

This is Tuesday, July 28th, 1992 and I am at the home of Frances McCarty, 4143 Los Choches Avenue, Sacramento, California and she is going to talk about some of the interesting things that she remembers about St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Sacramento at 15th and J Street.

My first job with the Diocese of Northern California was working for the program manager of the Diocese and his name was the Rev. Robert W. Renouf. St. Paul's congregation was a dwindling congregation. It had been a very thriving congregation under the Rev. Pearson and had a large congregation and was a going concern but as it has happened in many churches, as the suburbs of Sacramento grew, the people sort of fled to the suburbs and St. Paul's was left as a small church. So it was felt by the program manager and the Bishop Hayden that being a downtown church it would present an ideal location for a urban study and a mission. So it was, that we applied to the National Episcopal Church for a grant, following a conference to determine some of the needs to be found in Sacramento.

A demographic study was done, and there were identified five different areas of concern. One of them was aging, consisting of those who had never moved into the suburbs. Another, was the very high suicide rate in Sacramento, so it was felt that suicide was a great concern and a problem. Other problems was welfare and another was alcohol and drug addiction. Family life was an issue since there was one divorce to one marriage in Sacramento at this time. A conference resulted and each church was to send representatives and I think that there was two or three from each church in the Diocese, and about twelve other congregations that were part of this movement, and they met and tried to set some goals and find solutions for some of these unmet needs of the city of Sacramento.

They began by hiring the Rev. Lee Page to come. He didn't last very long, however, because I think on one Sunday he said something that disturbed a lot of the parishioners and a lot of people left the congregation because of it. So, at any rate, Father Renouf was appointed to be the director and also the Vicar of the Mission. Father Renouf, after he became the vicar, wanted to go not to just the churches but he wanted to go to the whole community. and get everyone involved. Consequently, he managed to get twenty-two members of the Jr. League to act as volunteers. He set up a training period lasting three months.

They started off with a telephone re-assurance program for the people who lived alone or were handicapped so they could have a phone call every morning to make sure that they were all right. Many of them were lonely and just needed someone to talk with since that might be their only contact with the outside world.

The second program was for the seniors who were isolated in the downtown area. It was a social program established to try to get them acquainted with each other and have some kind of contact with other people. Another program was for young people and that was called the Home Front and that was started under Rev. Lee Page. It was quite a thriving program and it was just when drugs were becoming an issue. There were dances, movies and all sort of things to try to interest young people and try to keep them from getting involved with drugs by giving them an alternative to doing something else rather than just turning on with drugs.

On the suicide thing, we were instrumental in that we wrote letters to the editors of the newspapers trying to convince them that because of the high rate of suicides we definitely needed to try to start a suicide prevention service and so we were, in a way, in on the beginning of that. However, it was taken over and became a reality, but not under St. Paul's.

We had many studies and conferences on family life and there was a great deal of counseling done down there with divorced people and with other people who had problems of one kind and another. It was often between the adults and the youths, so there was a great deal of study going on and a great deal of activity and we added other volunteers. The Jr. League had a three year commitment to these programs. I then became the Coordinator of Volunteers and at one time we had over 220 volunteers working on the programs, chaperoning the youth programs, and so St. Paul's has continued to have programs for the seniors and the programs of re-assurance is one of the vital programs. In connection with this, they have a home visiting program which is very important, providing someone to visit for an hour or just drop by. This is even done many times by students from Sacramento State who are doing this for their field work and they get credit for it in their studies. Also, volunteers in the community, go out and visit people at least an hour once a week and they have often two or more clients. So it is that many programs that were originally started are still continued. Many social agencies are having problems but St. Paul's is hanging in there.

I never realized that I would ever use it, yet now I am a user and I am going to go back as a volunteer again. I was on the staff at first but now as I am going back as a volunteer and make telephone calls from my home to other seniors to make sure they are safe and well and have a little chat with them if they wish.

After St. Paul's became a center for Urban Work and Study, and since it was so well located at 15th and J, work with alcoholics became intensified. The Rev. N. Knoble, Rector, had quite a ministry with alcoholics and he had many who just dropped in off the street and wanted help so he would try to see that they would get the help that they needed. We treated them all with dignity and tried to make them realize that they had a choice and if they didn't want to continue to drink we could send them to a half-way house or to Alcoholics Anonymous or somewhere else.

