

Clear Lake-St. Patrick-1987

We're here this afternoon interviewing Frank Mullen who is a member of our parish of St. Patrick's at Clear Lake. Frank has been here a number of years and we asked if he would sit in with us and answer some questions about the development of our parish at St. Patrick's. So, we'd like to start Frank, this is Mary Stottleman speaking, ??? Herman is the historian for our local ACCW chapter and she's also here and we'll be asking Frank questions back and forth, so we'd like to start Frank with your first question. How long have you been in the parish at St. Patrick's? Well, I've been at the parish since 1931 and then it was a mission out of Mason City and Father Bacci came from Mason and said mass every Sunday. Can you recall some of the, how was religious education training, CCD handled at that time? Well, it was all handled by the nuns at Mason City, St. Jos would come over, someone would go get them, take them over and take them back again. A lot of times while they'd take them home for dinner, why the nuns they loved that. How long was Fr. Bacci here? I can't say, but I think it was only about a year and a half, then Fr. Supple came, he was the first resident pastor that we had was Fr. Supple. Ok, now what Fr. Supple was this, what was his first name...? Gosh, I can't remember. Tell us a little bit about the church that you can remember, where it was located? Well, it was located on 8th street, it was big enough for us at that time, but then finally got so that we had to have more room so.... How many did its seat? It would only seat around a 100 or 125 or something like that. OF course, the new one is so much larger. Where was it located? It was on 8th street, South 8th street. That was kind of a main street wasn't it. Yeah, it's a highway, 107 going south to ??? Ok, when was there a rectory there at the time? No, there was no rectory and then finally they built a brick house, a beautiful home, that's when Fr. Supple came and we had a resident priest. We had a lot of nice organizations out of there and we served a lot of dinners, the women had lots of dinners, we needed it to get the money to keep going. I can remember as a summer visitor standing out on the steps because there wasn't room to get into the church so we weren't really sure if there was a mass going on or not, we couldn't see. Tell us about some of the activities that the church people participated in at the time. Well, we had what they called the Holy Name Society then and the men, and we had about 60 or 65 members that we had then. We met once a month and of course every once in a while, we'd put on a pancake supper to make us a couple of hundred dollars. If you made \$200 why you thought you had, well you had a rushing business. Was there a basement in the church that you could operate out of? Yes, the basement was in the church and had it all set up so we had stoves, of course that's where the women served their chicken dinners. I was just going to say, well what women's organizations were there, the Guild and the Ciricles? Well, yeah, they all had, yeah I think there were 3 Circles and a Guild. So, what, when did you start thinking about developing a new church. Well, when we started bursting at the seams and we didn't have room for the people, well we started. With our Holy Name Society, we had a lot of good members. What we did, we took 2 cars and 10 men and, on a Sunday, we'd visit all the other churches around and see how they were and their setting capacities and their measurements. We measured up all the sanctuaries to see what it would take to have a new church. Was there a committee that was named? At that time there wasn't, but Bill Hoeffler we were the trustees at that time and we went all around to all of these churches, we went over to Duncan, we went over to Britt, we went to all these different towns. Every place we went we looked around to see what it would take to build a nice new church and at that time, why we had a different pastor then, Fr. Buzynski was our pastor, and so we were looking for a spot to build on first and we had a beautiful spot right at the end of the street where we built the church on 9th ave, the new one, but we had a

