



Foundations

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60 Years of Service and Reaching Out: 1959-2019 St. Joseph's Hospital, Elliot Lake, Ontario

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ELLIOT LAKE

While not unique in Canada, Elliot Lake belongs to a group of towns that experienced boom and bust cycles throughout their history. Canada, rich in natural resources, was founded in a flurry of discovery that was initially fuelled by the fur trade. Like lumber and pulp and paper before it, the mining industry opened up many cities and towns in northern Ontario that sit on top of the Precambrian shield which is rich in nickel, gold, silver and other precious metals.

Half way between Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie on the Trans Canada Highway, some 42 kilometers north on Highway 108, uranium was discovered in 1953 by Joseph H. Hishhorn. The Algoma Basin began with two pioneer mines, the Algom Quirke and Algom Nordic mines. But prospecting continued and the first plans for the town of Elliot Lake grew with the same pace and urgency as the mining companies could dig shafts. Consolidated Denison led the procession of the other mines that followed. Then came Can Met, Buckles, Lake Nordic, Spanish American, Panel, Lake Milliken, Stanleigh, and Stanrock all developed in rapid succession during the following two years.

The community of Elliot Lake didn't just grow. Detailed thought was given to its most complex development before a single tree was blazed. Community planning was started in the spring of 1954 by the district discoverer, geologist Franc Joubin, who was then president of Algom. With his engineering aides, R. C. Hart and W. H. Hutchison and several Ontario Provincial Departments including Mines, Planning and Development, Lands and Forests, Highways, and later Municipal Affairs, Education, and Health, every single aspect of a central community was considered.¹

Robert C. Hart, a Consulting Geologist, would later figure in a major way with the development of health care services in the community and the establishment of St. Joseph's Hospital. He also served on "The Board of Trustees of the Corporation of the Improvement District of Elliot Lake" as Chairman from 1957-1961.

By 1959 nearly 25,000 people resided in the carefully laid out, government-planned community. Over the years, because of the boom and bust of the uranium market value, the population fluctuated between the late 1950s and the 1990s, from a high of over 26,000 residents to a low of about 6,600.

But settlement did not begin with mining. Even the land on Spine Road where the present hospital sits has a strong connection to the First Nations Peoples who were the original inhabitants of this area.

Long before the fur trade, logging and mining activities, the Elliot Lake area was the summer home of the Ojibway Nation on the North Shore. Many artifacts have been unearthed in our area and include a major native village on the shore of Elliot Lake, just over the hill from St. Joseph's General Hospital. There is a persistent rumour that a burial ground is on an island on Elliot Lake giving this area a very mystical and interesting history.²

THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH

In a little village in Le Puy, France, the Sisters of St. Joseph began as a small nucleus of six women gathered to alleviate the suffering caused by civil and religious strife. A travelling Jesuit missionary, Father Jean Pierre Médaille, SJ, became associated with them and by 1650, these women were recognized as a

congregation of Religious Women—The Sisters of St. Joseph. During the French Revolution several Sisters were guillotined which forced the others to go into hiding, but finally in 1794 they were free to return to their works of mercy. The congregation was re-established in 1807 as The Sisters of St. Joseph of Lyon. Thirty years after surviving the French Revolution, the congregation spread to North America when six Sisters landed in St. Louis, Missouri in 1836. From there they established themselves in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Then in 1851, at the bequest of the bishop, the congregation came to Toronto, Ontario which was in the midst of an epidemic of fever. Thus began the Canadian Federation.³

Within 40 years, the congregation established other independent branches in the dioceses of Hamilton, London, Peterborough and Pembroke where Sisters founded and operated orphanages, schools and hospitals. In 1881, four Sisters travelled by steamboat from Toronto to Prince Arthur's Landing (the present day city of Thunder Bay) at the head of Lake Superior and began ministry in Northern Ontario.

By 1936, Bishop R.H. Dignan, bishop of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie, invited the Peterborough Sisters working within his diocese to form a new independent congregation for his vast and fast growing diocese which consisted mainly of immigrants and a large indigenous population. One hundred and twenty one Sisters working in Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay, Sudbury and North Bay responded. The new Congregation assumed responsibility for St. Joseph's Hospital (1884) in Port Arthur and St. Joseph's Hospital (1931) in North Bay and was soon sending Sisters off for further studies in nursing instruction and hospital administration. Within eight years, they opened a hospital in Blind River (1940) and Little Current (1944), and would soon answer the call to operate a hospital in Elliot Lake.

Carrying on the tradition of all the Sisters of St. Joseph, this youngest group, with its Motherhouse in North Bay, began to reach out to the small communities around Lake Superior and on Manitoulin Island. Sisters opened separate schools in the province and established hospitals where no one had gone before. They cared for orphans and the aged and also brought with them the gift of music, which they taught instrumentally and in choirs.⁴

A NEW TOWN AND A NEW HOSPITAL⁵

In early 1957 the mining companies, led by the Rio Tinto Group and several leading citizens, including Dr. James Ruse and Mr. Ed Blahey, joined forces and decided to approach the Sisters of St. Joseph. That summer they drove to the Motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Joseph in North Bay as a delegation to Mother St. Bride, the General Superior, to request that the Sisters undertake the construction and operation of a hospital in Elliot Lake. As representatives of the new community they pledged to share the financial costs of construction.

For some months prior to this visit, officials of the *townsite* realized the need of a hospital in the area, and so had already formed a temporary Hospital Board. They had already taken a great deal of initiative by commissioning the firm *Gowan, Ferguson, Langley, et al, Architects* of Toronto to submit plans for a hospital and an adjoining residence for nurses.

This body of men pleaded for help for a place to treat the injured miners. There was already a medical clinic established there by six doctors, but there was no place to treat the accident cases. These gentlemen said they had made the same request to some others in the health care field, but with no success. They said that the mines would contribute 3 million dollars, 1 million from each of the mines. They had already inquired from an experienced architect, the approximate cost.⁶

After due consideration of the request, Mother St. Bride and the Council of Sisters agreed to undertake the project and to appoint Sister St. Camillus as the first administrator of the hospital. Together they worked rapidly to review the building plans, make suggestions and finalize them. By October 4, 1957 the boundary plan for approximately 12 acres of land was received. On October 25, 1957 *Fassel Construction Company Ltd.* of Toronto signed the contract to build the new hospital.

