

OUR LADY QUEEN OF MARTYRS....

The adjacent article is taken from the June 1987 issue of our parish magazine, then called Clippings.

*As we approach our milestone anniversary of 50 years, we prayerfully remember
Mrs. Regina Brunswick.*

Her vision of establishing a parish in Centerport and her generosity in donating first her boathouse/garage and then her own home for the Rectory mark the beginnings of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs parish.

"May Regina's generosity never be forgotten, her memory honored and her soul rest in peace."

Mrs. Regina Brunswick Benefactress

In 1948 Mrs. Regina Brunswick brought the house and property on the corner of Prospect and Mill Dam Road in Centerport. In 1952 the late Fr. Peter Altman, an assistant pastor at St. Philip Neri in Northport, took a census in the Centerport area and met Mrs. Brunswick who had been attending mass faithfully at St. Patrick's. Fr. Altman explained to Mrs. Brunswick that the Centerport area lay within the boundaries of St. Philip's parish. The Franciscan Brothers who had been on Prospect Road in Centerport since 1889 had opened the Sunday mass at the Camp to the nearby residents. However gracious their hospitality, their facilities proved inadequate to accommodate the numerous summer visitors who wished to attend mass each Sunday.

Since Mrs. Brunswick had a large combination garage and boathouse at the bottom of her property, Fr. Altman asked for her permission to use the facility for Sunday mass. Mrs. Brunswick readily agreed. This good Catholic woman who had a lifelong devotion to Our Lady asked that the place for Sunday mass be called Our Lady's Chapel.

Shortly afterwards, permission was obtained from the Diocese of Brooklyn to offer mass on the premises, Mrs. Brunswick generously deeded the lower half of the property to the Diocese of Brooklyn so that a permanent mission from St. Philip's parish could be established. The first mass in the old chapel was offered in December of 1953.

When the new Diocese of Rockville Centre was begun in 1957, Mrs. Brunswick began a gentle, but persistent, campaign to have a parish established in Centerport. She offered the remainder of her property, including her own home, the site of the present Rectory, to the Diocese of Rockville Centre. In 1965 Bishop Kellenberg accepted from

Mrs. Brunswick the formal transfer of the deed of the remainder of her property. Everything was given as a complete donation, and Mrs. Brunswick accepted nothing in return for what she gave. Finally in June of 1966 Bishop Kellenberg sent the late Fr. James Green to establish the permanent parish of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs.

Meanwhile, in a series of expansions, men of the parish kept enlarging the garage and boathouse. In the early sixties, the late Fr. Charles Caton, pastor of St. Philip's, authorized the construction of an L-shaped wing to be added to the old boathouse. Finally, the new pastor, Fr. Joseph Colligan, appointed in December of 1969 following the death of Fr. Green, added a vestibule and a steeple in 1976.

After deeding all of her Centerport property to the church, Mrs. Brunswick retired to St. Petersburg, Florida, but frequently visited one of her daughters in Manhattan. In failing health for the last year, Mrs. Brunswick returned to New York this past winter and died in the care of her daughter on April 27, 1987.

Our Lady Queen of Martyrs parish owes an incalculable debt to Regina Brunswick. A mass in her memory was offered on Saturday, June 13 in our new parish church. May her generosity never be forgotten, her memory honored, and her soul rest in peace.

