

Brazil Missioner Now Helps Area Disturbed

By SHARON DARNIEDER

Since February, 1973, Sister Judith McKay, SSJ, has occupied a desk as a community organizer in the University of Rochester's Community Mental Health Center (CMHC) using talents and skills developed in previous careers as a diocesan teacher and missionary for her congregation in Brazil.

An unlikely place to find her? Not really. She's had a lot of experience working with people and co-ordinating programs. And that's what much of her job as a community organizer is all about.

"When I was in Brazil," she said, "my job was in pastoral ministry and I did a lot of community organizational work. I developed and co-ordinated religious education programs for adults and couples and ran training courses for social action."

During the past two years Sister Judith and Paul G. Hardick, another community organizer, have worked with Susan Saunders, director of the community organization unit to develop a citizen participation program sanctioned by the university and designed to reach the 180,000 people the CMHC serves in southern Rochester and Monroe County.

They've worked with local citizens to establish 12 citizen committees, a consumer committee and a citizen council. Their area includes Riga, Chili, Wheatland, Rush, Mendon, Henrietta, part of Brighton and Pittsford and city wards 19, 14, 13, 11 and 3.

Committee membership comprises people from all walks of life, many nationalities and races, and individuals who have used CMHC services.

"According to 1972 statistics," Sister Judith said, "about 4,000 people in our area used our services. That leaves 176,000 that probably don't know what we do here or how we might be able to help them."

She's dedicated, as is the rest of the staff, to fostering community awareness of the CMHC and citizen involvement in the evaluation of its services, decision making process and other areas.

Although the community organization unit has been spending a lot of time recently with the citizen participation program, the staff is also concerned with other areas such as working with agencies that relate to the CMHC.

The CMHC, part of the university's department of psychiatry, is based in the R-Wing of Strong Memorial Hospital and is under the direction of Dr. Haroutun M. Babigian, who is also director of community and clinical services in the department of psychiatry.

Funded by patient's fees, federal, university and county funds, it was established in 1968 to provide comprehensive mental health services for those in its area. The Rochester Mental Health Center and the Genesee Mental Health Center serve other areas.

In addition to the community organization unit, the CMHC has five major services: outpatient, inpatient, a day treatment program, psychiatric emergency and consultation and educational services.

Those who come to the CMHC seek help for a variety of reasons including marital discord, family problems, coping with daily



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stress, severe emotional disturbances and drug and alcohol addiction. Treatment ranges from individual, group or family therapy to specialized programs for persons with drug or alcohol problems, such as the methadone maintenance program started in December, in which Sister Judith is also involved.

She remembers that when she returned from Brazil in 1972 she was undecided about her future.

"I worked at the diocesan Office of Human Development for a few months on a survey they were taking of the needs and resources of the inner city parishes," she said. "Then I worked as a volunteer in Northside Hospital's drug program and I knew that this was what I wanted to get into."

However, through a friend she met Susan Saunders, and her goal shifted a little.

"I had applied for a job in the drug program at Strong," she said, "and then discovered that there was also an opening in community organization through my talks with Susan."

"She helped to show me that my skills could be very helpful in such a program, so I made a compromise and decided to work in both."

Sister Judith spends 10 hours each week as a drug counselor, works on an appointment basis and does both individual counseling and group therapy.

She admits she finds this aspect of her job interesting, rewarding and helpful in relation to her work as a community organizer.

"I see that in order to facilitate community organization you have to have a sense of what clinical work is all about," she said. "My work in the drug program helps me get this and it gives me an understanding of what those who work in other areas are doing."

Sister Judith feels that the "community organization unit has been very viable in the department of psychiatry and that it's been proven to be an

asset to the CMHC and the community as a whole."

She pointed out that although there are some 500 mental health centers across the country, "none has a community organization unit as extensive as ours. It's unique."

"As a society we have a lot of conditional attitudes toward the mentally ill and the mental health giver," she continued. "There is a definite need for attitudinal changes related to mental illnesses."

"I can see a lot of injustices being done because people are not being treated as full human beings, such as discrimination because of jobs, etc."

Although she doesn't rule out the possibility that sometime in the future she may return to Brazil, it's easy to see by the satisfied smile on her face and her positive attitude that she enjoys her present job and feels her skills are being put to good use.

She hastens to add, however, that she's "still learning a great deal" and hopes to expand and become more specialized in mental health education.

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Father Andrew Greeley

At a recent meeting of world religious superiors, I am told, the Latin Americans went through their usual liberation theology bit and demanded that the rest of the Church listen to their contribution and take it seriously—a perfectly reasonable request, it seems to me.

One of the Latins then turned to the "North American" delegation and asked what their contribution was. Somewhat embarrassed, the Yankees repeated slogans of liberation theology and apologized for American imperialism.

"No, No!" said the Latin impatiently. "That's our contribution. What's yours?"

My informant reports that the North Americans were completely confused. A North American contribution? What could that possibly be?

Maybe nothing but another check.

Or as Monsignor Geno Baroni recently put it to me, "The Catholic elites are on the verge of cultural bankruptcy." It has been a long time since John Ireland, a long, long time.

I was reminded of the Latin demand for a North American contribution when I read the pathetic, dispirited document prepared by the NCCB for the upcoming synod. As a "review of the principal trends in the life of the Catholic Church in the United States," it does not even begin to exist. It is a shameful document in the strict sense of the word: it makes one ashamed to be an American Catholic and ashamed of the shallowness and lack of perceptivity of our leaders.

