

Of Carousels and Clocks . . . A Ministry to the Past

By MARY ANN GINNERTY

Auburn — Two years running the carousel at Dreamland Park in Rochester certainly provides a great introduction to the fancies and foibles of human nature for one with aspirations for the priesthood.

And so it was, just a few years back, for Father Robert Rice, now associate pastor at St. Alphonsus.

"The carousel is an experience of total enjoyment and most people at the end of the ride would moan that the rides keep getting shorter every year, when in reality the time span is the same, the memories a little more distant," Father Rice recalls.

What he liked most about the job was the opportunity to meet all kinds of people, from the children experiencing the awe-inspiring wonders of their first ride to the older, reliving memories, and whole spectrum of personalities in between.

A man of many interests and hobbies, Father Rice responds to the call of the moment with a zest and appreciation of life that can see beauty and potential not only in the people he serves, but the mundane and seemingly unimportant things of life.

Father Rice is a charter member of the National Carousel Society which seeks to preserve carousels in the United States. The carousels of the early part of the century are being disassembled and the society feels this is a major loss to the art heritage of this country, he says.

Father Rice explained that basically the art of the hand-carved figures came from Germany, but then American firms took over, and today, the charm of the massive wooden figures of fact and fantasy is perhaps lost except, to the littlest of children who ride the horses captured in that state of ecstasy that only the child riding the tail of a whim can really know and understand.

Music boxes, clocks and actually any antique that catches his eye are of interest to Father Rice. His interest in old clocks started in the attic of St. Bernard's Seminary when he found a hundred-year-old clock and was given permission to restore it.

The skepticism of "Here comes Rice with another piece of junk" has changed to a healthy respect for what he can do to return the tick to the clock and the timeless value to the antiques he uncovers in the most nonchalant of ways.

Father Rice rotates the items that decorate his room at St. Alphonsus rectory. Currently the wooden horse and the table model music box occupy the place of honor.

He says most of his finds are in storage, perhaps much to the relief of the rectory staff since it would be difficult to house player pianos, a nickelodeon and other such treasures.

Luckily, he says, his mother appreciates antiques and displays them in her home.

Father Rice is the sort of man who buys something on a whim because he likes it and months

later a dealer he is acquainted with tells him, "You've got a whatever it is," with a look of admiration.

"I really can't enjoy my hobbies the way I would like too, because there just isn't the place to store them or putter around. But, its good therapy to get your mind off the job once in a while," he says.

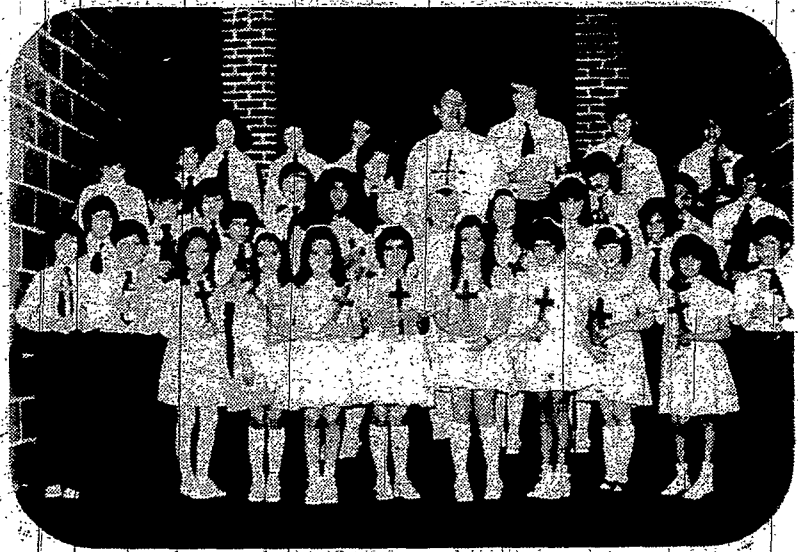
Father Rice has a knack for running into finds and making the right trade-off. His interest in the carousel gained impetus when he followed up a lead about a unicorn and a horse, six months late. The unicorn turned out to be an old Billy goat and the horse a horse, but that was the start of his fascination with the preservation of the carousel.

He has another special collection: his music boxes. He started out with tiny music boxes and worked his way into the table models, then automatics and floor models. He pointed out the first music boxes were made in about the 1840's, although some

of the musical watches and museum pieces go back centuries earlier.

Some of his numerous talents have been forced upon him as an economy measure. An example is that in the restoration of clocks, an important aspect is the reverse painting on glass which is very expensive to have done. So, he does his own. Some people have asked him to paint their clocks, but he has had to decline because of the time involved. But, he said, he really feels a lot of times people don't give themselves credit for what they could do if they would only try.

Father Rice is emphatic about his love of the work with the people of the parish. The call to service means putting aside some of his interests such as stamps, coins and book collecting. But, the true spirit of adventure that beckons him as he restores things of the past which carry with them many untold tales of history and people, still permeates those few precious moments that he can call his own.



A Happy Day

The smiles belong to members of the First Communion class at St. Michael's Church in Lyons. The children pose with their pastor Father Richard Orlando. The children are, from left to right, (first row) William Perrin, Mark Paliotti, Stacy Gonzalez, Suzanne Mastracci, Gail Justino, Erin Trombino, Pamela DeTorio, Lynette Warren, Dianna Devlin, Babette DeSain, Matthew Herbst, (second row) David Smith, Robert Gnau, Mike Borelli, Howard Brague, Paul McDannel, Elizabeth Hernandez, Susan Paliotti, Melody Nudd, Cathy Cassetta, Chris Colasurdo, Richard Smith, Scott Ippolito, Micheal Ippolito, (third row) Glenn Wasman, Nick Stirpe, Steven Wigent, Todd Brinkman, Chris Catholdi, Robert Borelli, (Father Orlando) Joe Borelli, Tim Ippolito, Anthony Borelli.

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Hornell — New officers of the Parish Council of St. Ann's Church elected at the June meeting are Jack Cregan, president, Robert Argenti, vice-president, and Harry Fillmore, secretary. Newly elected members of the council are: James Dagon Jr., Henry Burke, Jerry Argenti, Mrs. Donald Koehler, Mrs. Thomas Sheedy, Mrs. Angelo Daniels, Mrs. James Farrell, and Mary Prisco.