

# Charles Warunek... Man Above the Flood

By CARMEN VIGLUCCI

Charles Warunek sat back in a recliner easy chair in the trailer on loan from Housing and Urban Development until his home can once again be liveable. He was sizing up his life since June's flood swept the Southern Tier.

He might have dwelled on the fact that the flood all but destroyed his home on Wilson Street in Corning — instead he pointed out that because of its concrete foundation it stood its ground when other houses were washed away.

"All we ever had was our home," said his wife Marion. "Everything we ever had went into it. We never traveled or things like that."

Charles Warunek might have given more than passing mention to the fact that he and his wife not only lost their home but the possessions of a lifetime.

"What hurt so much," said Marion Warunek, "was losing the things my mother had passed down, such as our grandfather clock."

He did tell how his wife almost had a nervous breakdown but quickly added that she is all right now.

"It wasn't the flood itself," said Marion Warunek. "It was trying to get someplace to live afterwards. We, of course, could stay with our son; he only lives a mile and a half away, but they have children and we were making it awfully crowded. Besides all we really wanted was a little privacy. Then we had to fight a lot of red tape in getting the trailer."

Charles Warunek would have been allowed some self-pity, for he had just finished paying off the house in April and he had just put about \$3,000 into re-



The Warunek family outside their battered home.

modeling the kitchen and bathroom.

He might have pointed out the grim irony in that they had just reached the point where they could finish doing their home in "early American," fulfilling a lifetime desire but are instead now living in a government trailer — with early American decor.

All that and more.

But Charles Warunek was not looking back.

Instead he wanted to talk about the help he is going to get through Operation Rebuild, particularly from Our Lady of Mercy parish in Greece.

He told of how some volunteers from St. Mary's in Auburn, working on another place in the neighborhood, helped him put in some insulation because they had a little time to spare from their main chores.

He told of a workman who got him a lawnmower at a very good price in Rochester when such commodities were impossible to come by in the flood belt.

"We had forgotten there were people like this left in the world," he said, musing. "Too bad the whole world couldn't realize this, then there wouldn't be the problems there are today."

He didn't seem to be aware of the character of men like Charles Warunek who worry about keeping the grass trimmed when their lives have been landslided.

How have the Warunek family coped since that day when they stood on a Corning hill and tried to pick out where their house was under the flood waters?

First they put in for a trailer. Problems ensued but eventually the three-room-plus-bath trailer was put on their lot, just behind the gutted house.

After three weeks in the trailer

and with the prospect of another year in it, Marion Warunek says that living in it so far has created no problems.

But how to get the house liveable? Warunek got a loan of \$12,000 from the Small Business Administration, \$7,000 of which he will have to pay back.

"The man said I could have gotten more, up to \$19,000," says Warunek, "but that would be too much for me to repay. I'll be making payments of \$43 a month and when I retire Social Security will take care of that, but I'd have a tough time with anything more."

Warunek, a parishioner at St. Vincent's, also talked to Father Peter Bayer, head of the diocesan recovery efforts in Corning. Through that meeting the Warunek family were adopted by the Greece parish, which also has taken on the responsibility of helping to restore the Quattrini house next door.

"They're almost finished over there," said Warunek, "kind of quick, mainly because the Quattrini boys are putting in so much time themselves."

Warunek is unable to do much manual labor on his house be-

cause of a broken heel, suffered in a pre-flood fall from a tree he was pruning.

But still he is optimistic.

"Mercy has already had an electrician at the house. He made some diagrams and sketches last week and this week they'll get going on the electricity. Almost all the help from the parish is professional," he said, reflecting the added hope this implies.

"All it's going to cost us is materials," Warunek added. "These people are donating their time and talent and effort."

Warunek's son works for Corning Natural Gas and despite putting in many extra-shift days still has managed to buy and install a new furnace for his parents, a fact that gives them comfort many Southern Tier residents lack.

So with his 60th birthday next month, his home unliveable, his hopes of a lifetime dashed, his fate literally in the hands of strangers, Charles Warunek looks ahead. The help he has already had from so many sources has buoyed his hope.

"In fact," he smiled, "I'll come out on top."

FR. ALBERT SHAMON

## Word For Sunday



Sunday's Readings: (R 1) Ez. 18: 25-28. (R 2) Phil. 2: 1-11. (R 3) Mt. 21: 28-32.

