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C O N T E N T S

This book contains the following order of inter-views:

Father Joseph Lynch

Book 16

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V. 16

This is Father Joseph Lynch, St. Agnes Parish; formerly Assistant .  
Pastor, of St. Gabriel's Parish.

Q. Father; I know that you were very instrumental in bringing out the souvenir edition of the Magazine and, of course, you must have studied up on the history of Canaryville a great deal.

Do you have any story as to how Canaryville got its name?

A. It's kind of lost in the history, we tried to investigate it several times. It would appear one time because there was a piece of land outside the city. It was supposed to have a lot of birds in that area and picked up the name Canaryville.

There are other stories going around which we weren't able to nail down, and we never really got to doing ourselves, but it was just a nickname that somehow it became applied to it and apparently too, Canaryville applied just to one small section of the parish which gradually then became to apply to the whole area, which is under another kind of nickname called the "Village", and the reason it's called the Village, it has tracks on 3 sides. It has the stockyards on the other, so there's kind of a little valley in there, see !

Q. I heard another story that people from County Kerry that moved in there and it was nicknamed from the Kerrys, the Canaries.

A. It could be, as I say, we tried to investigate it. Among the old timers, it all seemd to come out kind of vague. The only thing definite was the name we had, you know, how it sort of got lost back even in their own memories, and some of them had been around there for a long time. I believe there's a man still living in the parish, he's living in the bedroom he was born in and that must be now on to 85 years ago, so that's what you call having roots in an area.

Q. It is!

A. But their memory in some of these things just isn't always that clear. They sort of heard about it when they were young and just carried it out.

Q. I'm interested too in the names of the streets. Apparently these names were all changed at one period of time, and I am wondering whether there was a deliberate choice of street names from the Irish background, like, Bakerboarden, Lowe, and Wallace.

A. I don't know. Out farther south, of course, they say that there is green on one side of Halsted and emerald on the other. Now, if that is anything, I don't know. But the other names -- there was one name that has a bit of a history. I don't know, if and when it was applied to the street but it's Parnell. Apparently, again, this whole story isn't too clear largely because from what we were able to get from it was kind of cloak

and dagger thing. Parnell was on trial apparently for things that he had not done and somehow there was evidence in this country, documentary evidence, that he was innocent. Father Dorney and another Priest -- Father Dorney was the former Pastor of St. Gabriel's Parish, took a vote over to England and presented these documents which completely cleared Parnell. I could be correct on this, but I think Parnell was not a Catholic. See, if you get two catholic priests in those days, quick all of a sudden, you know, this is kind of a truism of its day and apparently it had something to do with the street in the area being named Parnell.

- Q. That's an interesting story for those who are familiar with Irish history. The St. Patrick's Day ceremonies at St. Gabriels had a long tradition. How far back, do you suppose that goes?
- A. We had a picture in the book that we put out for the Diamond Jubilee in 1955 and the picture was of a cast of a St. Patrick's Day Play, which at that time, went back perhaps another 30 years and all the members of that cast when we could contact could tell us, is as far back as they could remember, could tell us, is something, so apparently this is one of those things, a long standing celebrations that they've had and it's apparently one that people afford to, not only the people in the area is all home talent, the people come back outside of the area. It sort of becomes an occasion for people to revisit

the parish. Even to this day, it's true, many of these older parishes, people move out and live outside of the parish for a number of years and yet you ask them "Well what parish are you from" and they tend to say "Well now I live here, but I used to be and that's where I'm really from".

