

A death marks milestone in family's life

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

I am sorry that I missed you last week. I was back in Waterford for the funeral of Al Bills, my mother's brother. Uncle Al was 88 and had been ill for some time. He was a lively and loving person and — although we're all happy that he is beyond his suffering — we are all saddened by his loss.

When I say we are saddened, I am referring to quite a few people. Al was one of 13 children of Helen and Nelson Bills. Al and his wife, Betty, had three children, 17 grandchildren and 46 great-grandchildren. You can appreciate from those numbers that his wake and funeral were gatherings of some size. What you would have no way of knowing from the numbers was that those two events held a real measure of joy and peace — and a good deal of laughter — for all of us.

As I think back on that now it seems to me that the joy was there because in that occasion we were able to appreciate the dignity and integrity of Al's life. He was a person of strong character and deep commitments. He loved his family and worked hard all his life to give them the very best that he had. His firstborn and namesake put

it this way, "Everything he had he poured out on his family."

Another source of our joy in those days was the way Betty Radigan Bills, Al's wife of 64 years, carried herself. Betty has been ill, but she was able to attend Al's wake. While there, she shone with a sense of peace and hospitality.

While I was in her presence that night, I remembered her passing by our home every morning for as long as I can remember to attend Mass at our parish church. It is difficult not to be joyful, I think, when an occasion — even one that is sad in so many ways — evokes such sustaining memories.

Al was one of the prime movers of our Bills family reunions and always one of their most lively participants. It is ironic that his death comes in the year when all of us descendants of Helen and Nelson Bills will gather for our 25th reunion.

We'll thank God for Al at our Eucharist that day and we'll miss him very much. But he will be there in Betty and their children and their children's children. And he'll be there in the laughter and wonderful memories he leaves behind.

The memory of Al's passing to a fuller life stays with me not only because he was someone I admired, but because that event symbolizes the shifting and changing to which we are called all through life. My Aunt Mary and my mother are the last of the Bills' children. I have always said that the two of them have so much life that they would eventually bury me.

Whether they do or not, the day will come when we of the next generation will become the matriarchs and patriarchs. Quick accounting tells me that we surviving first cousins number 23, not counting spouses. Will there be the will and a way to continue reunions? Or will we decide that growing numbers or other factors call for new shapes and forms of celebrating family life? And if we choose new forms, what will replace that community of belonging?

At the moment I don't know the answers to those questions. My intuition and sense of history tell me that the old



forms will change and that such a change will carry with it a certain sadness.

My sense of reality and the same sense of history say that inevitably we will change. Such change may be God's way of finding in several people the precious gifts which made Al Bills so dear to us.

Peace to all.

Festival profits to benefit social programs

ROCHESTER — St. Ambrose Parish has announced that it will donate 10 percent of the gross revenues of the 1990 parish festival, scheduled for June 8-9, to one or more not-for-profit organizations serving the poor and disadvantaged.

In order to be considered to receive a portion of the money, applicants must complete a form available at the rectory, 25 Empire Blvd. Forms must be returned to the rectory by midnight, March 9.

The parish social ministry committee will evaluate all applications, of which three to five will be presented to members

of the parish for consideration.

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria: the applicant and its proposed use of funds must promote values of the gospel; the applicant must be a not-for-profit agency according to section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code; and the poor or disadvantaged must benefit from the proposed use of funds.

Applications will also be evaluated as to how they answer the following questions: do the poor and disadvantaged participate in the decision-making processes of the applicant organization?; how was the need to be served identified?; do other organizations in the community serve the same need?; will funds be used for a new or innovative project?; are there alternative sources of funding available?; does the proposed use of funds empower the poor or disadvantaged to take greater control of their lives?

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When a person dies at home, what should you do?

You can call your funeral director for specific directions but here is a general procedure. First, contact your physician or emergency team. If the death is unexpected you should notify the police who will in turn notify the coroner. This will also assure that medical help can be given should there be confusion as to whether the person is dead. If the death was expected notify your physician for verification of death. If you wish, contact your clergy and relatives or friends who are close to you. When all medical and legal matters are cared for contact the funeral director who will take your loved one to the funeral home and provide you with support and assistance for the next several days.

We purchase all forms of insurance to protect our family & assets not because we expect the worst to happen, but to be prepared. Doesn't it make sense then to prepare for what will happen. Let our trained counselors assist you with the many options available in planning for a worry free future.

SCHAUMAN-SULEWSKI FUNERAL HOME
2100 St. Paul St. 342-3400

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