The document begins with a portrait of the "malaise" in secular American society which could have been lifted from the "Op Ed" page of the "New York Times." It is nothing more than an uncritical parroting of the latest fashion from the secular liberal party line—with the usual lack of empirical data to support its clichés. We are told that deep divisions still persist because of Viet Nam (not true), that Americans feel cynical and disgusted about the entire political process (most emphatically not true) and that they no longer trust their public institutions (they trust them more than almost any other people in

the world). We are also told that no progress has been made against poverty (a falsehood), and that racism has not diminished (an outright calumny against the American people). Finally, we (or the bishops who will go to the synod) are informed by the American hierarchy that the energy crisis "raises additional questions about American altruism and willingness to sacrifice." It sure did, and it answered them too. Americans were amazingly patient and responsible during a crisis caused by the incompetence of the government and the venality of the oil companies, and made worse by the inefficiency of the Administration (which is currently engaged in other activities).

I would submit that the bishops are going to Rome with a document to present to their colleagues at the synod which is nothing but a tissue of falsehoods about the current state of American society. It is a stupid, false, ignorant, outrageous document. Every copy of it ought to be burned at a ceremony of public reparation to the American people and the American Catholics who have been shamefully slandered.

Is there nothing good in the American experience? Is there nothing that we can present to the rest of the world from which it may learn? Is there nothing that we can be proud of? Is it not an accomplishment to be the first major nation in history to be forced out of a war because its people didn't want it? Is it worthless that with comparatively little violence we have coped with problems that have torn other countries apart in the last decade? Should not Catholic bishops, of all people, be proud of the success of the American multi-ethnic experiment (ethnicity is not mentioned once in their document)? Don't the political coalitions which have put all those black mayors into office (usually with Catholic support) count for anything?

Or, as a staff member of the Board Failte (the Irish National Tourist Board) said to me (with characteristic Irish expletives deleted or changed), "When are you guys going to stop repeating those cotton-pickin' anti-American clichés?"

When indeed.

French Students on Visit Learn Education Is Life

By PAT PETRASKE

For most youngsters the burden is lifted at the end of June: no more study until September. Not so for the 168 French boys and girls who spent July in this area. They were on a "working vacation," learning the customs of the country, and how to get along in a difficult language they've been wrestling with for years.

What they discovered about the United States, said Girard Pangon, a supervisor of the group, is summarized in an inscription he found at the Rochester Public Library.

"Education is not an opening for life; education is the life."

Pa. School Aid

Harrisburg, Pa. [RNS] — Legislation authorizing \$32.5 million in state aid to parochial and other non-public schools in the current fiscal year has been cleared by the Pennsylvania General Assembly.

The proposals would increase the aid from the previous annual level of \$30 million. Rep. Martin Mullen (D-Philadelphia) said the increase was not adequate and announced that he would seek another \$6.5 million when the legislature returns to session from a Summer recess.

The aid is channeled through public school intermediate units and is earmarked for textbooks supplies and auxiliary services such as vocational counseling.

Pangon, a chemistry and physics teacher at St. Croix in Paris, was one of three adults who came here with the French students. Their group had students also in Syracuse and Albany. His wife Ann, a mathematics teacher, and Sister Gabrielle Landeau, an English teacher, were the other supervisors under the exchange program, AVEL.

Relaxing at the home of Steve and Alice Murphy, who coordinate the AVEL program in Rochester, the Pangons praised the American education system. "Our schools are bad. The government does not think they are important," Pangon said.

"In France, education means we teach the students as we want them to be. They are not taught to fulfill themselves," said Mrs. Pangon. The couple would like to find teaching positions in the United States to learn more about American education.

The French government pays the salaries of the Catholic school teachers but does not give grants for the purchase of maintenance of buildings or equipment, according to Sister Gabrielle, who teaches at St. Genevieve in Rennes.

While she has been teaching English for many years, Sister Gabrielle didn't know much about daily life in America. "I had to ask what were those boxes along the highways," she said, referring to rural mail boxes. Wooden houses, unfenced yards and the American habit of drawing the curtains back from the windows were all new to her.

Each of the French visitors interviewed cited the "largeness or open space" of the country and the friendliness of the

American people as the most outstanding impressions of the United States.

"The people are so open and spontaneous here. In France the people tend to be more reserved," Sister Gabrielle commented. She said even the customs agent at Kennedy Airport made her feel welcome.

The Pangons had seen movies of the country and American cities but didn't know the American people. "We were very surprised by the people. It seems the Americans are very confident in themselves and are very interested in the old traditions of Europe," said Pangon.

One student, Benoit Cambier, had no problems in the United States except that "I couldn't understand." He stayed with Ron and Rita Schiefen and their three daughters, who liked to tease him about his very proper English. "It took him awhile to understand slang," said one of the girls.

Benoit's visit provided a learning experience on both sides. Barb Linda and Kathy Schiefen, who were delighted to finally have a "brother," found it odd that Benoit would get up every morning at 7. His "French way" of setting the table with the spoon at the top of the plate and the fork upside down also surprised the girls.

The Pangons believe Americans need the Church to fight off materialism. In France, religion is more traditional and is viewed more intellectually than in the United States, where it is more "emotional."

"Here the people need groups like the Church because the country is so big," said Mrs. Pangon.