

222,246 hours: Ambulance Volunteers

The Eagle Lake Ambulance Corps, a unit of the Colorado County Volunteer Emergency Corps (CCVEAC) was born on November 11, 1973 after a long "labor" which involved people from all segments of the community.

Faced with no ambulance service when the local funeral home was forced to discontinue its service, 31 concerned citizens banded together to fill the void. Even before the ambulance arrived, the group was gearing up with First Aid and Emergency Care

Attendant courses to prepare them for a new roll — pre-hospital emergency care.

With the encouragement and leadership of Dr. Raymond Thomas, the fledgling group went on to attain Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training in 1975, finishing in-hospital rotations at John Sealy in Galveston in May of that year.

A second EMT course was held in Eagle Lake in May, June and July of 1979. Dr. Jose Ugarte was coordinating for this course with lecture assistance from Dr.

Thomas and Dr. Curtis Laughlin. A doctor must give all of the medical lectures in an EMT course.

A great many people were of the opinion that a volunteer service would not work in Eagle Lake, but while many have come and gone through the ranks over the past nine and one half years, the group still retains six of its charter members.

Those charter members who still are active are Jim Clipson, JoAnn Gertson, Carolyn (Rosprim) Noska, Joe Herbert McCreary, and Bill and Emily Stiles.

Most of the time the number of attendants averages between 25 and 30. The only real "problem" area is that of daytime scheduling. Some of the members are farmers or are in farm related fields which means they are out of paper range during the day.

Others have jobs which they cannot leave during working hours.

"803" is usually manned by three attendants, but sometimes it has been necessary to use two-attendant crews. Due to the planting of crops, attending and harvesting them and

vacations there simply are not enough people to support 3-attendant crews. There is a constant need for daytime people; there is a constant appeal to anyone who can give even one day each week to join the Corps in their service to the community.

The people on the ambulance crews are quick to acknowledge a great debt of gratitude to various employers over the years who have generously allowed employees to "go" when the pager called. The volunteers, with this support from not only employers,



but families, law enforcement agencies, and the fire department, had logged 2871 calls by December 31, 1982. This represents a total of 222,246 on duty hours of all the attendants over the years.

Those charged with actually manning the unit are not the only segment of the community actively involved. An emergency call for an ambulance goes to a "Red Phone" at the nurses station at Eagle Lake Community Hospital. A member of the nursing staff receives the call and sets off the pagers carried by the duty crew.

It is up to that person to get the pertinent information to pass on to the crew, who are never more than five minutes from the ambulance. On occasions when Unit 803 is out of service or on a transfer to Houston or Galveston, the Eagle Lake Volunteer Fire Department not only makes a back-up unit available but provides a driver as well.

They had a stretcher clamp installed and the Ambulance Corps put the old stretcher in the F.D. unit when a new one was purchased for the primary unit.

This is a community ser-

vice organization and the members are proud to serve when they can. In order to keep skills equal to the task, a training session is held on the fourth Thursday of each month. While the Texas Department of Health, EMS Division, went to four-year certification last year, Unit 803 will continue to hold a 50 hour course every two years as has been the practice in the past.

Each member knows the next call may be to pick up a member of his own family. "Skills" unused, can deteriorate and we want to be ready!

VOLUNTEERS TO BE PRAISED

The volunteers of the Eagle Lake Ambulance Corps and the Eagle Lake Volunteer Fire Department indeed are groups to be praised for their dedicated service to the community. The following article was found in clippings loaned to the Headlight while writing these stories, and depicts the feelings of so many citizens in Eagle Lake.

"It is fitting during the Thanksgiving season to express our thankfulness for the time and effort each of you give so willingly as

volunteers of the Eagle Lake Fire Department and Ambulance Corps. We recognize that much training and sacrifice is required not only from each individual on the force, but also from their families and employers as well.

"Our community is greatly blessed by a prevailing spirit of generosity shown by such citizens who always are ready to serve when the need arises. We feel that this is a true application of Christian service."

The letter was signed by the Deacon Body of the First Baptist Church, but represents the feelings of so many other people as well.

