

1983 – 1993

I. In the Beginning

by Gertrude K. Daugherty - Printed May 1993

Located between Vaughns Gap Road and Highway 70 South was a hillside covered with grass and trees, home to birds, rabbits, and other small creatures, part of a tract of land given by Henry Neuhoff to the Catholic Diocese of Nashville. Eighteen acres were used as the impressive site for a beautiful church to be called St. Henry, and 44 acres for a retirement community “built in response to the growing need in Nashville for housing for the middle and upper income people that is affordable, secure, and in a Christian environment,” for persons age 55 and over.

It was to be developed in three phases. Phase I: 240 one-story Georgian Cottage-style duplexes with 2 – 3 - bedrooms, patios or decks, and garages. Phase II: a ten-story high-rise complex with 200 retirement apartments with related amenities. (This has not yet been built.) Phase III: a major nursing home, the present Brookmeade Health Care Center. Phase I in addition to the residences includes a community activity center with rooms for meetings, dinners, games; a kitchen, library, chapel, and swimming pool. The St. Henry Property Development Committee, chaired by Harold Black, was in charge. Ray Williams and Diane Collins managed the Sales Office. Some 30 companies made bids on various aspects of the development, six were thoroughly investigated, and the following were chosen: Barge, Waggoner, Sumner and Cannon were the Site Engineers; Mitchell Barnett, the architect Jones Brothers, Site Preparation; and Rochford Realty and Construction, the Building Contractor. The retirement community will be known as “The Cloister at St. Henry” and will ultimately be a 30 million dollar project.

By June 1983 all 54 units in Phase IA had been sold, and the first resident had moved in. On January 29, 1984, the “First Meeting” of the residents of Phase IA had occurred, with 48 of the 54 owners attending. Of the 12 candidates for Board

Directors, the following were elected: Paul Breen, Gertrude Daugherty, Elinor McIlwaine, and Don Punch; Karol Grace was appointed by SHPD to represent them. Paul Breen was elected president.

By April, 1984 there were 72 residents - 20 men and 52 women. Their median age was 75. This group quickly established close and friendly ties. Every Monday morning for the first several months, someone hosted a Coffee Klatch in his/her home and almost everyone came every time.

The first issue of the *CLOISTER NEWS* appeared in April, 1984.

The first Covered Dish Supper was held on the street in front of the Sales Office on May 3. The Clubhouse and Pool were dedicated June 24 and the pool welcomed its first group of swimmers on July 4. Since then the clubhouse has been the scene of Bridge and other card games, exercise groups, clinics, parties, and other assorted meetings. It is also available (at a nominal cost) for residents who wish to entertain friends and family groups too large for their homes.

By July, 1988, all units had been sold, 394 persons were in residence, and it became apparent that some changes in organization were needed. Some of the original Bylaws needed to be amended to reflect the growth of the community. Among the important changes was the increase in size of the COA Board - from 4 to 8 members, and the employment of a management company. David Floyd and Associates, Inc. is presently our management company. Presidents of the Board have been Paul Breen, Willard Kendall, Jim Geldrich, Gertrude Daugherty, Phil Lee, Sue Mitchell. Jim Geldrich was recently elected to a third term.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OUR NAMES

Considerable effort went into the important task of naming our retirement community. St. Henry Property Development Board members met and produced a list of suitable names. Everyone attending church on a particular Sunday was asked to choose a favorite from the list or to make other suggestions. Scores of names were submitted. The Board Com-

mittee and personnel at the Hart Agency who were to design the logo chose the name *THE CLOISTER AT ST. HENRY*. It was felt that the name connoted the peace and spiritual dimension to life that the people who would move here were looking for, and that all those involved in its development were striving to provide.

Then the SHPD Board appointed Msgr. Seiner, Msgr. Rohling, and Father Bevington, the first three pastors of St. Henry, to prepare a list of names suitable for the streets of the Cloister. They decided the names should be from Scripture, or of missionaries in the United States, or religious communities, or significant religious individuals. Many names were submitted but they had to be governed by two criteria of the Metro Public Works: that they not duplicate any presently existing street names and that they be short. These were their selections: Cana Circle – place in Galilee where Jesus and some of his disciples attended a wedding reception. Cloister Drive – main entrance to the community. Emma Neuhoff Court - wife of Henry Neuhoff, donor of the land. Glenmary Court – place in Ohio, base of the Glenmary Home Missioners. Loyola Drive – place in Spain, birthplace of founder of Jesuit Order. Marquette Drive – early Catholic explorer of the Mississippi River. Miles Court – first Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Nashville in 1837. Mount Carmel Place - place in the Holy Land; also associated with the Carmelite Order of priests and nuns. Siena Drive - place in Italy where St. Catherine, a Dominican Order saint, lived. St. Luke Drive – writer of the third Gospel; drive leading to the Brookmeade Nursing Home.

GROWING PAINS

During the first few years, the young community faced some challenging problems. For instance, water diverted from its usual courses by the grading and building site preparations showed up in unexpected places, such as yards, inside garages and living rooms. Then in the second year we had a plague of crickets. By the hundreds they invaded our lawns, gardens, and houses. Dogs were a major concern for a while. Cloister pets plus wanderers from neighboring areas soiled our lawns and walkways; some barked and a few bit; some chased rabbits into the black drain tubing and tore up the tubing in their scramble to get the rabbits seeking refuge there. One surprise was the discovery of a litter of puppies delivered by a

wandering mother dog in the living room-to-be of a construction on Siena Drive. All five found homes a week later with the workmen who took them home to be pets for their children.

A mysterious happening was the levitation of several blocks of sidewalk on Cana Circle. In a spell of very hot weather, two blocks rose creating a concrete drawbridge effect and a real hazard to unwary walkers. No explanation for this curious phenomenon was ever found, and it was corrected after the second episode.

A more dangerous situation for our walkers, especially those who liked to walk in the streets was that of cars driving fast on our streets. At first it was the cars of residents in a hurry. Later it was drivers from Highway 70 using our streets to cut through to Vaughns Gap Road. At the advice of Metro Traffic Commission, "Silent Policemen", bumper strips across the streets at intersections that shook up drivers exceeding our posted 15 miles-per-hour speed limit discouraged drivers from the highway and slowed down our resident drivers.

Lawns were a major problem. In the beginning residents were responsible for the lawns around their homes. Some had meticulously manicured lawns; some were so-so, cutting the grass when it was called to their attention; and some didn't care how their lawn looked. Eventually the Board contracted a lawn service who cut the grass weekly or as needed. The swimming pool provided some surprises. On several occasions groups of teenagers, guests of residents with grandchildren, pre-empted the pool with ball throwing, shouting, diving, etc. on one occasion four teenage boys came several afternoons, climbing over the fence to get in, until they were told they were trespassing on private property. Another time, two young ladies decided they would get a smoother sun tan if they went topless. The pool rules have been amended to provide for such adventures.

Time, patience, courtesy, and good will have worked together to solve these growing pains.