spot picked out down there where it would sit right in the middle of the street and be a showplace for blocks??? And so, we had a real estate man, ????, he was a member of the parish and he undertook to help us try to buy some property. So, we had it all set, we got ready to go up to Crystal Lake there was a piece of property we wanted that belong to a man from Crystal Lake, he was a barber in Crystal Lake, so we got everything all lined up and we made arrangements with him to go up there and see him and the morning that we were to go why we called Fr. Buzynski to go with us and he said, there's no use to going, and we said why and he said I bought a piece of ground last night. So, that's the, what he told us. So, of course we got together, well no use going so we went down and looked over the piece that he bought and he bought a nice piece of ground, there was a little house on it, but it wasn't large enough for anything. Then there was 7 acres that went along with this property that he bought there and we had to buy the whole thing, so we bought the whole thing with 7 acres and the spot to record.... to build our church. And so, then after we bought the land then he started with the architects, then we had architects there. At that time, I was in business for myself and so I could go places at different times. So, Pete come down to the shop and he'd say, can you take off, take me down to Ft. Dodge I want to talk to the architects. He had to go down and run it, how to build it, that's the whole deal, and so we would do that. We'd finally got our church built; we built a real nice church. What was the seating capacity, what were you working for on that? Well that was around 250 to 300 people, that's what we wanted, so one night, well they were getting along with the church, the church was being built and it was getting along pretty good and we were at this meeting one night and they said to the Father, is the church ready to move into and he said yes, well it's all ready to go right now, and he said, well we said, how come we can't start moving. There was about 35 or 40 men there at our meeting at Holy Name meeting. And he said why, I tell you what we're going to do, we'll get two or three men a night and we'll just move at night with two or three men, a little at a time. So, the fellas got together and went over to the neighbors there and the Plumbers and the Sieg??? they got three trucks and all those men started carrying. We took, we even took some of the seats, we had the seats out of the back of the church to use upstairs at the belfry there, or the choir loft and they got them and we took them out and we loaded everything and we were going down the street with statues, got a hold of the statues in the truck, and we moved into our church and we did it in one night, the whole lot of it. And of course, there were a few things like vestments and things that we had to move later, but the main part of the church was ready to go and that was we wanted. You mentioned some people that were kind of, can you remember who some of the pioneers were that worked with you on this whole thing, you mentioned Mr. Hoeffler, of yeah, Bill Hoeffler, while there's also Leo Stork, Leo Stork he was one of the main ones, he was the president of our organization, all of the time that we had our Holy Name Society. And Mike Poland, and Walter Cookman? we always had a lot of good members that worked on the church and on everything else. I remember you tell a little about the church music, why don't you recount some of those people who helped you or sang? I tell you that when I came here to Clear Lake on a Christmas, the only way that we would have Christmas mass they'd hire a man OJ King, he was a great soloist, and so they'd hire him to sing mass and he... I don't know what church he belonged to, but he didn't belong to a Catholic church, but he sang at mass. What would he sing? He would just sing the melody; he was a good tenor singer. You had some other people. Well eventually we got our own choir, and it wound up that we had a quartet. We had four people, we had a bass and a tenor and a soprano and an alto, and the main one was our lead soprano, Faith Monahan, she had a wonderful voice and then we had Mrs. Seesinger? she was the alto and Frank Linnet was the bass and I was the tenor, and we sang all the high masses and

Faith Monahan and I we'd be at every funeral, we sang the requiem mass for years. I sang in the choir for about 30 years. I remember that when I started singing, you were still singing in the choir, I know, I know, but I quit right away after that. But now we have a real choir. I was just going to ask you if you could say or see any changes that through the years, what do you think would be some of the more profound changes you've seen over the years? The nicest thing, the best thing I've seen is the young parish we have, the young folks and their families. A lot of people don't like kids making noise, but I tell you they fill the church. We have a really young parish right now; I think they're wonderful. How do you feel about the new liturgy and some of the changes that have occurred? Well, I don't know, I don't think they've hurt anybody. A lot of people won't change, you can't change them. Well we're creatures of habit. That's right. We just don't like to have anybody tell us what we have to do. [Feedback squealing]. I'm Helen Herman and this afternoon I received some??? from Jeanine Stork, she had visited Bea Sherril who was in Oakwood, and Bea said that her father was one of the group of people who went to the Archbishop in Dubuque to see if they could have a church in Clear Lake up to that time it had been a mission parish and originally in Garner, the way I understand it. Let's continue then talking to Frank. Well, I ask you, Frank, I remember when we came there were several times that we helped with and enjoyed some buttermilk donuts that you and your wife Madeline worked on, why don't you tell us a little bit about your buttermilk donut project. Well, the women wanted to make a few dollars and they would make them on a Saturday, Saturday morning. We would go to Garner and get our buttermilk from the creamery over there because we made buttermilk pancakes, I mean donuts. We had 5 or 6 women helping us and I remember one woman who had never fried a donut because she put them in the pan and she just didn't know how long you she had to leave them in there. She didn't know that you put them in and turn them over in a short while. We would, one woman would measure out the flour, another would mix the dough, and my wife and I were cutting out donuts, and we had two women that would take them to the store to sell them, they were selling them at the Easter store. We would have a great time doing that and we'd sell all that we could make and we'd get tired and we'd just quit. I remember you saying that the big problem was coming up with the right ingredients at the end, to make you donuts, what did you use, sour milk, well we used buttermilk, made buttermilk pancakes, I mean donuts, I have pancakes on the mind. One other question and I guess we can probably move on. I just wanted to check through you mention that some of that extra ground was purchased with the idea of a school in mind, is that correct. That was the idea, but when Newman was built, that was the answer and it really worked wonderful. As a central school. So, what about your own children, where did they go to school then, and what about some their religious education. Well, my oldest son went two years to Clear Lake High School, and the last two years he went to Mason City. He graduated from St. Jos where I graduated. I graduated in '22. He's loved it over there too. He thought that was wonderful. He got a scholarship to go to St. John's in Collegeville and then he finished at Iowa City his last two years. And that was before Newman was around. Yes, that before Newman was around. OK, are there any other questions that you can think of? [Inaudible, question about original church]. We thank you Frank for doing this for us and this goes into the Archdiocese, and we'll see what happens.