HERMAN NOVAK: man to whom the Corps is grateful: Herman Novak, emergency services chief for the City of El Campo, is said to be a man with an overwhelming sense of humor and yet a man who can be deadly serious when it comes to saving lives.

Novak has helped the Eagle Lake Ambulance Corps in many ways through his teaching and his friendship and Corp members wish to extend a big "thank you" to Novak for all his guidance and encouragement.



Left to right standing: Emily Stiles, Bobby Johnson, Paul Krupicka, Michael Barron, Jane Clipson, Carolyn Noska, Trudy McMurrough, Charlyne Spanihel. Left to right kneeling: Bill Stiles, Jim Clipson, Wilfred Luedecke, John Mahalite, Shawn Spanihel, JoAnn Gertson, Charles McMurrough, Helen

Pilkington, Peggy Byrn, June Mahalite. Not pictured: Corps president Lanny Powers, Claudette Powers, Joe Herbert McCreary, Ralph Johnson, Curtis Wilson, Mary Ann Till, Kathy Barron, Lynda and Bill Appelt, and Andy Stiles.

Colorado County Volunteer Ambulance Corp Eagle Lake Unit

"They are there because they Care"



Sponsored by
Dr. Curtis Laughlin & Laughlin Clinic

Recreation center means of relaxation for area residents

The Eagle Lake Recreation Association not only includes the golf course but the tennis courts and park facilities, as well. Although the association sells golf memberships for \$190 to residents and \$100 to non-residents, nonmembers also have a right to use the course as it is also funded by the City of Eagle Lake.

However, while members are not required to pay green fees, nonmembers are charged a green fee of \$5 each time they play. There is no charge for use of the park area, restrooms, or the tennis courts which are managed by the Tennis Association.

One of the major projects which the association is working toward is that of establishing a "pro shop" in the existing club building which would sell equipment as well as supply food.

Brook Ashby, president of the association, said more and more people are coming into Eagle Lake from communities as far away as Houston and seeking membership. This is explained by the fact that facilities in other areas are constantly overcrowded.

Last year's project centered around refurbishing the golf course. They did such major work as recontouring the greens and respraying with Tiff 328 grass. They also installed a new irrigation system. Ashby said the association is constantly trying to improve the quality of the course.

Memberships help pay for a portion of the maintenance on the greens. However, the city con-

The Eagle Lake Recreation Center

is proud to provide recreation facilities for the citizens of Eagle Lake &

Supports the efforts of Revitalize Eagle Lake, Inc.

Professional Services

THE CUSTOM SHOPPE OFFERS *Custom picture framing *Needlework framing *Museum framing/Gallery *Shadow boxes/Window coverings/Custom draperies *Mini blinds/Curtain rods *Custom topdresses *Wallpaper PHONE 234-3011 Eagle Lake Colors chosen in-house	REGULAR MEETINGS: Every Second-Friday Night  Dan Thornton, W.M. H.E. Tate, Sec. Visiting and local brethren are cordially invited and welcome	Zajicek Engineering & Surveying Co. Robert A. Zajicek Registered Professional Surveyor Registered Professional Engineer 732-3780
Veterans of Foreign Wars Meets every third Thurs. 8:00 P.M. Eagle Lake Veterans Center clubhouse R.J. Armstrong, Comdr.	Seaholm Photo Service *Weddings *Parties *Portraits Appointment Only 234-3433	Irving Williams Licensed Plumber Residential & Commercial 234-3122 Eagle Lake

Rev. Didner was key to history of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

The first Catholic families in this area probably came in from Louisiana to work in a sugarmill which was located at Lakeside, a small community in the vicinity of the Waddell-Brunner properties.

A deed on record in the Colorado County Clerk's office (Vol. X, pg. 71) transferring 150 square varas (at Union and Lake streets) for the sum of \$100 to Rt. Rev. E. C. Delaney made in December 1913. Bishop Dubois, Bishop of Galveston, on May 17, 1881, indicates there were Catholic families in the area at that site.

