

# On Or About This Day In Phil's Archives

PHIL'S BLOG

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## Fr. Martin Patrick Fallon – 40 years

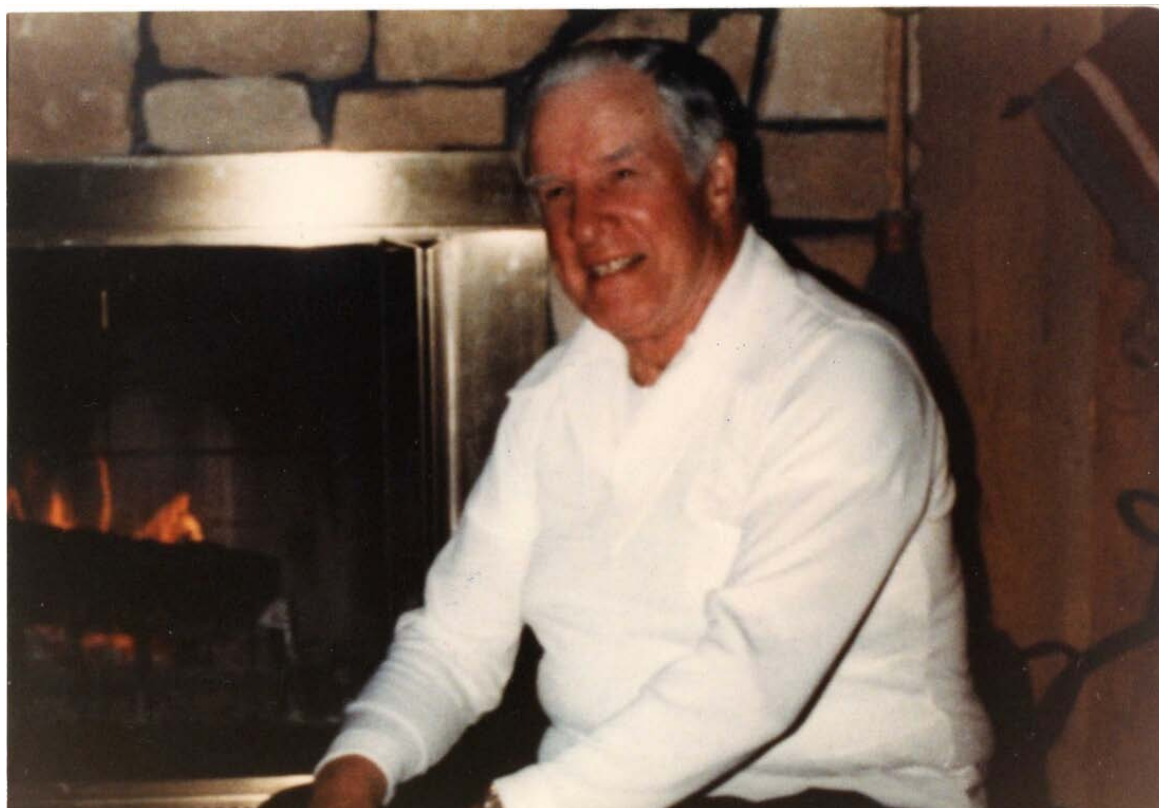
2/2/2022

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Born February 9, 1919 at 513 S. California Ave., Chicago, Illinois

Died February 2, 1982 at Ottawa Community Hospital, Ottawa, Illinois

Son of Patrick Fallon and Marie Groarke of County Roscommon, Ireland



I knew before my first Blog Post, I was going to write about this day, February 2nd. His death happened 40 years ago and when I talk about it – by hook or by crook - I get emotional. I like emotions, but as I got started, I had to step back. Instead of writing about his death, I am going to start out slowly.

My mother came from a family of 10 siblings; 12, if you count the two stillbirths. 4 girls and 6 boys lived to adulthood. Martin Patrick (Joseph) Fallon was my mom's older brother, and he was the 4th child born (of 12 births) to Patrick and Marie (Groarke) Fallon. He was baptized with the middle name of Joseph, but by 1940, he adopted Patrick as his middle name and dropped Joseph. You could do that in those days – the days before driver license and identification laws.

## Author

I have been interested in preserving family history for many years. Hope you enjoy.

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Patrick and Marie married in 1914 and by 1926 had moved 4 times. In 1926 the family settled in a two flat located at 3940 W. Polk Street in the Garfield Park neighborhood on the West Side of Chicago. Marty, age 7, and his siblings began to attend Presentation School and Church at Springfield Avenue and Lexington Street. When Marty went on to high school, he chose to study for the priesthood and was ordained a Catholic Priest on March 18, 1945. He served in the Peoria Diocese of Illinois.

10 JULY 11/JULY 18, 1997

## Block may boast most vocations

The New World (June 27/July 4) mentioned the number of vocations from various parishes. In that connection, you might find the following interesting.

In the annals of the church in the Archdiocese of Chicago, perhaps the most fruitful block for vocations was the 3900 block of West Polk Street (Presentation BYM Parish).

