

"Killer Amy" Blows In

by Antonio Rosales

She had completely passed out of our memory since her impressive visit last December 9, 1951 when she blew in again a few days ago, this time across our desk. And we knew her as the unforgettable Typhoon "Killer Amy" whom we had thought had also been completely forgotten by others.

But we found out that we were mistaken for there were those who still remember the destructiveness with which Typhoon Amy swept across the Archipelago. And the people most likely to remember were those who suffered most during its passage, especially the little known municipality of Guiuan in Samar Island. More striking still was the fact that Typhoon Amy had received greater publicity in the States than in our papers. Perhaps it is because typhoons are so common in our islands that it would be ridiculous to even show a sign of surprise whenever we hear of it. But then, too, perhaps it is because we were not the sufferers, and, therefore, we remembered it least.

A young nun, Sister Maria Constanca Peño, told the story of Typhoon Amy's destructiveness when it struck the municipality of Guiuan where she was teaching at the time. Her story reached the States where

Associated Press and the United Press, the two greatest news agencies in the world, flashed it across the continent to 1,773 newspapers in the United States, through the 2,287 broadcasting stations and the 107 television stations in the U.S.A.

Describing the typhoon the young nun said, "The sight of the debris is very sickening—it can drive you crazy if you don't stop thinking about it. . . . Guiuan is now like Manila after the liberation—all in ruins. It is hard to describe in words. . . .

"Ninety-five percent of the houses were carried into the Pacific by the angry waves or crushed down in total ruin. All our eight big Quonset huts which the U.S. Army left in 1945 were totally destroyed. . . . not a post standing.

"Men, women, children and babies were there—crying, shouting, praying, moaning with pain on account of the windows and doors of the church being blown down and hitting people. Broken window glasses flew over our heads."

Torrential rains and a 135-mile-an-hour wind filled the church with a thick fog, although it was daylight, she said, adding:

"That time was the crisis—from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. We couldn't see each other because of the fog, and

nothing could be heard but the roaring of the winds and the cries of pain.

"I thought it was the end for everyone. Each one was just waiting for his death. So was I. But I really did not get scared. . . I was willing to die. I was waiting for the walls of the church to crumble over us, and then we could have passed into eternity. Wouldn't that be a nice death?"

At the height of the typhoon the parish priest gave the blessed Sacrament to the huddled throng. . .

"And after that there was silence from the crowd, but the winds roared on.

"Groups of people were blown away. I myself was blown and dragged off by the winds from the sanctuary to the sacristy. I tried hard to return near the altar, but the winds seemed to have pasted me to the sacristy wall. We were all wet for hours and hours."

When the storm subsided, the survivors emerged to find their homes destroyed, many relatives dead beneath the wreckage or swept out to sea. Noting with a sore heart that "among the casualties were many of our 1,600 students," Sister Maria Constanca wrote:

"We have to begin from scrap again."

The Very Rev. Ulric Arcand, apostolic missionary of the Philippine rehabilitation offices in St. Paul, Minnesota, made public the nun's letter in the hope that badly needed contributions would be forthcoming to aid the sufferers. The overall damage was estimated at \$100,000,000. Typhoon Amy also left 1,126 dead, 420,395 homeless. It would be eight or nine months from the time of the destruction before the crops will have fully recovered.

Typhoon "Killer Army" has left only corpses, ruins, misery and a desperate people. Thousands of homeless families now eat only one meal a day. . . Help is very urgently needed in cash and in kind. Needless to say the situation is getting worse with each passing day. . . Very likely many will perish due to exposure to the elements, hunger, disease and may be epidemics of dysentery, or even the dreaded cholera."

Relief in kind and in cash could be divided between Bishop Acebedo of Samar, Archbishop Rosales of Cebu, and Mother Superior General of the R.V.M. Sisters, 430 España, Sampaloc, Manila.

A young curate in a cathedral parish was to deliver his first sermon and had to read it to his bishop. The bishop heard him in a stony silence.

At the conclusion the curate, trembling, asked: "Will that do?"

The bishop stared at him under bushy brows. "Do what?" he asked.

— The Sign