As early as 1888 or 1892 there was Father John Weimar traveling from Bernard to this community to play Mass in private homes; Father Simon Spinnewer, who with six Sisters of the Divine Providence operated two schools at Bernard and Mentz, attended the Catholic families in the Eagle Lake area from 1892 until about 1901.

During the early years of existence the Eagle Lake parish was called Sacred Heart of Jesus and was a mission of the Mentz parish. We know there was a small frame church built sometime prior to 1909, perhaps soon after the acquisition of the Doran property in 1901; however, it was destroyed in the big storm that hit Eagle Lake in September 1900. After that, Mass was said at the Waugh home and Oliver Martin home.

As early as June 1911, Rev. Geo. Montreuil was coming to Eagle Lake to say Mass at the Louis Boudreaux home. Lakeside and later on the second floor of the Schumacher Building. Father Montreuil, an apostolic missionary, is outstanding in this period of the history of the parish.

He had many small parishes, and his zeal was evidenced by the fact that he had twenty-two churches under construction simultaneously; also, his traveling was done by train and on foot. His determination to rebuild a chapel in Eagle Lake was beset by many problems.

He found the church property to be fenced and planted in sorghum, and it took a law suit to obtain from W.E. Bridges on September 19, 1912, the quit claim deed for Block 61 in the G.W. White Survey (Vol. 48, pg. 307). After obtaining clear title to the land, Father Montreuil set out to raise money to build the chapel, insisting upon having the entire \$2200 before commencing.

The Catholic Extension Society agreed to donate \$500 if the chapel was built in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title of Our Lady of Perpetual Help; the name of the parish was changed from Sacred Heart of Jesus to Our Lady of Perpetual Help on January 22, 1913. He begged the rest of the

balance before allowing a San Antonio contractor to build the red brick church which was completed in August, 1913.

Father Montreuil donated the main altar but there were no other furnishings — actually the inside of the church was not finished. Parishioners built benches, but the interior and other fixtures were not completed until the 1920's.

Mrs. E. C. Delaney made an agreement with Mr. Jacob Moerschell of Jefferson City, Missouri to help sell some of his property at Lakeside. True to his word, Mr. Moerschell donated \$500 to the parish when the land transaction was completed. Mrs. Delaney sought further donations from friends in Houston as well as Eagle Lake until the church was furnished.

Father Montreuil left his Bay City headquarters in May 1914 to return to Canada when his health failed. Apparently the Eagle Lake parish was returned to the jurisdiction of the Mentz parish which had sent priests to minister to the Eagle Lake Catholics intermittently in the early 1900's. In 1915 Our Lady of Perpetual Help was listed as a mission of Mentz, but visitation of priests was sporadic.

With the coming of Rev. George Duda to the Mentz parish in 1921, the needs of the twenty families in the Eagle Lake parish were ministered to more regularly. Father Duda alternated early and late Sunday masses between the two parishes and even managed to hold Rosary and Benediction Services on Friday nights. He worked diligently to complete furnishing the little red brick church.

During the next two decades there was a succession of priests who brought the Sacraments and the Mass to the parishioners, but the local Catholics yearned to have a resident pastor. About 1941 a group of men visited Bishop C.E. Byrne in Galveston to discuss the future of the mission parish. At that time Bishop Byrne appointed the first parish committee: Albert Pustejovsky, treasurer; Raymond Taylor, and John Kearney.

On February 14, 1940, Rev. Francis J. Klass was assigned to the Mentz parish soon after his ordination. This eager young priest, in the short time he was in the communities, did much to dissolve the hard shell of mistrust and misconception for Catholics held by so many of the non-Catholics in the area.

Since there were only about thirty to thirty-five families in the parish at that time, it is evident they formed a minority in the community. His concern for the spiritual welfare of the youth prompted him to form the Catholic Youth Organization. And since the

number of youth in both the Mentz and Eagle Lake parishes was small, he promoted many social activities for the combined groups. During his short pastorate, Father Klass saw the parish grow from about thirty-five families to fifty families. In December of 1941, he enlisted in the Navy as a Chaplain.

