

Notre Dame of Guam
Box 1846
Yona, Guam, M.I.
December 1962

Here are a few more details of that night -

Nov. 11, 1962

I will try to give you a picture of Typhoon Karen as we experienced it here in our building. It's one of those descriptive things that depends upon where you were when the wind blasted through and the rains slashed. Our other Convents at Agat, Barrigada, and St. Francis, Yona, all have their own wild tale to tell.

The Postulants and Aspirants had secured all windows and louvers by 11:30 Sunday morning, the 11th. Our kerosene stove had been coaxed into working, so we figured we were ready. At 7:30 that evening we five Sisters went next-door to our quonset-Convent. The winds were getting stronger and already the linoleum which had been nailed over the bathroom windows that morning had been ripped off. So *SM Carolyn* got up on a little washstand and began to repound the nails to shut out the increasing winds. Suddenly the roof blew off right above ~~her~~ head. Out went ~~the~~ veil and forehead band, and ~~We~~ haven't seen either of them since!

Now we knew it was time--past time--to leave the quonset-convent and plan to spend the night in the next-door Aspiranture building. Our first concern, of course, was for the Blessed Sacrament. So we took the tabernacle from the chapel to my office on the second floor of the Aspiranture. All that was left the next morning of our chapel was the floor: that altar, Stations and statues, newly-repaired pews--all were gone with the wind.

On arriving with Our Lord in the office, we began praying thousands of prayers, like: "Jesus, Son of the Living God, have MERCY on us!" Suddenly the windows of our adjoining bedroom blew in, and we knew it was time for further flight. So we all went to the first floor. There we put the Blessed Sacrament on the ping-pong table and continued to pray and sing and trust. Suddenly between 8:30 and 9:30 there was a horrible shattering of glass. With one impulse we ran to the corridor.

Now Our Lord was put into a cupboard. He was safe and still in our midst. The next six hours will ever remain a nightmare. We stood huddled together in 3-4 groups. I never shouted my prayers or meant them more than that night: "Jesus, have MERCY on us!" "Mother of Perpetual Help, PRAY for us!" We prayed our ejaculations in sets of ten or twenty or....but who really thought of counting. All That counted was that we would come out alive. My comfort during this eternity-of-a-night was that SOMETIME it HAD to end; SOMETIME there would HAVE to be a morning.

When daylight slowly came, we gingerly picked our way through the broken window-glass and the smashed dishes. We were horrified in looking out the side window to see the roof off our quonset-convent and the three outer walls ripped off. All around lay sheets of tin roofing, uprooted trees, and flown debris.

The second-floor ceiling came to meet us as we went upstairs to the Study Hall. One look, and all I could do was grab our habit sleeve and cry out loud into it.

All over the floor were dozens of water-soaked Notre Dame dolls, thousands upon thousands of Christmas cards--our Holiday Fair work of months cancelled in one night. Too heartsick to care, we went downstairs and lay on the damp mattresses that we had pulled out of the cells earlier as a protection against the fierce winds. We were still cold, perhaps from the cell-door wet drapes in which we had bundled ourselves while we had kept our prayerful and anxious vigil.

In the morning at about 8:00--but does TIME follow eternity?--Father Alvin came over from St. Francis across the village, and said we had better come over to their Convent. When we dragged the few still-dry mattresses over there, I can't remember, but they were placed on their chapel pews and soon all were asleep. After a few hours we had a meal--breakfast, dinner?--and then we slept again. It was the most peaceful day we would know for the next three weeks.

Sometimes I think the aftermath was worse than the actual typhoon. But no! it couldn't have been. Four times a day we walked across the village to work in the Aspiranture. One day was much like the next; Sunday, no different from Saturday. One is surprised at the energy in reserve both in body and soul at the time of a severe crisis.

In the meantime the Red Cross opened Field Kitchens in many villages; 1000 large, heavy tents were air-lifted to Guam to serve as temporary shelters for the thousands of homeless; 400 US Marines arrived within days to help rebuild temporary homes on Guam; typhoid shots were given to young and old. And, thanks be to God, I think it was within a week that water was again running through our pipes. We have been told it would take up to 60 days for us to have power again.

In the meantime, we "mopped up". We had thousands of pounds of flour (Hot Lunch) to dispose of. What was salvagable the Postulants and Aspirants took to the villagers; the rest we had to burn. We all wore masks, Roy-Roger-fashion, and I gave the young ones gum to chew to keep the morale up and the stomach down. God has been good to us in letting us save so many of our material things: clothes, tables and chairs, beds, most of our library books, and much of our school equipment, like the taperecorder, which though waterlogged, we hope will come out all right. The piano was frozen for two weeks, and yesterday I heard "Chopsticks" coming through again.

Our gaping holes in the roof have been tinned up by the Marines, and so after having spent two weeks with the Postulants and Aspirants in the St. Francis community room, we are again back in the Aspiranture building. "It is good for us to be here." Slowly we are getting back to a semblance of normal. The villages still look pretty beaten up. Property losses are estimated at close to \$1 million. Ninety-seven per cent of Yona was destroyed. Strangely, this typhoon had two eyes which crossed over our village--never did like crossed eyes!--and so we got a real clobbering.

The people have been magnificent under this unusual cross God sent us. This one came as a mighty breath of His love.