

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF  
MARQUETTE COUNCIL (1897-1996)**

**By Richard E. Venus**

## **KNIGHTS I HAVE KNOWN**

### **A BRIEF HISTORY OF MARQUETTE COUNCIL**

*By R. E. Venus*

Why do we have a Marquette Council? Indeed, why do we have a Knights of Columbus? There are several very good reasons.

There was a time in this country, when Holy Mother Church had to struggle for its very existence in a land where many of its citizens were consumed with hatred and bigotry toward anything Catholic. There were many violent attacks against the Church, its members and its priests.

One such period occurred in the latter part of the last century. The war between the states had sown the seeds of intolerance and violence that carried over long after the organized hostilities had ended.

It was a period that spawned rebellion against most any form of authority. Groups such as the infamous Ku Klux Klan, the Mugwumps, the Know Nothings and others, came into being with a total disregard for law and order. They all had one thing in common — hatred of anything relating to Catholicity.

It was a time when many young Catholic men were dying at a young age, leaving widows and orphans in a hopeless situation. Something had to be done to provide care for the widows and orphans and protection for our priests.

It was with these goals in mind that a young New Haven priest, the Reverend Michael Joseph McGivney, invited several men in his parish to attend a meeting at his rectory. This fine young priest had no way of knowing that from this humble beginning his little group would grow to become the largest organization of Catholic men in the world. This was due in a great measure to the untiring zeal and dedication of Father McGivney. It was he who coined the name Knights of Columbus for the Order.

During the winter months of 1881 and 1882 several meetings were held, with the result that on March 29, 1882, the first Council was chartered. It was called San Salvador #1, after the landing of Columbus. Soon another Council was chartered. It was Pinta #2 of New Haven after one of Columbus' ships. The idea spread rapidly and today there are thousands of Councils in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Brother Knights have achieved the goals of Father McGivney and our priests no longer need fear of their safety. Our great insurance programs have saved many widows and orphans.

## MARQUETTE COUNCIL

No history of Marquette Council would be complete without telling about Reverend Richard E. Shortell. It was this great priest who built St. Mary's church and the beautiful rectory that some very foolish people tore down. He also built the fine Club House that now serves as our Home.

When Father Shortell died in October of 1934, after serving as our Pastor for 42 years, he lefts no debts, but he did leave \$50,000 toward the building of St. Mary's school. This was considered an awful lot of money at the time, and he loved to say that he did it all with the nickels and dimes from the ladies and girls that were employed as domestics in the large mansions that were numerous in Ridgefield during its golden era.

Father Shortell recognized the need for an organization of Catholic men. So, like Father McGivney, he called a meeting of the men of the parish. It was a cold winter evening when the men gathered in the rectory to plan for an organization.

There was considerable enthusiasm for the idea, and from this meeting grew the fine organization that we know now as Marquette Council #245. After several meetings our Council was granted its charter in June 1897. Father Shortell then suggested the name of the famous Catholic explorer Pierre Marquette as the name of the fledgling organization. It was quickly adopted, as was any suggestion of Father.

The men were insistent that Father Shortell be the first Grand Knight. However, he graciously declined and suggested that the group consider Peter McGlynn for that honored post. It proved to be a very wise suggestion and Peter was then elected as our first Grand Knight.

Peter McGlynn was not only a fine Catholic gentleman, he was also a prominent citizen of our town. A plumber by trade, Peter had established an excellent reputation in a town that had not welcomed with open arms the arrival of Catholic families that were coming to Ridgefield in increasing numbers in the latter part of the last century.

Those engaged in business and in the various trades were looked upon with some degree of suspicion by those who felt that they were being invaded.

So, the newcomers had to prove themselves, and they did so in no uncertain terms. Catholic tradesmen did much of the work that resulted in the building of many of the great mansions that made the town of Ridgefield a mecca for the rich and famous of 100 years ago. Many others were engaged in maintaining the beautiful lawns and gardens that were the hallmark of the large estates that made our town a showplace. Peter McGlynn and his wife, the former Mary Ellen had four children — Marion, Helen, Joseph and Francis. Marion became the wife of Arthur Mullen, a member of our Council and a son of one of our charter members. Helen married Donald Cumming, a convert to our faith. Don later served with distinction as Grand Knight of our Council. Helen still lives in the Cumming home, the little green building next to the post office. Joseph, like his illustrious father, became a plumber, and with his wife Rita, operated a very successful plumbing business.

Francis became a priest in the Holy Ghost Order. I had the distinct honor and privilege of serving as one of his altar boys when he said his first Mass at Saint Mary's Church. Father Francis advanced rapidly and held several important offices. Finally he was appointed Provincial of the Order of the Holy Ghost for all of America.

Peter McGlynn passed in 1909, at the relatively young age of 45, and just 4 years later, he was followed by Mary Ellen, leaving four young children only partially raised. Into the breach stepped Jenny Hennelly, a sister of Mary Ellen. Jenny was a fine lady and the product of one of the earliest Catholic families in Ridgefield. Despite her very busy life Jenny found time to be a charter member of St. Mary's Ladies Aid Society (now Saint Mary's Rosary Society). Then during World War I, she became a Detachment Commandant in the American Red Cross. Our Lord must have blessed Jenny for the fine job she did in raising the four little McGlynns. She was much beloved and almost everyone called her Aunt Jenny.

In telling of the early catholic families in Ridgefield, we would be remiss if we did not mention Martin Hennelly, Jenny's father. In those days coachmen were looked on with considerable respect, and none were more respected than Mr. Hennelly. Rockwell's fine History of Ridgefield notes that in 1864, 130 years ago, the Honorable Hannibal Hamlin, who was Vice President of the United States came to Ridgefield to visit and make a speech.

Great were the preparations to greet the Vice President properly. He came by train to Danbury and someone would have to take a coach to Danbury and bring him here. Martin Hennelly was chosen for this honor.

As history records it, Martin Hennelly drove a pair of cream colored horses, with cream colored harness drawing a cream colored coach, and a cream colored dog ran along with the coach. Ebenezer Jones, who owned the outfit rode along as footman, and as you may have guessed, he wore cream colored clothes.

Mr. Hamlin must have been very impressed at the pomp and ceremony that was tendered to him. Word spread about the great celebration and it was said that Queen Victoria sent a representative to Ridgefield to acquire the cream colored horses. Back to Marquette Council.

Marquette had 22 Charter members; Rev. Richard E. Shortell, Edward J. Barrett, Nicholas Brennan, Michael Connery, Thomas Flood, John P. Fogarty, Michael McGlynn Jr., Michael T. McGlynn, Peter McGlynn, Patrick McCarthy, James T. Mitchell, John Mullen, James Mullen, Frank Hurley, Cornelius Lynch, James E. Ryan, Thomas Reilly, James Kennedy, John Potter, Joel Johnson, John Brophy and Levi Dann.

These fine Gentlemen were the cream of the crop at the time. In the early days they met in a building on Catoonah Street that had been St. Mary's Church and is now the Thrift Shop.

Father Shortell, always looking ahead, could see the need for a place for the parish organizations to hold their meetings. He bought the land directly across from our Church and put up the fine building that is now our Home.

The library (where we now hold our Council meetings) was intended as a meeting place for St. Mary's Ladies Aid Society and what we now refer to as the Blue Room, was for the Knights.

The upstairs auditorium was used for various parish activities and years ago it got a lot more use. Many were the fine dances and plays that were held there. Though there were relatively few Catholics in Ridgefield at the time. Father Shortell, looking to the future, had a large room designed in such a manner that should there be an overflow in the church. Mass could be held there. The stage would serve as a place for the altar and a little choir loft was added. The beautiful woodwork matched the church itself.

To accomplish this. Father Shortell turned to the first Deputy Grand Knight, James F. Kennedy. Big Jim as he was known, was Ridgefield's premier builder at the turn of the century. It was Big Jim who built the church and the fine rectory. He also built St. Joseph's in Danbury and St. Mary's in Norwalk.