REV. DIDNER ARRIVES

On January 10, 1943, Rev. Andrew W. Didner was assigned to the Mentz-Eagle Lake parishes where he would spend the entire twenty-three years of his priesthood. He immediately fell to the task of building a new church space the parish was rapidly outgrowing the small chapel.

The couple of hundred dollars in the building fund started by Father Klass swelled by \$2,345 with a barbecue supper in 1945, followed the next year by a successful parish picnic-rafting which netted over \$6,200. Henceforth, each year there has been a picnic-bazaar benefiting the building fund.

Property on Stevenson Street was purchased in 1945 and the years of dreaming and planning bore fruit on June 26, 1949 when Rev. Louis J. Reicher, Bishop of Austin, blessed the new church. The \$45,000 white stucco church, many priests from throughout the Galveston and Austin Dioceses attended and the Columbus parish choir sang the High Mass of Dedication.

There was further expansion of the parish plant with the purchase of the parish hall, dedicated to St. Madeline Cernal; Didner Hall was built there. Also, the white stucco duplex adjacent to the parish house was bought from Charlotte Sue Colly and converted in a parish hall. In 1978 it was remodeled by the Knights of Columbus for their use. More recent additions include the Rosary and Benediction services, he personally built and directed the work on the parish house and the two parish halls, dedicated to Didner Hall and Andrew Hall in his memory after his death. He installed the air conditioning in the parish buildings and looked after the electrical repairs, as well. He was particularly interested in the youth of the parish and community.

Every Wednesday evening the parish held a Rosary. Benediction services, he instructed the youth in the tenets of their faith. Though dedicated individuals had taught catechism classes throughout the years, Father Didner was the first priest to tend this important aspect of impressionable youth. He explained the Faith so as to dispel fears and untruths circulated against the Church at that time.

Using his talents in electronics, he encouraged youth — whether Catholic or not — to work in the Junior Engineers Club. He conducted inquirers classes regularly and the growth of the parish during his pastorate is testimony to his diligence and zeal.

Rev. Marion Atomanczyk, assistant at Fayetteville, was assigned

administrator of the parish when Father Didner died on January 25, 1966. During the brief six months Father Marion was in the parish he accomplished many things. He implemented the changes promulgated by Vatican II, among them the altar facing the congregation, congregational singing, and greater lay participation. The property adjacent to Didner Hall was purchased during that time.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

From the early days of the parish when Mrs. Herchel taught catechism in her home, the laity has taken an active part in instructing the children. Classes were then held on Saturday mornings for grade schoolers and on week nights for high school students.

Teachers assisting the pastors in the 30's and 40's included Mesdames C.E. Johnson, John Kearney, T.C. Roberts and Misses Mary Jocheitz, Georgia Jocheitz and Charlyne Stephens.

Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament from Incarnate Word Convent in Victoria started teaching 3-week summer classes in June, 1945 and have continued to the present. They provide three Sisters each summer since that time, though the time has been shortened to two-week sessions. Prior to the purchase of the duplex which has been used for Sisters' Quarters, they stayed at the Albert Pustejovsky home and took their noon meals in the parishioners' homes.

As the number of children in the parish continued to increase it became necessary to have more classes. Women who have generously given their time to this project include: Mary Clipson, Pearl Meitzen, Patty Stephens, Charlyne Spanihel, Carolyn Bosgrum, Mary Theunissen, Verne Kuchler, George Nichols, and Dorothy Kuhlfeil. Men of the parish have also taken an active part in the instruction of the older students; they include Eddie Krivacka, L.J. Spanihel, Tam Halbert, Garland McMeans, and Charles Glueck.

ALTAR BOYS

"Henry J. Dostal and Raymond Taylor were the first local altar boys. Father Duda brought servers from Mentz prior to their serving. Young Henry had been trained by the Sisters while his family resided in Weimar so he undertook the task of training the boys in 1949.