- Q. I get the sense that there is a great deal of local pride, and I'm sure that people from the outside wonder why that should be, that a neighborhood is in the shadow of the stockyards and associated with that smell and rather low cast job should feel so attached to the place.
- A. Low cast job would really be a description of it. There were days when men would work in the yards, I understand, for 12 1/2 cents an hour, eventually good days came and they were getting as high as 17 cents an hour. And a man with 10, 12, children, large families were rather common in the area. The stories, we heard, rather common, were that men would go to the yards and worked maybe two shifts. If somehow he could grab 3, maybe grabbing an hour at a time behind a pile in order to get a little sleep in order to support his family. And yet, it became such an intimate part of their lives, first of all it was a job, and when there's not work too easily available that becomes very important. Apparently Father Dorney had done a favor for the stockyards in helping them keep their present location when the city gradually gave evidence of

building around it. Because of that, they exhibited their gratitude and any man he sent into the yards with a note from Father Dorney, that note guaranteed that man a job, so you can well imagine among the people of the parish he was known as "King of the Yards" and a tremendous affection for him because he was not really their spiritual leader. In many respects, he was their whole life as far as getting a job supporting their families. And because then the yards became such intimate part of their lives, they would have marriages and probably this is what's been done for a number of years. This doesn't sound very romantic, I know, but they would get one of the dead horse carts, or dead animal carts from the yards, bring it and decorate it a little bit and then after the ceremony, the new Bride and Groom, one or both, who worked at the yards, would get out the dead horse cart and proceed to their home where they would have the celebration. Well a dead horse cart just doesn't most seem unlikely a bride's party climbing into a local hearse or something, but that was a close connection they had with the yards,.

Q. Tremendous! What about the relations between the Canaryville side and the Back of the Yards side? Were they sort of like separate worlds or did you feel that there was a co-mingling in a community of some sort?

A. Technically, St. Gabriels was front of the yards. If the wind 'was blowing in your direction, it really didn't make a great deal of difference, and when people referred to Back of the Yards, they're quite commonly thinking of St. Gabriels, as well as the other parishes on the west side of the yards. Today, the term "Back of the Yards" applies from Damen, westward, all those parishes, which are parishes-based largely on nationalities. Now, today, we're getting on second and third generations, last names don't mean that much. Just as St. Gabriels, one time was an Irish parish -- so between Canaryville or St. Gabriels, and parishes which was presently known as Back of the Yards -- there was no close connection. The yards separated them and they could have been in some respects, on two different planets. In both areas their livelihood was in the yards and totally based upon it, but they used to work in close national groups. You would go into one section of the yards and you would hear nothing but brogues, and you go into another section of the yards, and if you didn't speak Polish, or Lithuania, in each section and each groups had their own section, even the road gang for the railroads. One gang would be all Irish and another would be all Italians. These are people that gather together in all national groups. These are the lads from home, wherever home was in the old country and they intended to stay

fairly far apart. So parishes became known, for example; the Irish parish, the Polish parish, and so on. It was only on formal occasions they'd ever call the parish by its proper name.

Q. Yes, and even the services were conducted in the national languages.

A. Correct, except Gallic. There's some people apparently who do in Gallic and still do, but they're comparatively few and I've never heard of a church where they conducted any service in Gallic. But among the people, because the Irish spoke English, but among the other people, these first generation people, even to this day, these are parishes that have, for example; at least, one mass on Sunday which would be a mass in Lithuanian and the sermon is Lithuanian, or a mass in Polish and a sermon in Polish. There's still sufficient number of older people or perhaps newer people from the old country, but the so-called Irish parishes never had that particular difficulty, unfortunately we always had English. And from what I've heard, it just seems to be a difficult language, I'm glad I never had to learn it.

Q. In those older days, was there any sort of friction or hostility, perhaps rivalry between these national groups?

A. Many of them came over from the old country. Not so much that they hated each other, but sort of "my father is bigger than your father" idea, and "we, because were us we're better than you

are, no matter who you are", and even the boys from home, as they would say, would have some discussions among themselves, "one county better than another county" and apparently on a Sunday afternoon, just for the good general fun of it, if you got bored and if one county would decide to have a little fight with another county, it was a nice way to spend a Sunday afternoon battling each other. It wasn't a regular thing but on occasions this would happen and I supposed they all retire to the local Pubs to soothe their woes and quench their thirst in the heat of battle and discuss how the other fellows were, how they were still the greatest and how terrible it was in those days.

