

# COURIER-JOURNAL

## Southern Tier-Auburn Geneva

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### Hornell Hospitals

## Merger Timetable: Approval in a Year?

By Martin Toombs  
Southern Tier Editor

**Hornell** — A timetable that could bring state approval for the merger of Hornell's two hospitals a year from now was described by the consultant hired by St. James Mercy and Bethesda hospitals May 1.

Thomas P. Weil, retained by the hospitals in February as "interim team leader" to assist in the merger, said that he expected a draft proposal to be ready for presentation to the state Office of Health Systems Management in mid-August, followed by a formal proposal for review beginning in January, 1980. Unless problems develop, he said, state permission to merge could come in late spring, 1980.

Weil, of Bedford Health Associates in Katonah, was in Hornell April 30 and May 1 for meetings with various groups and a press briefing.

Also attending the briefing were the hospitals' executive

officers, Sister Mary Rene McNiff of St. James' and Carl Luger of Bethesda.

The merger proposal is expected to propose operational changes for the combined facility designed to benefit the medical service of the Hornell area. The feeling is that the state might look more favorably on the hospitals' proposals in order to ensure completion of the merger than they would if the changes were proposed by an already-merged corporation.

Weil, a hospital consultant since 1971 with a doctorate in Medical Care Organization, noted that the executive officers have been submitting data on the utilization of services, patient origination, and staff usage of the two facilities to him.

He reported that after he met April 30 with the interim committee, a letter was written to the Hornell Medical and Surgical Society asking for six doctors to work with the committee, with two

of them attending all meetings. Weil noted that the request is a response to the feeling that "physicians must be deeply involved" in the merger process.

In 60 to 90 days he will have a better idea "what kinds of programs and services this community will require in, let's say, 1985," he said, and "what the delivery system will look like" after the merger.

He met with the Bethesda auxiliary April 30, he said, and there are "some people in that group who are opposed" to a merger, he stated. He recounted that they said "we want to retain Bethesda in the same manner as in the past. We love our hospital and we think" people should continue to have a choice of hospitals.

Weil noted that a concern they expressed is that Bethesda, with 90 beds, will become a long-term care facility, with the 144-bed St. James becoming the acute care facility. He reported that with an average acute patient load of 173 last year, it is "impossible for either" building to take the entire load. There is "no way" that Bethesda could stop handling acute patients "for the foreseeable future," he said.

He also reported that auxiliary members exhibited interest in "better emergency room service," and for an increase in the availability of long term care.

At a combined board meeting April 30, he said, some members on one of the boards (which he would not identify), "spoke in disfavor" of the merger. He called the opposition a "very small minority," and reported that he will meet again with both boards May 24.

Meeting with the St. James Women's Board May 1, he heard "great enthusiasm" for the corporate consolidation," he reported.

His meeting in March with the Hornell Medical and Surgical Society revealed "some physicians who are not delighted with the prospect of

a corporate consolidation," he said, but they believe that something should be done. The majority, he stated, are "generally in support" of a merger, but are concerned about specific elements. They also want both buildings to continue to provide acute-care facilities, he said.

### To Volunteers:

## 'Thanks a Million' Hospital Says

By Martin Toombs  
Southern Tier Editor

**Elmira** — St. Joseph's Hospital honored its auxiliary and volunteers at a dinner May 1, for 25 years of service which included a half million dollars and a half million hours donated to the hospital.

The "thanks a million" dinner attracted 200 volunteers and auxiliary members, many of whom were honored for their services to the hospital.

Heading the honorees was Sister Ann Loretta Riesenberger, who has compiled 15,000 hours of volunteer service.

Topping 5,000 hours were Daniel Kennedy and Ella Smith.

The auxiliary president, Mrs. Alfred Lucas, presented a \$25,000 check to Sister Martha Gersbach, hospital administrator, as the first payment of the auxiliary's \$75,000 pledge for new coronary care equipment.

Unveiled was a plaque to be placed in the hospital which will honor all volunteers who have donated 2,500 hours of service. The presentation was made by Sister Margaret Adelaide Owen, hospital board president.

Marking the 25th anniversary, all but three of the auxiliary past presidents attended the event, and a brochure on the organization's history, prepared by volunteer director Rose MacFeiggan, was presented to those attending.

The 100 award winners also heard Mrs. Susan Hersch, head of the hospital's Community Relations Committee, tell them that the caring of the volunteers is "not an anachronism."

She noted that the "changing role of American women" in the past several years, and the increasing movement of women into the work force, has had many effects on volunteer work. While this has happened, she noted, some groups are saying that "women who work for free are exploited." Such an attitude has "denigrated volunteerism," she said, but it



Sister Ann Loretta Riesenberger, left, who was honored for 15,000 hours of volunteer service, and Rose MacFeiggan, hospital volunteer director, stand proudly in front of the ice-sculptured "25" signifying the 25th anniversary of St. Joseph's Auxiliary. Sister Ann Loretta and nearly 100 others were honored at a dinner May 1 for their volunteer service to the hospital.

continues to grow. And as men volunteer more, she said, their work has aided the cause.

Pointing out the number of "greed" books on the market,

which tell readers to get what they can for themselves, it is a "tribute to the human spirit that the message of self-fulfillment" for some is attained through efforts to help others.

