

History of Linn Manor Care Center

Iowa and Wisconsin Assemblies

The initial thoughts about an Iowa home for the aged came from Henry Wahls of Garnavillo, Iowa. Henry became familiar with the Longport, New Jersey, Gospel Hall Home for the Aged while his daughter Faye was administrator there. One day in 1974, Henry stopped by the Silver Mill Feed store and visited with Val and Robert Brandt about the possibility of having some sort of Christian nursing home in the Midwest. Val and Robert had a printing press at their feed mill, and they sent out questionnaires to determine interest and gave subsequent progress reports. Val communicated with all Assemblies within driving distance of Garnavillo.

An opportunity presented itself when a new hospital was built in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, and the old one was for sale. A number of brethren from Eastern Iowa and Wisconsin assembled and discussed a number of options. A corporation was formed and funding was lined up. An architect and an attorney were consulted. The building would have needed renovation to meet building codes. There was a problem with distance to the nearest Assembly at Lynxville, Wisconsin, or Garnavillo, Iowa. There was a suggestion of starting an Assembly in the nursing home, but there was not agreement for this. Several informational meetings were held at area Bible conferences. Faye Wahls shared her experiences as an administrator, and as to assembly support, rules and regulations, communication with state officials, and staffing requirements. Negotiations continued with the response of a "conditional yes" to sell which was shortly followed with "no" by the person responsible for selling the hospital. It was eventually sold to the county.

Evangelist Herbert Dobson helped negotiate the first attempt to purchase the old hospital in Prairie du Chien. He continued to follow our project with keen interest, and encouraged a number of people to support this work. He was the first one from the Assemblies to set a gospel tent in Marion and see blessing in salvation.

Later, a few brethren from Cedar Falls obtained a set of building plans and considered an option on local

development land. A considerable investment for sewer, water, and paving would have been necessary to get to the area considered. Transportation to the Cedar Falls Gospel Hall was required, so this was not pursued any farther.

Marion

In 1976, a four-acre parcel adjacent to the Marion Gospel Hall came up for sale. Grant Hagen, knowing the previous attempts, asked Robert Weber if he thought that property would be at all suitable for what the Assemblies were looking for. After several weeks, Grant asked his wife Pat to call the realtors and find out what they were asking for the property. She was told the property had been sold. The Hagens went on vacation.

After the morning meeting the first Sunday back, Grant told Robert the property had been sold. Robert said it was now back on the market. Grant and Robert looked at it. After prayer for the Lord's guidance; they made an offer, which was accepted. Their prayer was that the Lord would intervene and block the way if this was not His will.

Robert and Grant each had homes, so they considered renting the house on the property next to the Gospel Hall, preferably to Christians, maybe someone retiring and moving to town, or maybe some younger couple moving to the metropolitan area.

Continuing Education

With school starting, Grant asked Pat to call Kirkwood Community College to see if they had any adult evening classes about senior housing and care needs. The counselor advised going to Ankeny Community College Friday to enroll in the long-term care administrator's course. Grant shared this with Robert after Wednesday night prayer meeting. Grant took Friday off, Robert took a vacation day, and they enrolled as students. The course was designed as a correspondence course with community research projects, interviewing seniors, finding available community support services, with reports and papers

to send in. The class would meet, review the syllabus, share their findings, and ask questions.

Sell Our House?

One day, the thought crossed Grant's mind that maybe they should move to the little house next to the Gospel Hall. While looking through the welding helmet at Highway Equipment Company and meditating, the Apostle Paul's question from Acts 9: 6 often came to mind, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Just as Gideon sought the Lord's mind and put out the fleece, it seemed we should find out if the Lord would have us to move from Cedar Rapids to Marion. We cleaned up our house, put an ad in the paper, "For Sale by Owner, two-story house, after 5 pm Monday through Friday, or Saturday." Grant didn't want to show it on Sunday or list it with a realtor and have the word get out that we were planning to move when we really were not. I didn't want to put a sign on the lawn and get the neighbors excited because we were really not planning to move and this was only a test. It would be longer to drive to work from Marion, and we had fixed up the house the way we wanted it and were content to stay there.

