

After a long day, Orleanski soaks his feet and enjoys the view from his window.



Orleanski strolls past the once-grand Glen Springs Hotel at St. Anthony's.

Friar's prayers may not preserve land

(Continued from page 1A) -came a friar 30 years ago.

Poverty. Chastity. Obedience.

For a man who is hell-bent on saving this particular plot of God's earth, that last knot is a tough one. Like other Catholic sects, the

Franciscan order hasbeen trying to cut its overhead for years in a study in 1988 of its restoration streamlining effort. They are "It's a tough deal. There's determined to sell the property. something with all the health Developers' various proposals

Site of St.

Anthony's

State Park

race track (4

administrative costs, and letting

"We have this resource, this

God-given resource, it would be

such a shame to waste it," the

Budnick envisions at least

"As far as buildings are

building for me is that old

fitness," Budnick says.

tried to persuade his order

lived for 27 years.

only time will tell.

concerned, the most important

and more praying, Budnick has

against a sweeping sale of the

whole property, where he has

Just recently, he feels he's

Franciscan officials who came

The parcel is dotted by three

springs, with water burbling out

the hillside to the 36-mile-long

Seneca Lake below. The site

features a working gravel pit,

operated by the R & L Perry

Construction firm of Watkins

the bid was rejected by the

Franciscan order because the

Liberty Group's more broad-

In January, Perry offered to

buy the land for \$1 million. But

rented from the friars and

into office in September. But

making some progress with

from just one spring.

friar says. "We'd like to convert

whoever could use the hotel do

County

to construct plush vacation housing and other buildings may evaporate the friar's dreams like Hood says. so much sunshine shining on the water far below in Seneca Lake. "(Budnick's) frankly had a lot the plot up a bit, selling off a of dreams that haven't panned gravel pit on the property for out over the years," says Donald profit, using mineral water Pins, a real estate consultant for royalties to fund care for the the friar's Wisconsin-based poor and subsidize the order's superiors, who run this particular

province of the Franciscan order. "They've had a lot of crazy offers and ideas." Pins says. The latest offer, signed Tuesday between the Wisconsin superiors and a local buyer,

proposes to build housing and other development on the farm land, says Watkins Glen real estate agent Dominick Franzese, who has been helping the Franciscan order search for a Franceze would not be more

specific about the buyer or his plans, saying he doesn't know the details himself, but he did say the offer for the whole plot was for under \$1 million.

Only three months ago, a similar proposal from a Floridabased investment group fizzled. The Liberty Group — offering \$1 million for the property — had its own visions for restoring the hotel and converting the expanse of woods and fields into terraced vistas with houses overlooking the lake.

The group's plans were downgraded in July to include demolition of the hotel building and by August it withdrew its

offer, cing cost concerns. One a major resort, the Glen Springs Hotel rivaled the country cubs and private resorts that still hrive in the so-called Borscht Belt of the Catskills.

Founded in 1890, the hotel became a convenient summertime stop for wealthy Philadelphia and New York families who wanted a more discreet, less ostentatious vacation than could be found at Grossinger's or other vacation spots of the era.

The bold signature of Franklin D. Roosevelt leaps off the pages of the guest register, booked into Room 149 with his wife, Eleanor, for an August weekend in 1929. "In its day, it must have been

something," Pins says. But time has been unkind to the Glen Springs.

Shards of glass and plaster litter the floor. The terraced walks are now blackened with soot from a fire, and salvage crews are harvesting the woodwork. Its years as a Cornell based construction proposal

veterans and, later, as St. Budnick's dream is to have a Anthony's Minor Seminary and private developer, Southern Tier Preparatory School through 1970 Services, ship the water out in have taken a toll. large tank trucks and have local "It's a wonderful piece of

wineries boule it property," says Syracuse based-"This being wine country, I real estate consultant Robert thought it would be the perfect Hood, who did a brief feasibility match," says Southern Tier Services President James Curatolo. "I think there's a lot of

potential for the whole place." But the friars in Wisconsin regulations, and you'd need a lot have been reluctant to buy into of money to make it work," Budnick's visions. "In the back of their mind, 'It's a wonderful dream."

they are waiting for Mr. Big Budnick's plans would carve Bucks to buy the place in one big chunk," Curatolo suggests. "It seems to-me they can hold on to part of it, develop part of it, and sell the rest.' And although they may take

exception to Curatolo's wording, the concept of selling St. Anthony's as one large parcel is one that the Franciscan order would accept. "The Franciscans are

concerned about the environment there. They could have fragmented it off in little bits a long time ago," Pins says. Budnick believes the plan he has to fragment the property, profiting from its separate virtues rather than from one sale,

ncreases its worth. "Estimates I have say the place is worth close to \$10 million." he says. "The person who wants to buy really should figure a good asking price. It shouldn't just be unloaded for a million. The gravel alone is worth much

the marvelous resource of water we have here to address a global The Rev. Francis Affelt O.F.M., the order's Wisconsinbased business manager, says \$25,000 clear profit on the water that if it is worth more than a \$1 million he'd welcome any developer who can pay that. Development of the site would cost too much to make it gymnasium. That could become a worthwhile, unless the site is sold retreat, a spiritual environment

at a lower price, he says. and, obviously, a site for physical Tax records in Schuyler County show the parcel currently Through a two-year barrage of is assessed at \$117,150. Using the lobbying, praying, letter writing state-set 29 percent valuation of a property to compute taxes, the actual value could be estimated at roughly three times that — or about \$\$393,900.