## St. Joseph's Busy With Hospital Week

**Elmira** — Two new patient services have been initiated during Hospital Week 1979 observances at St. Joseph's Hospital.

Monday, May 7, a new service was launched at luncheon, the volunteer-produced "Today" at St. Joseph's newsletter was provided each patient with the noon meal. The communique will furnish over-night news headlines, weather, in-house and regular television programming, and other information.

The newsletter, under the sponsorship of the Development Council of the hospital's Community Relations Committee, is compiled by former Elmira radio news personality Bernie Morley, assisted by other volunteers.

On Wednesday evening 110 employees will be honored for five to 45 years of continuous service.

will greet the patients while Mother's Day, May 13, will be special for new mothers and their offspring. Mom will receive a rose, and baby a bonnet, and a pink or blue baby shirt emblazoned with a picture of a baby and a stork and the inscription "Life Begins at St. Joseph's" will be presented to each new citizen. The practice will continue as a regular feature.

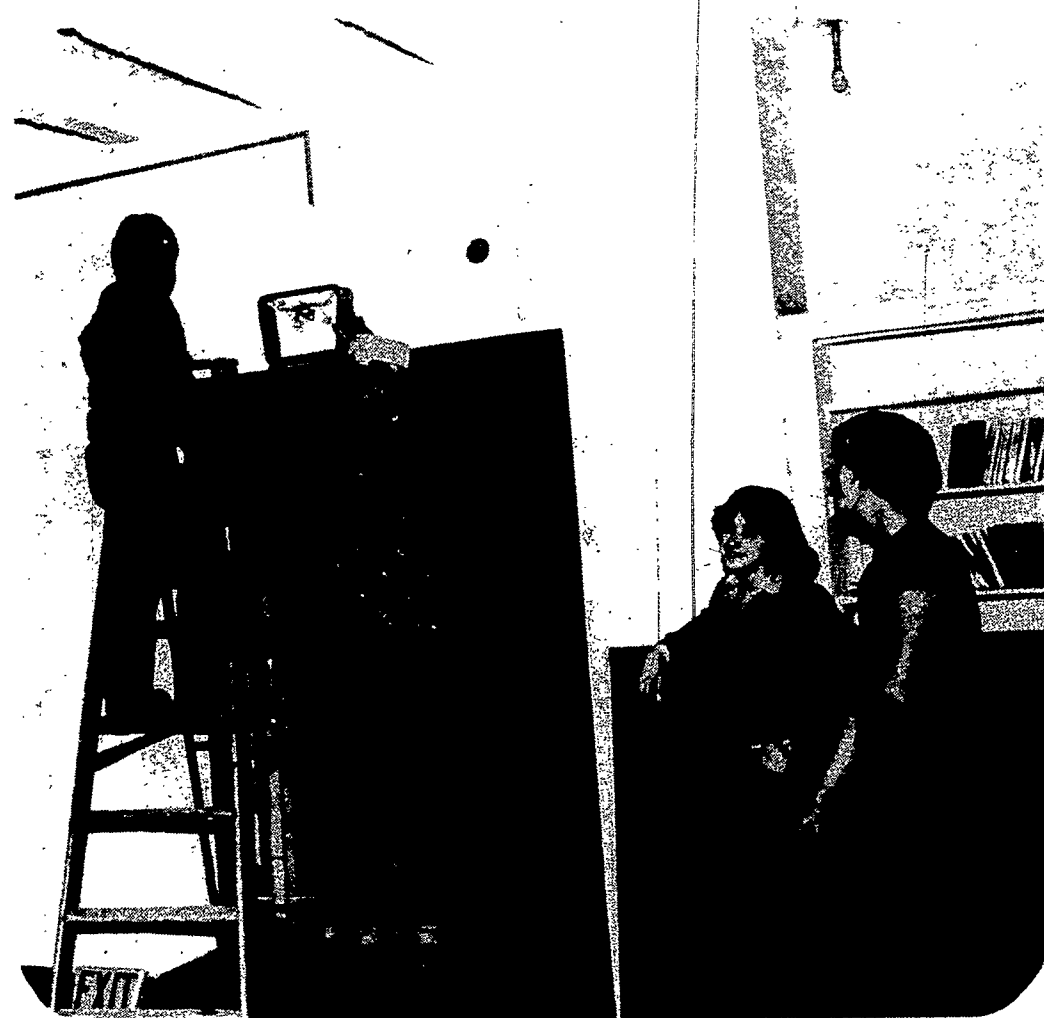
This year's Hospital Week theme is "We're Working for You" the other 51 weeks as well.

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### Sr. Joan Alice Honored in Auburn

**Auburn** — Sister Joan Alice, OSF, ACHA, will be honored with a reception and dinner at the Springside Inn here on May 20 for 19 years of service to the Mercy Health and Rehabilitation Center.

Sister Joan Alice first came to Auburn in September, 1939 and has served in various capacities in the fiscal and administrative areas including her present assignment as administrator.



### Midway Point

Renovations by the Sons of Italy at the site of the Auburn Youth Center reached mid point with the installation of exit lights for the center located in the basement of the former Fulton Street School gymnasium. Show above are Anthony Bianco (on ladder) and Louis Parente putting the finishing touches on the sign, while Joseph Dyson and Karen Loeper, "supervise."

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