

# SENIOR FEATURE

## Bishop's secretary had fun along the way

By Lee Strong  
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — For nine years, Arlene Jones enjoyed a rare privilege.

She was often the first person in the Rochester diocese to read Bishop Matthew H. Clark's weekly column, *Along the Way*.

But since Dec. 29, 1993, Jones has had to wait with the rest of the diocese for the *Catholic Courier* to arrive in the mail to read the bishop's weekly commentary.

It was on that day that she retired from her job as secretary to the bishop.

In addition to typing the bishop's weekly column, Jones' responsibilities included handling Bishop Clark's mail, answering his telephone calls, and sometimes serving as the listening ear to complaints from people calling the Pastoral Center.

She looks back on her job with pleasure and pride — and with no regrets about leaving.

"I just walked away from there feeling very grateful and very fulfilled, and having done professionally everything I wanted to do," Jones said. "There's not too many people who have had the opportunity to work for the bishop of the diocese in which they live."

She got that opportunity in 1984 when then-secretary to the bishop, Kathryn S. Jeffrey, retired. At that time, Jones was serving as the religious education office secretary at Greece's St. Lawrence Parish, 1000 N. Greece Road, where she had worked since 1972.

She and her husband, Bert, had belonged to the parish since moving to the Rochester area in 1967. Both hailed from Utica, where they were married Feb. 4, 1955.

Although she was happy with her job at St. Lawrence, Jones recalled it seemed an appropriate time to move on because her pastor, Father John Murphy, was retiring, and the religious education director, Sister Roberta Rodenhouse, RSM, was also moving on.

Jones applied for the Pastoral Center position and was hired.

Any initial apprehension she might have had about working in a new environment — and for the bishop — vanished quickly.

"It wasn't long before I felt comfortable," Jones recalled. "The people were gracious."

She gradually found her job expanding as the Pastoral Center experienced substantial restructuring, and Father



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

**Arlene Jones, who served as secretary to Bishop Matthew H. Clark for nine years, relaxes in her Greece home.**

John M. Mulligan was appointed vicar general in 1988. Although she retained her title of secretary to the bishop, she essentially became the executive secretary of the Pastoral Center administration, Jones observed.

In her position, Jones has seen the bishop become the target of criticism and attacks for some of his actions, including those decisions surrounding the consolidation of several Catholic schools. But she was quick to support her former boss.

"He always felt like what he did was right," she said of Bishop Clark. "I have a lot of respect for him — doing the right thing isn't always easy."

At times, she was the person who handled calls from people who were unhappy or angry about diocesan decisions. Jones said she always tried to keep in mind that she might be the only person angry people might reach, and that she was thus serving as a representative of the Rochester diocese.

"They just wanted to vent. They wanted to talk to someone in the bishop's office," Jones said about some of the callers. "So you just have to grin and bear it."

In doing so, she used Bishop Clark as a model.

"Seldom was he ever down about it," she said. "Bishop Clark was always his gracious self."

By the fall of 1993, Jones said she finally felt it was time to retire. Her husband had retired from Xerox Corporation in August of 1993, and Jones said, "It was time for us to start doing some good things together."

Among those "good things" will be enjoying time with their three daughters: Linda, who lives in Batavia; Judy, who lives near Phoenix, Ariz.; and Margy, who lives in Cheektowaga. Retirement also means the Joneses will be able to

see their grandchildren more as well.

Jones and her husband left Jan. 16 for a three-month trip to Arizona during which they will spend time with their daughter, her husband and their two children.

The couple also plan on spending more time at their mobile home up on the St. Lawrence River, where Arlene said she hopes to relax by doing some yard work.

And perhaps she will sit down to read Bishop Clark's column when the *Courier* comes in the mail each week — enjoying what he had to say, and perhaps the knowledge that she did not have to type it.

### THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER



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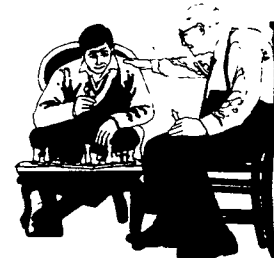
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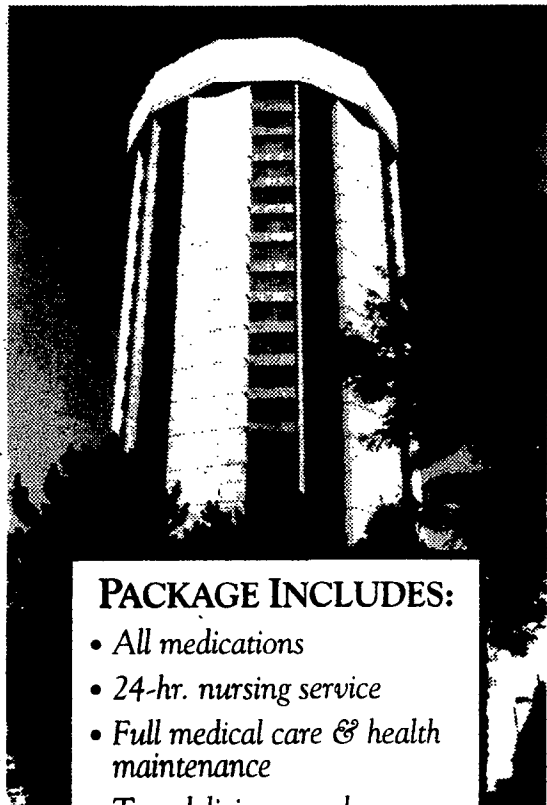
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