- Q. The other day, an old man that has a heart as big as pie was telling me about how he was a fighter of his generation and hardly a week went by that he didn't have a black eye. His mother asked his big brother "has George been in a fight". He said, "well he hasn't had it yet, but he will".
- A. Well, most of the jobs were manual jobs. You lived by muscle in many cases and gradually the longer they're in the country and the more people they knew, this is true of all the nationalities and it is still revolving in our own day and whoever the next group coming in twenty five years from now, they are going to have to start at the bottom of the ladder and they're going to have all the muscle jobs and gradually as they get to

know people they are going to get them in other areas of society. So at one time this meant a lot, you know, how strong you were and what you could do and perhaps this was their own way of recreation because most of their time they had to use that strength to earn a living for the family.

Q. And where were all those television and movie shows and other entertainments?

A. No, No, but they had their own entertainment, which I don't know whether we would consider that today. The local Saloons, these were gathering places where fellows would meet usually on weekends, sometimes in the evenings as times got better and they didn't have to put in so many hours where they could gather and maybe groups talking over things at home or things in the neighborhoods or things at work because many of them didn't work in the same plants in the same places, friendly places, and they were really neighborhood taverns. I know, when we were down there, we made a count of them and this would be around 1955, there were 43 neighborhood taverns, a few of them serviced, like the Amphitheatre, but most of them were neighborhood taverns. With that many, it would be hard for a man to die of thirst, anyhow!

Q. Somebody can always drag them to an oasis.

A. And save them! But it was places for the men to meet and to talk. Another remarkable thing too was, again this was a loose term for entertainment, but missions would be held each year

and they would very well be attended. Well as you say, there was no radio, no television, people didn't have money to go out, if there was any place much to go to. So when, the mission came along, you got someone that was going to preach, why it became quite an event and apparently it began in Father Dorney's time. As best we can figure, he figured one of the missions was not as well attended by the men of the parish as it should be, usually they had one week for men and one week for women. So, he went around to the local saloons, of course the lads were parishioners of the parish and he asked them if they would kindly close, from say, around 7:30 to 9:00 P.M., that gives the lads time to finish their beer, get up there, and come back afterwards and apparently there was some discussion on this. A couple of fellows who carried a little bit of weight said they would do it, the other fellows mind, and apparently as the mission would go on Father would go out and walk through the neighborhood. The saloon had better be closed, otherwise he would call the proprietor, and whom he knew by his middle name and said "I thought you were supposed to close for the mission". Of course, in those days, you listened to what you were told and the next night it would be closed, otherwise you may find that Father wasn't too happy with the situation, the customers would drop off too, they were very loyal to the parish.

Q. I read in your history book right there that some of the meat packing firms, owners, lived in the community, here on Emerald. Do you know whether those places are still there, and where one could find them?

A. I don't know the exact addressed. I've had them pointed out to me as time went along because the buildings are still there. Now, I would just surmise that over the years they have over-gone what used to be called conversion, chopping big houses into small apartments, and then as the laws became stricker, of course, that stopped, but by that time they've already been accomplished, so I susupect that they would probably be something similar to rooming houses. Now, how one will ever re-constitute them into what you could formerly construe as a stately manner, I don't know, that would probably take a little bit of doing by this day.

Q. All right, can you suggest anybody who in the neighborhood that I might talk to, to find really where the places were?

A. I don't know, as I'm speaking to you right now, I just don't know of anybody whose memory would be that clear. I would say the best one to talk to would be Father Riley, the present Pastor of the Parish, he would know who among the real old timers would still be around because I don't think he himself would have any specific knowledge on this matter. There might be one other Priest who would be able to help you out in this

regard, and that would be Father John Kennedy, whose out of St. Thomas Moore Parish on the south side, He had been in St. Gabriels for sometime, very interested in the parish, very close to it. I know that he gathered most of the facts for the booklet, he sort of put it together and I sort of arranged it in the pages, kind of editing and we ended up with, at that time, now it's going back 15 or 16 years, with the equivalent of another booklet, that you kind of had to pick and choose of course, and there's a lot of information that just never got composed into the making that we have. I think, he might perhaps by memory, I'm sure he wouldn't have any of the papers, I think at that time we left them there, but as many documents, all of a sudden someone comes home and says "what are these old papers", so you get rid of them, but he might be somebody to talk to.

