

DIOCESAN NEWS

St. Louis grad to fly shuttle in '98

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

PITTSFORD — Astronaut Pam Melroy stood before the St. Louis schoolchildren who were raising their hands and shooting her questions at the speed of light.

"Have you ever been to Jupiter?" one kid asked.

"Have you ever been to the moon?" asked another.

Melroy, a 1975 graduate of the school, patiently answered in the negative to both inquiries during a morning talk April 11 in the school gym. She continually reminded the students that she herself has yet to fly in space.

Then came a question that Melroy handled with the deftness of an experienced public speaker.

"What if they forgot you were there?" one child asked, wondering if Melroy could be lost forever in the realms beyond earth.

"That's why they have women astronauts," she replied. "Because women astronauts are not afraid to ask directions."

The students and faculty laughed heartily at Melroy's quip, one of many she shared with audiences at her grammar school alma mater, and at her high school alma mater, Bishop Kearney in Irondequoit, where she also gave a presentation that day.

In addition, Melroy gave a third presentation on her life as a potential space shuttle astronaut at St. Joseph's School in Penfield April 12.

A major in the United States Air Force, and a veteran of the Persian Gulf War, Melroy is tentatively slated to pilot a space shuttle in spring of 1998. It's been a lifelong dream. Melroy remembers wanting to be an astronaut as early as age 11.

"I wanted to do something worthwhile with my life," she said in an interview prior to her speech. She recalled how she idolized the men who went to the moon in the late 1960s and early 1970s. "I wanted to do something that would benefit everyone."

Space travel does benefit everyone, Melroy stressed, noting she has read a



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Astronaut Pam Melroy, a graduate of St. Louis School in Pittsford and Bishop Kearney High School, answers questions from students at St. Louis April 11.

"big, fat book" that outlines the thousands of technological spinoffs created by the space program.

She pointed out, for example, that when she goes to space, her shuttle will carry a suitcase filled with protein crystals that are part of a disease research project.

It is difficult for scientists to accurately study the crystals on earth due to the effect of gravity on their shapes, she said, so her crew will bring them aloft to grow them in zero gravity.

By using more accurate knowledge garnered from the protein growth in space, pharmaceutical manufacturers will be better able to create drugs to treat such diseases as Type I, insulin-dependent diabetes, she concluded.

"That, to me, is one of the most direct benefits we see from space," she said.

In her speech, Melroy explained that she is currently training with a group of astronauts who will begin work on the first-ever international space station. As a pilot, she'll guide a craft that flies at 25,000 miles an hour and orbits the earth every 90 minutes.

She noted that in addition to her 14 fellow citizens in the astronaut group, two French citizens, and one Canadian and one Japanese are training for the station-building shuttle flights.

She added that officials at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration hope to send people back to the moon and build a station there, as well as travel to Mars sometime in the second decade of the next century.

"What that means is somebody in this room could be the first person on Mars!" she told the children.

Land sale to net \$1.3 million for Tier agency

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Mary Smith's childhood residence in Horseheads was a quaint, 18-acre piece of land that supported chickens, a horse, a cow, and a crop of potatoes. Smith's mother, Nellie Monroe, operated a small motel on the property for travelers passing through Chemung County.

"I wouldn't call us dirt farmers, but we could live off the land," recalled Smith, a lifelong parishioner at the Church of St. Mary Our Mother.

In the past few decades, the surrounding area has shed its rural roots as large shopping complexes have shot up along Route 17. As a result, the Monroe land — located on County Highway 64 near Route 17 — is now among the hottest commercial property in Chemung County.

And that's a very good development for Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier.

Catholic Charities plans to sell 12 acres of this land — acquired from Monroe in 1991 — to a national retailer within the next few months. The sale is expected to net approximately \$1.3 million for Catholic Charities, said Tony Barbaro, the organization's executive director.

Catholic Charities purchased the land from Monroe five years ago for \$5,000 per acre. In 1994, the agency opened a new Southern Tier Community Food Bank on six acres of the property.

Barbaro said that Catholic Charities originally intended to build low-income housing on the remaining land, but reconsidered because the property value has increased so rapidly in recent years. Rather than build on prime commercial land, Catholic Charities decided it could derive greater benefits if it resold the property and used the profits toward other social-ministry programs.

"I don't think anybody had a clue the land value would be escalating as high as it has," Barbaro said. He pointed out that the Monroe homestead's value *per acre* is now higher than Catholic Charities' original cost for the entire property.

