

HOMETOWN

SOUTH BEND TRIBUNE MONDAY, JUNE 23, 1997

SERVING
YOU and YOUR COMMUNITY

INSIDE: This year's graduates at St. Joseph's High School. Page 3

Empty nest is not her style

By KEN BRADFORD

There's room for more children at God's Little Angels Day Care Ministry. That's because there's always plenty of room in Vinnie Flency's home.

Mrs. Flency has raised a dozen children of her own — 10 boys and two girls, ranging in age from 28 to 9. Now at age 65, she's raising five foster children — ages 15 months to 7 years — and taking care of 21 youngsters at her new day-care facility at 280 Western Ave.

She retired three years ago after 23 years at All General. Her husband, Rev. Charles Flency, is a pastor at Greater Mount Eagle Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago, and he runs the P & C Fresh Seafoods store next door to his wife's day-care center.

THE NUMBER

For more information on the God's Little Angels Day Care Ministry, call Vinnie Flency at 280-0425.

The day-care facility is in a building that once housed the B & J Lounge. The Flencys tried to convert it into a restaurant that would serve food from the seafood shop. But the business never took off, so the Flencys began looking at other options.

Mrs. Flency has always loved little children, and it just seemed natural to open a day-care facility.

"I know I didn't want to sit at home," she said. "We had the older kids and we always had room for more."

"The center is more of a service than it is a business. A change heading in the welfare rules has had its ripple effects already."



It's like one big happy family at God's Little Angels Day Care Ministry. Vinnie Flency is seated at right and Rev. Charles Flency is standing at right.

"A lot of mothers need to get on with their education, get a job and get themselves of welfare," she said. "They're going to need help. They need to know there is a place for their babies to go."

God's Little Angels approaches its mission a bit differently. Because mothers work all kinds of odd hours, the center opens early and closes late. The first batch of children are dropped off at 6 a.m., and sometimes it's a mother ends up working after 11 p.m. Mrs. Flency will take a child or two home with her.

And Rev. Flency drives a bus to pick up the children who wouldn't otherwise have a ride to the center.

Operating the business end of the center has been a learning experience. She has the proper

licenses to care for children in her home and at the center, but the Flencys found out the hard way that once you meet the city building codes, there are even more rules at the state level.

And for a while, it seemed that they'd never actually have any customers.

"I went on the air (with advertising on WBWL)," she said. "This was my last hope. Just when I said that, the phones started ringing."

We're being blessed. We just kept praying, and the phone started ringing."

The center is a ministry, in that it is Christian-based. "We don't really specify a religion," Rev. Flency said. "We don't."

See ANGELS/Page 4

The Cove still not my kind of place

KEN BRADFORD
IN YOUR HOMETOWN

We haven't been out to the Cove yet this year. Late a lot of folks, we wait until the nights heat up and there's a promise of a slight breeze at the ballpark. It's often late July before we get there.

Frankly, I've never felt comfortable at Crown Point Stadium. It's partly the way the seats are laid out. They run parallel to the foul lines. If you're a few sections down the first-base line and sit looking straight ahead, you stare toward the center field wall.

To watch the action at home plate, you have to twist to your seat without knowing your neighbor. I haven't learned how to do that without getting a backache.

It's mainly reason I feel uncomfortable is that I won't let myself forget things that happened in or 11 years ago.

It was among the people who were happy to hear that South Bend was planning to get a minor-league baseball team. I was going to be a baseball junkie, and I prefer the minor leagues to the major leagues. The game is more real. The fans who love the game-winning homer is genuinely excited when fans less a 100 tell him way.

During my honeymoon trip, my young bride and I sat in the rain for a doubleheader between the Jamestown Expos and the Ohio Blue Sox. She was naive and adoring back in those days. We have the autograph of Kenes Birshoff, a Jamestown kid who hit three homers that day. It probably was his best day ever. As far as I know, he never made it past Class A.

