

Former editor recalls 'big fisherman'

By Carmen J. Viglucci
Guest contributor

I picked up the morning *Democrat and Chronicle* in the driveway without wearing my glasses, and skimmed the front page as I headed back inside. My eyes zoomed to Bishop Hogan's blurry name in column one, and I knew instinctively the rest.

It was 31 years ago I first laid eyes on Bishop Joseph Lloyd Hogan, the seventh ordinary of the Rochester Diocese. It was at his first news conference as bishop in 1969. He was succeeding Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, who had resigned and personally picked Msgr. Hogan for the job. It was no secret that the local media considered Bishop Sheen inaccessible, and the news conference was Bishop Hogan's subtle way of indicating changes were in the offing.

But no one could have predicted the sea of changes Bishop Hogan and his flock would deal with through the following decade before another news conference in November 1978 would close the tenure of the ailing bishop.

A diocesan committee, of course, was planning his public farewell. A caring priest said,

"Bishop, when you finish your remarks, say something like 'Father here will answer any other questions' and just move quickly away."

"Oh, heavens," the bishop said in his still resonant voice. "I've never ducked the press in my life, and I'm not going to start now." Sicker than even he knew, he stayed until the last query.

A new bishop is always a concern for a diocesan editor. Early on, I learned the bishop's respect for the newspaper. A ticklish problem had arisen at the *Courier* which we presented to the bishop through his secretary, Father Michael Conboy. An important diocesan official wanted to publish an article, somewhat critical of the bishop's policies. I went to the bishop's office at 50 Chestnut St. to get permission to run it.

Father Conboy said the bishop wanted to know if it was a "matter of integrity." "Yes," I said. "Then do what you feel you have to," Father Conboy said simply.

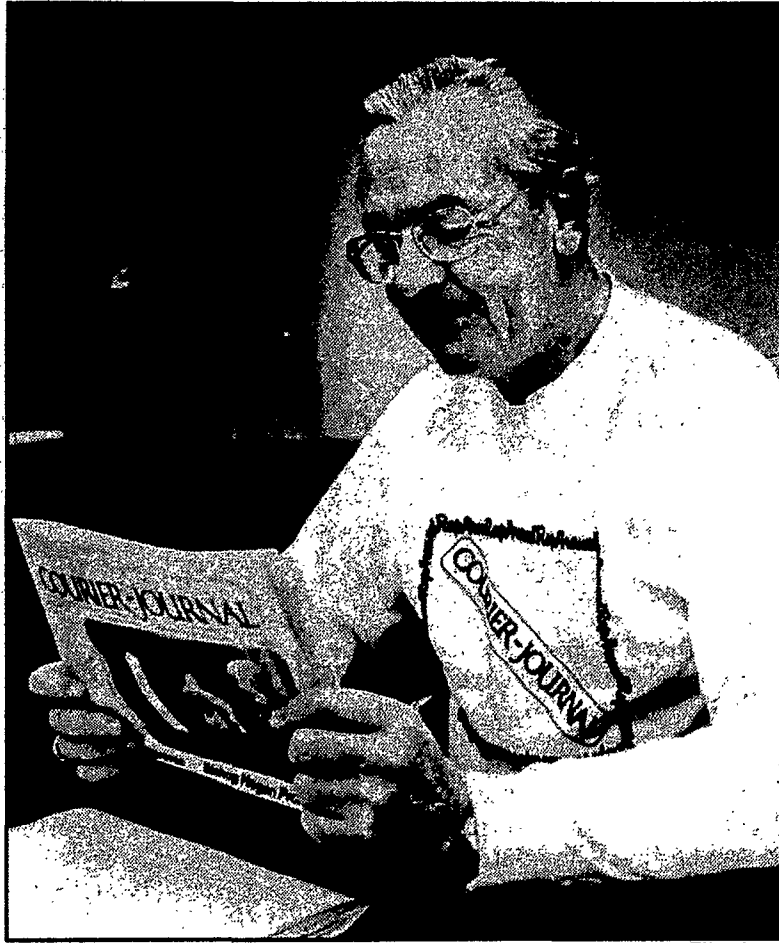
Though he had, in Rudyard Kipling's words "the common touch," the bishop was very intellectual, a teacher. His nicknames among fellow priests were "Doc," for obvious reasons, and "Ack," for academic.