The story was told that when he was building the Dutton mansion on High Ridge, he often substituted a two by six for a two by four. E. P. Dutton was not only a great publisher, he was also an accomplished architect. It took two years to build the mansion, and Mr. Dutton made frequent trips from New York to see how the work was progressing. He noted that Kennedy was exceeding the specifications and said, "Jim, I am afraid you are losing money on the job." Kennedy turned and said, "If I am, it's me own business."

The title "Big Jim" seemed to fit this fine man. He was big, and so was his family, not only in their numbers but in their sizes. One daughter, Margaret, became postmaster in California. After Margaret retired, she became legally blind and used to hire a public stenographer to correspond with me. Big Jim finished the Club House in 1903 and the Knights and the Ladies Aid moved into the building.

On June 20th 1897, the original officers were elected as follows: Grand Knight, Peter McGlynn; Deputy Grand Knight, James F. Kennedy; Recording Secretary, James A. Mullen; Financial Secretary, James E. Ryan; Chancellor, John Brophy; Treasurer, Michael McGlynn; Warden, James T. Mitchell; Lecturer, Edward T. Barren;; Inside Guard, Patrick McCarthy; Outside Guard, Frank W. Hurley; Advocate, Joel L. Johnson;

Chaplain, Rev. Richard E. Shortell; Trustees, John Brophy, Thomas Flood, Michael McGlynn, Michael Connery and John Mullen.

There have been 52 Grand Knights of Marquette Council in its 98 years of existence. They are as follows: Peter McGlynn, Michael T. McGlynn, James E. Ryan, Michael McGlynn, William Ryan, Bernard Keeler, John Brophy, Peter McManus, J. Edward McGlynn, George L. Rockwell, Lawrence Leary, John Morrisroe, William Creagh, Octavious J. Carboni, Joseph A. Roach, Levio Zandri, Donald Cumming, Lawrence

Coleman, Edward D. Hyde, Peter Carboni, J. Bernard Christopher, Charles Cain, Walter T. Dolan, Richard E Venus, Joseph Brunetti, Philip P. Masterson, John Moore, Vincent Smith, John G. Come, William Lynch, Paul F. Venus, Arch Brazie, Gregory Clinton, Robert Betts, Joseph Gardner, Brian Johnson, Richard F. Godbout, Carmine Argenio, Peter Fagan, Joseph Arena, Raymond Stuart, Donald Kelly, Gene Casagrande, Norman Craig, Thomas F. O'Mara, Timothy M. Halloran, Thomas Murphy, Francis Foyt, Charles Mangi, Ronald Post, Kevin Ryan and our present Grand Knight (1996) Dick Howard.

It would be safe to say that I knew almost every one of these fine men personally. After Peter McGlynn came Michael T. McGlynn, known as Painter Mike to distinguish him from the other Michael McGlynn. He was also known as M. T. and was a very prominent citizen of our town. He served for many years on the School Board, both as a member and as Chairman. He was a super conservative and you can be assured that the Board had to justify every penny that was spent.

Just down Catoonah Street, on the north side, there was a small building that now serves as the law offices of our Judge of Probate, Joseph A. Egan, Jr. For many years, when this building was smaller than it is now, it served as a warehouse for M. T. McGlynn's painting supplies. When I was a kid delivering newspapers, I would stop by the paint shop. M. T. had a bay horse named Tommy, and if it was quitting time, he would give me a ride in the wagon to the top of the hill. As he left me off in front of the church, M. T. would never fail to say, "Save your pennies, Dick, for when you get old, they are the only friends you will have." He practiced what he preached, and he became a very wealthy man. M. T. was in his 90's when he passed on at Altnacraig and he was the last surviving charter member of our Council.

James E. Ryan lived on High Ridge, just across the street from the Club House. He was just about the nicest man I had ever known. I often thought how unfortunate it was that Jimmy and his lovely wife were unable to have children. They would have been ideal parents. Jimmy owned and operated a general store. The J. E. Ryan Store, just north of Bedient's. They sold everything from ladies dresses to feed for livestock and did a brisk business for they were fair and everyone had great confidence in this fine man. The people employed at Ryan's were very loyal and most of them stayed with him for all of their adult lives.

Michael McGlynn was also known as "Tinker Mike", in order to distinguish him from "Painter Mike". He was another of the many plumbers that our Council seems to have. His two sons, Thomas and Richard also became plumbers and they were also members of our Council. Michael was a little man, but though small in stature, he was quite large in his standing with his fellow townsmen. He served eight terms as a member of Ridgefield's Board of Selectmen and always stood his ground in public debate with other members of the Board, especially when his opponent was First Selectman Eldridge M. Bailey.

William M. Ryan was a brother-in-law of Tinker Mike and joined him in the operation of a firm that was known as McGlynn and Ryan. Will was not a plumber, but he was in charge of the store, did the bookkeeping and carried on a picture framing

business in a building just north of Bissell's Drug Store. Will was definitely not a gambler, but he enjoyed pitching pennies with me on the sidewalk in front of the store. I am sure that he used to let me win, which I did most of the time. Later on Will became superintendent of the local branch of the State Highway Department, when it was based on Robert's Lane. His wife, the former Ethel McGlynn was very involved in politics and served several terms as Ridgefield's representative to the General Assembly in Hartford.

Bernard Keeler was a painter by trade. He was quite tall and was able to do much of his painting without use of a ladder. Bernie always seemed to have a very stern expression and I was a little bit afraid of him though he was really a very nice man. During World War I, he served as a corporal in the Home Guard. He also served several terms as a member of the School Board.

John Brophy was probably the most prominent of all of our Grand Knights. He was the son of James Brophy, in whose home was held the first Mass for arriving Irish Catholics in Ridgefield. As a boy, John worked in the local tannery, which was located where the Titicus River passes under North Salem Road. To say that he advanced rapidly is putting it mildly. After serving in several local capacities, John went to New York where for sixteen years he was Inspector of Customs in that great city.

Returning to Ridgefield, John Brophy became Commissioner of Fairfield County for twelve years. He was elected eight times as a member of Ridgefield's Board of Selectman and became the first Catholic to become First Selectman. When the Town Hall was destroyed in the great fire of 1895, John drew the plans for the present Town Hall. He also was one of the original members of the Board of Directors of what is now Union Trust. At that time it was The First National Bank.

Peter A. McManus came to Ridgefield from Scotland as a young man. He had learned to be an architect and went to work for Big Jim Kennedy. Along the way, Peter married the former Mary Connelly, who was a niece of Big Jim. One of Peter's first jobs was drawing the plans for the great sunken Italian Garden for George M. Olcott (where Casagmo complex is now located). This garden was a major part of one of Ridgefield's great showplaces.

Later on, Peter formed his own construction business and became a prominent citizen of our town. After building many houses, Peter became involved in politics and served several terms as Ridgefield's representative to the General Assembly. He also served a number of years as Labor Commissioner. He never lost his Scottish burr, but served as interlocutor in minstrel shows, one of which I was a part of in 1926. Two of Peter's sons, James and Joseph were members of Marquette.

J. Edward McGlynn was a son of Painter Mike, and like his father became a painter. His son Francis became a priest. Eddy, as he was known, served for a time as Acting Postmaster.

George L. Rockwell was a very prominent Ridgefielder. He was a nephew of two Connecticut Governors, George and Phineas Lounsbury, and lived on the corner of

Governor Street and East Ridge that now houses our local police department. George was a convert to our faith and he had been a 32nd degree Mason. I do not know of any Grand Knight who had been a Mason.