Interestingly enough, the "Certificate of Ownership" for the land the hospital was built on was not finalized by The Land Titles Act until 1959, long after construction was well underway. I suspect that events in Elliot Lake generally, and at the hospital site in particular, were happening so quickly that things moved ahead before all the "i's were dotted and the t's crossed." Such was the nature of such an endeavour in this nascent pioneering mining town.

The land was registered as parcel 5038½ in the District of Algoma. The “Certificate of Ownership” certifies that the transfer of land to the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie happened under Transfer 43787, dated May 11, 1959 and registered June 2, 1959, and was made in consideration of \$1.00.

The sod-turning ceremony occurred at the building site on October 27, 1957. Representatives of the municipality, the mines, businesses and the medical profession attended as Mother St. Bride took the shovel and turned the sod to mark the beginning of construction. Several speakers marked the occasion — Rev. Raymond H. Farrell, Pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Elliot Lake; Robert C. Hart, Chairman of the Board of Trustees; Doctor James N. Ruse, first medical doctor in the *townsite*; Anthony Fassel and Mother St. Bride. A reception was held at the Algoden Hotel where the architectural plans were displayed.

On November 26, 1957 the application for a permit to build a new hospital was sent to the Ministry of Health, and by November 30th the application was granted. On January 7, 1958, an Order in Council (#4488/57) was received from C.J. Telfer, Director of the newly formed Ontario Hospital Services Commission “approving the establishment of a public hospital at Elliot Lake, to be known as St. Joseph’s General Hospital.” This Order in Council had been formally approved by the Lieutenant-Governor on December 19, 1957 as recommended by the Minister of Health of the time, Dr. MacKinnon Phillips.

On January 21, 1958, the recently formed “Blind River–Elliot Lake Medical Society” which was comprised of fourteen doctors practicing in the area, requested a meeting “to establish contact with the Sisters of St. Joseph with a view to learning about the Elliot Lake Hospital.” A meeting was arranged for March 21st at the Sudbury General Hospital, and was attended by the members of the Sister’s Generalate Council, Mr. Anthony Fassel, the contractor, Mr. Langley, the architect, doctors Thomson, Ruse, and Joyal, as well as Mr. Langton of Rio Tinto Mines, and Mr. Hart and Mr. Fox of Elliot Lake.

The purpose of the meeting was to present the necessity of opening a temporary ward for Obstetric patients in the Nurses Residence. Construction for this unit was to begin May 1, 1958 and be completed by September 28th. It was decided that completing the Nurses Residence

would become a priority and that that building would be constructed first so that necessary adjustments and renovations could be made in order to use it as a maternity unit. Doctor Maurice J. Farrell (brother of the parish priest Fr. Raymond Farrell) and Doctor S. Golesic delivered the first baby on November 30, 1958. Close to 1000 babies were born in these temporary quarters.



Geraldine Donohue, a hospital board member, recalled her years as a young nurse working in this improvised maternity unit. “*There were so many babies being born, we did not have enough bassinets or cribs for them, so we pulled out dresser drawers and used them to lay the babies in.*”

On April 3, 1958 Mother St. Bride wrote to twelve men from Elliot Lake inviting them to serve as members of the Advisory Board. All of them accepted and the first meeting was held April 30, 1958 with Mr. Robert C. Hart becoming the chair of the first official Hospital Board. They would advise on property concerns, finances, public relations and legal matters, as well as anything else that might promote the best interest of the hospital.

On August 30, 1958 Sister St. Camillus with Sister Florence, secretary to Sister Camillus and Sister Fidelis, nurse, and four Sister teachers who were assigned to the new Our Lady of Fatima School took up residence in a 45-foot trailer in Hydro Park, lot 18, facing Highway 108. They lived there until the residence was completed and ready. Sister Florence assisted Sr. Camillus on all the details of the building operation, while Sr. Fidelis prepared for the first patients and was kept busy with the overflow of patients at the Blind River Hospital. People were most gracious and welcomed the Sisters, but to see them driving a car loaned to them by the contractor, Mr. Fassel, was a novel experience for many townsfolk. As one person from the town remarked: “First time I’ve seen a Sister and first time I’ve ever seen a Sister driving a car”.

A WOMAN TO BE RECKONED WITH

At 65 years old most people are thinking of retirement or at least slowing down. Not so for Sister St. Camillus, the first Administrator of St. Joseph’s Hospital!

Sister St. Camillus was born Mary Tierney on September 29, 1893 in Jackvale, Ontario near Ottawa to Timothy and Catherine Tierney. She was one of nine children — 4 girls and 5 boys. Two of her brothers, Frank and Tom were ordained priests. On September 18, 1923, she entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peterborough, taking the religious name St. Camillus who was the patron saint of hospitals, nurses, healing and of doctors. In 1936, she became one of the founding members of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault St. Marie.

Sister St. Camillus became well known as a nurse, head nurse and hospital administrator in hospitals in Thunder Bay, North Bay, and Sudbury before she was appointed to Elliot Lake. She was recognized as a person with down-to-earth-wisdom and vision, and served several terms between 1946 and 1972 as a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph's Congregational Councils.

To St. Joseph's Hospital in Elliot Lake she brought not only her expertise in health care, but also her enthusiasm and enjoyment of pioneer living in the then, remote new mining town. Not only was Sister St. Camillus a woman of wisdom, but her leadership style was full of that ability to see clearly what had to be done and then confronting the problems that arose with her trademark down-to-earth approach. In the days when few women managed corporations and large hospitals, she oversaw the building of St. Joseph's Hospital from the ground up at the same time as administering and seeing to patient care, first in the maternity and emergency, and then in the completed hospital when it opened.

Typical of her no-nonsense style, when asked about her new position as Administrator, she remarked "I hope the debt can be cleared as fast as the hospital is built."

Sister St. Camillus reflected on her appointment to Elliot Lake and her experience years later in her *Memoirs*:

After some careful consideration, Mother St. Bride, Reverend Mother at that time, looked at me and said, "Since you have finished your assignment here in North Bay, would you consider responding to this request?" I gave the subject further meditation, and even though I had reached retirement age, I followed the example of my patron Saint Camillus, patron saint of hospitals, and decided that I would accept it as a challenge, and challenge it would prove to be! I had read that it was the example of St. Camillus, who had his

helpers wear a white coat with a red cross on the sleeve, that the Red Cross derived its name.