Back in the '70s, the ideas of the Second Vatican Council were being realized — Communion in the hand, communal penance, the permanent diaconate, laymen distributing Communion, the sign of peace. And each event was contentious.

"Modernism," groaned some. "Growing pains," smiled Bishop Hogan.

I always felt the bishop's importance lay not in his public persona but in how he respected everyday life. One example pops into mind.

At a large diocesan gathering in Elmira in the mid-1970s, the bishop was suffering with influenza but "wouldn't miss this for the world." A procession was being formed in the rectory, winding through rooms and hallways and out onto the sidewalk next to the church. The bishop sat as long as he could but eventually stood in his place as the line was painstakingly formed. Two acolytes were at either side. The bishop's height was not ordinary — 6 feet 5. Sweating profusely in his heavy vestments, he looked down at one altar boy and asked his name.



File photo

Bishop Hogan with his favorite diocesan newspaper.

through the jungle wilderness in humid, 100-degree heat. Tony asked someone in the party to take one of the bags, but was turned down.

He continued to chug along when he felt a hand at his shoulder yanking off one of the camera bags. He turned to see Bishop Hogan pulling the strap over his own shoulder.

The bishop often graced our dinner tables as well. Sooner or later Father Joseph Beatini would take over the piano and entertain us with his professional voice. The kids would be drawn to the bishop, the youngest unaffectedly climbing up to his lap.

He always considered the celibate life of the priest "a blessing from God." "But," the newsmen in me had to ask him one time, "don't you miss family life?"

"But I do have a family," the bishop reminded, referring to his brothers Daniel and Father Mike, and sisters Phoebe, Gert and Mary Rose.

"I mean your own family, children ..."

He looked at me, considering his words, and said: "Once when I was a young priest I went to a basketball game alone. A few rows in front of me were a couple, seemingly married, obviously enjoying the game and each other. Outside, leaving the auditorium, I happened to see them again, walking along, hand in hand, chatting. As I began the trek back to my room, I thought 'maybe I am missing something.' But those moments have been few and far between."

He wanted to live long enough to see John XXIII canonized. Instead, he will know him in heaven.

In recent years, my wife, Patricia Costa, and I have stayed in touch with the bishop. Somehow he always managed to send cards for the appropriate occasions. And when we visited him at the SSJ infirmary, he was always the gracious host, asking after our children by name.

History will remember him in the context of the momentous times of his bishopric. The rest of us will always see him in the more important ways — as Doc, as Ack, as the Big Fisherman.

Viglucci was editor of this newspaper, then called the *Courier-Journal*, from 1968 to 1985.

The boy told him. "From the South Side?" "Yes."

"Well, you tell your dad that Bishop Hogan said hello."

A small kindness, the ripples from which probably had much wider import.

I was privileged to know Bishop Hogan in his private life as well. Every year a group of us would go on a long weekend of fishing at Wolfe Island in the Seaway. On these occasions, some of us liked to refer to the bishop as "the big fisherman." He reveled in the tomfoolery, the splendid scenery, the joy of fishing and its many symbolisms for Christians. Mostly, he seemed to enjoy quietly rocking on the side porch of the Hitchcock House and watching the long sunsets over the Canadian Seaway.

Though we were always properly reverent, the bishop liked a little ribbing, as when we named the smaller perch we caught "Bishop Hogan fish."

Another time when a diocesan contingent headed by the bishop was visiting our missions in Brazil, Tony Costello, the *Courier's* then-publisher, was carrying two camera bags full of equipment as the group trekked along a narrow path

He had a tremendous concern for education. When I taught at Bishop Kearney High School (from 1963-73), he made several visits there.