George had served as Ridgefield's Postmaster, and it was while in that capacity that he wrote the great history of Ridgefield. The accuracy and detail that he furnished in that tremendous volume are a real tribute to this historian. Mrs. Richard M. (Pat) Nixon was a niece of George's wife. Oh yes, he also served four terms as Ridgefield's representative to Hartford. His son George Jr. was also a member of Marquette. George L. Rockwell was a credit to our Council, and he was a fine Catholic gentleman.

Lawrence Leary was another of our many painters. He was actually more than just a house painter. He had a tremendous amount of talent and did some fine portraits and landscapes. I had a dance band for many years and it was called the Mayflower Swing Band. I asked Larry to paint on the front of the bass drum and he did a beautiful portrait of the Mayflower. Many years later, Larry did a mural of a great old fashioned garden that stretched across and over the stage upstairs in our home. When that room was used as a school, someone painted over Larry's masterpiece. If you look at it very carefully, you can still see the outline of the mural.

After serving as Grand Knight, Larry turned his attention to the Office of Chancellor. He learned the beautiful charges that the Chancellor gives at degrees and became famous throughout the State of Connecticut for the elegant manner in which he rendered his charges. Indeed, he was much in demand and traveled all over the state to give his presentation. Larry had a beautiful bass voice and sang in St. Mary's choir for many years. He also appeared in the famous minstrel show in 1926, singing Old Man River, in a real professional manner.

John Morrisroe came to Ridgefield right from "The Old Sod." He learned the carpenter's trade and worked for many years with William Creagh Sr. Jack also served as a chauffeur for some of the wealthy families. I will always remember him for the way he danced. The highlight of the St. Patrick's Night parties that used to be held upstairs in the home was when Jack Morrisroe and Jack Jones did the Irish Jig. They were as good as any Broadway production.

William Creagh Jr. was another of the many plumbers who became Grand Knight of our Council. Three of Bill's sisters from that fine Creagh family still live in Ridgefield, Mary and Agnes and Mrs. Francis (Alice) Brown. Bill moved with his family to New Canaan, and promptly became Grand Knight of Father Stapleton Council in that town. That was something that did not happen often, but anything was possible with Bill.

Octavious J. Carboni, better known as "Tabby" was one of the best known of all of our Grand Knights. He came to this country as a little boy, like most of the Italians, from the province of Ancona, Italy. He was very quick and very smart from whence came the moniker.

As a boy Tabby worked in his father's grocery store and he became so proficient in the English language that he often served as an interpreter. He was good with figures and wrote with a flowing hand. Tabby joined the Knights when only 18 years of age and quickly became Recording Secretary. If you would examine the minutes of the 1920 meetings, you will see why he was chosen for that particular post.

After working as a clerk in the Savings Bank, he also became a clerk in the post office. Then for many years, he became an insurance salesman for the Metropolitan Insurance Company. Tabby and his lovely wife, the former Catherine Creagh (Bill's sister) had six fine children. One son, Steve, still lives in Ridgefield, and one sister, Mrs. James T. (Mary) Mitchell, also lives here in our town, as does his brother Olinto, better known as Lance.

The Carboni family were all very sports minded and Tabby was probably best known for his ability as a bowler, baseball and basketball player. He also excelled in a game called poker, and of his expertise in this I have first hand knowledge. Tabby was good to know and fun to be with. Like many of our Grand Knights, Tabby engaged in politics and served several terms as our Town Treasurer.

Joseph A. Roach was one of my favorite Grand Knights and it was during his term in office that I became a member of our Council, in 1936. The Roach family lived right next door to mine in the building that now houses The Ridgefield Animal Hospital at 614 Main Street. Joe's father Ned was a maker of monuments, and Joe followed in his father's footsteps. Joe's brother Clement became a priest in the Order of The Holy Ghost.

Joe's career as a monument maker was cut short by World War I, in which he was a legitimate hero, as a member of the 102nd Regiment, U. S. Infantry, 26th Division. After landing in France, Joe was instructed in Intelligence work by the French Army. He saw action in several places in France, including the Marne, where during the attack he was blown up.

During the attack, Joe suffered four bullet wounds and eight shrapnel wounds. He was taken as a captive while unconscious. Joe was taken to an enemy prison at Darmstadt, from which this incredible man proceeded to escape. It was all amazing but he staggered and crawled his way to the Holland border 43 miles away. He was sent to England and finally was ordered back to the United States.

Joe arrived home, still carrying the lead from his wounds. He recovered enough to rejoin his father in the monument business, which was not really good for him because of all the dust that was inhaled while cutting the marble stones. A piece of Joe's handiwork remains in our Council Chamber. It is a little granite slab that sits on the Grand Knight's table, on which he sounds the gavel. It was entirely fitting that Joseph A. Roach was elected the first Commander of the Everett Ray Seymour Post of the American Legion. He died at a young age with complications from his wounds and the dust that must have rested in his lungs, leaving his wife, the former May Keefe and his little daughter Marie. One thing is sure, Joe was a great credit to his family, his Church, his country and the organization that he loved.

Levio Zandri was a very respected member of our community. As a young man he was active in sports, especially baseball. He was a great bowler and captained the Knight of Columbus bowling team, which lead the league on many occasions. After college, Levio came back to Ridgefield to teach in our high school. He eventually became principal of the junior high school. In the basement of our home is a picture of a float we entered in the 250th Anniversary parade of our town in 1958. His son Billy, who later became a priest, took the part of an Indian in that spectacular pageant, as did PGK John Corrie. Levio took the part of our great patron, Pierre Marquette. I believe Levio is the oldest living member of our Past Grand Knights. Levio married Mary Dowling, the daughter of Michael Dowling, who was the sexton at St. Mary's for 42 years.

We have already mentioned Donald Cumming, who was the second convert to become Grand Knight of Marquette. Don also answered to the nickname "Stub", because of an instep problem that affected his walking gait. He was a most likable man and being tall, played center on the high school basketball team. While working as a clerk in our post office, Don suffered a growth in his cranium from which he did not recover. Treatment for his ailment turned out to be very expensive and the Knights put on an affair at the Community Center to raise some money. It was a resounding success for Don was well loved by all who knew him.

Lawrence Coleman was a fine man who worked for many years in Bedient's Store. He was very good with figures and served as our Financial Secretary before becoming Grand Knight. Lawrence was also an avid bowler and was a member of our fine bowling team. He married Florence Denton and they lived just around the corner from our Home, on Bryan Avenue.

Edward D. Hyde came to Ridgefield as the manager of the A&P Liquor Store. The Knights had a regulation that prevented those who dispensed intoxicating liquor from membership in the Order. After some negotiation, it was decided to accept Eddy as a member as he did not dispense liquor directly to his customers. Since that time, the regulations were changed and now even bartenders are able to join the Order. Later on, Eddy left the A&P and opened his own liquor store three doors north of Bissell's. He did a thriving business, but after he passed on, others were not as successful and his place has now become an antique store. Navio Peter Carboni replaced Eddy Hyde as manager of the A&P Store. Pete, as he we all called him, also followed Eddy as Grand Knight, elected in his first year as a member.

Pete Carboni was a brother of Tabby and like all the Carbonis he was athletically inclined. He was very good at baseball and basketball and was an avid golfer. On one occasion, he made a hole in one at Vail's golf course. Pete married Will Ryan's daughter Margaret and joined McGlynn and Ryan, so of course he also learned the plumbing trade.

J. Bernard Christopher was from a family that operated a large firm on Spring Valley Road. Bernie, as we called him, was not fond of the drudgery that was part of farm life. When his family sold the farm he turned to the painter's trade. Bernie could change his voice to one that would make your hair stand straight up on your head. He loved to tease anyone and when he worked for Joe Zwerlien, he had a perfect foil. Joe was one of the

greatest K of C men ever. He was a large man and quite affable, and Bernie just about drove him to distraction with the tricks he would play on him.

Bernie's brother Tom was also a member of Marquette and in a picture on the wall of our Council Chamber, of the float which Marquette entered in the War Bond rally in World War I, Tom is shown driving the float.