Since that time the words "altar boy" have been synonymous with volunteer service from young boys. Assisting at Mass has been

only one of the services they have rendered to the parish. Whether it meant getting to Mass an hour early to light the heaters so everyone else would be a little warm, doing odd jobs with the pastor, or being "runners" at the parish functions, these boys give generously of their time and enthusiasm.

In June, 1962, the Knights of Columbus began to sponsor the Knights of the Altar program in the parish. On June 17 Father Didner invested the original 16 Knights of the Altar in ceremonies at 9 o'clock Mass. Calvin Sommer was the first Grand Knight of the organization and others invested that day included Charles Brasher, Joe Ed Johnson, Phil Kana, David Kuchlerka, Billie Joe Briscoe, Michael Burns, David Ruth, Henry Dostal, Jr., Ralph Gertson, Jr., Sammy Meitzen, Chuck Stephens, Joe Mike Spanihel, Charles Briscoe, and Michael Meitzen.

CHOIR

If there was a choir as an organization prior to 1921 the memory of its service has been lost with the death of pioneer parishioners. In 1921 Addie Miekew traveled from Mentz with Father Duda each Sunday to play for Mass on the Estes pump organ. Reggie Lois Floyd (Mrs. L.W. Stiles), 13-year old daughter of Mrs. Maude Floyd who was directing the choir, took over the position when her family moved into the parish.

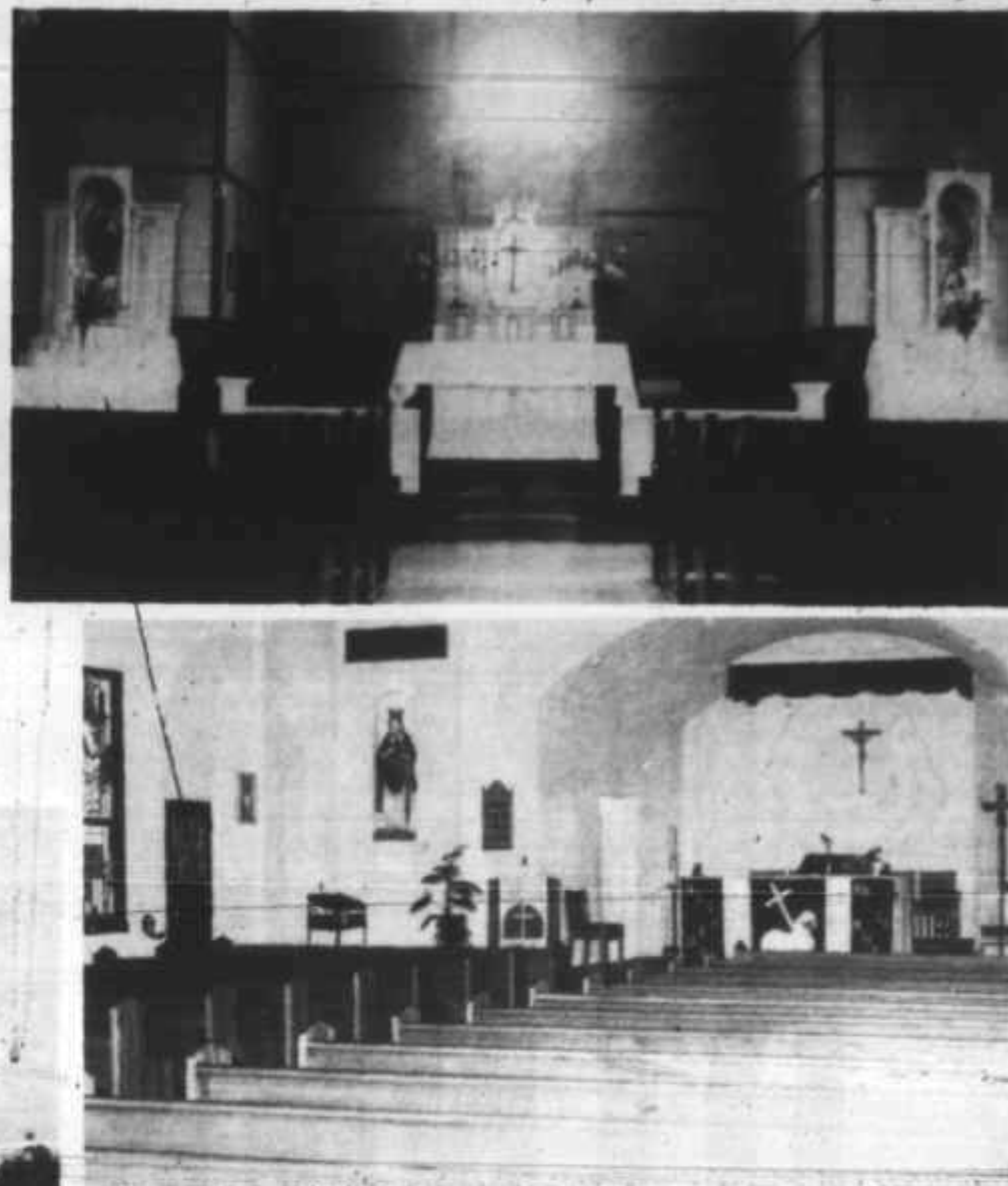
She was so small that Mrs. Floyd and Ruth Theunissen pumped the organ for her while she played. When Mrs. Stiles moved to Eldridge, Mrs. Pearl Adams began playing and continued for a number of years. During this time membership in the choir included many of the young men and women.