To get back to Elliot Lake—the architect took us for a sight-seeing drive to see the lonely place. There was nothing attractive about it. We traveled through dusty roads for 12 miles to reach this famous country spot. There were very few houses, most of which were built for mine managers, and only one central street.

There was a 12-acre area given over to hospital use, at no cost, from the Elliot Lake Council. We were allotted a spot in Hydro Park for trailers. Our Mother General and Council rented a trailer in North Bay and had it in place for use in the park. The parking lot held about 100 trailers and each one was hooked up with hydro, and we all had running water from a tank. We had a gas stove on which to cook and bake. The trailer could accommodate seven Sisters.... The trailers were close alongside each other and we had no telephone. We later learned, after vacating our trailer, that the trailer next door was occupied by a 'bootlegger'! Too late did we find out! The main entertainment was to watch the dogs fight in the driveway in the twilight.⁶

Everyone helped out in this new endeavour. The Sister school teachers willingly worked in the hospital kitchen and laundry after a full day teaching at the school.



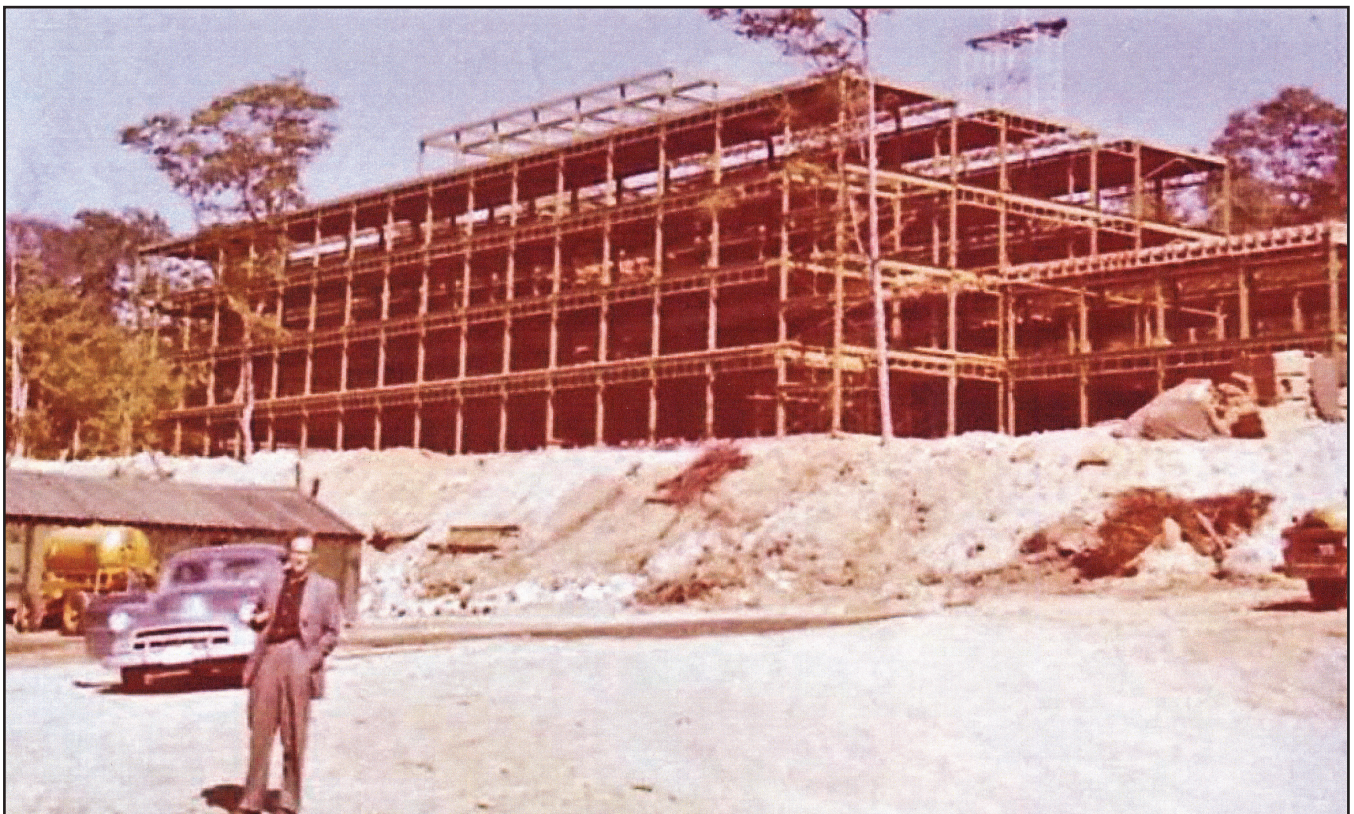
The Sisters arrive at the famous trailer, their temporary home.

St. Joseph's Hospital, Elliot Lake, Ontario

All photos courtesy of St. Joseph's Hospital, Elliot Lake and the Archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie



St. Joseph's Hospital, Elliot Lake Ontario — Architect drawing



St. Joseph's Hospital, Elliot Lake Ontario — Construction 1959

Sr. Roberta Collins recalls being sent to Sault Ste. Marie to learn to drive a car but learned on an automatic. Sr. Camillus had purchased a standard (clutch) and so the Sisters bounced all over the roads. Sr. Camillus thought it wise to send more Sisters to learn to drive!

Sister St. Camillus lived for a hundred years, dying in 1994. Throughout her long life she always maintained a twinkle in her eye, reminding everyone not to take things too seriously.