Bernie's other brother Leo became a priest in the Order of the Holy Ghost. So that makes three fine young men from St. Mary's parish that joined that Order. I feel that the fine hand of Father Shortell can be seen in this matter for he was very fond of the Holy Ghost Fathers.

Charles Cain was a peppy little fellow and an excellent auto mechanic. He worked for Louis DeVantry who owned the garage that is now Pamby's on the corner of Danbury Road and Grove Street. Charlie married Lou's daughter Dorothy and she became a convert to our Faith.

Dr. Walter T. Dolan came to Ridgefield in 1931 and was one of three dentists in our town at that time. "Doc" served several terms as Grand Knight and was a true Catholic gentleman. His wife Malvina was president of St. Mary's Rosary Society for many years. Doc had a real good voice and did much degree work when he became District Deputy.

I followed Doc Dolan as Grand Knight and it was a very real experience. It just happened to be at the time that we were involved in purchasing and renovating the Home on Wilton Road West. There will be more on all that later.

Joseph Brunetti followed me as Grand Knight, and I had become District Deputy. Joe as a young man worked in his father's store that stood on the corner of Prospect and Bailey Avenue.

Joe served his hitch in the United States Army during World War II, and on his return was anxious to get back in the business again. He opened a store, Brunetti's Market where Gail's Station House is now. He had a keen eye for business and ran a very successful operation. Along the way he had the good sense to marry lovely Ada Bedini.

Joe Brunetti was another of the fine athletes that our town seemed to have in abundance. He bowled on the K. of C. team and when in high school, he was the star catcher on the baseball team. He is still an avid golfer and shoots in the 80's.

It was during Joe's term as Grand Knight that I, as District Deputy, received a request, urging me to encourage my Councils to participate in the celebration of Christmas by erecting a Crèche. All the Councils cooperated and Marquette made the finest of all. Joe appointed Brothers Joe Knoche, James McManus, James Leary and Joe McManus to see what they could do with the request. All of these brothers were in the carpenter trade and after drawing the plans, they set to work in the Council Chamber of our former Home on Wilton Road West. The result was the beautiful Community Crèche that has graced Main Street during the Christmas Season since, despite the objection of the Jewish Anti-Defamation League. However, we were forced to move it from its rightful place, in front

of the Community Center. It was a true community effort, with all the local churches contributing to the cost of the Crèche and the figurines that are displayed.

Philip P. Masterson and his nice wife Eleanor lived just over the state line, in Lewisboro. Both were members of St. Mary's parish. Phil became our Grand Knight and Eleanor was president of St. Mary's Rosary Society. Both brought a lot of life to both organizations.

Phil was an estate appraiser with a large office in New York City. He must have been exceptionally good at his profession, for he did more business than all his competitors, in a very competitive business. Some of the great estates he settled were those of J. P. Morgan, Mary Payne Whitney, Marshall Field and Proctor and Gambol.

After his term as Grand Knight, Phil became District Deputy and later assistant to State Deputy John Bedell. He had been a member of a Council in New York, but his membership had lapsed and I was able to get him transferred to our Council. When Phil died, he left \$250,000 to our State Council. He and Eleanor are buried on the southeast corner of St. Mary's cemetery with just a foot stone marking the grave. He left money for a nice monument, but because of some foolish regulation they could not put it up.

John P. Moore was another of Ridgefield's fine athletes. He starred in all sports in high school and later played quarterback on the Spartan football team. Fifty-four years ago, John's name was attached to another very prominent Grand Knight, when they established a store on West Lane that was known as Casa-More. They were just getting started when World War II caused John to go into war work and his partner went off to war as a member of the United States Army.

After the war was over, the two fine gentlemen reopened their store. After a while the partnership was dissolved and John joined Electro-Mechanical Research Inc., a subsidiary of Schlumberger. When that organization moved to Sarasota, John and his wife Rita (Will Ryan's daughter) went with them.

Vincent A. Smith was a hard working Grand Knight and served several terms in that office. His fine wife Agnes has been President of the Rosary Society for many years.

Vinnie was associated with New York Telephone for many years and was a supervisor when he retired. He and Agnes were among the very early settlers of the little colony known as the Ridgefield Lakes Association. During and after his tenure, Vinnie was very active in the operation of the weekly Bingo games at the Wilton Road home. It was the life blood of our Council for many years and Vinnie never failed to be a part of it. Incidentally, it was the money that was derived from Bingo that purchased the folding tables and chairs that we still have.

John G. Corrie, a native of England, and his nice wife Marion, came to Ridgefield more than forty years ago. John was a watchmaker by trade and worked for several years at Craig's Jewelry Store. He joined Perkin Elmer, I guess as a troubleshooter, for he traveled extensively for that firm. Marion recently passed on. She was very well liked and is worthy of our prayers.

John is now retired and is busier than ever repairing watches and clocks at his home at 16 North Salem Road. He still attends Council meetings and never misses any of our social affairs.

William Lynch is another Grand Knight who lives just over the line in South Salem. Bill is a lawyer as is his wife Mary. He was a fine Grand Knight and went on to become our District Deputy.

Paul E. Venus served in just about every office before becoming Grand Knight. It is my considered opinion that Paul was about the Finest Recording Secretary our Council ever had. An examination of the minutes will bear this out. He was a stickler for detail and his writing was so fluent that he could well be classed as a role model.

Paul was a butcher by trade, and during Ridgefield's "Golden Years", the wealthy people all wanted him to cut their meat for he knew just how they wanted it. He had been a member for more than 30 years before accepting the office of Grand Knight. Only then did he think he was qualified.

Archie Brazie was another gentleman who waited until late in life to become Grand Knight. Archie was a kindly man, and was held in great esteem by his brother Knights. He also became a member of the Fourth Degree, and served as a member of the color guard on many occasions.

Gregory Clinton, unlike Archie, was quite young when he assumed the office of Grand Knight. Unfortunately, Greg was the victim in a very serious auto accident. He never completely recovered from the injuries he received.

Robert Betts was also a young Grand Knight. Bobby was a partner in a business call Norco on Route 7, and it was a very successful operation. It was in his term of office that Monsignor McLaughhn alerted us to the fact that St. Mary's Club House would be put on the market and he wanted us to have first refusal. I think his reason for letting us know was motivated to some extent by his desire to have a friendly neighbor. At any rate, it would be several years before a deal could be consummated.

Joseph Gardner was a carpenter and a builder and brought several new ideas to the Council during his term as Grand Knight. Some of his proposals were very good, but at that time our finances were rather low, and therefore they did not generate enough support to carry them out. Joe wanted to completely renovate that old 1840 building on Wilton Road.

Brian Johnson was a big fun loving man, and he kept the Council in good spirits during his term. Brian loved to sing and he did so in several of the minstrel shows that Marquette used to sponsor. He is now a game warden somewhere upstate. While Brian was Grand Knight there was a move to improve relations between the Knights and the Masons. Brian showed considerable wisdom when he appointed his Deputy Grand Knight to head a committee that consisted of Arthur dark. Gene Casagrande and myself, to meet a committee from the Masons that was headed by Russ Fairbanks and consisted of Edwin Allan, Philip Milsenrad and Gerry Myers.

As you may have already guessed, our Deputy Grand Knight at that time was Brother Richard F. Godbout. Dick called for the original meeting to be held in the octagon room of our home on Wilton Road. Both committees were very amicable and after some discussion, it was proposed that a concert be held to raise money for the Danbury and Norwalk Hospitals. It met with general approval and all that was necessary was to find a suitable band for the occasion. The name Benny Goodman was broached, but when his fee of \$5,000 was disclosed, it was feared that there would not be much left for the two hospitals. Thirty years ago that was considered a lot of money. However, we need a big name and Benny was real big.

