**A History of the Christopher Club   
as published in the 25th anniversary brochure of the   
Knights of Columbus, Maria-Joseph Council 4022**

History of the Christopher Club

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| RELIGIOUS GROUP  EX-VEGAS CLUB HAS A BUYER  *[Excerpts from Dayton Daily News article, February 15, 1965 by Fred Robbins, Industrial Editor]*   "A former Dayton area nightclub, which once presented many of the big names in the entertainment field, may become headquarters for a religous organization.   The Maria-Joseph Home Corp., affiliated with the Maria-Joseph Council 4022 of the Knights of Columbus has acquired an option to purchase the former Vegas Club, Daniel Nagle, President, announced today.   Included in the 90-day option to purchase the property on the north bound lane of S. Dixie Drive, adjacent to the Hills and Dales Shopping Center, are three acres of real estate, a swimming pool and the building which formerly housed the nightclub.   The property is owned by T.C. and H.T. Shank of Fort Wayne, Ind., who purchased it early in 1962 from the founder of the former Racquet Club.   Final decision on the acquisition will be made by mid-April, a Council spokesman said. | Nagle said the property which will be renamed the Christopher Club will be used as a Council home. The swimming pool will be open to members of the Council, with some memberships available to other local Catholic families, he added.   The Council, which has 280 members in Oakwood, Kettering, Centerville and Washington Twp., and will celebrate its 10th anniversary in May, now meets at the Bella Villa Hall on County Line Road."   The above excerpts outlined to the public the proposed purchase of the facility now known as the Christopher Club, K of C Council 4022. It does not in any imagination portray the reams of correspondence, notes, legal papers, and the many man months of effort that went into the preliminary work in reaching this point of acquisition.   Following the option agreement in January 1965, enough enthusiasm for the proposed purchase was generated among the Council members and the public that the Home Corp. was confident that, although an awesome challenge, it was an obtainable goal. |
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| The terms of the option called for a purchase price of $120,000.00, of which $35,000.00 would be paid at the time of exercising the option, $15,000.00 in January 1966, and the balance via monthly payments of $591.00 each.   More preliminaries. We not only had to hold an election to reconstitute the Board of Directors, a multitude of legal details had to be disposed of. Concurrent with this a campaign had to be launched to sell pool memberships and solicit financial help from the membership through a plan to sell 4% interest bearing bonds. | In the first order of business, board members were elected: Daniel Nagle, Pres., Howard Kathmann, V.P., Roland Eichner, Secretary, Shearl Roberts, Treasurer, James Gilvary, William Frost, James Dias, Gene Koop and John Sweeney, Directors. Shortly thereafter, Jim Gilvary had to resign because of the press of business, and was replaced by Larry Marra who was the appointed Chairman of the House Committee. The Board of Directors, G.K. Frank Staley and the general membership staged an all-out effort - brochures were printed, address lists were obtained, and letters by the hundreds were composed and sent to anyone we could think of in an effort to sell pool memberships. Also registered with the State Division of Securities was an issue of 300 Certificates of Indebtedness which were to be sold to Council members. Following these efforts came the momentous night in April, when the Board voted unanimously to take the plunge and give notice of the exercise of the option. Everyone in the room that night felt the weight of every one of those $35,000 squarely on his own shoulders. It was not only a question of money involved but also of the very integrity of the Council and its members. |
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| It was now a mad dash to get the building in shape for rentals and the pool ready by Memorial Day for its first season under the ownership of Council 4022. The premises were in disrepair, having undergone two unsuccessful business ventures, and periods of vacancy, left their mark. The nightclub decor had to be changed. The remnants of commercialism had to be changed to a more sedate, fraternalistic motif. The risque scenes under black lights were no longer appropriate.   No organization could have possibly shown more Christian spirit, more pride, more fraternalism than our members, their families and friends. Brothers with talent and Brothers with no talent came forward giving hours of their time doing skilled, semi-skilled and manual labor to get "our home in order." The first Saturday in May - our first rental, a wedding reception. The facility never looked better even in its palmiest days as an exclusive nightclub. We had begun an era of Columbianism in the Kettering community, one that has been financially and socially successful as you view the club operation on our 25th anniversary and its fifteenth year as the Council meeting place. | Our first major Council affair (we were holding Council meetings even before the purchase agreement was executed) was the 10th anniversary dinner dance, May 15th. The affair was fantastic. The pool had been filled and large candle-lit artificial water hyacinths. Home Corp. president Dan Nagle cut the ribbon which symbolized the official opening of the club, Council 4022 now owned and operated the Christopher Club. The pool opened on Memorial Day 1965 with 115 members, gradually increasing to 135 toward the middle of summer. As the summer wore on, both the club and pool operations began to take shape as we gained experience and the word got around that the Christopher Club was a first class place to hold a function. Rentals were on the increase. The list of organizations making use of the hall was lengthy, but a few were Kimberly-Clark, Krogers, Dayton Ski Club, Dayton Jaycees, Kettering Chamber of Commerce and Vic Cassano Enterprises. Then, as now, Saturday wedding receptions were a steady source of revenue.   Full time manager of the club facilities was Brother Al Mallin; the pool, Mr. Howard Linard. |
