bessie Vogel Niece and remained a lifelong resident of the community he loved. A proud graduate of Flemington High School, Class of 1939, he dedicated an extraordinary fifty-one years of service as a printer with the Hunterdon County Democrat before retiring.

When Cub Scout Pack 61 was established in 1949, the new program faced the challenge of finding a leader. Douglas Niece—though he had no children of his own—volunteered to serve as Cubmaster, inspired by his strong commitment to community service. With the support of American Legion Post 159, he began a remarkable journey of leadership that would span more than six decades.

Mr. Niece's impact on Scouting is nothing short of extraordinary. As the founding Cubmaster, he built a program rooted in the enduring values of the Boy Scouts of America—citizenship, character, and service. Over an incredible span of more than sixty years, he served as Cubmaster, making him one of the longest-serving Cubmasters in the history of the national organization. His dedication was so profound that, in many cases, he guided three generations of Scouts within the same families. In recognition of his exceptional service, he received numerous honors, including the prestigious Silver Beaver Award.

Beyond Scouting, Doug Niece was a cornerstone of the Flemington community. A devoted member of the Flemington Presbyterian Church, he served as an elder and deacon, sang in the church choir, and dedicated himself as a Sunday School Superintendent and teacher. His lifelong love of music began as a graduate of the Flemington Children's Choir School, where he later served on the Board of Trustees. Even into his later years, he continued leading Sunday morning carolers throughout Flemington until the age of 85.

His spirit of service extended even further—he volunteered as a reading mentor at Franklin Township Elementary School and was deeply involved in horticulture as a member of the Hunterdon County Chrysanthemum Society and Education Director of the New Jersey State Chrysanthemum Society.

One of Mr. Niece's most enduring contributions to the community can be seen each holiday season in Flemington's cherished Christmas Tree Lighting. This beloved tradition, which dates back to 1922 and is the oldest service project of the Flemington Rotary Club (founded in 1923), has brought generations of families together in the heart of town. Originally coordinated by

volunteers and the Flemington Children's Choir, the responsibility for the tree installation and lighting was taken over by Cub Scout Pack 61 under Doug Niece's leadership in 1965, ensuring that this treasured tradition would continue for generations to come.

Each year, the ceremony begins with Pack 61 leading the lighting, followed by Christmas carols, and the arrival of Santa Claus by fire truck. Continuing a custom from the 1920s, the Rotary Club distributes candy canes and oranges—once rare treats that brought great joy to children and continue to symbolize the spirit of giving today. A unique honor remains: the Cub Scout who sells the most popcorn during the annual fundraiser earns the privilege of lighting the tree—an enduring example of how Doug connected Scouting achievement with community celebration.

Douglas Niece was predeceased by his beloved wife, Frances Miller Niece, in 1982, and his brother, Donald Niece, in 2005.

Through every role he embraced—printer, mentor, church leader, volunteer, and above all, Cubmaster—Douglas H. Niece exemplified a life of service. His leadership ensured that Cub Scout Pack 61 and the traditions of Flemington would not only endure, but thrive.

Today, his legacy lives on in the generations of Scouts he mentored, the community traditions he helped preserve, and the enduring spirit of service he inspired.