THE BUILDING PROJECT CONTINUES

At 3:00 PM Sunday afternoon October 26, 1958 the corner stone for the new hospital building was laid by Monsignor J.C. Humphrey of Christ the King Parish in Sudbury in front of a small group of citizens. In his remarks Monsignor Humphrey stressed that a hospital operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph “will make no distinction among patients as to race, colour, tongue, and most important of all, need.”⁷⁷

Dr. James Ruse⁸, Elliot Lake's pioneer doctor, summed up the gigantic undertaking of building and running a hospital with the sincere statement that such a hospital as this “was more than steel and stone.”⁹

It is interesting to note that a copper capsule was inserted into the cornerstone which contains newspaper clippings, photographs of the hospital and the surrounding area, a history of the coming of the Sisters to Elliot Lake and lists of the names of doctors, Advisory Board, Ladies Auxiliary and Trustees of the Board for the Improvement of the District of Elliot Lake. Also a program of the Laying of the Cornerstone ceremonies and a few religious medals were inserted.¹⁰

The first Advisory Board of St. Joseph's Hospital, Elliot Lake consisted of the following members:

- Mr. Robert C. Hart, President
- Mr. Mel Bowman, Vice-President
- Rev. Raymond Farrell, Secretary Treasurer
- Mr. Murray Airth, Chairman of Finance Committee
- Mr. J. Gauthier, Chairman of Property Committee
- Mr. Al Brunet, Chairman of Legal Committee
- Mr. Hal Wright, Chairman of Public Relations
- Mr. Ed Blahey
- Mr. Ray Jones
- Mr. R. Lindberg
- Mr. Bernard Molloy
- Dr. James Ruse

The medical staff was officially appointed in June 1959. They include the following doctors:

- Dr. James Ruse
- Dr. Maurice J. Farrell
- Dr. N. Abell
- Dr. Geoffrey Mizbah
- Dr. R. Antochin
- Dr. J.P. Moody
- Dr. L.J. Casaar
- Dr. P.Y. Morrissette
- Dr. R. Dietch
- Dr. A. O'Brien
- Dr. K. F. Orr
- Dr. Stephen Golesic
- Dr. R.D. Smith
- Dr. P. Joyal
- Dr. G. Lewistsky
- Dr. John A. Thompson

Early in 1959 construction was again altered to provide an emergency department prior to the opening of the entire hospital out of a necessity to accommodate and treat mine injuries. Operation of this service began in May 1959.

FINANCING

The total cost of the hospital building project was \$3.15 million dollars. Funding was provided by the mining companies who donated \$1 million, the federal government who provided \$700,000, the local community fund raising provided \$125,000, a municipal grant provided another \$500,000 and the Sisters borrowed \$825,000 in order to have those funds to contribute.

As the building project progressed, cash flow became an issue from time to time. Money had been pledged but was slow coming in. As a result, in February 1959 a letter was sent to the mining companies who had collectively pledged \$1 million to the project. The mining scene was fluid and some of the mines actually had gone into receivership. The letter sought to update the remaining companies on the finances and the project. By December 31, 1958, \$1,488,094 had already been spent, with an additional \$120,000 projected to be spent in January 1959. The letter stated, “The Sisters hope that perhaps some of the Mining Companies can make arrangements to anticipate their gifts to the Hospital.”¹¹ The letter suggested that the companies honour their pledge either in whole or by monthly or other installments. If, for any

reason, a gift could not be made at this time, the letter hoped the company would consider making a loan to the Sisters which would be repaid in due course by the mining company's gift which could cancel the loan.

These numbers are factual but they don't tell the whole story of the strong bonds that were created among the townspeople with the Sisters, united in a common project to serve the health care needs of the people of Elliot Lake and the surrounding area. All were asked to help and many sacrificed for this greater good. For example, an ad was placed in the local newspaper underneath the article about the hospital opening. The ad asked: "Have you a spare \$1000? The Sisters of St. Joseph are looking for a kind donor with \$1000 to complete an already installed radio system with under-pillow speakers for entertaining bed-ridden patients"



Have You A Spare \$1000

ELLIOT LAKE — The Sisters of St. Joseph are looking for a kind donor with \$1,000. The objective? To complete an already installed radio system which will provide hours of entertainment for bed-ridden patients.

The under-the-pillow speakers have already been put in each room. All that is needed is a central station which can be connected into the system to provide radio or recorded entertainment.

Anyone have a thousand dollars they don't need? If you do, see Sister Michaela at the hospital.

OPENING OF SAINT JOSEPH'S GENERAL HOSPITAL

St. Joseph's General Hospital was officially opened at 3:00 PM on September 12, 1959.

After construction was completed, Mr. Anthony Fassel, the building contractor, reported that a lot of materials and man hours went into a project of this magnitude. By his reckoning the construction used about "200,000 bricks and another 200,000 tiles, 1,500 tons of cement, hundreds of miles of pipe and electrical wire, and a great deal of elbow grease."¹² He estimated that the amount of work needed to complete the job would have been the full time work of 300 employees working for a full year. In all, 30 sub-contractors worked on the site.

A letter from Leslie M. Frost, Premier of Ontario was sent September 17, 1959 extending his regrets for not being able to attend the opening ceremonies. In his



Tom Rogers, who later became a board member of the hospital, remembers when the hospital was being built. He and some neighbourhood boys were playing at the construction site when a loud voice from above wanted to know what they were doing there. When they looked up they saw Sister Camillus walking along the second floor steel girders calling down to them. Naturally, they ran away as quickly as they could!

letter he praises the work of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

This is just another of the many services which your Order of the Sisters of St. Joseph has undertaken in Northern Ontario during the last three quarters of a century. Your work in the hospitals, in Homes for the Aged, and in the schools has done much to further progress in the north."¹³

The program for the *Opening Ceremony* was as follows:

1. Welcome by R.C. Hart, Chairman of the Board
2. Music selections ~ Choir of Christ the King Church, Sudbury
3. Dedication of the Hospital by his Excellency Most Rev. Alexander Carter D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie
4. Remarks by the Honourable Robert MacAulay, Minister of Energy and Resources of Ontario
5. Remarks by Dr. P.B. Rynard, MPP, Member of Simcoe
6. Remarks by the Honourable Robert Winter, President of the Rio Tinto Mining Company of Canada
7. Remarks by Mr. Stephen B. Roman, President of Consolidated Denison Mining Ltd.
8. Cutting of the Ribbon by Mr. Stanley Martin, President of the Canadian Hospital Association who used a golden scalpel



Carl White (who years later became President and CEO of St. Joseph's Care Group in Thunder Bay) recalls that his family moved to Elliot in 1958. "They were building the hospital at the time and we used to make good spending money by going there to collect pop bottles. We took our shoes off at the door and went into the building in sock feet. I seem to recall someone used to monitor the door so we complied. As young guys at that time we were quite terrified by Sisters so would never break the rules.

My dad gave three days of pay as a donation to help build the hospital. The company matched that amount so little wonder people feel ownership of that building. On special occasions we used to go as a family to the hospital cafeteria for supper. It was the best place in town to eat at the time. First time I ever ate grapes as you could buy a dish of them in the cafeteria. Back in those days we never had grapes at home."