The following were ordained from that one block: Fathers Al Mei, 1928; (Bishop) Ernest Primeau, Ward Morrison and John Farrell, 1934; Joseph Woods, 1938; Ray Morrison, 1939; James Kelliher, SJ, 1940; John Daly, 1941 (Rochester, Minn.); Ralph Mollan, 1943; **Martin Fallon, 1945 (Peoria)**; Donald Ahearn, 1951; and Paul Mollan, 1954 (Oklahoma City). Also, the father of Father John Hall, 1980, was raised on the block.

In addition, from this one block during the same period, 13 girls entered the convent. The block was a blessing to the church and to all those who lived on it.

Fr. John Farrell  
and Fr. Ralph Mollan  
St. Thomas Beckel Parish  
☒ Mount Prospect

Presentation

Phil

Other than  
your aunts + uncles,  
I thought you might  
be interested in how  
famous Polk St was  
- in addition to your  
Uncle Jim growing up  
there. Love,  
A. Celeste

After 1945 Father Marty served in several parishes in the Peoria Diocese and each of these were a long distance from his family in Chicago. He didn't get home often, except for holidays and weddings and maybe a visit in summer. His family did visit Fr. Marty, staying for a few days to maybe a week. The rectory house he lived in always had extra rooms to accommodate his visitors.





Fast forward to Thanksgiving 1976. I was a freshman in high school and a couple of weeks shy of 15 years old. My family had just moved into a new home in the Edison Park neighborhood of Chicago and there was a lot of excitement happening. Two large tables were setup to accommodate our guests, my mom's sister Irene and her family. Her sister 'Dolly', known more formally as Sr. Mary Patricia. My Dad's sister Theresa and my uncle, Fr. Martin Patrick Fallon. Fr. Fallon is what his parishioners called him. Fr. Marty is what his close friends called him. Uncle Marty to me and my 30 plus Fallon cousins.

Holidays are exciting; the anticipation, the dinner, the laughs and stories being told and made. Uncle Marty's arrival was always one with big hugs, kisses and smiles. He would bring home gifts of food for the occasion, sharing plates of cookies or candies that he had received from his parishioners. Maybe a shirt for the boys or a trinket for the girls. Our house was his central base when he would make these visits. He would stay for the long weekend, sometimes even a week, and branch out to visit friends and family in the Chicago area. It also meant I would be giving up my bed and sleeping on the couch. For this teenager, not a problem.

On this Thanksgiving with the large number of guests, the wine, beer and cocktails flowed. And when dinner arrived with the usual turkey, mashed potatoes, rutabagas and countless other favorites, everyone moved to a seat at the table, ready to dig in. But first, who better to say the prayer than Uncle Marty? He started by offering thanks and then meandered into why he is thankful for other things in life. While I don't recall it being a long prayer of thanks – others do and have teased and recounted the long wait while the food was getting cold in front of them. All of a sudden, my mom and Aunts – Uncle Marty's sisters – jumped up from the table and ran over to give Uncle Marty a big hug, making a fuss and kissing him. I saw what was going on – but had no clue why all the excitement broke out! I found out later Uncle Marty had just told us he was being transferred to a new parish near Ottawa, Illinois. I also did not realize the significance but was told this meant he would be closer to the family. Instead of a 3 hour drive to visit him, it would only be an hour and a half. Today, I realize that was a big deal. Back then, I was too young to understand.

Skip a couple of years to early 1978 and Fr. Marty found himself being told by his Bishop to check into alcohol rehabilitation. Years of heavy drinking was showing. Colleagues and parishioners who knew him best could see the effects of the alcohol and his Bishop called him on the carpet. He was instructed to check in to a substance abuse Guest House for clergy in Rochester, Minnesota. He did as he was told and embraced

it. By the end of the year he was back at his parish in Ottawa, sober and working to make himself a better person.



Thanksgiving November 22, 1979 at the McGoverns. Clockwise from left: Emmett, Theresa McGovern, Emmett, Ann Fallon McGovern, Maureen, Colleen, Ann Marie, Phillip, Fr. Marty Fallon; taking photo: Sr. Patricia (Dolly) Fallon

Once dinner was over at this 1979 Thanksgiving, the McGoverns made a visit to the Fallons in Niles. Here are the photos from that evening. Note a couple of us changed our shirts to look more presentable!



Diane Fallon, Emmett McGovern, Sr. Patricia 'Dolly' Fallon, Rich Fallon



In February 1981, Fr. Marty turned 62 and began to think of retirement. During the Christmas holiday in 1981, two months before he passed away, he made his last visit to his sister Ann. At some point, he was standing in Ann's kitchen looking out the window towards the back yard. It was not a big yard. The depth was short, but the length was long. Marty stood looking out the window long enough that his sister noticed and asked, "What are you looking at, Marty"? He responded, "I am trying to figure out how I can fit a trailer in your backyard for when I retire."

To be continued....

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