A date for the concert was set as Saturday evening, August 28, 1965. It would be held on the ball field in back of Veteran's Park School. A very successful souvenir program was put together, filled with advertisements from local business places. It is doubtful that any event ever held in Ridgefield ever generated as much enthusiasm and cooperation.

August 28 was expected to be rather mild. However, this one was real cold and in the afternoon the wind blew so hard it knocked over the bandstand and the shell. We began to wonder if Benny and his band would ever show. They did and the crowd of people came from as far away as Long Island and Poughkeepsie. Most of them brought blankets and all enjoyed a terrific performance by the "King of Swing." After the concert was over a reception was held at the famous Fox Hill Inn, where Benny thoroughly enjoyed himself and of course, he was the center of attention. Oh yes, each of the hospitals benefited to the tune of several thousand dollars.

The event generated a good feeling between the two organizations and soon I was appointed to arrange for trips to ball games at both Shea and Yankee Stadiums. At first there was an equal number of Knights and Masons attending but gradually less and less of the Masons made the trip with us. Then people other than Knights and Masons began to fill the bus that took us to the games. Some of the newcomers appeared to be more interested in how much beer they could drink, rather than who won the ball game. After several of the annual trips, I decided to let someone else take over the chore of hiring a bus and buying the tickets. No one else seemed interested in taking over the job. However, the joint activities of the two organizations resulted in publicity that caused new members to join each of them.

Brother Godbout's success with the concert carried over into his term as Grand Knight and soon we were looking for other means of keeping our name in front of the public and at the same time making some money.

At this point another Deputy Grand Knight came forward with the idea of putting on minstrel shows. This was Brother Carmine Argenio, who followed Brother Godbout as Grand Knight. Bucky, as we called him, loved a show of any kind and he worked very hard to make his shows successful. They always played to large crowds and created a good feeling among the participants and the people who looked forward to the annual event.

There is not much that I can tell you about our next Grand Knight, Peter Pagan, as most of you are familiar with the great work that he has done and is still doing for our Council. Peter has chaired many of our activities during the past thirty years. He still chairs the annual Tootsie Roll Drive and it has been one of our more successful events. Peter has also been very active in the Fourth Degree, especially in keeping the Color Guard before the public.

Brother Joseph Arena was another Grand Knight who did a fine job, and continues to do so. Joe is a very good example of a Past Grand Knight, who does not disappear after his term in office has ended. Joe still attends meetings and makes himself available for any duty or activity that comes along. He has recently undergone a serious operation from which we are happy to say he has recovered nicely.

Raymond Stuart was not an aggressive person. Rather, he brought to the office of Grand Knight a calm exterior that belied the fact that he was a very hard worker. Ray was a great credit to Marquette and his term was a successful one. He was also a Fourth Degree Knight and often served in the Color Guard. His wife was a former nun so you can be sure that their children were all pointed in the right direction.

Donald Kelly was a former New Yorker, who served as Grand Knight in a very quiet manner. Like Ray Stuart, Don got things done without a lot of fanfare. He became a lawyer and his work in that connection caused him to stay in New York for some time after his term ended. I am happy to say that Don has recently returned and rejoined Marquette and it is good to see him at our meetings again.

Gene Casagrande is a man about whom I could write a number of volumes, and they would all be good. I got to know Gene in 1927 and we have been good friends ever since. He was a star basketball and baseball player for Ridgefield High School and he became a good golfer. Gene's father, Aldo was one of the finest comet players in the state, so it was only natural that Gene would learn to play that instrument, and played in The Ridgefield Boys Band, that later became the Oreneca Band. He also learned to play the violin and played that instrument in our dance band.

Gene and John Moore bought a little grocery store on West Lane. They combined their names and the store became Casa-More. They were just getting started in business when World War II interfered and they had to close the store. Gene went into the U.S. Army and served in the South Pacific. When the war ended Gene and John reopened the store. John then took a position with Electro Mechanical Research and Gene bought out John's share in the business and ran the store for some forty years. Tragedy struck Gene's fine family when his wife Mary contracted Lou Gerhig's Disease. No husband could have been more kind to his wife than he was to Mary. After Mary's untimely passing, Gene married Marge McKee, the widow of Herb McKee, another of our real fine brothers.

I think that Gene served more terms as Grand Knight than any other person. He was in office when we really got down to business about selling the Home on Wilton Road and purchase our present Home. I was the Chairman of the House Committee, but more on that later.

Norman D. Craig followed Gene as Grand Knight and it was during his terms of office that a great deal of renovation was accomplished on our present Home. He was also a member of the 4th Degree and served in the Color Guard. At this time. Norm has been a member of our Council more than 40 years. He and his dear wife Elsie have been our good friends even longer than that. Many years ago. Norm's mother, Mrs. Ross Craig, purchased Francis Martin's Jewelry Store, and it has remained as a family business for many years.

Thomas O'Mara followed Norman as Grand Knight and did a creditable job. Tom was associated with Perkin Elmer for many years, and though he considers himself retired he still does consulting. Tom is an avid golfer and he enjoys getting out on the course at Dhly Ridge.

Timothy Halloran still commutes to New York each day and while he was Grand Knight it must have been tough for him but he did a good job of it. We enjoyed the vocal sparring that at which he was particularly adept. Despite Tim's very busy life, he found time to organize a large group of handicapped children each year for the annual visit to Montreal and the shrine of Saint Ann.

Thomas Murphy was a very hard working Grand Knight and was well liked by all brother Knights. Tom was a real talented gentleman and we missed him very much when he and his family moved to Florida.

Francis Foyt brought to the office of the Grand Knight all of the expertise that an I.B.M. executive is supposed to have. It was during Frank's term that we had to contend with the demand of the Jewish Anti Defamation League that we move the Crèche from its rightful place in front of the Community Center.

Frank may be considered the most photographed of our brother Knights. He is now engaged in real estate and his picture can be seen each week in the Press, advertising his business. He is also a member of the 4th Degree Color Guard.

Charles Mangi, better known as "Chuck", was not only a fine Grand Knight, but a shining and graphic example of a man whose interest in the Council did not end with his term as Grand Knight. Chuck continues to serve as one of our Trustees, and does an exceptionally good job in this important position. He is another I.B.M. retiree and is now a consultant.

Ron Post is another retiree of I.B.M. During Ron's term as Grand Knight, a considerable amount of renovation was done to our Home. Like many others, Ron has made himself available as a consultant. That is, except during the hunting and fishing seasons, when Ron is engaged in other activities.

Our most immediate Past Grand Knight broke the string of three consecutive I.B.M. retirees, just when it looked as though affiliation with that large company was a necessary ingredient, if one wanted to be our leader.

Kevin Ryan has been with Texaco almost 30 years. He is a product of Brooklyn, which is known to have famished so many famous men. Kevin and his fine family moved to Ridgefield some 19 years ago. That is just one example of the common sense for which he has an abundance. It was great to see social and fraternal activities renewed and expanded under his leadership.

Most recently, Dick Howard succeeded Kevin. We wish him the leadership skills that marked his predecessors. It might be said at this time that I have known every Grand Knight of Marquette, with the exception of Peter McGlynn whose untimely death occurred before I was born.

Our Council held its early meetings in the old church at the bottom of Catoonah Street, that now serves as our Thrift Shop. When our present Home was completed in 1908, we moved there and for the next 40 years our meetings were held there. We met in what was called the Blue Room and the St. Mary's Ladies Aid met in what is now our Council Chamber. We gave Father Shortell \$75.00 a year to pay for the coal.

We should recognize some of the Brothers who never served as Grand Knight, but by their hard work and loyalty, made our Council the fine organization that it is.