Q. I would, when I go to Father Riley, I will want to see those early Baptismal and Confirmation papers, that you refer to there, that you have a photograph of.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you suppose from your recollection there are other kinds of things that have the ora of those old days that might be printed and things to look at, the initial things? We're going to be there with a camera.

- A. The church was built in 1887, the Parish was formed in 1880. Now, Father Dorney had alters put in, which I understand, were very nice. But then Father Burke, when he was made Pastor, decided that the alters were fine for 34 years ago, whichever the case, and the church had grown, and in the meantime, more deserved is more beautiful alters. So what he did, was take out the alters that they had and put in the present alters at St. Gabriels, which really fit in so beautifully, you'd think they were suppose to be there in the first place. He went himself to Italy to choose stone and somehow he had to explain to the Italian Artist as how to make shamrocks because there's mosaic shamrocks all over the alter, that must have been an interesting thing to explain that. But I understand the original main alter is out in the Oak Forest Infirmary, the Catholic Chapel in Oak Forest. Now that is the only thing I have heard, I'm just supposing that that is accurate.
- Q. You've just told me something that is very interesting, that there is shamrocks in the alter and I am sure that the eyes of the camera will find those shamrocks.
- A. Another interesting thing, which I think is interesting anyhow, and I suppose it can be disputed 15 times over but it seems to me an artist, when he tries to make something beautiful, he has to take from his background what beauty is -- if an Oriental were going to make a statue of one, in all probabili-

ties, she would end up being Oriental. In this, Irish parish, of, course, everything came from Italy and so when you look at the statue of our Blessed Mother, maybe it's just another thing you see. If you ever do get there, take a look at what is called the alter rail there. There are placed in the alter rail, statues and these aren't things, such as, we think today, you know, someone turned out some 1500 of the same thing in one day. These are individually carved statues, they're really each individual statue. It is a work of art, it's very beautiful, very nice.

Q. I really suspect that Chicago is full of art, that is, totally overlooked. We all have our eyes on European churches or something of that sort.

A. Well take the church itself, one of the famous architect in Chicago, Root, was one of the Architects for this church, and incidentally he did Root Street. The church is an Norman Architecture, apparently based on some copy of a church over in Normandy, France, and at one time the bell tower was substantially higher, except one storm decided to change things somewhat and it was sufficiently weakened when they went up there to check it out and cut it down I understand, by practically about 20 feet. So it must have been a much more enclosed structure than it has been. It's just again a piece of visual art, that if you just drive along these close streets,

you never get a chance to really to step back and take a close look at the building because everything is tight.

Q. That's why those European churches and other edifices-have the advantage. It's not open spaces around them, each one has a sense of approach to the place.

A. Yes, the only thing St. Gabriels has, of course, is that little yard in front with the statue of St. Gabriel -- St. Gabriel blowing his horn. I don't know, I suppose they are still doing it, we used to replace that horn about three, or five times a year. We suspect kids would usually break off the horn pipes so that it would look like St. Gabriel was shooting a pea shooter, you know, very unimpressive, it was really ridiculous, that's about it!

Q. Well are there any other things that come to your mind. I am interested especially in the symbiotic relationship between the community and the meat industry. Can you think of any tales or community attitude that would be relating to the yards and the packinghouses?

A, The oldest impression I had with outline specific details is the days of the strikes were very very hard and serious stages. First of all, most people in those days, when you went on strike -- it's not too clear to me that there was a strike fund that helps support you, most people were already making a hand to mouth existence to go on strike meant that the day you had your last meal and then on you're living on

the kindness of those who might have a job elsewhere, or neighbors, and people -- like in many of the older neighborhoods. to live on a block, the blockless family, not that they were related directly, although quite often they were, but in the sense that everybody really helped out one another to a remarkable degree. With time, it actually became related. There's an area of the parish, to get a little bit Off your question momentarily, that used to be called the 400, over around 43rd Place, 42nd Place. There, they figured, some wag, I think, did it. He said, "if you calculated all the inter-relations, you know, my cousin upstairs, my father-in-law down the block, my uncle across the street, that there were 400 families who were inter-related." Yet, if you ever made an enemy you moved out of the neighborhood, you were sued if you're not arising with the clans, you know. But in those days, I think that's the way people would survive during the strike because of close friends, relations, and when they talk about strike-breakers, one of the chief means was somebody who had no money. And the fact that a strike could have succeeded, it would seem to me to give some indication to the depths of desperation to which people were driven, that even under those extreme circumstances they would still stay out invalid and you can understand too, a man who has undergone

