

'Shoes for Poland' 6,000 Pair Donated

By Terrance J. Brennan

The carefully printed note found inside one shoe was obviously the work of a youngster. Yet, in its simplicity, it echoed the feelings of so many across the upstate area.

"We want to share shoes and our prayers with the people of Poland."

This graphic display was only one outward sign of affection. But there were thousands of silent prayers last week in the old school hall at St. Stanislaus Parish as the Shoes for Poland project came to a close.

The project, sponsored by the Polonia Civic Center of Rochester, began collecting shoes to send to the needy in Poland on Dec. 1. As of last Tuesday,

the local effort had some 6,000 pairs of shoes donated for shipping to Gdansk sometime in January, according to Steve Flor, area coordinator.

"It's a lot more than we ever expected," said Flor, "and a lot more work."

Flor is assisted by some 20 volunteers who have to sort and repackage all the shoes that are donated. Many of the shoes, according to Flor, have come from collections by students in area high schools and colleges.

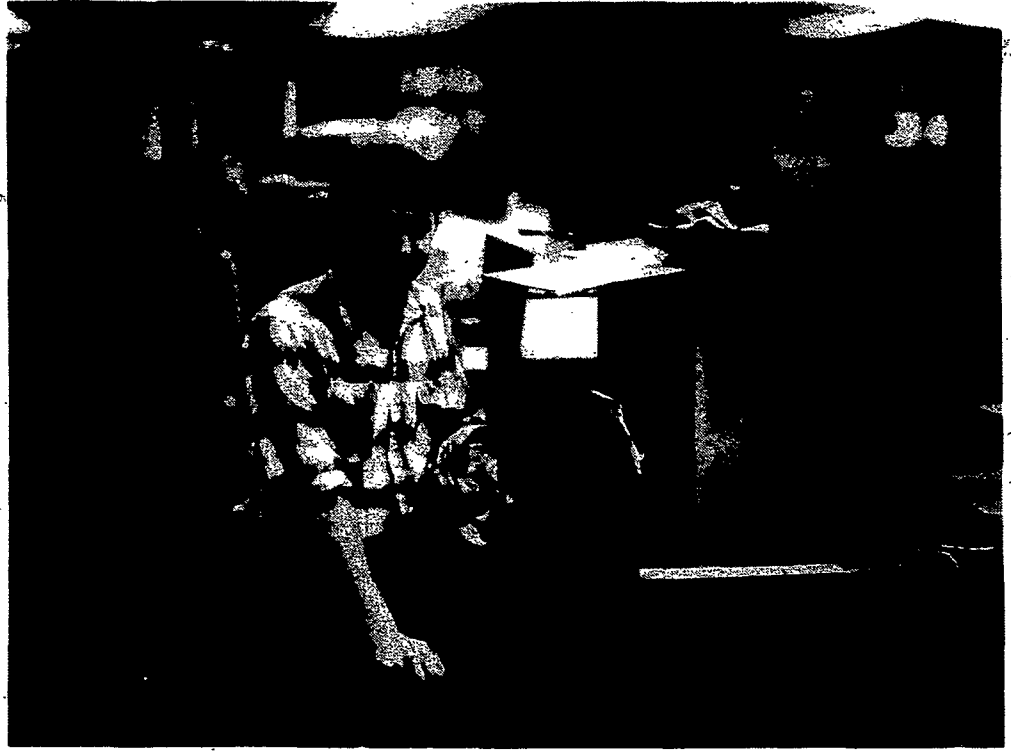
The purpose is to collect shoes suitable for distribution to the Polish to protect them for the coming winter. According to Flor, a major problem has been that many shoes donated fall into the

category of summer shoes — worn out sneakers, open-toed ladies' dress shoes, etc. — hardly feasible to combat the bitter winters in Poland.

Flor said that some Polish-bred Rochesterians have received correspondence from relatives and friends in Poland that tells of shoes made there now that have cardboard soles — shoes that may last perhaps two weeks.

On the whole, Flor agreed that the project is a huge success. "These are really going to help those cold in Poland."

"You look at what we're doing and ask 'Why?'" said Flor, 26, an unemployed civil engineer. "It's just proof that the Communist government is



Steve Flor, Shoes for Poland project coordinator, sits among the many boxes packed and waiting for shipping.

a complete failure — when they can't even provide shoes for their people. But this also shows just how generous the people in Rochester really are."

Flor said that a truck was expected to arrive here from Buffalo on Friday, Dec. 10, to pick up the shoes for transport to the

docks in New York City via Washington, D.C. The collection in Buffalo reached nearly 17,000 pairs, added Flor.

