

The History of The Traveling Rosary
Notre Dame Council No. 2901
Joseph P. Sirera, P.G.K.

As we begin the new millennium, it seemed like an appropriate time to write the history of the Traveling Rosary of Notre Dame Council. Notre Dame Council was dedicated to Our Lady and named in Her honor, it was only a matter of time that this dedication would show itself beyond our council's home. The original Traveling Rosary was conceived and built by Ray Hogarth in November 1963 with the help of Russ Hassell. Larry Preller was Grand Knight of the Council; Ray Hogarth was the Catholic Activities Chairman. PGK Andy Bonthron was also a member of that first team. The State Chaplain was Father Gaudette, S.S.J.

The Traveling Rosary would have to be life-size to match the dedication of the Council to our Blessed Mother. The construction of the Rosary is as follows: 59 styrofoam balls representing the beads, are mounted on 1/4 inch diameter naval rope approximately 125 feet in length attached to a six foot high wooden cross with a bronze "Corpus" of Christ. The Our Fathers and Hail Marys are marked by 3 inch diameter styrofoam balls; the beads are spaced about 2 feet apart so that people can stand and hold a bead. An electric cord is secured to the rope and a light socket is imbedded in each bead (each styrofoam ball) to hold the small lamp bulbs.

Before the time to begin the Rosary, the team spreads it out on the floor and installs the lamp bulbs; white bulbs are placed in the Our Father beads while blue bulbs are placed in the Hail Mary beads (the bulb colors were reversed in the original rosary). These lights are left unlit until the start of the Rosary and the room lights are dimmed or turned off. A Priest, Deacon or the Leader will begin the Apostles Creed, announce each Mystery in turn, recite the Glory Be and O My Jesus after each decade and lead the Hail Holy Queen at the end. A team member carrying a cue card with the prayers printed in large letters will walk inside the Rosary circle and light each bulb while the person holding the bead recites the first half of the prayer; all present respond with the remainder of the prayer.

The Traveling Rosary is a "Living Rosary" in that each person holds, or "becomes", a bead of the Rosary; it is called "The Traveling Rosary" because it was designed for reaching out to organizations outside the Council home. The Traveling Rosary can be done as its own activity; hymns can be added; it can precede Benediction or follow the Mass; it can be done indoors or outside; it is most effective in the dark or in dim lighting.

In 1966, State Deputy Francis G. "Bud" McFarland, designated the Traveling Rosary as a State Activity and named PGK Andy Bonthron (of Notre Dame Council) as the State Chairman. In 1967, Brother Lou Heil (also of Notre Dame) would be named the next State Chairman.

Even while it was being used as a State activity, the men from Notre Dame continued The Traveling Rosary as a Council Church Activity through the leadership of E. John "Jack" Schmitz and Ted Holloway, Sr. In 1965, Ted brought his 5-year-old daughter Julie to participate in this Rosary. Jack and Ted would continue their promotion of the Traveling Rosary of Notre Dame Council through the 1970's with assistance by Joseph Crostic; they would be joined by this author in 1981; many times these men would be accompanied by their ladies Carmela Schmitz, Mary Holloway and Stella Sirera. The Traveling Rosary increased its travels to many of the other councils in the State as well as to other organizations as Sodalties, Holy Name Societies, PTA groups, C.C.D. classes, youth groups, and to the Manresa Retreat House.

In 1983, after 20 years of faithful service and showing its age & wear, the Rosary would be rebuilt; only the Corpus & Medallion would be transferred to the new Rosary to keep the continuity. PGK Jack Schmitz was now Chairman with PGK Ted Holloway, Sr. as Co-chairman; with the help of Al Dimena, Hugh Carter, Jim Schaffer, Walt Hayes, Sr. the new Rosary took shape. PGK Hank McFadden would construct the carrying case.

This new Rosary was introduced to the Council on March 29, 1983, at a special Founder's Day activity. The new Traveling Rosary was blessed by our Chaplain Rev. Joseph C. Simmons and recited by all present. Dignitaries present included the [then] State Treasurer Aldo G. Bartolomei, State Advocate Andrew C. Bauer, District Deputy John F. "Jack" Miller, and District Warden Stanley F. Nowakowski.