9. Presentation of the key by Mr. J.B. Langley, Architect, to Mother St. Bride, Mother General
10. Final musical selection.

The opening ceremonies were followed by a tour of the new hospital, ending with a reception hosted by the Women's Hospital Auxiliary.

Mr. Robert C. Hart, had played a significant part in the development of the fledgling town of Elliot Lake and the establishment of the hospital. His work completed, he resigned from the board as Chair in August 1961 so that he could take up a new mining position in Toronto. About 250 people gathered at the Collins Centre to bid farewell to Mr. Hart. A few days prior, the Sisters hosted a special meal to honour him "for he has meant more to us than just a position as Chairman of the Advisory Board – though this in itself has been tremendous enough....It is this combination businessman/friend whom we honour this evening."

REGISTERED NURSING ASSISTANT (RNA) PROGRAM

In 1964, St. Joseph's General Hospital opened a 10-month training program for Registered Nursing Assistants (RNA) on Hutchison Avenue. The inauguration of the program was initially supervised by Sister St. Leo (Sister Leona Marchand). The founding Director was Mrs. Norma Clarke, who worked until

Sister Leona could assume her duties as Program Director, a position she held from 1965-1985. Mrs. Hilda Russell acted as secretary for many years. Mrs. Diane Trussler was Director from 1985 until the school closed in 1993.

A minimum of Grade 10 was required for admission, however, most graduates from the first class had Grade 12 before applying. The first school building was at 113 Hutchinson Avenue which had makeshift classrooms and a basement that was “laid out as a simulated hospital ward” where the students learned the “art of making up beds for all types of medical and surgical patients.”¹⁴ Theoretical studies continued until December when the students began further and more advanced practical training in the wards of the hospital.

Each student received \$70 per month while in training to defray the cost of room and board while studying. Twelve young women from Elliot Lake, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie and the North Shore were among the first class to receive their certificates. In 1964 a starting salary for an RNA graduate was estimated to be about \$260 or more a month.

The Official Opening of the new building, a portable “Butler building” behind the hospital, occurred on May 22, 1965. It was “airy and attractive” and “equipped with modern hospital beds, audio visuals and a comfortable lecture room. There is a library, a restful lounge for trainees and private offices for Sister St. Leo and a head nurse.”¹⁵ Applications for the second year class had been received from as far away as the Philippines and Hong Kong, but these applications depended on the person’s ability to receive the proper permits from Immigration Canada. Two male students from Trinidad had received the proper visas and had been enrolled in the second year program.

In 1993, the Ministry of Health decided to discontinue the funding for the hospital based RNA program and move it to Sault College. In the 29 years it was in operation 524 RNA students graduated from the RNA program at St. Joseph’s Hospital in Elliot Lake.

The first woman ambulance attendant, Nellie Baczyk, was hired by St. Joseph’s Hospital in 1979. Nellie had completed the RNA course in 1973-1974. She worked as an RNA and on the ambulance and also took an interest in the safety department from Rio Algom Mines.

EXPANSION

In 1983, on September 9th a date that coincided with the hospital’s 25th Anniversary there was an official opening of the hospital’s expanded facilities—emergency, radiology, laboratory, coronary intensive care units—a total of 35,000 additional square feet.

Construction of the expanded services began in February 1982, the contract awarded to *Newman Brothers Construction Company* of St. Catharines. The expansion was a \$6 million project and while the Ministry of Health contributed \$4 million, the community had to raise the remaining \$2 million for this expansion.

ST JOSEPH’S HOSPITAL AUXILIARY

The first meeting of the Women’s Auxiliary occurred on May 7, 1958 at Central Public School, the only building of permanent construction in Elliot Lake at the time. The cost of membership was \$1.00 a year. As soon as the hospital was constructed the auxiliary began a fund-raising campaign to buy equipment for the hospital through sales at the new gift shop and various other functions held at the Collins Hall. The auxiliary joined the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario the same year.

In 1973, the Women’s Auxiliary changed its name to the Hospital Auxiliary when men began to join the Auxiliary, thus becoming an active, grassroots, and community-based organization that supported the health care needs of Elliot Lake.

Since its foundation the cost of a yearly Hospital Auxiliary membership has risen to \$5.00 a year. The auxiliary continues to meet every third Monday of the month in the Hospital Cafeteria from September to May and boasts over a hundred members. Over the years the auxiliary has raised approximately one and a half million dollars which has been used to purchase needed equipment for the hospital.¹⁶

THE CAMILLUS AND OAKS CENTRE

In 1984 Sister Jean Doyle responded to concerns expressed by Denison Mines, Rio Algom and other major employers in Elliot Lake regarding high rates of alcoholism and drug addiction in the area. As a result, the Camillus Centre, the first Addiction Treatment Services in Elliot Lake, opened in the former nurses residence at St. Joseph’s Hospital on March 8th, 1984. The Mines and the local United Steel Workers Union were very

supportive of the struggling Camillus Centre and in 1987 the Ontario Ministry of Health finally initiated a funding formula and operational budget for the Centre.

In the Fall of 1989 the Ontario Ministry of Health announced that it was expanding addiction services in Elliot Lake and the previously submitted Camillus Centre Detox proposal was accepted by the government. A 1990 feasibility study, commissioned by the Administrator Sr. Sarah Quackenbush and the Board of Directors, had recommended the establishment of a number of new programs for Elliot Lake as well as the expansion of the Camillus Centre. In 1991 the Ministry of Health accepted these findings and committed one million dollars for capital construction of the new facility with an additional one million dollars in annual operational funds.

The former Oaks Hotel was approved as the new site for these services: an expanded Camillus Residential Treatment program (with double the capacity, i.e. 50 beds), the Oaks Withdrawal Management Services (monitored medical detoxification) sponsored by the Hospital and a partnership with the Elliot Lake Family Life Centre (out-patient youth and seniors programs) separately funded by the then Ministry of Social Services. The irony of the situation was not left unnoticed—that a former hotel and pub was now a centre to help those suffering from addictions. However, thus was the nature and resiliency of the people of Elliot Lake.