In 1939, 12-year old Charlyne Stephens (Spanihel) began playing with the assistance of foot-work by Bill Glaiser and Henry Dostal. Mrs. Martha Roberts was director at that time. It would be impossible to list all the names of those who have served in the capacity of choir member or organist over the years, but the service they have rendered to their parish shall surely be credited to their benefit and is a fitting tribute of their love of God.

In the 1950's a Junior Choir composed primarily of children in elementary grades was begun by Mrs. Spanihel. In 1960 the Jr. Choir began presenting a Christmas Pageant and in 1962 the choir began the annual practice of performing an outside Living Nativity Pageant in cooperation with CIO members.

ALTAR SOCIETY

The Altar Society was organized in 1921 by Rev. H.F. Rop during his brief stay here. Its purpose was to care for the altar and clean the church. Mrs. Joe



At left is the church built by Father Montreuil in 1913 after the first church was blown down by a hurricane.



religious education chairman; Janet Mahalite, budget and finance chairman; Verne Kuchlerka, community life chairman; Wilfred Wick, building and maintenance chairman; Gail Gertson, family life chairman; Mary Ann Wood, youth chairman; Emily Stiles, Altar Society representative; Joe Mike Young, youth representative; Rick Arlt, K.C. representative.

President of the Altar Society is Emily Stiles, Grand Knight of the KC's is Daryl Gertson, and president of the CYO is Joe Mike Young. The current minister is Rev. Ray Widacki.

Rev. Ray Widacki reported to the parishes on February 14, 1982. He has continued to lead the parish Association with the plant as well as the congregation membership. The Hammond 820 organ was purchased in March such after he came.

Father Ray has also increased the number of Lay Ministers by commissioning Randy Burrows, Joe Lee Foster, James Dierschke and Jim Wood.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church has had a long history in the community and one which has proved to grow toward the future.

ORGANISTS

Organists through the years have been Reggie Lois Floyd (Mrs. L.W. Stiles), 13-year old daughter of Mrs. Maude Floyd who was directing the choir, took over the position when her family moved into the parish.

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CURRENT LEADERS

The members of the Church Council are: Jim Wood, president; Ray Odenhaus, president-elect; Phyllis Puenek, secretary; Cynthia Spanihel, treasurer; Betsy Glaiser, liturgical chairman; Jeanne Leopold, Kuchlerka Spanihel.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help CHURCH BAZAAR Sunday, June 26

Barbecue Meal
Raffel
Auction
Booths — Games
Rides for the Kids
Country Store

Dance with music by The Velvets 6 to 10

at the Eagle Lake Community Center 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.