Joseph A Zweirlien was offered the office of Grand knight on several occasions, but always declined because he said that he did not feel 'worthy' of it. He probably was the hardest worker we ever had. He was a big good-natured man and many were the harmless pranks that were played on him. On one occasion as Joe was about to leave the Home he started his engine but the car would not move. Thinking the transmission had gone bad he went back inside to get a ride home. Actually, someone had jacked up the rear of his car so the wheels did not touch the ground. He blamed Doc Yanity and George Pasolo, as they loved to tease him. However, it was Tommy Christopher who had jacked up his car. Joe had a very loud voice and after roaring like a lion he laughed along with the rest of us. We could use Joe today.

Brother Patrick Potter was another great worker, and no matter what the project, Pat was always there to help.

Brother Joseph A Knoche was a carpenter by trade and many of the repairs to the old Home were the result of Joe's fine hand. Joe was also a Fourth Degree Knight and member of the Color Guard. I doubt that Joe and his wife Peggy ever missed any Knights of Columbus affair.

Of course everyone knows of Ferd Bedini and the work that he has done, and is still doing for our Council. Last year we tendered Ferd a dinner at which he received a nice plaque in recognition of the many years that he has been a stalwart member of our Council. It was a well-deserved tribute.

Brother Joseph M. Venus was another very faithful member who served in several different offices, but never Grand Knight. He was a member for more than fifty years, many of them as Financial Secretary. Many of the old minutes of our meetings will show his flowing hand as Recording Secretary. Joe was a fine baseball pitcher in high school

and later as a member of our KofC team. Joe Venus was a fine singer, with an excellent tenor voice. He was an integral part of every one of the numerous shows the Knights of Columbus used to sponsor.

John Bacchiochi was a power house when it came to renovating the old Home on Wilton Road. He was in his family's construction business and placed that company's machinery at our disposal. The floor in the Council Chamber had rotted away and had to be replaced so a work detail was organized. Forty men went to Holy Communion as a body at the 8 o'clock Mass one Sunday and then went to the Home, where they had breakfast and then went to work. John even got his father to come along and boss the job and the men laid a fine concrete floor in that large room.

John was my Deputy Grand Knight and one time when we were having Ladies Night at the Home he told me that he did not feel well. It was a miserable, rainy night and there was no sidewalk from the parking area to the Home. John lay down on a sofa in the octagon room, but as the mud began to form John left the building and returned with planks to make a temporary sidewalk. We did not know how sick John was but it was only a short time later that this fine Brother passed to his heavenly reward. Ferd Bedini later installed the concrete sidewalk that still leads to the building.

William P. Boland is the oldest member in age and in the years that he has been a member of our Order. Bill was another who always was there when there was work to be done. He was appointed Financial Secretary during my term in office and did an excellent job for some forty years in that all-important office. Bill is still with us but not in good shape and it would be good to remember him in your prayers.

There are others who did great things for the Council but these are one who quickly come to mind. However, in the interest of time and space, I will quit here.

When I became Treasurer of Marquette our organization was in bad shape, financially and otherwise. We owed Supreme Council \$600.00 and there was no money in the bank. There were only four or five brothers showing up at a meeting, and Supreme was asking that we turn in our Charter. When, as the Treasurer, I asked what we should do, I was told that it was my problem.

When I suggested that we consider running a carnival, I was told that there were not enough active members to run it. Obviously, something had to be done and we finally agreed to give a carnival a chance. A carnival supply house in Bridgeport was contacted and every Brother was asked to participate. There were about forty members **at** the time, and some of them had not been to a meeting in years. However, after much pleading, they started to come around.

The carnival was held in what is now our parking lot. It had a gravel surface at the time, but it suited our purpose. Finally there were enough members to staff each booth; the affair was a real success and I was able to pay Supreme. We did so well that the carnival became an annual event. In fact, it did so well that in 1947 we cleared \$1,947.00

We almost lost it. On the night that the carnival closed I had no choice but take the proceeds home for safekeeping. Fearing that someone might come looking for it, I put the bag full of money in the oven of our kitchen stove. I was always the first one up in the morning, but this time Marie beat me to it. When I entered the kitchen there was a peculiar odor. Marie had turned on the oven and I quickly retrieved the well-baked money.

Now, with money in the bank, we were getting the attention of the clergy. Father John Fanning had been sent to St. Mary's as an administrator over Father Donahue, who had become rather senile. Father Fanning was a young, eager beaver and made it known that he wanted our money for things he wanted to do. As you can well imagine, I did not hesitate to take issue and informed Father Fanning that he would get the money over my dead body. I further declared that the money would be used to purchase a Home for the Council.

It is hard to believe, but the same Brother who blocked the purchase of the Loder House got up and said that the Knights would never have their own Home. Fortunately, the others at the meeting agreed with my stand and supported my idea that we would one day have a Home we could call our own.

St. Mary's School had not yet been built, but the Bishop had ordered that steps be taken to start the ball rolling. We received notice that we must vacate the Club House, as it was to be used as a school until another could be built.

Clifford A. Seymour was at that time working for me at Millscroft Farm, a large private estate on St. John's Road. Everyone should know someone like Clifford. He was rather naive but just about the finest man I have ever known.

Clifford was from a family that was one of the very early settlers of our town. Along the way, the Seymour family had acquired so much land, when land was cheap, that they could have been considered to be land poor. He had been born in the building that eventually became our Home, but now lived in a large place called Soundview Farm. Relatives were living in his old homestead and they were in the process of moving to New York City.

When Clifford heard of our predicament he wondered if we might be interested in buying the old house. The owner's name was Birmingham and Clifford offered to be our intermediary with them. The price for the building and one acre of land was set at \$10,000. We had accumulated \$5,000 at the time and it sounded good to me. At the time, our meetings were being held in the Ridgefield Fire House. A letter concerning the matter was mailed to each member of the Council. Just about everyone who could walk came to the Fire House that night. My old nemesis was there and voiced his disapproval, but when the vote was taken there was not a dissenting vote cast. The deal was consummated and then the work began; it really was a lot of work getting the old building in shape.

The original house was built in 1840, and the Seymours lived there for eighty-five years when a man named Demarest became the owner. Demarest, who was a silk

importer, was Clifford's father-in-law. He was a member of the Holland America Society whose books now adorn the shelves in our Council Chamber. He was also quite wealthy and owned a chauffeur-driven Pierce Arrow.

It was Demarest who added that attractive octagon room to the west side of the house, and the large library that we would use as our Council Chamber on the north side of the building. Each of these rooms had elegant fireplaces that were built by Joseph Knoche Sr. in the mid 20's.

After Demarest passed, the house remained vacant for some time and suffered the ravages of all empty houses.

The Birmingham family used only a portion of the house so the unused part of the house continued to deteriorate. The library had a flat roof that suffered several bad leaks and that had to be remedied by putting a gable roof over the flat roof. Then it was discovered that the siding in that same room was also in bad shape, so that was removed. Pat O'Keefe and I borrowed Ryan's truck and went to Redding, where he knew of a pile of nice pine paneling that was available at a very low price. That cured the siding problem, and provide attractive pine paneling to the walls inside.

During all this, the flooring in the library was found to be in a dangerous condition and that brought about the previously reported busy Sunday when the concrete floor was installed with a great effort by the Brother Knights.

Along the way we found that the oil burner was obsolete and the boiler had several leaks. This had to be remedied and we did not have the funds to do it. I devised a rather simple plan whereby each Brother would loan the Council \$10 or \$20 without interest and each month one would get paid back.

Some of the Brothers loaned more than \$20, but all were confident that they would be paid back, and they were. By now you can probably see that an awful lot of work was put into the establishment of our first Home. I really doubt that any organization ever put forth such a combined effort as did the members of the Marquette Council. It was not unusual to find ten or fifteen Brothers working at something at the Home on week-ends. They probably would have preferred to out on the golf course, but they were dedicated to an effort that was extraordinary. If the man-hours expended were ever tabulated they would be astronomical.