The ad came out in Saturday's paper. We got a call at breakfast and gave them the address. The doorbell rang. Grant said, "Come on in." The buyer's first words were, "And thy house." The Bible text by the front door was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and Thou shalt be saved." He quoted the rest of the verse. We gave them a tour. He started measuring where his furniture would go. They looked in the garage, came back in, and said, "Where do we sign?" We hadn't talked about price yet. Grant made some comments regarding listing with a realtor, offer and counter, negotiation, etc. The buyer said, "We are not people to bargain. When we see something we want, we want it and do not dicker on price." Grant said there is only one way we can sell and that is to cash out. We have too much commitment and need to clear ourselves. "That's the only way we buy." We still hadn't said anything about price. Grant had prayed, "Lord, preserve me from a heart of greed, lest I not be realistic about this." Grant had hired an appraiser who compared similar properties that sold on that side of town recently, and said we would have to have the appraised price. "No problem." "How soon can we

move in?" Our prayer had been, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do, move to Marion?"

Administrator in Training

The State Licensure Board required one year of experience working in a care center. A new nursing home had opened on the north side of Cedar Rapids. The administrator there was familiar with the administrator-in-training course, but said it would have to be on a volunteer basis only to get the required hours. A month's notice was given at the factory with a desire to leave in good standing so I would be able to return if I got hungry and needed a paying job. Pat was secretary at the fire department, an excellent experience for gaining familiarity with fire codes.

While Grant was volunteering, the State surveyors returned to the nursing home for a follow-up inspection. The results were devastating. With deficiencies numbering into the 70s, they considered decertifying the building. The management company fired the administrator, and I thought I had lost my volunteer position. After some delay the next day, I decided to go in and encourage the workers and residents whom I had gotten acquainted with. The management company came through the building to get acquainted with supervisors and department heads. They finally came to me, and I explained that I was a volunteer taking the long-term care administration course. The one looked at the other and said, "You're just the one we're looking for." They wanted to hire me and put me in the office. I told them they were making a big mistake, and I didn't know anything about the office. They instructed me to take the list of deficiencies, work on those which could be fixed, and to record progress made. I was to write down questions and someone would get back in a few days to help me. I took my sample job descriptions from my school course work and revised them. I wrote policies and procedures for each department. I made a copy of each one for my brief case and later used these for Linn Manor.

Corporation

The land by the Gospel Hall was purchased with a partnership. An advisory committee representing Iowa and Wisconsin Assemblies was appointed. The committee later became Board members. Erwin

Stickfort, Marvin Studnicka, Val Brandt, and C F Foster continue today. As interest and encouragement continued, it became necessary to set up a corporation. The property joined Grand Avenue, so we decided to call it Grand Haven Homes Inc. The thought was a haven as a place of safety and homes would include more than one building. Grand Haven Homes Inc. is a 501 C-3 non-profit, charitable Iowa corporation.

Rezoning and Platting Lots with the City of Marion

The land was agricultural A-1 and needed to be rezoned multifamily R-5. The application was made to the zoning board for review, followed by the public hearings. A civil engineer designed the plat for the lots, street, sewer, water, and utilities, and application was made for a Grand Avenue Heights Addition to the City of Marion. The street name was called Elim Drive. Elim was a place of blessing for the nation of Israel on their journey through the wilderness (Exodus 15:27 and Numbers 33:9). Our desire was that Elim Drive would be a place of blessing for seniors on the journey of life (Psalm 71:8&9).

Application to Build

We were advised to collect letters of intent from interested persons who would like to live in a Christian nursing home in Marion. We collected data from the Longport Gospel Home for the Aged as to how far people would move to be in this type of home. We attempted to show that we would draw residents from out of county and out of state. We requested a permit to build a 25-bed home and an additional phase II construction of 20 beds. Numerous trips were made to Des Moines in the application process. Robert Weber's experience as a professional engineer was helpful in communicating with various governing boards and government offices.