Catholic Charities has reached an option-to-purchase agreement from the M.A.Y. Commercial Group. M.A.Y. is the agent for Lowe's Companies, Inc., a national building-supplies chain. Barbaro hopes that local governmental approval for site development will occur by the end of 1996.

Profits from the sale will be used to establish the Nellie Monroe Social Ministry Fund. To ensure the fund's long-term potential, Barbaro said that Catholic Charities will limit use of these monies to the interest they generate. "A 10 percent return is not out of the question," Barbaro said.

According to Barbaro, Catholic Charities plans to expand programs in Steuben and Tompkins counties and also bolster efforts in its Justice and Peace Department.

"This lets us do things we haven't been

able to do in the past," Barbaro said. "From time to time we've gotten some very generous bequests, but not of this magnitude."

Barbaro emphasized that Monroe — who died in 1994 at the age of 97 — gave her full blessing to Catholic Charities' plan to resell the 12 acres.

"Mary (Smith) and her family have to be given a lot of credit. They're remarkable people," Barbaro commented.

Smith added that she, too, feels the turn of events has all worked out for the best.

"I think God had his hand in the whole thing," Smith said. "He had all this in mind, I'm positive."

Broadway tribute to benefit St. Joseph's Habitat project

PENFIELD — The Penfield Theatre Guild will perform "Broadway Favorites," featuring a variety of song and dance numbers, at St. Joseph's Resource Center, 43 Gebhardt Road, on May 4 at 7:30 p.m., and May 5 at 2:30 p.m.

The performance will jointly benefit the guild and St. Joseph Parish's work on a Flower City Habitat for Humanity building project, slated to begin construction June 1.

The guild performance will feature songs from some of the most popular Broadway composers, including Andrew Lloyd Weber, Lerner & Lowe, Rodgers and Hammerstein and Jerome Robbins.

Donation is \$12 for open seating. Full

Paper gains 21 NYPA awards

ALBANY — Topped by three first places for photography and two for advertising, the *Catholic Courier* amassed 21 awards in the New York Press Association's Better Newspaper Contest. Winners were announced at the NYPA's annual convention, April 11-15 at The Desmond in Albany.

In addition to the five first-place awards, the *Courier* earned four seconds, six thirds and six honorable mentions. The award total of 21 shattered the newspaper's previous high of 12, set during the 1993 Better Newspaper Contest.

S. John Wilkin, the *Courier's* staff photographer since 1993, earned "Photographer of the Year" honors for the second time in three years. He also won first place for photographic excellence. Both awards were inclusive of all four circulation divisions in the contest.

In addition, Wilkin took both first and second places for sports-action photo in class D, the contest's largest circulation division. Other class D awards for Wilkin included second place for feature photo (children at an Italian culture camp) and honorable mention for a picture story about a Notre Dame University student providing health care for migrant workers.

The *Courier's* advertising department came away with two NYPA first-place awards and two second places.

The paper won first places in class D in the "Advertising Idea — Multi-Advertiser Pages" category for the newspaper's Senior Lifestyles pages, and in the "Advertising Idea — Multi-Advertiser Pages" category for the newspaper's 212s containing advertisers' names. In addition, the *Courier* received second place overall for ad design and second in Class D for special-section advertising.

Three *Courier* staff writers earned third-place honors in class D.

Kathleen Schwarz, who also serves as copy editor, took third in the feature story category for a report about battered women; staff writer Rob Cullivan placed third for in-depth reporting for a series of articles about migrant ministry; and staff writer Mike Latona captured third place for a sports feature story about Seton Hall basketball player Sandy Mitchell.

Graphic designer Amy Sundstrom won third place in the graphic illustration category for class D.

The *Courier* garnered two third-place staff awards for coverage of religion and for education coverage.

Finally, the newspaper earned five honorable-mention staff awards: health coverage, health care and science (overall), front page, special section (Parenting), special section cover (Parenting), and special holiday edition (Christmas).

— Mike Latona

tables are available for \$200. Students and senior citizens may pay \$10 for the May 5 show. Seating is limited, and advance reservations are requested. Call for tickets at 716/385-5773.

Habitat for Humanity builds or rehabilitates homes for low-income families. To be eligible, family income must not be more than 50 percent of the median income for the Rochester metropolitan area.

St. Joseph's Habitat for Humanity project will take place in Rochester, and will comprise the volunteer efforts of at least 200 parishioners. St. Joseph's parishioners have also agreed to raise \$50,000 toward the cost of the project.