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| Trials and tribulations associated with the operation of a plant of the magnitude of ours were monumental and our view of them was probably clouded by ego and the prestige of owning a Council home second to none in the Miami Valley area. Ego and prestige, however weren't paying the rent, utilities, licenses, salaries, etc. It was a continuing struggle on the part of many people to satisfy creditors. Many needed repairs, alterations and renovations were delayed. The grandeur of the decor was beginning to deteriorate, enthusiasm began to wain.   In January 1966, club manager A1 Mallin resigned because of ill health and Brother Bernie Wannemacher was appointed interim manager. G.K. Thomas Antonelli announced effective March 1, 1966, Ray Doran had been engaged as a full time manager replacing Bro. Mallin and relieving Bro. Wannemacher of his interim responsibilities. Mr. Doran came to us highly recommended, having served as club manager at several local clubs, including the WPAFB Civilian Club. Club activities increased, new business was generated. Although operating costs and overhead were high, profits were showing some slight increase. We were meeting our obligations and the Council, through the charity and tolerance of the mortgage holder, was making the $591.00 monthly mortgage payments. | The next seven years, 1966-1973 were not uneventful or business as usual. Initially under Mr. Doran's stewardship the club prospered and it looked as though the lean years were behind us. Not so. Volunteer labor dried up. Council members for the most part became complacent. "Let Ray do it"; he is getting paid a good salary. Payroll soared; paid bartenders, a full time maintenance man, and a part time secretary joined the staff. Expenses were becoming unmanageable. The Christopher Club and Council were going further and further in debt. In fact the situation became so critical that several options were under consideration. Some of these options included bankruptcy, default on the land contract, (interest only was being paid), sell the liquor license, sell the property and salvage whatever assets we could retain. Last but not of least important consideration was the possibility of merging with Council 500, thus providing that Council with a more modern facility. It would assume our financial obligations. Under that arrangement Council 4022 would have probably relinquished its Charter.   In 1973, Glenn (Doug) Cox was elected Grand Knight. He was immediately briefed on the seriousness of our financial position. More serious consideration had to be given to ways of improvement. |
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| A last resort meeting was held. Approximately 15 members attended. They were dedicated to the principal stated at the time of execution of the purchase agreement eight years ago, "It was not only a question of the money involved but also of the very integrity of the Council and its members." Harsh decisions were made. We could no longer afford a paid manager, full time maintenance personnel or stenographic help. We, the members of 4022, did it before and we can do it again. Henceforth, back to the basics. If we want a nice Council home, if we like prestige, then we as members must provide it through work and dedication to the principal stated. To this end many pitched in to make ends meet and to return the Christopher Club to respectability and financial stability. Eighteen months later, with the exception of the mortgage and payment to families wanting to sell their pool memberships, we didn't have one creditor. Sacrifices were great, personal funds were used to keep us from the claims court. | Supplies and paper towels were brought from home. Bar towels were hand laundered. We were buying a dozen, one at a time. With astute leadership by the Board of Directors and Grand Knights in this period the Christopher Club had "turned the corner." No one person can lay claim for this monumental effort, this miracle. It was a collective fraternal effort. However, it would be remiss in any history of the Christopher Club if one Brother Knight was not mentioned by name. As there are many stars in the heaven, all bright, but on any given night one always seems to shine the brightest. In our cadre of stars PGK, Past Home Corp. President, Gene Koop must be recognized. In our time of need of leadership Gene became part time manager, part time maintenance man, part time administrator and general overseer of petty cash, which was the only money available. To him we owe a debt of graditude. Whoever is privileged to continue this historical summary from 1980-2005 I am positive will somehow be influenced by the presence of Brother Koop. |
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| Since the 1973-1974 crisis, the club has been operated/managed by its own members, principally by the Board of Directors elected by the membership. This Board of Directors consists of a President, V.P., Secretary, Treasurer, House Committee Chairman, Buildings and Grounds Chairman and Pool Chairman plus six Directors, making a total of thirteen. Each are elected for a three year term. The immediate PGK is an automatic member. The current GK attends board meetings in an advisory capacity.   In the past six years, 1974-1980, the Board has authorized expenditures of approximately $125,000 for renovation and remodeling projects. Some of the major ones included recarpeting, refurbishing the ladies room by the ladies auxiliary, a new men's room upstairs, (prior to 1974 the men's room was located in the lower level), kitchen, paneling, drapes, and sound system. A major addition was completed in 1975 increasing the capacity of the club by 40% (110 people). Currently, remodeling and updating of the pool area is underway. | In 1979, under GK Ray Mock, a major remodeling program was undertaken in the lower level. The lower level was completely refurbished. New paneling, restrooms, heating and air conditioning, carpeting, TV, recreational equipment and kitchen equipment have been installed. The lower level was dedicated in September as the "Gene Koop Room." It is the official Council meeting and recreational room. There is no interference or inconvenience with rentals or other use. Each member has the lock combination and is encouraged to use the facilities. The GK controls this room and governs its use as he sees fit.   As we look to the 1980's and beyond, the future seems secure. We pledge outstanding service to the Council, Church and community. With this pledge in mind, our long range plans include such things as an expansion of the club to the south, a health facility for members, a gable roof, landscaping the front of the property, replacing wood exterior with decorative masonry walls, new dance floor, installation of another walk-in cooler to accommodate a draft beer system and the possibility of a mini-rise apartment building or shop complex in the northeast corner. Most of all on our "dream list" is a burn-the-mortgage celebration in 1983. |