The charm about the minors is that there's an atmosphere of suffering of desperation. We saw a great day for Birshoff, but some Ohio pitcher probably lost his seat on the team bus that rainy June afternoon and was living in his parents' basement by August.

In America, the ballpark was at the county fairgrounds. You could almost smell the cow crap, but future big leaguers Andy Van Slyke and Kevin McReynolds were knocking homers and chasing hot balls as if their lives depended on it.

The pay is lousy, the pressure is enormous and the working conditions are awful. But you're playing ball and, holy cow, if you get the right breaks, you'll be famous someday.

So I laughed out loud when city officials here were proposing a multimillion-dollar facility for a Class A minor-league team. Surely, I figured, they would eventually actually visit a ballpark and scale back to something nice and not too reasonable in price.

Nope. It had to be the big, kicker ballpark and it had to be built in the shadow of the crumbling buildings of the Shadobaker Courthouse. The stadium had to be there, we were told, because it would revive that neighborhood.

It got ugly when residents started speaking up. Some wanted the team owners to help build their own park, which seemed reasonable. If I pay for the park, my kids play there. If someone else pays for it, they can tell my kids to scram.

Some wanted to have a small stadium built at one of the existing park sites, like Riverside or even the county fairgrounds. There were all sorts of sincere suggestions.

The city's response was to dig in the heels. If you had any reservations about the city's proposal, you were anti-city and anti-baseball. It was the sort of attitude that guaranteed there would be lawsuits and tax appeals.

You might recall that the same sort of thing happened when the

See BRADFORD/Page 4

Poem honors their angel

Here is a poem Stephanie and Ruth Clark wrote about their mother-in-law, Vinnie Flency.

Courageous and beautiful with a strong and strong soul saving children with had a chance and making them a whole.

Chosen through the grace of God who watches from above to teach each one how to grow and how to pass on love.

Living like a hero, nothing like a mother.

To show each one how to live life and to be kind to one another

To wake up in the morning to bright and smiling faces knowing the team have dried up without seeing any faces.

Makes you know you matter in the life of one who knows and that we will be there through thick and thin.

Through the eyes of the world standing back, watching from afar. We can see without any doubt the Angel that You Are.



Lillian Luckey looks over the scrapbook she has put together of her amateur and professional baseball career. Luckey was a member of the South Bend Blue Sox of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League in 1946.

Happy days as Blue Sox pitcher

By JACK WALKDEN

Lillian Luckey is almost embarrassed by her fame. Able to live most of her life in relative obscurity, Luckey suddenly found herself in the spotlight over the past few years.

The release of the 1992 film "A League of Their Own" brought the story of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League back to life. And so Luckey was in demand to talk about her experiences playing professional ball back in 1946.

"I got a kick out of it," Luckey admitted. "It was a part of my life that I'd put away. Then 'A League of Their Own' came out and I created interest."

"I make a point to tell every-

body that I was not a star in the pro league. That year they named a local girl on the South Bend team and I had some speed."

"But I was about that time that the transition was being made from underhand to overhand and I just speed in the transition. But even though I wasn't a star, it's been good therapy."

"The AAGPBL was formed by then-Chicago Cubs owner Philip Wrigley during World War II as a substitute for men's baseball because so many of the major league stars were drafted and sent overseas. The league operated from 1943 through 1954."

Luckey, an excellent amateur softball player in the 1930s area

from 1932-45, was sought after as a local star for the South Bend Blue Sox in 1946.

"I came home from the Marines and started working at 'Yakert's,' Luckey said. "Chuck Grant, the manager of the Blue Sox, came and asked if I wanted to play."

"I hadn't intended to play, but I went out into the front yard and played catch with Mr. Grant. And he immediately signed me to a contract."

"I made the 400 per week with the Blue Sox, which was more than I was making at Yakert's. We also got meal money on the road. Plus, about that time Yakert's went on strike, so I wouldn't have been

See LILLIAN/Page 4



Lillian Luckey in 1945.