The green light to proceed was not received until 1993. The city of Elliot Lake had seized the Oaks Hotel for back taxes and turned it over to St. Joseph's Hospital for the project. Construction was initiated for the \$3 million renovation of this former hotel into a 42,000 square foot modern health care facility for the treatment of drug and alcohol addictions. Bonnie Jean Wilson was hired as a project manager to oversee the Oaks Centre



reconstruction. The contractor was Gerry Dufresne of *Tribury Construction Limited* from Sudbury, Ontario. Of the \$3 million construction cost, \$2 million was provided by the Ontario Hydro Elliot Lake Economic Diversification Fund. The architect for the project, Blaine Nichols, of *Nichols, Yallowerga Bélanger Architects* remarked that the challenge was “to redevelop an abandoned rundown hotel into a modern community building.”¹⁷

The *Official Opening Ceremonies* took place on September 20, 1994, with Roland Aube, the Chair of the Board of Trustees acting as the Master of Ceremonies. The blessing was conducted by Bishop Bernard Pappin. The ribbon cutting ceremony was shared by Sr. Mildred Connelly, General Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Honourable Shelly Martel and Mayor George Farkouh.

Many donated to the expansion of the Camillus Centre and the new Oaks location including corporations, local service clubs, the Camillus Centre Alumni and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie.

Camillus Centre Directors: (located at the former nursing residence)

- Sr. Jean Doyle 1984 – 1989
- Sr. Mae Kierans 1989 – 1995

Oaks Centre and Camillus Centre Administrators*

- Art McCord ~ Appointed Director of the new detox from 1995 – 2002.
- Jim Ng ~ Appointed first Administrator of The Oaks itself after it opened in 1995
- Debbie Milne ~ Manager of the Camillus Centre from 1997 – 2005
- Ralph Regis ~ Director of the detox and Camillus Centre) from 2010-2018
- Barbara Ridley ~ Director of the detox and Camillus Centre from 2018 to present.

* The list of Administrators/Directors & managers was prepared using files from the HR department of the hospital and the memory of some of the former CEOs. It is as accurate as could be determined at this time, however, the more important purpose of the list is to acknowledge and honour those who worked to make this treatment centre a vibrant reality.

ST. JOSEPH'S MANOR

As a town, Elliot Lake fell on a particularly challenging time in the early 1990s when the last mines ceased operations and closed for good. It could no longer be dubbed a "mining town." Since then, and with considerable success, the town promoted itself as a retirement community hoping to attract seniors looking to stretch their retirement savings.

Elliot Lake Retirement Living, a not-for-profit organization responsible for marketing the city to 50-plus retirees, manages more than 1,500 units of rental properties once owned by the area's mining companies. Rents ranged from \$600 a month for a two-bedroom apartment to \$875 a month for a three-bedroom home.¹⁸ They were successful and soon the senior's population of Elliot Lake was one of the largest per capita in the province.

This success also highlighted an urgent unmet need in the area for a long term care home. The growing population of frail and elderly citizens exceeded those that could be provided for in private homes or appropriately met in an active treatment hospital.

Sr. Sarah Quackenbush and the Board of Directors prepared the initial groundwork to meet this need and planning for the new Manor began in earnest in 1995. However, the project did not get off the ground until the MOHLTC (Ministry of Health and Long Term Care) proposed 20,000 new long term care beds in the province as a whole. St. Joseph's Manor subsequently applied for 80 beds but was awarded only 32, however, shortly afterwards the ministry awarded an additional 32 bed for the proposed home. Construction began in 2001. The architectural firm was *Nichols, Yallowerga Bélanger Architects* and construction of the \$9 million project was undertaken by *Kona Builders Ltd.* of Sudbury.



With a great deal of consultation from the management team of the hospital and the board, St. Joseph's Manor opened its doors in November, 2002. Again the Sisters helped to finance this much needed facility.

St. Joseph's Manor Administrators

2002 - 2013	Susan Clayton
2013 - 2017	Wilma Flinkert
2017 to Present	Cynthia Farquhar

THE CATHOLIC HEALTH SPONSORS OF ONTARIO (CHSO)

Around 1996, in the face of diminishing resources and personnel, a movement began among some Religious Congregations to look for an alternate way to continue to sponsor the Catholic health care institutions they had founded. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie (founders and sponsors of St. Joseph's General Hospital, Elliot Lake), along with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, the Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception from Pembroke, with the help of the Catholic Health Association of Ontario came together to develop a new model of Catholic Sponsorship in order to continue the legacy of their Founding Sisters and to strengthen existing Catholic health care. As a result of this collaboration, The Catholic Health Corporation of Ontario (now the Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario) came into being in 1998.

In the law of the Catholic Church (Canon Law) this new sponsorship form is called a Public Juridic Person, a term used to designate those officially entrusted with a mission of the church. This ensures that a health care organization participates in the name of the church with the full authority of the church. Since the inauguration of the Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario, three other Religious Communities have transferred the sponsorship of their respective institutions to CHSO sponsorship.

Today 17 health care organizations comprising of 34 separate institutions share a common bond of excellence, quality and compassion, continuing the legacy of their pioneering Sister founders. As an incorporated body the CHSO has defined responsibilities under Canon Law, Civil Law and the Federal Corporations Act.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie continue their involvement in St. Joseph's General Hospital, Elliot Lake by having a representative of the Sisters as an ex-officio

voting trustee on the board and by having two Sisters as members of the Board of CHSO, the new sponsoring entity.

60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

On Monday, April 8, 2019, St. Joseph's General Hospital celebrated its 60th anniversary of serving the public's health care needs. The anniversary event began with a Mass celebrated in the hospital chapel by Bishop Marcel Damphousse of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie. They were joined by former CEOs Sister Sarah Quackenbush and Mike Hukezalie. Following the Mass, there was a luncheon in the hospital cafeteria which served about 42 people.

At the luncheon a few of the dignitaries addressed the group in the cafeteria, including Bishop Marcel Damphousse, Greg Humbert, of the Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario, Sister Sarah Quackenbush, as well as Pierre Ozolins. Also present was Sheila Hoo, grandniece of Sister St. Camillus, the founder and first administration of St. Joseph's General Hospital in 1959. While the actual anniversary date for the official opening of St. Joseph's General Hospital was in September of 1959, Ozolins remarked that their aim was to mark the anniversary closer to the Feast of St. Joseph, which is March 19th.

Sister Bonnie MacLellan, General Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie, was unable to attend the anniversary. However, she sent a speech that was read by Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie General Counsel member Sister Bonnie Chesser.