"Oh sure, if you look at it as some farm lands and a few old buildings, a million dollars is a good deal. But when you look at the resources, look at the data, the thing changes a little," Budnick says.

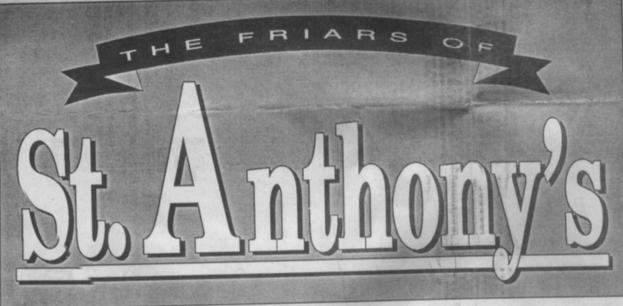
Clearly, the friar is tied to the of the ground and running down

"My whole priestly life has been here," he says.

Budnick's voice gets quiet when he speaks of what would happen to himself and the two other Order of Friars Minor brothers he leads in daily worship, 89-year-old Rev. Casimir Orleanski O.F.M. and 72-year-old Rev. Marty Bak

"They don't want to go to the mother house. They say the next University dormitory for married already was under consideration. step is the grave," Budnick says.

While sitting in the chapel after evening Rosary, the Revs. Austin Budnick, 65, and Marty Bak O.F.M., 89, read quotations ns from the Bible to each other.



Where 100 Franciscan friars once were peacefully ensconced, only three remain

By ANNIE-LAURIE BLAIR and DAVID GREWE Journal Staff

B efore the sun streaks the sky over Seneca Lake each weekday, the murmuring voices of three aging Franciscan friars echo prayers through the hallways of St. Anthony's of Padua Friary. Offering their blessings to the Lord, the three prepare Communion and one, 65-year-old Austin Budnick

O.F.M., administers the Holy Eucharist to the others. The three call this the most important part of their day After the sacrament has ended, the Rev. Casimir Orleanski O.F.M., a stocky, vibrant 89-year-old in a long, hooded brown robe, returns to his bedroom in one of several crumbling buildings - including the onceglamorous Glen Springs Hotel — on the hilltop

overlooking the lake and Watkins Glen. He changes into work clothes and prepares a simple breakfast for himself and, sometimes, for the others. Orleanski, who was born in Poland and still has a thick Polish accent, spent 10 years working in China before

Franciscans purchased the place, deciding it was ideal for the seminary and preparatory school they wanted to operate somewhere in the Central New York region. During the 1950s and '60s, Orleanski was one of more than 100 friars who lived at St. Anthony's and taught the Catholic school children who boarded there. Such religious boarding schools lost popularity as the Woodstock generation grew up in its tie-dyed clothing, and the school was closed in 1970 for lack of pupils and

Today, Orleanski's work includes doing the tailoring for the remaining Order of Friars Minor brothers at St. Anthony's. He prepares their meals and, occasionally, helps mow the grass or do other household chores. The trio of Franciscan friars has spent a combined total of 90 years living at their hilltop haven and assisting at the St. Francis of the Lake parish in Watkins Glen.

Their future on the hilltop, however, has been tenuous for nearly 20 years — the length of time their regional Franciscan directors have been searching for a buyer for the 250-acre property On Tuesday, a Watkins Glen real estate agent said

another in a string of recent offers for the land has been submitted. Other development or sale proposals to date have either fallen through or been rejected by the superiors. Obviously, they are still looking. The three St. Anthony's friars are among 25,000

to live and preach the glory of Jesus Christ and teach the Gospel, Budnick emphasizes. The Franciscan Brotherhood was founded by St.

Franciscan brothers worldwide whose main objective is

Francis in the 13th century. The average age today of a friar in the United States is 52, but their numbers - after years of steady decline - now are increasing, the friagr

Budnick, Orleanski and 72-year-old Rev. Marty Ba O.F.M. lead a comfortable, quiet life together at Stak Anthony's. They spend some moments of the day breakfast, for instance together. But, following - at morning meal, they depart the kitchen to spend thethe of the day alone.

whose silver-streaked hair and demeanor radiate idnick, and warmth. Budnick came to teach at St. Anthony's in 195 finishing seminary school. He earned a doctoral 52, after hilosophy from Cornell University in 1979. Ndegree in ties at the friary include overseeing the day ow, his

"We're here to live by the Gospel," explains Bu

operat even more important to him in the pas But en his campaign to convince his Franct few years has been located in Wisconsin, not to sell riscan

superiors, k-cel. wooded parcens stridently prayed for and vo Budnick has s for the brotherhood to bot calized his coming to St. Anthony's in 1949. That was the year the dream, which is it water on the property. tle and sell the sparkling mineral Northeast's rich and far That water helped attract the Norression to a plush sphous during the flapper era and Depresing would go to fua here. The profits from the bottling a tenet of the Fnd worldwide

programs for the poor, and nission, the friar says. actively inv While Budnick has been accounterpaolved in molding St. Anthony's fate, his two countered arts maintain a low profile in the affair, content inste with the prayeroriented life of a friar.