such suffering, not so much for himself but for his family, then you can see if he sees somebody going back into the yards, for whom they had several, less than acceptable terms applied. You can understand why he would have some rather fierce feelings about the matter and it would not take too much of a stretch of an imagination to understand how violence could come about. A man felt really he had a nicest stroke of that situation.

Q. That was a battle of desperation!

A. Yes, very much so. Gradually as time went on, people in the area became less dependent upon the yards, I would say.

Probably it's really only since the Second World War, you figure, that was in 1945 and the unions never really got a foothold, perhaps until the earlier mid-30's. They were never really riding very high very long before then, the people had gone through their whole period of suffering, it was those who had come after them and joined the unions and worked over there step by step for them who really benefited by the terrible suffering of those who had preceded them. I suppose someone has to make the first step, and that's always true, and it just happened to be true in this case, but then the neighborhood itself became less and less dependent. The very common jobs in the area that became, what used to be called

"streetcar conductors". I know a common attended job would be a policeman, fireman, city worker.

Q. School teachers!

A. School teacher was a prestige job. First of all, you had to finish high school. I think that at one time it was almost the maximum requirement. They would have liked to have you go see the inside of a college, but I think that if you can say, you had a teacher from that college, you were sort of in. Frankly, of course, those requirements went up over the years, but to become a school teacher was an amazing thing. Some people had been retired for, from a job so long. I understand there was a lady recently who died, who was living on a school pension of \$72.00 a month. Now when she would have retired from that pension, I don't know, but you can imagine she must have been teaching a long long time ago, and people went for this because they were trying to pull themselves up and they were taking every means possible to do it and this was really a religious luck. St. Gabriels -- 75 years had 75 priests ordained which is remarkable. If the average maintained over the years that those who would enter, say around high school years, say that perhaps 1 out of 10 or 1 out of 15 would be ordained. To think that they had all those priests over there a number of years is outstanding.

Q. And then there must have been many many Sisters?

A. Oh, a very great number. Most of them joined the Order, as most of them did. The Order that was actually teaching in the parish, which was the Sisters of Mercy. It our best count, we had over 100. Again, it was both, teaching and the religious life, but it has often been speculated in the church, you know, where do you get vocations and it seems a large number of them always seem to come from people who have difficult time financially and people whose life had been brought up on sacrifice. Now whether it still pertains to our own day, that's a question of speculation and discussion. But we certainly had many vocations over the years and the people were very proud of it and to this day, when a priest would walk through a neighborhood, they don't have to know you, its "Hi Father", the fact that you're a priest is enough. I know, we used to be walking along the street and you'd hear little children yelling "Hi Father" and you'd be wondering what all the yelling was about, so you just look in the general direction and waved. I recall, one of the Fathers I mentioned to you, he was walking along the street one time and he heard "Hiya Father", and of course he couldn't figure out where the voice was coming from and he looks up and here's a little kid in the bathroom window waving, so he waves back to him. You know, that's where we get our tales from. Interesting to be the John's people tending towards over the years.

Q. So that as the years went on, say even after World War II, that neighborhood became even less dependent on the yards than in the former period.

A. Yes, so the closing of the yards is in progress at this time is not going to have a terrible impact directly upon the people of the area. As a matter of fact, if it turns into an industrial part, as they are presently presenting it, it really could have a very beneficial effect upon the area. It would open up a whole new, not only different kind of jobs, but a different quality of jobs.

Q. Yes, well I'm out of tape and out of questions, and I've enjoyed this chat with you this morning. Thank you very much Father for your advice.

A. It was a great pleasure talking with you, Mr. Orear.