Joseph Knoche laid out the carpentry, Joseph Zweirlien the painting and Peter Carboni the plumbing, and they had plenty of help. You could almost always find Gene Casagrande in the kitchen cooking hamburgers for the workers. John Bacchiochi was always there to oversee all aspects of the work details. Unfortunately, despite its calm, the tremendous activity was not without its problems. Our Grand Knight and the brother who was the driving force in spurring on the workers, developed considerable animosity. It may have started when the Grand Knight's wife became highly critical of some of our lighting fixtures that Brother Abe Morelli had donated and installed.

At any rate, a feud was brewing and the members could see it. It festered a little more when the Grand Knight stopped his car in front of the Home one Sunday afternoon as a dozen men were working and stated that he was going out for a round of golf. The matter came to a head when the Brother who was spearheading the work force made a motion at a meeting that a certain committee be appointed and added the names of those he felt should be on the committee.

He may or may not have known that the Grand Knight does the appointing of committees, but the Grand Knight took great offense and the next day called me to his office to tell me that he was going to resign. This upset me greatly, as I was the Deputy Grand Knight at the time. I pleaded with him to reconsider. I told him of the terrible effect that this would have on the Council. I made much of the fact that no Grand Knight had ever resigned before. I told him of my personal problems that would make it very difficult for me to take over the office at that time. None of this had any effect on him and to make matters worse he notified the Ridgefield Press that he was resigning for reasons best known to himself and the paper printed all of this.

I should say that these two gentlemen were both very good friends of mine, but they had put me in an unenviable spot. I was very much afraid that this unprecedented move would split the Council at a time when Unity was most needed. I refused to accept his letter of resignation, so he mailed it to Donald Cumming who was Recording Secretary at the time.

It was with considerable trepidation that I approached my first meeting as Grand Knight. However, the Brothers rallied around me, and the work on the Home continued.

I should have mentioned earlier that it was necessary to obtain a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals before we could occupy our new Home. This caused quite a stir in our town. Zoning regulations prohibited the establishment of such an activity in a residential zone. Neighbors had a say in such matters and they were quite vocal. The Seymour family on the south side of us were very much in favor, and the McCarthy's on the north of us were very much opposed. It should be noted that John McCarthy was the son of one of our Charter Members and old Pat must have been spinning in his grave. John even went so far as to solicit help from friends all over town and they hired one of Connecticut's leading law firms, Cummings and Lockwood to represent them. One of his backers was the great Geraldine Farrar, America's first "Super-Star." We were no less active in recruiting our own backers, one of whom was Joseph Woodcock, Grand Master of the Masons. The Ridgefield Press enjoyed all this publicity.

On the day that the hearing before the Zoning Board was held, I started carrying extra chairs into the auditorium at the Town Hall. Harry Hull, then our First Selectman asked why I was doing it and I replied "Harry, you are going to see a meeting like you have never seen before." My prophecy was true and the place was packed beyond its capacity.

Zoning had only recently been adopted and even then by a very close vote. Many people were upset about Zoning and it was rumored that an attempt to reverse the adoption might be made. James Doubleday was a member of the Zoning Board of

Appeals, and when I got his ear I informed him that if we did not get the variance, he could kiss Zoning good-bye.

Cummings and Lockwood saw fit to send one its young and Harvard-educated lawyers to the meeting as they must have thought it would be a very simple case. The meeting had not progressed very far when the young lawyer announced that he represented "the finer people of Ridgefield". The auditorium was soon filled with boos that only stopped when Brother Phil Masterson raised his hands in the air. It was a great show of "Unity" and the opposing forces had lost their case.

The variance was granted, but with several restrictions that I found to be unacceptable. However, our Grand Knight was eager to get the matter settled and allowed the restrictions to remain. Of course, we were verbally assured that they would not be enforced.

We had made a thorough study of the Zoning regulations and revealed, during the hearing, several abuses of the rights of property owners. For example, we brought out the fact that if any church in Ridgefield was destroyed by fire or otherwise, it could only be rebuilt to one quarter of its original size. It was Marquette Council that demanded a review of the regulations that resulted in changes in the inequities that had been imposed on owners of property.

The first meeting in our new Home on Wilton Road was held on December 21, 1948. More than thirty members showed up for the meeting, and while we did have electricity, the furnace was inoperable and so we had no heat. We met in the octagon room because the floor in what would be our Council Chamber was in a dangerous condition.

It was a very cold night so it was decided to light the fireplace. The idea was good but we neglected to test it first. Soon the place was filled with smoke as the chimney was clogged. It got so bad that you could not see the brother sitting next to you. However, we were so happy that we had finally established ourselves in a place we could call our own that we suffered through many inconveniences, for we were all confident that things would get better.

After the plumbing and the furnace were fixed and the painting and carpentry work completed, the concrete floor in the Council Chamber was laid with a nice tile cover placed over it. All we needed was furniture to make the place livable. Incidentally, Abe Morelli donated the tile and he and one of his men installed it.

Then one morning I got a call from Brother Phil Masterson who asked me to come to New York and bring our checkbook. As previously noted, Phil's was the biggest estate appraiser in New York. At this time he was appraising the Andrew Carnegie estate in Pittsburgh, and his furniture had been sent to the Coleman Auction Gallery in New York. Knowing the state of our finances and aware of the fact that Carnegie was one of our country's wealthiest men, I worried on my way to the city as to how many pieces, if any, that I would be able to get.

It was a hurry up job as the auction would start the following day and Phil had gotten the auctioneer to knock down the prices on the furniture. I am happy to report that I was able to get the beautiful Jacobean Oak table that now sits in our Council Chamber for \$25.00. The sturdy chairs that went with the table were \$1.00 apiece. A nice sofa was \$5.00, a walnut desk was \$3.00, the little square topped mahogany table that sat in the Carnegie entrance hall was \$2.00. It also now sits in the Council Chamber and the very heavy oak desk that now sits in the kitchen downstairs was \$4.00. It had a roll-top over it but someone swiped it out of the garage where we had it stored.

Altogether this transaction had to be considered a steal. Of course, the stuff had to be transported to Ridgefield, but that problem was solved by my cousin Walter Walker. Wally was in the moving business and as a Brother Knight, offered to do the job for free.

Our bout with the Zoning officials and the "finer people" did more than just gain us a variance. It brought to the attention of the people of Ridgefield that we were an organization with which to be reckoned. We gained a lot of publicity and it became relatively easy to sign up new members. In fact, our membership soared to over two hundred. I can't help but feel that if we had stood our ground in the tussle with the Rabbi and the Jewish Anti-Defamation League, we would have generated even greater support.

Once the Home was in order we started having Communion Breakfasts and always had a full house. We had dinners and dinner dances and weekly Bingo games. **It** would be safe to say that Marquette Council had found its way onto the map. When Tabby Carboni's little daughter became seriously ill, and her medical bills reached astronomical proportions, we put on a spaghetti dinner to help the family. It was so successful that we had to have three sittings and it netted \$1,260. In those days, that was considered a lot of money and I still have the letter of thanks that Tabby's wife sent us.

That dinner and the affair we ran at the Community Center for Don Gumming were excellent examples of Knighthood in action and the Brothers had every reason to be proud.

We had just one acre with the Home, but that would soon change as it seemed as if we were spreading our wings. It was just before Christmas one year and Clifford Seymour came over to Millscroft to help me saw some wood. Clifford did not seem to be his usual good-natured self. When I asked what his trouble was, he told me his mule was sick. Clifford was a very devout member of the Congregational Church and each year, at Christmas time he gathered laurel on his property (where Acre Lane is now) and then decorated the church with it. Because his mule was sick, he would be unable to do his good deed this year.

Of course, I offered to use my truck to transport the laurel for him. He brightened up immediately and accepted my offer. You have to understand that Clifford depended on me for a number of things. I even used to give him a haircut with the electric clippers that I used to trim the horses. So when we got to the church, I even helped him with the decorating. To say he was grateful was putting it mildly.