Orleanski spends his days in his simply furnished room equipped with a chair, dresser, bed, trunk and a primitive desk. There, he writes letters to numerous Bak, a frail-looking frian who returned to St.

Anthony's in 1981 after living there previously from 1962 to 1970, oversees most of the mechanical repairs on the property, including running the large boilers that heat the old buildings. His chores at St. Anthony's also include picking up the mail and doing the grocery shopping. And he also spends

part of his day in personal study or walking the surrounding hillside. Recently, two of the friars moved out of a building adjacent to the hotel that they had lived in for many years, into a smaller structure on the property. And the third friar is getting ready for the taxing relocation.

Yet the short moves - a brief moment in the lives of men devoted to God, prayer and study - are a foreboding reminder of what easily could happen in the



During the morning meal in the friars' kitchen at St. Anthony's, Orleanski is engrossed in the morning newspaper while Bak eats.



Orleanski, left, Budnick and Bak stand in front of the Glenn Springs Hotel, one of several crumbling buildings on the St. Anthony's Paddua Friary property.

PHOTOS BY DAVID GREWE-JOURNAL STAFF

Budnick vacuums a rug in the front hallway of the friary. Each of the friars is responsible for different daily chores that help keep their home running smoothly.

Hotel evokes shards of glittering memories

By BARBARA BRUHIN KENNEY

ack when people used fountain pens to sign hotel registers, the signatures at the Glen Springs Hotel were artful, bold expressions of wealth and good taste. "Wed. August, 13, 1929. 2 For

Dinner. Franklin D. Roosevelt. The guest registers for the once grand hilltop resort in Watkins Glen - which turned 100 years old this year — are a little yellowed, but still hint of the splendor that was once commonplace

Ithaca banker Charles Treman and his wife, Mary, signed in Thursday afternoons in the 1930s. Chauffeurs signed on the second line down and slept out in a guest house at the back.

"When they were making movies in Ithaca, many of stars and major staff people went over there and stayed," Schuyler County historian Barbara Bell

The signatures — nicely preserved in Cornell University archives — read as a she remembers. who's who of the elite from Central New York and beyond.

But you can't put buildings in a box and seal them up on library shelves. High above Seneca Lake, on the Padua Friary, the Glen Springs Hotel is a play golf in the summer, skied in the

charred timbers and leaky roofs. nimbus of the resort. "You have no idea how nice it was," She remembers three resident doctors

says 89-year-old Ethel Bassett of Ithaca, who filled in for the pianist at the resort in the early 1920s during her Christmas break from Ithaca College. Bassett, who later became the full-time pianist, lived at the resort while she was were there for nerves. They were there employed there. She remembers meeting

the likes of John D. Rockefeller and his "They used to travel with their maids and valets," she recalls.

Bassett joined a violinist three times a day to play in the resort's music room. The music filtered out into a spacious Corinthian lounge, where guests gathered after meals.

When Bassett wasn't entertaining guests, she was enjoying the splendor of life in a resort hotel where she eventually met her husband, Henry Bassett, who also was a musician.

"I had all the freedom of the hotel, and I could do anything I wanted to," Bassett's room was on the top floor of the hotel annex, which was connected to the main building by a glass-enclosed

corridor. She remembers dancing to Victrola music in the parlor while hotel roperty now known as St. Anthony's of guests gathered to watch. She learned to rumbling cluster of broken windows, winter and took rides in the still-novel

But there are those who remember the But at age 19, Bassett didn't feel a need to take advantage of the famous "water cure," which brought fime to the resort.

who lived in houses ner the hotel and two nurses who lived of the premises. "People were there or different reasons. They were thee to reduce. They for a nice place to stay" she says. "There was a time inhe last century, says Bell, "when peop thought that

mineral water was a cie for anything in the world." Brochures at the Schyler County Historical Museum in Iontour Falls advertise the resort's Hdro-therapeutic baths as being similar o European spas. Resort owner William^B. Leffingwell called the springs "Th American

Nauheim" after a simar treatment developed in Bad Naueim, Germany. But long before the plendor noted a century ago, the mined springs that still gush from the proper's underground gorge drew the Senecandians to the area o drink the water, sas one brochure.

The plan to open alealth spa on the property was the braichild of George Freer, who inherited te property in 1853 from his wife, Cynthi Watkins. Watkins formerly was the wiftof village founder Dr. Samuel Watkins. In 1870, Freer builthe original hotel

See MEMORIES,