“Today, we celebrate not only the 60th anniversary of St. Joseph's (General) Hospital. We celebrate 60 years of relationship; 60 years of commitment; and 60 years of service. We celebrate the administration and leadership of the hospital over the years, including Sister Camillus, Sister Sheila; Sister Miriam Downey, Sister Marjorie Shannon, Sister Sarah Quackenbush – with our first lay administrator, Mike Hukezalie, followed by Pierre Ozolins. We also celebrate today the development of the Camillus Centre. Like the genesis of the hospital, which began at the request of the mining companies, the chemical dependency rehabilitation centre, later to be renamed the Oaks, was initiated at the request of the mining companies. Recognizing that chemical dependency is an illness requiring treatment, the centre was opened in 1984, and appropriately named after the builder of the hospital – Sister Camillus.”



To honour the 60th Anniversary of the hospital and the lasting legacy of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie, a wall-mounted display panel about the hospital's first Administrator, Sr. Camillus, was permanently placed in each of the three organizations.



Left to right: Ms. Cynthia Dwyer, SJGHEL Pastoral Care/Mission Integration, Rev. Anthony Man-Son-Hing, Pastor, Mr. Greg Humbert, Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario, Chief Elaine Johnson SJGHEL Board Chair, His Excellency Marcel Damphousse, Bishop of Roman Catholic Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie, Mr. Pierre Ozolins, SGJHEL Chief Executive Officer, Ms. Connie Free, SJGHEL Chief Nursing Executive.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sister Mae Kierans, CSJ, Archivist of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie.

Sister Trina Bottos, CSJ, St. Joseph's Hospital Board Director and Designate for the Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario on the local board. Grateful for her initial research and summary of the history of the hospital.

Pierre Ozolins, Chief Executive Officer, St. Joseph's General Hospital Elliot Lake.

Cynthia M. Dwyer, Manager Pastoral Care/Mission Integration/Hospital Volunteer services. St. Joseph's General Hospital Elliot Lake.

Sheila Hoo, Elliot Lake Resident and grandniece of Sr. St. Camillus, CSJ.

ENDNOTES

1. *A City is Born ... Elliot Lake*. Page 2. The author and source of this booklet are unknown. However, there is a reference on page 10 to the construction of an upcoming hospital in 1957 so the booklet must have been written before that time. "A hospital of up to 100 beds is planned and construction should start late in 1957. It will be financed jointly by the federal, provincial, and municipal governments, the mines, and public subscription."
2. The Town of Elliot Lake website: <http://www.cityofelliottlake.com/en/cityhall/history.asp>.
3. *As the Tree Grows, Celebrating 100 Years of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Peterborough, 1890-1990*. 1993, Pages 2-3.
4. Various documents in the Archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie.
5. Much of the material used to write this history comes from documents, letters and notations in the Archives of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie at their Motherhouse in North Bay, Ontario.
6. *Memoirs of Sister St. Camillus*. September 21, 1989. Copy obtained from Mrs. Sheila Hoo, grandniece of Sr. St. Camillus who moved to Elliot Lake in July 2012 after she retired from teaching at St. Mary's Separate School in Huntsville, Ontario.
7. *The Elliot Lake Standard*. Tuesday October 28, 1958.
8. Obituary. Ruse, Dr. James L. (U of T Medicine, Ph. D Endocrinology, McGill 1965) Peacefully at Princess Margaret Hospital on May 5th, 2003. Beloved husband of Jean. Loving father of Carol and her husband Jim. Greatly missed by loving grandsons Scott and Greg. Lovingly remembered by Millie Umehara. Survived by his two brothers John and Gordon Ruse and their families. Jim began his medical career in family practice in Elliot Lake before returning to Toronto where he worked in medical research. *The Globe and Mail*, 2003-05-07.
9. *The Elliot Lake Standard*. Tuesday October 28, 1958
10. Ibid.
11. Letter by Fasken, Robertson, Aitchison, Pickup & Calvin: Barristers and Solicitors (Toronto) to the mining company on behalf of Mother St. Bride. February 19, 1959. Copy found in the Archives of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie at their Motherhouse in North Bay, Ontario.
12. *The Elliot Lake Standard*. Thursday September 10, 1959.
13. Letter from Mr. Leslie M Frost, Premier of Ontario. September 17, 1959. Copy found in the Archives of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie at their Motherhouse in North Bay, Ontario.
14. *The Elliot Lake Standard*. Circa 1965.
15. *The Elliot Lake Standard*. Circa 1965.
16. Source: Geraldine Robinson, President of the St. Joseph's Hospital Auxiliary, Elliot Lake. August 2019.
17. *The Elliot Lake Standard*. 8-page Special Supplement "Grand Opening Oaks Centre. Tuesday September 20, 1994.
18. Jennifer Lewington. "Retirement Property: Elliot Lake offers simple, rugged beauty – and affordability for seniors." Special to *The Globe and Mail*. Published February 19, 2014 (Updated May 12, 2018)<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-investor/retirement/elliott-lake-offers-simple-rugged-beauty-and-affordability-for-seniors/article16934231/>

APPENDIX ONE St. Joseph's Hospital Administrators



Sr. St. Camillus (Mary Tierney)
1958-1961



Sr. M. Sheila (Kathleen O'Loughlin)
1961-1968



Sr. Miriam (Margaret Downey)
1968 – 1974



Sr. Marjorie Shannon
1974-1987



Sr. Sarah Quackenbush
1987-1999



Mr. Mike Hukezalie
1999-2015



Mr. Pierre Ozolins
2015 - 2021



Mr. Jeremy V. Stevenson
2021 - Present

APPENDIX TWO

How to Buy an Elevator¹

The Kind of Leader that Sr. Camillus Became

by John Dunn²

Sister Camillus was born Mary Tierney at Fallowfield, Ontario (which is now part of the city of Ottawa). She lived for one hundred years and six months. In all that glorious span of years and months, nothing that she ever accomplished happened quite the way anyone else would have anticipated, given the like circumstances, and not because an insouciant younger generation might declare that she did things unpredictably, 'right off the wall'.

Not at all. Those who knew her best realized that a measure of practicality and careful consideration marked her every enterprise, and put a stamp into its completion in much the same way carbon content characterizes high quality tool steel.

