

## Report from the Aspiranture, Yona, Guam

"J. M.

Sunday, November 11. Retreat Sunday was interrupted with the announcement of Typhoon Karen, Condition 1. We secured parts of our house as best we could. Two neighbors put our kerosene stove into working condition. We watched the TV news at 2:45 telling about the approaching typhoon. We saw part of the Christopher's program at 3:00 with frequent technical interruptions. At 3:45 all electricity was off. (Even Nov. 25, all electric clocks are pointing to quarter to four).

After supper we had regular recreation with the Candidates and Aspirants, playing cards and caroms in kerosene lamplight. The winds continually got stronger. At 7:15 we went to the convent Quonset for a nameday treat for Sister M. Martinus [Joyce]. As Sister Rose [Manibusan] got to the lunch, we noticed excessive water coming in the lavatory windows. We tried to fix the pieces of linoleum we were using for window blocking—with no avail; the winds were too strong. While Sister M. Carolyn [Stahl] was up on a chair pounding, a terrific gust of wind ripped off the roof over our heads. Lo, and behold, Sister's veil went, too. In fear the rest of the house would also crash, we dashed for the Blessed Sacrament and went over to the Aspiranture building.

We stayed on the second floor in the office and study hall praying until the windows started blowing glass all over the room. Next we stayed in the recreation room and refectory, trying to get a little sleep. The wind got continually stronger, tin was blowing around outside, and we could see that part of the Quonset and laundry were being blown apart. When the windows in the recreation room gave, we huddled in the corridor between the bedrooms and cupboards. Mattresses were pulled off the beds and door curtains were used to protect us from flying glass and water. Parts of the ceiling were becoming water soaked and falling down. The noise upstairs was only a prelude to what we discovered the following morning.

Monday, November 12. The long night of fear ushered in an even greater picture of destruction than we had imagined. As soon as it got light, we looked out to see what was left of the convent quonset. What a shock it was to see it! The roof was gone, the front wall caved in, the back wall pushed out and the chapel completely swept away! Another shock was the sight of the study hall upstairs in the Aspiranture. Five big holes in the roof, numberless broken windows, wind and water had made a refuse dump of all our textbooks, library books, Holiday Fair articles, curtains, clothing and bedding. Christmas cards and Notre Dame Sister dolls lay in inches of water and debris.

About 4:30 a group of young men came to see if they could do anything for us. We asked them to bring up our kerosene stove and some food, if they could somehow get into what was left of the quonset. Crawling through a window they pushed open the kitchen door and managed to find a few things. The winds were still very strong.

As daylight increased the winds subsided somewhat. Commissioner Sudo, Father Daniel and Father Alvin were the first to check on our safety. Father Alvin suggested that we all move over to St. Francis Convent, as wind and rain would make our house uninhabitable. With just bare essentials we arrived at St. Francis in time for breakfast (10:00). They too, were flooded. The roof over the chapel and several bedrooms were gone, besides several more punctures over the community room, lavatory and corri-

dor. Every time it rained there were inches of rain to sweep out. The Candidates and Aspirants bunked in the Community Room and the Sisters doubled up in the dry bedrooms.

After dinner we brought over some more valuable, movable pieces of furniture, such as, tape recorders, phonograph, and other visual mechanical aids. On one of these trips some boys poked their heads in one of the broken windows and acted rather suspiciously. We decided not to leave the house unguarded, so we asked a family to stay there temporarily. They had been staying in the school auditorium with some hundred other families. They were grateful for the shelter and we for the protection of our things. Supper and bed were early that night.

So far this has been our story of the typhoon. Every family could tell their own experiences. In an overall picture, as papers have stated, 95% of all homes were destroyed. People are living in the school-rooms that were not destroyed and doubling up many families in some homes that are not quite so bad. As of today many people are living in tents, set up next to the pile of rubbish that used to be their homes. Yona was the worse hit, but other villages, too, have suffered greatly.

Red Cross food distribution centers, field kitchens and medical care centers were set up for the people. All were advised to get typhus shots, as an epidemic would cause even more loss of lives than the typhoon. Some of the Sisters worked in the medical station and food distribution center.

Tuesday, November 13 and following.

Today was the first of many like-days. Salvaging at the Aspiranture, trucking of desks, mattresses, and personal belongings over to St. Francis by car and on foot. A very special 'Thank you, God' is due for the safety of our car. It has many scratches and a broken taillight but still runs. Without it we would be lost. There is no water, electricity, or telephone service.

Each day we concentrated on the salvaging of certain articles in the order of importance and perishableness. Foodstuffs were among the first. Through our hot lunch program we have quite a store of food. Much flour, corn meal, rice and oatmeal were water soaked and had to be destroyed. The canned goods were saved.

The rest of the salvaging cannot be described. It is an experience only actuality can give. Picking out valuable articles from a pile of rubble, dirt and falling timber; shoveling out piles of broken glass and water soaked books; finding a fork amidst a pile to be burned; decaying food products being carried to the bonfire; and the ever-present question, "Where to put this?" are only a few of the day by day duties. Each day we did as much as we could, returning to St. Francis for meals and sleeping. Night comes early in the tropics, so each day ended with the approaching darkness. Evenings found us gathered together usually for signing or listening to news on the transistor radio.

November 16. Hurrah! Water was again coming through the pipes at St. Francis. All water had been carried from approved sources up to this time. Since it was the first, it was limited to cooking and personal needs. Some of the Sisters took our pre-typhoon wash to the river. It is a beautiful clear spring, just big enough for 6 people to get near enough to scrub. The Aspirants took our wash on Saturday.

This was the day of our big Holiday Fair was to open. Needless to say, there was no Holiday Fair. Many of our articles were ruined in the typhoon, besides the fact that the people would not have money to buy.

Sunday, November 18 and the following week. Three cheers for the Marines! An emergency platoon of Marines came to work on the roof of St. Francis Convent. No more floor sweeping every time it rains! Part of the platoon went over the Aspiranture and started fixing our roof, too. They did a good job, nary a leak now. They used some patching on the old quonset, very temporary, to enable us to use it for storing. They did not work on Thanksgiving, but did return on Friday. They could not possibly finish, so they left a piece of canvas over the kitchen end of the quonset.

The Candidates and Aspirants went home for Thanksgiving Day. We spent the day moving our personal belongings from St. Francis to our new bedrooms on the first floor of the Aspiranture. The Candidates and Aspirants are all on the second floor, enabling the first floor to be our convent.

On Friday we had mass moving from St. Francis to Aspiranture. Mattresses, desks, and personal belongings were carried and trucked across the village. We spent the night in the Aspiranture. We continued to eat our meals at St. Francis on Saturday and Sunday.

Sunday, November 25. Since it was visiting Sunday, the Candidates and Aspirants went home again for the day. It also gives them a chance to help out at home. We do not plan to go back to classes this week as there is much work to do yet in and around our house. Finding place for things from 2 houses into 1 house is quite a challenge. Our one and only classroom was converted into a chapel. It's real cute. We used the portable altar that has been around from the pioneers and fixed up some kneelers, salvaged from St. Francis Church. All our chapel furnishings were blown away, except for vestments. These were saved in the hot locker. Statues, pews, stations, altar are all beyond repair.

We are doing some cooking at St. Francis and bringing it over here to eat. Breakfast and supper we are trying to manage on a 3 burner kerosene stove. If our patience doesn't wear out, it may work.

Many of the schools on the island, including St. Francis went back to school today, November 26. They are teaching half days and sharing classrooms. It is surely not ideal learning conditions, but at least it's a start.

That brings you up-to-date. Please keep us in your prayers."