State Board Exam

We had finished our educational requirements and hours of training and were scheduled to take the exam on a Monday in May. On the Saturday before the scheduled test, we received the answer to our application. We were denied a permit to build from our application, due to existing licensed beds in Linn County and authorized permits per the State formula of senior population. There seemed like a dark, heavy cloud came over our experience. Robert said, "I'm

sorry, Grant, we gave it our best and the door is definitely closed. There is nothing else we can do now." After a period of silence we went home. "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*" "*They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.*" On Sunday, I suggested to Robert that we should go and write the State exam. "Let's just do that much. We have completed our training, paid our fees, so just let's do what we can see clearly to do."

Health care Contractors of Altoona

At the restaurant after the State board exam, I asked Robert if he had the name and phone number of the contractor that the state people suggested we contact. He looked through his brief case and found the company. The owner was in that afternoon and invited us for a visit. Altoona was on our way home. We were surprised to find out they had attempted to build two times in Linn County. They had a permit for a 100-bed home. Their first attempt required the necessity of purchasing an additional 100 feet of the next vacant lot. After offering a premium for the additional ground was to no avail, the next attempt was in the east part of Marion, but that land needed to be rezoned for building a nursing home. The rezoning was denied, so they gave up trying to build in Linn County. We explained our interest in a private, Christian home and our intent for a non-profit organization.

Health Care Contractors gave us a copy of some plans, which we showed our committee and other interested people. They checked to see if their permit was still valid. We were advised to keep their project name so the State or others wouldn't think it was a new proposal. Since their permit was for Linn County, they named it Linn Manor Care Center, so we kept the same name. We visited most Assemblies and gave progress reports. We were encouraged to keep going and see what could be done. They wanted to sell us a 100-bed home, but that would not fit on our lot and we were only interested in about half that number of beds. The plans were revised to 44 beds. The building is on slab, no steps, one story, brick veneer, with private, double, and three-bed rooms. The design considered a possible expansion if adjoining land became available.

Financing

The committee felt they could raise money for a down payment, and we could apply for financing. Grant went to Des Moines and checked on financing with bonds. After the non-profit corporation was set up, the committee suggested the debt could be spread around to a number of people so no individual would have to assume a big burden. As a number of individuals had CDs mature, they decided to make unsecured loans with this money and charge us CD rate interest instead of prime rate. Donations were increasing, and we could issue tax-deductible receipts. The home was built without a mortgage. Over 40 loan holders contributed varying amounts. Many of the loans were forgiven over a number of years. Donations from Assemblies and individuals were sufficient to meet the interest requirements and loan repayment schedules.

Contract

The contract was signed in October of 1978, for a turnkey price with beds and the basics of \$525,000. The street with sewer and water was about \$60,000 more. There were about 25 young trees on the building site that needed to be moved. Grant called for prices from companies that had a tree spade.

One of the men Grant called was kind of upset when he found out the location. He said he had the property bought, pending the sale of his property. The people who were buying his property got delayed in FHA financing, so he was not able to meet his commitment and the property was put back on the market. He said two weeks after we bought, his deal would have gone through.

The footings were dug in November. Grant ran the backhoe and worked with the contractors until it was finished. Many from the Assemblies made visits, checking on progress.

Volunteers

Grant arranged for volunteer labor to help backfill the footings and drain tile, help with framing, mark lines on plywood for the roof, insulate the roof and walls, backfill sewer trenches, grade out for cement floors, cleanup sheetrock, wallpaper, finish grade the lawn, pour cement for sidewalks, assemble beds and unbox bedside cabinets, etc. The contractor allowed over \$5,500 for donated time. Richard Van Mill unhooked his crop dryer and brought it over to thaw out the

ground so construction could continue in the wintertime. Many of the wives made casseroles, salads, desserts, bars, and cookies, and helped serve the workers many days.

