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Hospitals Propose Merger

By Martin Toombs
 Southern Tier Editor

Hornell — A proposal for the merger of St. James Mercy and Bethesda hospitals should be ready for presentation to the State Health Department in December or January, 1980, the consultant hired by the hospitals said at a press conference Aug. 17.

While it isn't known how long the review process will take, Thomas P. Weil, the consultant, said that signing of the contracts will probably take place during 1980.

Also attending the session were Sister Rene McNiff, St. James administrator, and

Carl Luger, Bethesda administrator.

The merger proposal, Weil said, will include plans for combining services at the two hospitals, and will include proposed increased services for the Hornell area. Possible additions include hemodialysis, oncology and cancer treatment, alcoholism, the aged, and an emergency room staffed 24-hours a day; Weil said he "would consider that to be a new service."

The proposal also will include a request to establish the new state reimbursement rate for the combined facility before the merger. Weil further stated that he hopes to establish some

assurances for the merged hospital on rates following the first year.

Luger noted that it will be "difficult to get a rate up front," before the corporate merger actually takes place, but that it will be part of the merger proposal.

Concerning the ability of the hospitals to bear the cost of the merger, Weil noted that the total debt of the two facilities of about \$1.5 million is significantly lower than other hospitals of comparable size.

Currently he is looking at the two physical plants, he said, beginning consideration of which services should be located at each building.

He re-stated a previous

comment that "both hospitals will continue to be used for acute care for the foreseeable future."

He also noted that his work hasn't indicated "any reason for losing jobs," and that the hospital boards will have no difficulty honoring their pledge not to lay off workers.

The merger has been controversial in Hornell for some time. Weil noted that he would be willing to meet with any group seeking more information on the merger anytime he is in Hornell.

Asked about a rumored class-action lawsuit to block the merger, Luger responded that he had received no communication about such a suit.



Father Edward Zimmer (left) accepts congratulations from Msgr. James Cuffney who is stepping down as pastor.

Pastor Ends 22 Years Of Service

Auburn — Hundreds of parishioners filled St. Mary's Church here on Aug. 15 as Msgr. James Cuffney celebrated his last Mass as pastor and introduced his successor, Father Edward Zimmer.

Msgr. Cuffney, retiring after 22 years as pastor, officially turned over the flock to Father Zimmer when he transferred the book of Gospels to the new pastor during the Mass.

Some 20 priests, many of whom were former assistants under Msgr. Cuffney, attended the Mass and a reception which followed. Father John Mulligan, co-

pastor of St. John the Evangelist, Rochester and a former associate at St. Mary's, served as master of ceremonies at the reception held in Lyceum Hall.

During the reception Auburn Mayor Paul Lattimore presented Msgr. Cuffney with a plaque naming him a Distinguished Citizen of Auburn and gave him the key to the city.

Father Zimmer, who served as pastor at St. Monica's, Rochester for ten years, said he was "happy to be at St. Mary's and looking forward to carrying on the good works done by Msgr. Cuffney."

Camp Star

A Special Experience

By Martin Toombs
 Southern Tier Editor

Painted Post — On only its second day, the 65 persons at Camp Star seemed to be adjusting to camp life, and having a good time meeting soon-to-be friends.

Camp Star, the Rotary Club-sponsored camp for handicapped children from Steuben, Schuyler and Chemung counties, was at Watson Homestead for 10 days beginning Aug. 15. Campers included children with a variety of difficulties; special diets, lack of coordination or other problems that keep them from attending other camps.

The camp's residents included 50 campers and 15 counselors.

The staff was everywhere, keeping track of bathing suits, glasses, towels and letters home, but most of all trying to see that the campers enjoyed themselves. Campers were participating in a variety of activities, including swimming, arts and crafts, and outdoor games.

