

Urges Colleges To Assist 'Dear Abby' Letter Brings Gift Bonanza

Boston — (NC) — Sen. Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts urged Boston College's newly created Council on Urban Development to "take the lead in a general revitalization of ghetto neighborhoods."

"What I call upon you to do is to take the college into the city," Sen. Kennedy declared. "What I am urging is that you transfer the skills and abilities you have developed from the academic towers to the tenements of Boston. Only by personal action, in the streets of the city, can we remake our slums and renew the faith of the slum dwellers."

Sen. Kennedy spoke at a dinner marking the formation of the council as part of the Jesuit

run college's Institute of Human Sciences. The Institute of Human Sciences attempts an interdisciplinary approach to problems connected with urbanization, technological change and other aspects of social development. Its Council on Urban Development, composed of scholars, scientists, politicians, and members of the business community, will meet twice yearly to pool their ideas.

Sen. Kennedy urged the institute to "get housing development corporations off the ground all over Boston." He said the institute should also assist ghetto residents in formation of self-owned small businesses. "The pride, the feeling

of self-sufficiency which comes from the ownership of a small business, cannot be overestimated," he said.

Other projects which Sen. Kennedy suggested for the institute including helping to solve problems related to crime, recreation and transportation. He urged that Boston College consider the feasibility of allowing students to count for credit time spent on social work projects in the low income areas of the city.

CARE In Indonesia

First CARE operations in Indonesia are under way, with initial emphasis on a pilot feeding program for school children.

By FR. PATRICK O'CONNOR (NC News Service)

SAIGON — A letter to "Dear Abby" started it, and the results have come by the truckload.

They come in great, grey U.S. mail sacks, filled with the goodness of American hearts, young hearts and old.

Every sack bulges with gifts for orphans and other needy children of Vietnam. The gifts have been sent in response to a simple 68-word letter from U.S. Air Force Sgt. Bill Thompson.

Columnist Abigail Van Buren, who appears in "Stars and Stripes," had asked servicemen in Vietnam to say what they'd

like for Christmas. One of the first replies she printed was from Bill Thompson.

"What do I want for Christmas?" he wrote and answered: "infants' wear, children's wear, toys, shoes"—gifts for 100,000 orphans and other poor children in Vietnam. "That's all I want for Christmas, Abby, and God bless you for asking."

Thousands of readers responded and are still responding. Packages have come from individuals, families, schools and business firms. Some were mailed along rural routes, some in cities. Fourth graders in Oakville, Conn., high school boys and girls in Passaic, Ed Tomassay in Los Angeles, three youngsters in Bozeman, Mont., the father and mother of three

little girls in Loogootee—these are some of the senders, picked at random.

"God bless you for your thoughtfulness," wrote Mrs. Walter Schack of Garfield, N.J., sending two packages.

Some 50,000 donors wrote letters, many enclosing Christmas cards all touching in their sympathy and generosity. Bill Thompson is distressed by his utter inability to answer them. "I'd like to write to everyone," he said wistfully. The arrival of another mail truck with 50 more sacks of packages for prompt handling was a reminder that he couldn't.

Assigned to CORDS (Civil Operations for Revolutionary Development Support) for ref-

ugees, he gave his APO 92643 address in his letter to Abby. The Army Post Office and the Air Force have cooperated magnificently. The gifts have been ferried across the Pacific by SAM—Space Available Mail—and much space has been made available.

It has not been enough however. Now a ship, reportedly named the Sergeant Thompson, is sailing from San Francisco, bringing what the planes could not take. The shipload will arrive in time for Tet, lunar New Year, a great family holiday, which will fall around the end of January.

The first load brought by air-mail was landed in Saigon on Dec. 2. Since then sacks have

kept coming, on one day 50, on another 86, on another 285. The 5th Group, U.S. Special Forces, has lent a warehouse in Tan Son Nhut airbase and pays the wages of 18 Vietnamese women, who work under Bill Thompson's supervision, sorting and repacking the gifts. An assortment of clothing, toilet articles, toys and other items is packed into a light plastic bag for each recipient.

1254 mail sacks have been received and the gifts have been repacked into some 15,000 plastic bags.

U.S. Air Force, Army and US-AID-contract planes carry the gifts to units all over the country. To some they bring entire mail sacks, not yet opened, for local sorting and distribution.

In the Saigon area thousands of the plastic "gift kits" have already been sent out to orphanages. The Holy Name Society of Queen of Peace Church delivered 400 to a Buddhist orphanage.

Money gifts have come, too—more than \$1,000 so far, Bill Thompson said.

Watching the calendar, he is intent on shipping the gifts already received to outlying areas well before Christmas. With the nimbleness of a parachutist (he earned Vietnamese paratrooper's wings), he move fast amid toys, infants clothing, cakes of soap, baby shoes, canned food, even fruit cakes, a miscellany that would gladden—and bewilder—Santa Claus himself.

"It's unbelievable," a soldier kept repeating, as he surveyed the piled-up mail sacks and the workers sorting the bright medley of articles already unpacked. He had been sent by the Public Information Office to size up the operation and was overwhelmed.

Bill Thompson, who has seen much overseas service, is a New Yorker by birth. He was born and baptized in St. Pius parish in the Bronx.

WCC Leaders

Back Pope's

Peace Call

Geneva — (RNS) — Officers of the World Council of Churches here called the attention of member churches to Pope Paul's appeal for a "Day of Peace" on Jan. 1, 1968.

Signed for the WCC by Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, chairman of the Central Committee, and by Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, general secretary, the message also reminded the Churches that "prayer and action are demanded every day . . . if peace is to be built and if it is to endure."

The WCC and the Vatican recently announced the intensification of cooperative efforts in the areas of international justice, peace and development.

In his statement in Rome, the Pope said: "Let us strive then to inaugurate the year of grace, 1968, the Year of Faith which is transformed into hope by praying for peace, praying altogether in our churches and in our homes. Let no voice be missing from the chorus of the church and of the world seeking Christ, who was immaculately for us, to grant us peace."

Dr. Fry and Dr. Blake said they were responding to the Pope's proposal because of the prevailing conviction that "peace with justice and freedom requires as an indispensable ingredient the release of spiritual resources."

Blue Army Sets

3-Point Program

Washington, N.J. — (NC) — Msgr. Harold V. Colgan, founder and international director of the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima, announced he is sending letters to all U.S. bishops asking them to adopt a 3-point "program of action, prayer and Eucharistic devotion."

Msgr. Colgan, said the plan's three phases include:

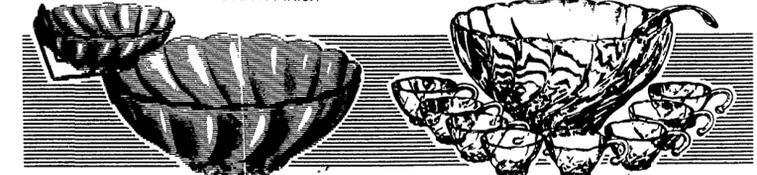
—A pilgrimage for one month in each diocese of the "Pilgrim Virgin" statue of Our Lady of Fatima, presented to the U.S. by Bishop Joao P. Venancio of Fatima, Portugal. The statue is meant to be a focal point for prayer for peace.

—A stepped up program of home visits by smaller "pilgrim" statues. This is envisioned as an ecumenical activity in which persons of all faiths will gather in Catholic homes for prayer.

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