We soon had a program called Information and Referral. This is still going as part of the community services and the food closet. In the beginning the churches would bring cans of food and many churches of the area would cooperate and help in cooking turkey dinners and help with the seniors and we had big parties with the seniors at Thanksgiving and Christmas because there were many seniors who did not have a family to go to for the holidays. It was something I was really happy to be part of because I met a lot of people I would have never met otherwise I live out in the suburbs and I don't think we are quite as aware of some of the problems that the people living in the urban areas have. It certainly opened my eyes and became an educational experience.

After Fr. Renouf, the next director was Rev. Ray Smith and I worked under him a considerable length of time and at that time I began to coordinate the community services. I always enjoyed working at St. Paul's because I could look right out at the beautiful stained glass windows. Some of them had been given by the Crocker families. I heard a rumor that the Stanford family had wanted to do something great for the community and they came to the church and were talking about such a huge sum of money that the rector felt that something should be done toward education and that instead of just one church receiving so much. So apparently that was what was done and Stanford University was the result. However, the beautiful Stanford window was given at that time to the church.

It was always a pleasure to work there and I had so many people come in while I was there, who came in and tried to take pictures of the window, or to try to get some of the history of the place and it was always a pleasure to conduct them on a little tour because we were always proud of the way it looked.

The old organ was especially valuable, I think, because it was an old Tracker Organ that had come around the Horn and when people were first coming here to Sacramento and to California and the Gold Rush days. I think there are so many treasurers down there at St. Paul's and I have heard so many tales of history of the place that I hope it will be preserved some day as a historical monument because it is a beautiful church with beautiful windows and with an ambience about it. I think of all the people who have attended services there from the days when they came in carriages to the days when they came in off the street, to the downtown workers. A few of the other parishioners still came but it has never grown to a large congregation again. It was quite traumatic to the church and to the people who had attended the church when the pews were taken out in order to have social service programs. The space was needed to make a larger area so all of the pews were taken out and that was done under r the Rev. Lee Page and I am sure he took a lot of flack from everybody about it, but it provided the ability to serve the community in ways that we had not been able to service them before.

I think that the little chapel that had been there at the back of the church was then made into a little chapel at the front of the church at that time and it is now part of the church in the front of the church. It used to be that we entered on 15th St. but originally the office was in the front and the people came in right off the street and that is when we had many alcoholics and street people coming in during the 60's and it was a place that was seen to welcome everyone and we tried to do what we could and work with them and refer them to the community agencies that were available, and give them the help that was needed. Many of the churches gave food and clothing and every morning when I came in I would find my desk filled with used clothing and would have to sort it out and put it away.

We would give food and clothing away to people but we finally had to keep records on it because we realized we were giving away a great many cans of food and three-days' worth of meals and that the community needed to be aware of what the problems were and how many people was needing the kind of help. and we started to keep records and became a little better organized at that time and the way we handled things there.

It was always fun for me to think of the older generation who had been members and of the congregation of St. Paul's and I guess they had come with their carriages and their fine clothes. At one time I think St. Paul's was the only Episcopal church and it was then the cathedral church in this Diocese. Then latter it the Trinity Church became the cathedral church. I have heard that there was almost a rivalry between the two but I think that has long since been abandoned and they are trying to work together and have been for some time.

Well there has always been a congregation although many people thought that St. Paul's Church was no longer in existence. They have always had a worship services there since I have known about it and they used to have noon-day services for the downtown workers and so they would make it convenient for them to come. They had many organ concerts and cultural events for the community. Some of the finest musicians in Sacramento would be so thrilled to play this beautiful organ that they would come and donate their services. Many times we would do it for fund raisers and sometimes just for the benefit of the community.

The old tracker organ was a treasure and still is I am sure and it came around the horn at the time of the Gold Rush and is still working fine and the acoustics are very good and they were even better before they did some of the remodelling on it and it is still a wonderful place to go for a concert.

It was necessary to move the community services and the food closet. They are now located over on 27th St. next to the bishop's office and St. Paul's Agency is now down on 21 St., which is starting again a new social program. For a time, transportation became such a problem that they had to give that up since it costs so much. But now we have a new grant and we will start some social programs starting next week. They still have the telephone programs, the re-assurance serves about 200 people every day and St. Paul's has earned quite a reputation about its concern and care for this community. I am proud to be still working on the Program Division committee.