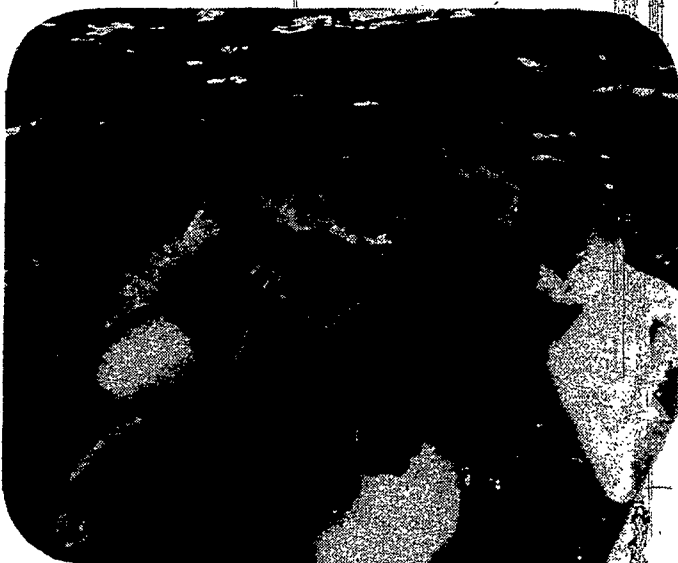
One first-time counselor, Pam Ficarra of Elmira, summed up much of what the Camp Star experience was like. She said that she had never worked with handicapped children before, and she was a little apprehensive about it. But it wasn't a problem, she said, and she found the children so warm and open that she was enjoying herself.

Meals were taken in the Watson Homestead dining hall, a leisurely walk from the cabin area where Camp Star was located. Those campers unable to make the walk rode a tractor-pulled cart with large stars on it.

When one camper, who really needed the exercise provided by the walk, asked to go on the cart, Ray Defen-



The sing-alongs around the campfire were greeted enthusiastically.



The kids spent much of their time in the pool.

dorf, camp director, used a type of persuasion that wouldn't work in any other kind of camp. He told the girl that if she walked all the way to the dining hall without complaining, he would give her a hug. She turned and headed for the dining hall.

Sister Judy Hamm, nurse during the first week, noted that she had had to contend with some cases of homesickness, but that for many of the campers, it was the first time they had been away from their families.

That evening, at a camp

fire, the group was joined by another at Watson, a camp sponsored by the Presbyterian church. The campers mingled easily, and conversations began before the singing started. The groups took turns teaching each other songs, and those that everyone knew were sung with extra enthusiasm. Bags of popcorn provided everyone a late-night snack.

The Camp Star campers, after their first full day at camp, hurried back to their cabins, several expressing the desire to get to sleep as soon as possible.

Monastery Dedicates Renovated Chapel

By Martin Toombs
 Southern Tier Editor

Pine City — Bishop Matthew H. Clark and about 300 other persons helped the priests and brothers of Mount Saviour Monastery dedicate their chapel in ceremonies on the Feast of the Assumption.

The Our Lady Queen of Peace chapel has undergone some renovation, which included a new top for the altar. The impressive stone altar, placed in the center of the chapel, was blessed by Bishop Clark.

Several visiting priests joined Bishop Clark and the Benedictine priests in celebrating the Mass.

In his homily, Bishop Clark noted the many images used in the Bible for Church, including agriculture, family and shepherd.

In the readings of the Mass, he pointed out, it is the image of builder: "living stones we

are called," he noted, living stones that make up the Church.

The previous evening he had attended a meeting, he related, and he said he observed among those attending "the mystery of Christ alive in their hearts."

"They, as a body, became much greater than the sum" of their parts, he said, because of their faith. "They signified Church as they gathered in that assembly," he said.

"Tonight, in this place," Bishop Clark told those attending, "you, together express the very same thing."

The congregation came "here to dedicate this altar, this church," he said, but "what we begin here finishes elsewhere."

The chapel stands as "a reminder of a call we all share to the witness to the perfect love of life."

Following the homily, Bishop Clark blessed the altar, outlining with oil the engraved crosses at the center and the four corners of the altar.

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