First Employees

Myrna Ferris, LPN, volunteered as the Director of Nursing to help us get started. Jan Sluiter offered her services as RN consultant by phone and regular visits to meet the State requirements for things that needed an RN signature. Charleen Studnicka, LPN, worked the evening shift and later took responsibility of DON. Elaine Rossow was a nursing assistant and later worked with the activity program. She retired after 19 years of service. Joan Weber started the activity program. Helen Groothuis worked as a nursing assistant on the night shift. Tim McCalley and Robert Weber set up the computerized accounting program. Ilene Uhlenhopp worked with payroll and accounting for 14 years. She also worked with the activity program. Corinne Borrett started as kitchen manager. Candas Eichacker started housekeeping shortly after we opened and has continued for 24 years.

Pat Hagen did the secretarial work from the beginning, with the communications to the State and city. She was certified as a nursing assistant and filled in occasionally. She took the courses for food services supervisor and managed the kitchen for a number of years. She has supervised the housekeeping and laundry for many years. She is certified as activity coordinator and has overseen the program for many years. She manages the office, coordinates the admissions and Title XIX program, schedules staff, helps with interviewing and training, as well as coordinates the annual family picnics and Thanksgiving meals.

In addition to the administration of the home, Grant has served on the Board of Directors from the beginning. He took care of much of the building and grounds maintenance. Grant was certified as a nursing assistant and helped out occasionally. He took several food service courses and has worked as a part-time cook. He took the activities coordinator course and has contributed in a number of areas including bus driver, conducting the Bible classes, and a few funeral services.

First Residents

Our first admission opening day, August 27, 1979, was Bill Ismay from Phoenix, Arizona. He was followed by Elmer Brandt (Garnavillo, Iowa) and Mae Smith (Manchester, Iowa). Admissions following by yearend were Maude Hultgren (Manchester, Iowa), Louis and Amanda Brandt (Garnavillo, Iowa), Jost and Emma Hoesli (Black Earth, Wisconsin), and Pearl Potter (Marion, Iowa).

Apartments

Discussion and options for additional apartments were considered for a number of years. In 1989, John Portman became quite interested in an apartment and encouraged us to build. Norman Wirkler drew plans for a four-plex of independent living apartments which opened in 1990. In 2002, another four-plex was built directly across the street from Linn Manor. It includes a community room convenient for family reunions, anniversaries, birthday parties, Christmas get-togethers, hymn sings, employee in-service training, and Board meetings.

Today

Twenty-five years of service have come and gone. For the first 12 years, all residents were recommended from the Gospel Hall Assemblies. Industry changes in health care have brought about more home care services resulting in fewer moving to the home. During times of lower occupancy, opportunity has been given to folks who would appreciate the conservative Christian environment with a home-like atmosphere.

We have had the joy of seeing the Lord's hand in blessing in salvation of residents and workers. The Marion Gospel Hall ministry and gospel meetings are broadcast on speakers in resident rooms and the front lounge. The Marion Gospel Hall is wheelchair accessible, only 60 feet from Linn Manor. Assembly volunteers escort residents who are able to attend.

Certification for Skilled Care became a reality January 1, 2004. We now have a Medicare provider number in addition to the Medicaid provider number.

Grant L. Hagen, Administrator

Comments from the LMCC Board of Directors

The Linn Manor Care Center Board of Directors thanks everyone who has made possible first the inception and then the operation of the Home for the

past 25 years. This support has taken a variety of forms including dedication to an idea, prayer, planning, financial contributions, willing volunteers, staff, committees, advisors, consultants, medical services, residents, and families.

In addition to the recognition of the many individuals in the history above, the Board thanks Grant and Pat Hagen for their untiring, unselfish service of 25 years. Without them, Linn Manor would not be the success that it is today.

May all be done to the glory of God and God alone.