

Thirty-eight years of dedication to Bloomfield Manor

by Jean Berns Jones

On a cold January evening in 1971, a member of the Iowa County Board knocked on Everett Thomas' door and asked him to serve on the board of the Iowa County Farm, Hospital and Home.

"At that time the board managed the farm and they liked to have people with agricultural backgrounds on the board," Everett explained. "I was busy farming and didn't know if I had the time take it on."

"The county board member told me the term was for three years. He said I could think about it, and that the board was meeting the next morning. That night he came back and told me I'd been elected."

"I had really good committee members to work with, who took a lot of interest in the home," Everett recalled. "Our meetings were always well attended and enjoyable. He listed Victor Jonas, Jim Whitford, Ken Powell, Tom Paull and Dick Heimerl as late members who were dedicated to the home's upkeep and betterment."

On December 16th Everett (83) was recognized with a certificate and hearty applause at the Bloomfield Manor Christmas program. A special stone marked with "Everett Thomas - Board of Trustees for 38 years" will be placed near the home's gazebo beneath a tree that was planted in his honor.

During Everett's tenure, the

April, Everett was back in June working at the annual Bloomfest celebration. He came with a flatbed truck and helped haul picnic tables as usual.

For his first several years on the committee, the board met in the imposing old Iowa County Asylum which stood south of the Iowa County Home. The asylum was built in 1887 as an early effort to provide for the county's unfortunate and homeless elderly.

"It had wood floors and asbestos, and it was torn down in the early 1970's because it didn't meet standards," Everett recalled. "There were about 70 people living there and as many as



Everett Thomas poses with his wife, Angie, at the Bloomfield Manor recognition ceremony where he received an appreciation certificate for 38 years of service on the board.



The original Iowa County Home for the Aged, pictured here, was replaced by the current home in 1962.

That was 38 years ago. "The years just kept going by and they didn't kick me off, so I stayed on," Everett laughed.

He served with Victor Jonas and Ken Powell on that first committee. The second year, Everett was made chairman and kept that position until Ron Benish replaced him two years ago.

Everett's term on the Bloomfield Committee Board of Trustees stretched through the decades until last April, when the experience of hearing loss led him to retire. The members at that time were Ron Benish, John Jenkins, LaVerne Clifton and Bob Regan.

"Everett, along with Bob and LaVerne, has passed the torch on and we are striving to continue the job they have done," Benish said. With him on the current committee are Joe Thomas, Carol Anderson, Dana Perry and Jim Griffiths.

nursing home has kept up with the times. He was instrumental in overseeing many changes and improvements that benefit today's residents and will continue into the future.

"We can't possibly thank you enough for all you have done for Bloomfield Manor," Administrator, Barbara Linscheid told Everett at the December program. Linscheid, a 35-year employee, has witnessed Everett's steadfast dedication to the nursing home.

"For all those years, you cared enough to work through the challenges and decisions to make life better for the residents and staff here at Bloomfield," she added. "You have touched the lives of over 1,700 residents who have lived here during that time."

Linscheid noted that even after leaving the board last

possible were moved into the nursing home."

The nursing home had been built in 1962 to replace the older one erected in 1900. The new home had nearly 40,000 square feet of space with 86-bed capacity. It was built for a total cost of \$573,330.

A fence along the west side separated the nursing home from the county farm. The farm originally started with 120 acres of land and tracts were added through the years until it has reached 640 acres.

"When I first joined, the Bloomfield Committee was in charge of managing the farm," Everett said. "We were still milking about 50 cows, and that March it was decided to sell them off."

"In April (1971) the county board decided to take the farm responsibility from the Bloomfield Committee and turn it over to the Property

Committee," he explained. "Victor Jonas and I wrote up a contract to rent the land out. We put it in the Chronicle, and that was the last we had anything to do with the farm."

Responsibility for the nursing home carried on and, in 1988, the county board approved installing air conditioning for the comfort of the residents. A new patio was added onto the northwest corner of the building in 1989, allowing space for resident seating outdoors.

The nursing home was smaller at that time. It had rooms with double occupancy and even some for four people. The demand for private rooms for residents led to the

water could be turned back on to part of the home," Linscheid recalled.

In early 2000, Bloomfield administrators and the Auxiliary began modest plans to enlarge the homes' small chapel. Then a generous bequest from Bob Campbell made it possible. The benefactor had a strong relationship with the home due to having had family members who lived there.

"Bob wanted to do something for the home, and he sure did," Everett commented.

The resulting 3,000 square foot Campbell Chapel and Meditation Center was dedicated in 2002. It is used for

major changes that have taken place since he began on the board. "Patients now need more care, and we have more people in wheelchairs," he said. "And there are lots more state and federal guidelines to live with."

"In the 1980's we were having trouble with administrators," he recalled. "Then in October, 1987, we hired Barb, who was acting administrator. It was one of the best things we ever did."

"One reason the home looks nice is that we have two good maintenance men and other dedicated employees who really care about the place. Some of the employees have



Thomas (left) is shown with his first Bloomfield Manor Board of Trustees (and the administrator), in 1971. Trustees Victor Jonas and Ken Powell are seated.

construction of a 7,600 square foot addition in 2001.

The addition extended the south end of the building to the parking lot. It included 12 private residential rooms, an expanded rehabilitation department, new main entrance, administrative complex, clinical room for physicians' use and a second elevator.

In 1991, the board oversaw application to the Department of Natural Resources for a new wastewater treatment system. The new plant was completed the next year.

On a -5 degree evening, a water main broke beneath the newly laid pavement in the Bloomfield parking lot. Everett received a call to help the diggers locate the broken pipe.

"He was out there in the frigid cold with the workers until about 11 p.m., when the

services, activities and community events. The front wall is crowned with a beautiful stained glass window which was donated by the Auxiliary. "Bob's generosity made it possible to do more than we had ever imagined," Linscheid said.

Everett noted a few of the

been here for years and years," he added.

Linscheid told Everett during the recognition program, "Many people have reaped the benefits of your caring for 38 years, and for that we say thank you."

"I enjoyed every minute of it," Everett said.



Past trustees Bob Regan, Everett Thomas, and Jim Whitford (l-r) are shown discussing Bloomfield Manor business with Administrator, Barb Linscheid (far left).



Everett Thomas retired in April, 2009, from a board which consisted of (back row) Ron Benish, Barb Linscheid (administrator), Thomas, John Jenkins; front: LaVerne Clifton, Bob Regan.