In 1975 I was teaching at St. Charles School in Greece and I was very much delighted to receive a phone call from Bishop Hogan. I was called out of class; he wanted to thank me for taking the position at DeSales High School and for sharing his concern for the continuation of the school. At the time, the (DeSales) board had decided to close the school but a group of alumni, parents and students petitioned Bishop Hogan to keep it open. He said they had to raise \$100,000, and they did it. The following September, after I had started as principal, he came down and presented the check for \$100,000.

He had a fondness for the school (Bishop Hogan was principal from 1953-55). When I sat behind the desk as principal, I would say to myself, "I'm sitting in the same chair as the bishop!" I felt his presence that way.

(On closing several diocesan schools) He wrestled with problems of enrollment, the costs. That was a very painful thing for him to do.

- Ed Tracey

Principal, Geneva DeSales High School, 1975-99

I was a sergeant of the Livingston County Sheriff's Department when Bishop Hogan returned to Lima for his first Mass as bishop, and I helped direct traffic. Then (on Aug. 31) I parked cars at St. Rose Cemetery for his funeral. So everything's come full circle.

He was well thought of out here in Livingston County. He was a very good man, and he had some sights that are going to be seen someday pretty soon.

- Pat Gillen

'Resigned priests' never given cold shoulder

By E. Leo McMannus
Guest contributor

As the benign Father Robert F. McNamara says in his revised diocesan history, it was back at Lima High School that young Joseph Lloyd Hogan "had somehow acquired the nickname 'Academic': 'Ack' for short. The moniker not only stuck, it became prophetic." Except for four years in parish work in Elmira and Rochester, his priesthood was mostly spent academically. And "Ack" seemed naturally over the years to be a part of his formal titles.

Maybe that is because he was always so unpretentious, so unassuming, so free of cant.

As Father McNamara says, "Bishop Hogan was the first of the bishops of Rochester to feel in no wise glued to the episcopal pedestal. Without sacrificing his proper dignity, he made it clear that he was a bishop of and for the people."

And he was a friend, when others in authority might reject them, to those who had departed from the priesthood. I remember that he came down to the parish in Bath where I was helping out in 1968 while I was agonizing over my future direction in the priesthood. There he participated in a muted celebration of my 25th anniversary, a year after his own, and he showed, quietly and unobtrusively, the support of his friendship.

In the years from 1975 until 1982, my wife and I would spend summer vacations at Keuka Lake, free from teaching in Miami. He would drive down from Victor, after his retirement in 1978, to relax at a

cookout on the beach or row a boat around prominent Bluff Point. Its name always provoked a penetrating and humorous comment on the current scene. I, and I am confident that other "resigned priests" like me, were never made to feel unwelcome. Our decision, which separated us from our brothers in Rochester, painful as it must have been to him and disappointing as well, he regarded with respect.

Rochester for us, whenever we came from Florida for a visit, which over the years became less frequent, meant a trip to Victor or to the St. Joseph Convent Infirmary to see Bishop "Ack." Thus it was last July 7 that we sat with him, in the Rochester sun of the late morning. There was, as of old, his sharp observation, his witty remark, his keen humor.

I treasure now those moments, and the many more that we had together at the old St. Andrew's Seminary on Plymouth Avenue, obliterated by Kodak, and at St. Bernard's Seminary, both as students and faculty members. I also treasure those occasional trips in the 1950s to Cape May, New Jersey, along with "Big Daddy" Thomas and Leonard Kujawski, gone now, and Ack's incomparable brother Mike, who remains to keep vital the great Hogan spirit. He and the other members of the warm and hospitable Hogan family — appropriately of College Street in Lima — merit our sympathy.

May the seventh bishop of Rochester, "who was a bishop of and for the people," rest in peace.

McMannus and his wife, Mary Anne, reside in Venice, Fla. He applied for and received laicization.