Ezekiel in the first reading says that people can change. Bad people can become good. Good people can become bad. In the gospel Our Lord told a story of two sons who had made such a change within twenty-four hours. One had good intentions at the beginning of the day, but these did not materialize. The other started the day off badly, but ended up well. Change for better or for worse is such a probability for all that St. Paul warned that people should be humble and think of others as "superior to themselves."

Sunday's readings, however, teach a further lesson. John Bunyan was one of those persons Ezekiel spoke about — "a wicked man turning from his wickedness." After Bunyan had sworn that he would never enter the kingdom of God, he dreamt a dream of heaven, was changed, and wrote one of the great classic works of Christendom, *Pilgrim's Progress*.

This book is like a collection of photographs of virtues and vices. With eloquent sarcasm, and not without humor, he was drawing a picture of the first son in Our Lord's parable when he created the character Mr. Talkative. Mr. Talkative is the Christian who talks of prayer, of repentance, of good works — but he knows only how to talk of them. He is like the lad who said,

"I'm on my way, sir." Bunyan writes: "I have been in Mr. Talkative's family, and his house is empty of religion as the white of an egg is of flavor." With that snapshot, Mr. Talkative goes quietly down the drain.

Somebody said we have two tongues: one in our head and one in our shoes. And no matter what the tongue in our head is saying, it is the tongue in our shoes that tells what we are doing and where we are going. And the awful truth is that the tongue in our shoes has the last word. Even the pharisees saw that. "Which of the two sons did what the father wanted?" Jesus asked. And they answered rightly, "The second."

Doctor Alfred Adler contended that life happens at the level of actions, not words. What we say is neither here nor there unless it is in agreement with our actions. We are what we do! And what we do is the real answer to what we mean and intend. Our Lord said something like that about "talkers." "Not all who talk like religious people are," he said. "Even though they may refer to me as 'Lord,' that won't get them to heaven."

Remember the Peanuts cartoon that satirizes the Christian who does not put good works where his mouth is. Charlie Brown and Linus are trudging through the snow, bundled up in warm clothing. Spying Snoopy sitting in the snow looking forlorn and slightly frozen. Charlie Brown says to Linus, "Snoopy looks kind of cold, doesn't he?"

"I'll say he does," says Linus. "Mabe we'd better go over, and comfort him."

"Be of good cheer, Snoopy," says Linus to the shivering Snoopy.

"Yes, be of good cheer," chimes in Charlie Brown.

The last frame shows Charlie and Linus trudging off with Snoopy sitting there shivering with a question mark over his head.

So with us. Are we big in talk and low in performance? Soft tongued, slow foot? Are we the kind of person who has to be explained ("Oh he's okay when you get to know him")? Or the kind who has to explain himself ("I didn't get a good night's sleep. That's why I've been so nasty today")? Or the kind who lives in a vacuum ("He opens the door and nobody comes in")?

Yes, talk is cheap! In fact it is worth nothing unless backed up by works.

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## LETTERS

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### St. Joseph Sisters Grateful for Help

Editor:

The Sisters of St. Joseph address this message to the people of the Rochester diocese:

On September fourteen we received from Father Joseph Reinhart, diocesan mission director, your generous contribution for our Brazil mission and our work in Selma, Alabama. Our gratitude for your assistance deepens each year, but it has a new dimension as I write to you today. Since the diocesan collection for Latin America and our home missions took place only shortly before the destructive flood in June, I realize that many of you

along with the monetary sacrifice which your giving necessitated have also experienced the suffering of those who are homeless and uncertain of future security. In our grateful prayers these special needs will be remembered.

During Sister Rosalima's recent visit to Brazil she noted many signs of growth which encourage and animate future endeavors. In all that has been done, the Church of Rochester plays an important role. Even in the interior of Brazil, the people are becoming increasingly conscious of their human dignity, their per-

sonal and cultural worth. They cry out for bread, for work, for land, but now they are thirsting for freedom, equality and for truth. You, through our sisters, are responding to this cry. In the areas entrusted to the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Church of Brazil feels the strength of your support.

May the blessings that are given to those who come together in the common hope of the Kingdom be yours in great abundance.

Mother Agnes Cecilia Troy  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester

