Family and friends add to Cathy Turner's bliss

By Mike Latona Staff writer

HILTON — Two weeks ago, Rochester native Cathy Turner shared her accomplishments with the world.

Last week's celebrations were kept more localized. And it was the hometown folks who provided the new Olympic star with her most cherished moments.

"To tell you the truth, my biggest thrill was coming home and celebrating with my family at the airport. We're a big Russian-Ukrainian family. We have very, very big holidays and we're very tight," Turner, a parishioner of St. Josaphat's Church in Irondequoit, told the *Catholic Courier*. She was interviewed from her North Greece home, where she lives with her mother.

"It's just wonderful that I can make their lives happier," added Turner.

Family members weren't the only ones touched by Turner's accomplishments — an individual gold medal in women's 500-meter short-track speed skating and a silver as a member of the 3,000-meter short-track relay team.

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More than 1,000 well-wishers flocked to Greater Rochester International Airport last Tuesday evening, Feb. 25, as Turner made her triumphant return home from the XVI Winter Olympics in Albertville, France.

Amid countless appearances on Rochester-area television and radio stations, Turner again greeted the public during a parade through the village of Hilton. The parade was followed by a standing-room-only party at the village's fire hall last Friday night.

Although she had had only a few hours sleep since the Olympics, the 5-foot-2-inch Turner never lost her smile or graciousness through all the hoopla. In fact, she still seemed in awe of the attention as she was presented with a slew of gifts and complimentary speeches from Rochester-area officials during the Hilton party.

"That's the way I am. I have trouble handling fame," admitted Turner.



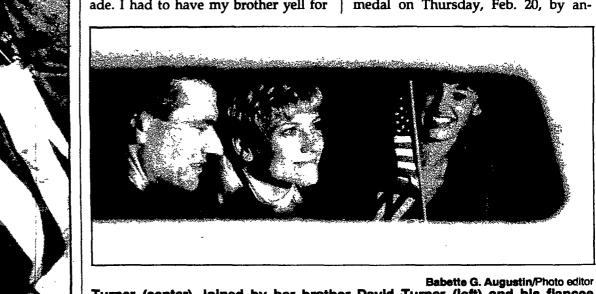
Turner waves to well-wishers during a parade in her honor in Hilton Feb. 28.

With both her medals hanging from her neck, Turner stayed late into the night to sign autographs for hundreds of supporters. She said that was the point where "it really started to hit me. I couldn't even swallow any more. The doctor says I can't keep going like this, or I'll end up in the hospital. I have a real bad sore throat and I'm on antibiotics.

"I felt so bad because I couldn't even yell to the people during the parade. I had to have my brother yell for with offers for a book and movie about her life, and she was due to fly to New York City earlier this week to meet with an attorney and talent agency.

Recording contracts also loom; by now her eight-year absence from speed skating to pursue a singing and songwriting career has been well documented.

Her return to the sport in 1988 paid off in a major way with her success at Albertville. First Turner earned a silver medal on Thursday, Feb. 20, by an-



Turner (center), joined by her brother David Turner (left) and his flancee Renee Ruter, speaks to the press from inside a limousine at the airport.

me," laughed Turner, whose voice had turned raspy by the end of the week but hadn't yet lost any of its enthusiasm.

Nancy Price, Turner's mother, reported, "The phone's been going 24 hours. It's been so tiresome."

Turner's brother, Dave, added that the commotion has been "wild — just incredible." If Yet it looks as if life for the 29-yearold East High School graduate isn't about to get any quieter for quite some time. Already she's been approached

choring the 3,000-meter relay to a second-place finish.

Two days later came her race of a lifetime, when she edged out China's Li Yan by just :0.04 of a second. The finish was so close that Turner didn't even believe she'd won until her name was called.

Upon that announcement she literal-



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor

An exuberant Cathy Turner, complete with gold and silver Olympic medals around her neck, steps into Greater Rochester International Airport Feb. 25.



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