



Bob Pfuntner smooths pitted plaster walls in diminutive living room.

After the Flood OPERATION REBUILD

Text and Photos By Laurence E. Keefe

On Ellicot St. in Corning you can stand in a white, wall papered bedroom and look down the street on Saturday morning to see a wedding party leaving St. Vincent's church.

Laughter and busy voices float up the stairs of this house which stands in one of the hardest hit flood areas, and almost every thing seems just like it was before the water came.

But then you look out the window a little harder, and you see that the porch roof on the house next door has fallen right down onto the porch. And going down stairs, it becomes apparent that the laughter comes from a group of men who would not normally be there.

These five men are from St. Mary's parish in Dansville, and they're taking part in Operation Rebuild, an ecumenical, volunteer effort to get people back into their homes before the winter comes.

They work on walls where the sheet rock has been stripped leaving the studs bare; they hand new ceil-

ings where the old tiles crumbled away; they hammer and paint and scrape and renovate.

Outside the house is an appraiser from the Army Corps of Engineers, the fourth one to come to inspect the house since the flood. In an effort to get around a shortage of trailers, the Army is trying to make temporary repairs which will make houses liveable.

The Operation Rebuild volunteers are working on the house of Mrs. Suzanna Marmuscak, an 80-year-old widow with heart problems. She is living with one daughter, while another daughter, Mrs. Sue Bzupinka, a widow of two months herself whose house was also destroyed, oversees the work on her mother's house.

Operation Rebuild is a project organized by the Office of Human Development. Head of the Corning end of it is Father Peter Bayer, who explains, "We have first on our list of priorities those who can't help themselves, like widows, the elderly, those on fixed incomes and invalids."

So far his office has surveyed approximately 100 cases to find those eligible; found 45 cases where Operation Rebuild help was needed; and gotten together with a family in 34 cases.

Father Bayer isn't happy with the progress. "We could have hundreds of families," he says, "had the volunteers." Under the rebuild program, the holders pay for the materials out of their own pockets. Volunteers do the work.

The team from St. Mary's is headed by Father Bayer, both experienced in the building trade. They are happy with the relief efforts of the national organization.

"If they'd stop jerking around," Father Bayer says, "we could make better time." As the volunteers have to wait on certain projects to see if federal relief will take care of them.

And James Bennett says, "There's a lot of heat left before we need heat in here — and we've wasted two months." Everywhere in



Ivar Paur puts family on Rebuild map in headquarters.



Robert Drum, Arthur Morsch, James Kramer put up tile.