A short time later, Clifford informed me that he would sell some land in back of our Home. He thought the Knights should have it and would sell it to no one else. The land he was referring to measured three acres and we could have it for \$2500. I told Clifford that his offer was very generous, but we did not have the money to do it. He said he would hold it until we had the money.

Brother Phil Masterson stepped forward when I told him of the offer and said that he would buy the land and hold it for us, which he did. We sold off one acre to Brother Richard Lynch (whose grandfather was one of the charter members) for \$1800. That left two acres for \$700.

A year later Millscroft was sold and my family had to move. Clifford owned a large barn just south of the Knights' property and fronting the highway. He offered to sell me the barn with one acre for \$500. He even offered to help me convert the barn into a dwelling. I thanked him but had to turn down his kind offer as it was a case where time was of the essence. I told Clifford that the Knights would be interested in buying the property as it would square off our holdings. Clifford assured me that that if I did not accept his offer, he would sell the place only to the Knights.

Of course we jumped at the chance and now we had the main building, the barn and some four acres of land for a total expenditure of \$ 11,200.

Fraternal organizations have their high points and their low points and at this time we were having our low point. We had several years of rapid growth and now we were in a decline. There was a real need for young members with a lot of spirit. The building that we had put so much work into had begun to deteriorate, and there seemed to be a lack of interest.

There was some talk about selling off some of the land, but when test holes were bored on the back property, it was found that it had drainage problems that would limit the use of it. It was about that time that we received the notice from Monsignor McLaughlin concerning St. Mary's Club House.

It was my opinion that if we could acquire our present Home right across the street from the Church, we would have a Home that should attract many new members. It was also the opinion of many others, especially because it would be more accessible than the Home on Wilton Road.

Little did we realize that it would take some 14 years before such a deal could be consummated. However, when it became obvious that major repairs were needed to keep the Home in shape, discussion on whether or not to sell the Home began in earnest.

At a regular meeting of Marquette Council on May 7, 1974, the question came to a head and Brother Richard Godbout made a motion that we should sell the Home on Wilton Road. It was seconded by Brother John Corrie. The motion passed without a dissenting vote. This was 11 years after Monsignor McLaughlin's notification that a deal could be made.

Brother Argenio, who was then in the real estate business, was given the exclusive. We put a price of \$86,000 on the property. Interested parties came and went, but the price seemed to scare them.

The Baptist Church had not yet been built and they were looking for a site to locate. A committee from that church made several visits and seemed real interested, but their offer of \$50,000 was not acceptable. They later allowed Francis Martin to talk them into buy some of his land on North Salem Road. They were stuck as they could not use the property and they purchased land on Danbury Road and built their church.

Several offers were received, in a range from \$50,000 to \$60,000. That would have made it an even trade for St. Mary's and would leave us with nothing to make necessary repairs. It was very discouraging and Father Medynski, who had succeeded Monsignor McLaughlin , was pushing us to make a deal. On March 4, 1975, he notified us that he was placing St. Mary's Club House on the market.

We held on and at a meeting of the House Committee on March 10, 1976, Brother Joseph Knoche moved that we take our Home off the market. His motion was seconded by Brother John Corrie. There were eight members present and five voted in favor of the motion. I'm happy to say the vote was not binding, as it would only be valid if a special meeting was called for that purpose, and each member would have to be notified in writing.

Such a special meeting was called for Thursday, March 18,1976, as Walter Ditmar had finally agreed to our selling price of \$86,000. The well-attended meeting was limited to two items: (1) to accept or reject Ditmar's bona-fide offer; and, (2) to discuss and decide the proper disposition of moneys that would be accrued through completion of item 1. The vote on Item 1 was favorable and unanimous. Item 2 was discussed and the vote to buy St. Mary's Club House also passed unanimously.

There were further negotiations with Ditmar. He wanted us to install a septic system, as the waste material was being taken care of by an open cesspool. We stood our ground and told him to take it or leave it. Then he had a lot of trouble in securing a mortgage (this was understandable). Finally, we seemed to have everything in order and Father Stubbs, who succeeded Father Medynski, gave his blessing to the deal. A closing was then scheduled for February 12,1977. Then we ran into more complications and the closing was rescheduled for June 1, 1977.

On that bright Wednesday morning Brother Gene Casagrande as Grand Knight and I as President of the House Committee, took off for New Canaan, where, at the Savings Bank, the deal was finally consummated.

Brother Romeo Petroni handled all our legal work and charged us no fee. St. Mary's was represented by Joseph A Egan, Jr., now our Judge of Probate.

We actually received \$85,621.90 for an investment that originally amounted to \$11,200. We immediately spent some \$6,000 to put a new roof on the Club House and paint the exterior. That left some \$20,000 to put in the bank for future use.

The Brother Knights were quite supportive and we did an awful lot of painting on the interior of our new Home. One of the biggest jobs was removing the tiles from the flooring of the proposed Council Chamber. Brother Casagrande and I managed to do this with ice scrapers and it took several nights to accomplish this. Brother George Besse refinished the fine floor in the auditorium upstairs and many others helped get the place in good shape.

Our first meeting in our new Home took place on July 5, 1977, and Brother Casagrande and I left our respective offices with the self-satisfaction that we had done well for our Council. With the many bright young people operating our Council today, we feel that the future looks bright and after twenty-nine years we are back Home where we belong.

While we pay tribute to our own Council, we should also be very proud of our Supreme Order. It suffered the usual growing pains that any new organization would be beset. It persevered during those early years and when World War I came along it really established itself.

What were called Knight of Columbus "Huts" sprang up all over the battlefields of France. At these "Huts" the doughboys received coffee and doughnuts FREE, and beside each "Hut" there was a placard announcing that it was FREE. The emblem of our Order was displayed and the soldiers did not forget that when they went to the Salvation Army or Red Cross stands, where they had to pay.

The result was that when they returned home many of them joined the Knights and our membership swelled. All this was not lost by the other and when World War II came around our Order was not allowed to have any more "Huts."

However, the Knights were in the forefront in every town where we had a Council. We took an active part in the Bond Rallies, and sponsored the Blood Banks. When we had a Blood Bank in conjunction with the Holy Ghost Fathers, the donors far exceeded our quotas.

It should be noted that the Knights have an insurance program that is rated one of the best in the country. We must not forget that the insurance to protect the widows and orphans was one of the prime reasons for the Knights to organize and be a force for good.

Along the way our Order purchased the land on which Yankee Stadium is built. The proceeds from this venture had furnished money to accomplish many of our good deeds. Recently our Order gave \$100,000 to John Cardinal O'Connor who is about to retire. He will use that money to help the unfortunate. It was some years ago that we provided the Bell Tower at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. In 1995, we played a major role in the World Special Olympics that were held in Connecticut. We should be proud that we are Knights. Let's support Marquette's officers who are doing such a good job.

Marquette is a very active Council and it is good once in a while to blow our little horn and let people know that we not only erect the Community Crèche each Christmas

season, but we also sponsor the Memorial Day Mass each year in St. Mary's cemetery and the St. Patrick's Day Dinner Dance. We also raise funds for charitable enterprises such as DATAHR, the Dorothy Day Hospitality House and Covenant House. You should know that our Council distributed more than 50 fine boxes of food to the needy each year, or that we donated more than \$5,000 to charity this past year.

During World War II, our little Council furnished more than 30 of its members to our country's Armed Forces. While in the service, the dues and insurance of these brothers was paid for by revenue that was generated by our card games. Our membership has grown to about 140, but the great work that has been done is through the efforts of a relatively few of our members. So let's attend our meetings on the first and third Tuesday of each month and enjoy the satisfaction of knowing that you are part of the activity.

So now that we have looked back on the fine history of Marquette we can now look forward to even greater achievements.

Also in our future is the 100th anniversary of our Council. Yes, just one year from this June will be our 100th birthday. So, let's get started by attending meetings and help plan for this great celebration.