The Traveling Rosary would continue on through the 1980's under the leadership of Jack Schmitz, Ted Holloway, Sr. and Joe Sirera; they would be assisted by their wives; others that helped during this period include Dolores Stephens, Joseph Schmitz, William Schmitz, PGK John Cosaraquis, George and Mary Nastvogel, Ruth Gonce, GK Andrew Derwart, Charles Cipriotti, DGK George Walter, PGK Henry "Hank" McFadden and Richard Sirera. Jack and Ted would soon be saying their Hail Mary's to Our Blessed Mother in person.

Joe Sirera and John Heuer would guide the Traveling Rosary through most of the 1990's with the help of James Johnson, Robert Heinlein Joseph Wagner and Francis Rosenbrock; at the end of the decade, Howard Bottiger, Richard Long and Paul Coleman would become part of the team. From the earliest days of the Traveling Rosary, the Singing Knights would be involved; at special occasions, they would be called upon to sing the Mysteries and provide music to mark the special event.

It is not feasible to list all the visits that were made by The Traveling Rosary in its 37 year history; however, there are several visits that are noteworthy because they were regularly scheduled events: St. Mark's Church-CCD, Mason Dixon Council at St. Mary's Church in Pylesville, Sacred Heart of Jesus Church-CCD, Catholic Daughters at Bishop Sebastian Council, Knights of Fatima Council, Notre Dame Council, Church of the Annunciation-Ladies, St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Govans, Charles Carroll of Carrollton Assembly, St. Clare's Church-CCD, Our Lady of Hope Church-CCD, Corpus Christi Council at Holy Spirit Church, Cardinal Shehan of Baltimore Council, Ladies of Notre Dame Council, Oak Crest Village, St. Francis of Assisi Church-Ladies, St. Jerome Church, Bishop Sebastian Council-Ladies, Church of the Annunciation-Youth Group, St. Elizabeth's Church, St. Leo's Church, Fr. Maurice J. Wolfe Council at St. Francis de Sales Church, St. Joseph's Church in Eldersburg, Cardinal Gibbons Council-Ladies, Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, Holy Rosary Church, in the front yard of Mrs. Szymanik's in Essex, William of York School, Immaculate Conception Church, St. Phillip & James Church, All Saints Church, Prince of Peace Church, St. Phillip Neri, St. Wencelaus Church, Little Flower Parish, Our Ladies Center in Ellicott City, Holy Family Council, St. Mary's Seminary, Manresa Retreat House, Bishop Becker Council, Holy Family Church, in the back yard of Angelina Kratochuvil, Baltimore Chapter of GKs, Santa Maria Council, Immaculate Heart School in Upper Marlboro, Columbia Council, Archbishop Curley Council, Fr. O'Neill Council, Mother Seton Council, St. Matthew's Church, Christ The King Church, Francis Scott Key Hospital, Sacred Heart Council and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church.

Attendance figures were not accurately kept in the earlier days of the Rosary. However, during the past five years, the Rosary made 110 visits to a total attendance of 8,279 people with \$2,061 received in donations and contributed to the Grand Knights' Charities. This averages 22 visits per year for the Traveling Rosary with an average attendance of 1,656 people per year with yearly contributions of \$412 to our charities.

In January 2000, after 17 years of faithful service and showing its age & wear, the Rosary would once more be rebuilt; the Corpus & Medallion would again be transferred to the new Rosary to maintain the continuity. PGK Joe Sirera and PGK Howard Bottiger would build the new Rosary; Robert Martel would design and build the new cross. The Traveling Rosary would begin the new millennium with the team consisting of PGK Joe Sirera, PGK Howard Bottiger, PGK Richard Long and Paul Coleman.

On January 29, 2000, the new Traveling Rosary of Notre Dame Council made its debut at Holy Spirit Church in Joppatown as a Pro-Life Activity for Corpus Christi Council No. 6188. Father

Simmons as Pastor of Holy Spirit Church and Chaplain of Notre Dame Council would bless this new Traveling Rosary during the 5:00 PM Mass. The Rosary was recited immediately following the Mass; Timothy J. Bird, Grand Knight of Corpus Christi Council and Charles E. Schafer, Grand Knight of Notre Dame Council were participants in this service.