Take for instance, the day when she came unexpectedly to Toronto to buy an elevator for St. Joseph's Hospital in Port Arthur, Ontario (now Thunder Bay). Sister Camillus was then 'the person in charge' at the hospital — Chief of Everything — chief of nursing, director of finance, manager of maintenance, chief operating engineer, handling every other aspects of managing a hospital in her spare time. In a letter to me 'somewhere in England' with the Canadian army in wartime, Marie, Sister's godchild and niece, wrote telling me that before eight o'clock one morning in January, 1944, she had answered the telephone in her apartment on St. Joseph Street in Toronto and in surprise heard a familiar voice say: "Marie, it's Sister Camillus."

"Sister, what a wonderful surprise," exclaimed Marie. "Where are you?"

"I'm in Toronto. I've just arrived from Port Arthur."

"In Toronto! What are you doing in Toronto?"

"I'm here to buy an elevator."

"You're buying an elevator?" Laughter at such a bizarre notion could have started a Charlie Chaplin

sketch of a nun and her niece getting started in the elevator business.

"Yes," Sister Camillus confirmed the reason she was in Toronto. "And since I'm alone this time, I wondered if you'd be able to find time to accompany me on this business. It might take most of the day."

"Yes, I can. I'd be glad to." Marie replied.

"I'm glad to hear that. Let me just come up to your place then and make a few telephone calls, and we can begin our business from there. Would that be all right?"

"Certainly.. I'll be waiting for you."

Once Sr. Camillus arrived at the apartment she telephoned the Otis people, and explained that she was in Toronto for the purpose of buying an elevator for the Sisters' new hospital in Port Arthur.

At ten o'clock a long sleek Cadillac limousine with a uniformed chauffeur at the wheel drew up in front of the apartment building on St. Joseph Street, and a very nice young man came to the apartment to announce that he would be happy to escort Sister Camillus and Marie on a tour of the city and give them first hand experience of Otis quality in elevators. They set off for the Toronto Western Hospital where they rode up and down, in Otis elevators exclusively. That led to further demonstrations of Otis' quality at the Toronto General. Each new up and down offered an additional note of improvements in the technology of getting up

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1. Although this story transpired when Sr. Camillus was administrator of St. Joseph's Hospital in Port Arthur, Ontario (Thunder Bay) it provides a fitting demonstration of the kind of woman and leader she was.
 2. The author of this story, John Dunn, was the husband of Sr. Camillus' niece and goddaughter, Marie Dewan Dunn.

and down, and as the day wore on, listening to the manufacturer's representative extolling the merits of one versus another installation for hospital use.

At three-thirty in the afternoon, when it seemed they had covered the Otis scene with a blanket and the day was about finished, the nice young man seemed of a sudden to lose his aplomb. His enthusiasm went damp.

"Is that it, then?" Sister Camillus asked him.

"Well," said he haltingly, "Maybe yes, Sister, and maybe no. You see," he fumbled for words, "The very latest improvement in elevators for hospitals is a self-leveling device. You know how awkward it is when the cage comes to a floor and the elevator stops an inch or two lower or higher than the floor where you're stopped."

Sister Camillus nodded, quite aware of those awkward occurrences.

"Now we've got a self-leveling device which stops the cage right at the level you want, and makes it easy to bring patients from the operating room into recovery, and even allows the staff to move patients from one floor to another as they improve. We'd like to have you see this device at work too."

Sister nodded in agreement with the advantages to be had in the self-leveling device. "I understand," she said. "Is there some place we can see it?"

Distress in the nice young man reached the acute stage. "Yes, there is" he managed and almost choked... "It's just that there's only one in Toronto right now, and, well it's quite central too. On Dundas."

He lapsed into silence.

Sister Camillus offered palliative care. "Where on Dundas?" she asked.

"The O'Keefe's Brewery," he confessed shamefacedly.

A pause lasted five seconds, and again Sister's instinct for palliative care broke in. "Well, what are we waiting for?" she responded.

Raised eyebrows in the lobby of O'Keefe Brewery greeted the nun in her full habit, regimentals of black and white trailed by her niece and the Otis man.

Little groups of men in animated conversation suddenly stopped talking, their words choked off, and replaced by a stunned silence. Men watched silently, staring open-mouthed as the Otis man escorted a nun and her niece across the foyer and boarded the new elevator.

A generically neutral door closed on them. The three rode up and down, back up and down again, and because it was shift change time, with working men coming on duty and others leaving, the elevator stopped multiple times on different floors. The self-leveling device proved itself a boon in the brewery. Doors opened to admit brewery workers, whose naturally ebullient temperaments went silent as if flash-frozen. The Great Silence in the Trappist monastery at Oka would have been pandemonium compared to the stillness in the self-leveling elevator in the O'Keefe sanctuary. Men removed their hats as if warned by an inner voice that their days were numbered. Sister thought Toronto had become a place of many wonders. The self-leveling scene enraptured Marie. The Otis man rejoiced that his device instilled muffled quiet akin to the presence of the Almighty.

One brewery worker escaping the cage at the 1200 foot level wiped his brow immediately and hissed into the ear of a waiting union steward "Do you know what I've just seen in that elevator?"

The door of the cage closed before the steward's reaction could be assessed for accuracy, but later report had it that his retort hopped, skipped and jumped up from the Mediterranean to land at Lake Ontario. There, after a deep breath the steward enquired. "Dante's 'Inferno', maybe?"

At five o'clock the limousine drew in again to the parking space at the curb in front of 26 St. Joseph Street and Sister Camillus and Marie returned thanks to Otis for the courtesy of the Cadillac and all the advice they had received about elevators.

The streak of practicality in the Tierney genes broke out in Marie's wonderment. Back inside the apartment she enquired about the cost of an elevator for a hospital. "How much would it cost to buy an elevator for your hospital in Port Arthur?"

"Somewhere between fifteen and twenty thousand dollars," said Sister Camillus.

"And do you have that kind of money?" asked her practicality-driven niece.

"Oh no," Sister Camillus laughed. "Not at all."

"Then what will you do?" asked Marie, desperation writ all over.

"We leave that kind of thing to St. Joseph," replied Sister. "He provides."

A year later a celebration brought about a family gathering which also was held in Toronto. It gave Sister Camillus and Marie an occasion for reminiscence about the special day they'd spent on Toronto elevators. "Did St. Joseph ever come through with money for your elevator in Port Arthur?" Marie enquired.

"Oh yes, of course," Sister said, adding "Self-leveling device and all." And, seeing the puzzlement in Marie's eyes, Sister added "As the men in the family say, 'No sweat'."



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Greg J. Humbert
Foundations Editor

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