Nuclear Protester Was Man Obsessed, Associates Say

By Jerry Filteau

Washington (NC) — Norman Mayer was a frustrated man, obsessed with banning nuclear weapons, who was "very easy — perhaps too easy — to write off," said a prominent Washington peace activist who knew him.

Mayer, 66, was killed in a hail of police bullets Dec. 8 as he tried to drive away from the Washington Monument after 10 hours of riveting the nation's attention with a threat to blow up the monument unless a national dialogue on nuclear disarmament was begun.

His claim that he had half a ton of dynamite in his white van at the foot of the monument later proved false, but for a full day it held uncertain police at bay and caused turmoil in Washington as Mayer dramatized the message emblazoned on the side of the van: "No. 1 priority ban nuclear weapons."

Mitch Snyder, leader of the Community for Creative Non-Violence, a small band of committed pacifists and social justice activists in Washington, told NC News that he and other members of

the CCNV knew Mayer and had talked with him a number of times in recent months when he was picketing the White House to advertise his anti-nuclear message.

He described the dead protester — a hotel handyman from Miami Beach, Fla. — not as a coherent, well-thought-out advocate of pacifist principles, but as a person obsessed with one thing, banning the bomb.

"But in a sense he was right, you know," Snyder added. "If we take seriously the threat posed by nuclear weapons, then maybe we ought to stop everything and focus on that ... What happened yesterday (Dec. 8) drives home the seriousness" of the nuclear threat.

Snyder firmly disagreed with the method of Mayer's dramatic protest, but said the national attention that he attracted by threatening violence highlights a constant temptation facing those who are committed to social change through non-violence.

The Community for Creative Non-Violence, which is not denominational but has strong Catholic connections and is frequently involved in

church-related issues of justice and peace, is among the most active local groups engaged in such issues in the nation's capital. Its activities have ranged from anti-war protests at the Pentagon to soup kitchens for the destitute to hunger strikes and other protests seeking more assistance to the poor from the Catholic Church.

Snyder said that Mayer's actions and death provoked "mixed feelings" and thoughtful discussion among members of his community.

Although it was "a crazy thing, an excessive thing," he said, "he paid with his life for his beliefs. He was serious to the point of risking his life — though not the lives of others, since there was no dynamite."

Noting reports that Mayer had tried unsuccessfully to purchase dynamite in several places shortly before his protest, Snyder said, "I'm not surprised. Once you threaten to use violence, it's a simple step to using violence.

"This is a problem that people seeking social change always face. You saw the media there — now I don't blame the media, it's not their fault, they have to do their jobs — but the way the media react almost forces the use of violence," he said.

He compared the nationwide attention to Mayer's protest with the kind of public attention given to non-violent protests such as his community engages in. The single factor that made a difference, he said, was the dynamite threat, with its danger of the loss of lives and destruction of a cherished national monument.

For those committed to a cause and trying to draw the attention of an apathetic

public to that cause, he said, the inner dynamics of the relationship between violence and media attention tends to "force the impatient and the frustrated to cross that line. It's a dilemma we all face."

Snyder did not see Mayer's protest as having any significant impact one way or another on public opinion or the peace movement in the United States.

Those who might consider him representative of the peace movement are likely to be already opposed to the movement, he said, and those within the movement would not consider him representative.

"If there is any 'loss,' it will be offset by people committed to non-violence who will feel challenged by this person who risked his life," Snyder commented.

"I hope that in future years people will look back on him with more kindness," he said.

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Creationism Idea Rebuked

Syracuse — The top education official of the Syracuse Diocese has issued a position paper opposing "scientific creationism" as scientifically inadequate and out of step with the general Judeo-Christian understanding of creation.

Richard M. Lawless entered the debate between proponents of scientific creationism and adherents of the theory of evolution. Creationism teaches an instantaneous creation of the universe compatible with a literal reading of the creation accounts in the Bible. The theory of evolution holds that the universe developed gradually over a period of billions of years.

Local Catholic leaders have noted, Lawless said, that the controversies over the teaching of creationism in public schools have left the impression that evolutionary theory is anti-Christian and that creationism is the only Christian point of view. "That is definitely not the case," he said. "Catholic teaching, as well as the teaching of most other major Christian and Jewish groups, holds that the evolutionary theory is perfectly compatible with religious belief. Scientific observation of evidence God has given us, which led to the theory of evolution, offers an explanation of the ways of God's universe. Religion offers an explanation of what this creation means."

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