

# In His Hometown: Waterford Exults

By John Dash

Waterford, N.Y. — Here in the oldest incorporated village in the U.S. the news came early Wednesday morning that Waterford's native son, Matt Clark, shortly would assume the mantle of Bishop of Rochester.

Jim Michon and his mother, Mrs. Warren Michon, had opened up their general store and were selling the local and New York papers.

To a stranger's question, Michon replied, "Mrs. Clark? You mean Matt's mother? Went to school with Matt — Waterford-Half Moon, when it was just called Waterford."

Obliging the stranger, Michon called his mother to ask Grace Bills Clark's first name so he could look her up in the phone book. "Matt was quite an athlete, very well-known in Waterford," he said.

"They live over on Seventh Avenue, right on the corner."

Waterford is one of a number of small communities nestled in the hills outside of Albany: the kind of place where everyone knows everyone, for generations and generations.

"Well, what do you know," Mrs. Michon exclaimed when told that Mrs. Clark's son had been named a bishop. The Michons are genuinely pleased for the Clarks, for the priest's mother and for his sister, Helen Clark Early.

At the Clark homestead, Father Thomas Powers, pastor of St. Agnes/St. Patrick in nearby Cohoes, and classmate and good friend of the new bishop, guides visitors in to greet Mrs. Clark, her daughter and Mrs. Margaret Carter, her sister.

The women are brewing coffee and finishing up breakfast in the kitchen to ready for the day.

Also present is Helen's youngest child, Kathleen, demure and awed by the

presence of strangers in the house.

Father Clark had called from Rome the day before to give his mother the news of his appointment. "You sure stirred up some excitement here, Matt," Mrs. Clark tells him on tape the next day.

The phone begins to ring. Relatives and friends are hearing the news over the radio and start calling. No sooner is the receiver put in its cradle than the phone rings again. Shortly, everyone in the kitchen is taking turns answering it.

Father Powers recounted some of the nicknames the new bishop goes by. He's Matt to the family and hometown friends. At Catholic Central High School, the yearbook reveals, it was occasionally Buck. Father Powers recalled that while the bishop was a seminarian, and even today among friends, he is Harvey Matthews. And, irreverently, while Father Clark was a teacher at Vincentian Institute, he was covertly called The Hunk.

The new bishop's athletic prowess is the near constant topic of conversation.

At the end of March, Mrs. Early said, Bishop-elect Clark ran and finished in the Rome-Ostia 18-mile marathon.

A plaque reveals that Father Clark was the CYO's Athlete of the Year in 1955. He also was all-city in Basketball and Football in his high school years.

Jogging has become his major sport these days.

Mrs. Carter had an unusual experience a few months ago. She said that when she read in the local papers that Bishop Joseph L. Hogan had retired from the Rochester see, she said "That's where Matt is going!.."

The women forgot the incident until Tuesday evening, when the family got the news that the off-hand prediction had come true.



A treasured photograph, Grace Clark and her children, Matthew and Helen.



Helen and Matthew at three and four years old.



Mr. and Mrs. M. Harvey Clark proudly pose with their grandchildren. Mr. Clark died in 1977.

**CONGRATULATIONS  
AND  
BEST WISHES  
BISHOP-ELECT  
MATTHEW H. CLARK**

