

month, of Catholic Charities of the Brooklyn-Queens Diocese, now the largest Roman Catholic human-services agency in the country, covering America's most populous diocese.

Despite not knowing what a social worker was back then, Bishop Sullivan has devoted 38 years of his life to the job, serving in welfare offices and hospitals, rising to direct the charities and now serving as vicar for human services, overseeing the charities' vast operations with their director, Frank DeStafano. (Mr. Stefano couldn't resist a dig at the boss yesterday as a reporter sat down: "Not the baseball thing again. He was only on the team for three days! Myself, I was always dedicated to the poor. No time for any kind of fund like that.")

Bishop Sullivan's message to the cable audience yesterday was that he could hope for nothing better during the next 100 years of Catholic charity work than for one message to be hammered home: "To be a practicing Catholic means to be involved in the lives of others."

But as he relaxed after the show he had another, angrier message not about personal but about public responsibility: welfare reform. He complained that too few people are talking about its effects now, which he says have hurt the poor in Brooklyn and Queens as much as anything he has seen in three decades of tumultuous change in the boroughs.

"I agree," he said, "that it had to be reformed, and I agree that there had to be a change in the culture that work must be more important than relief. But I radically disagree with the way it was done."

Four years ago, he and another bishop managed to wangle an hour and 15 minutes in the Oval Office with President Clinton, to try to talk him out of signing the welfare reform legislation. Mr. Clinton said he understood them. Then he signed the measure anyway.

"But I will tell you," he said, his face coloring, "that I think most of what is being said about the success of these programs is hype including here in this city. To me it's a sham. You look at the food lines at Catholic Charities. You look at the food lines at parishes. You look at the people trying to pay their rents."

He added: "They haven't heard the last of this. We're only into the third year, and the reality is that there will always be dependent people who can't work."

As he socked on a snap-brim hat to run out and give a speech about health care, he was asked whether it ever disheartens him—approaching his 70th year, his 44th as a priest, and nearly as long as a social worker—that there are still so many people suffering.

"It might not make any sense but it doesn't," he said. "I really think this job as heaven on . . . way to heaven. It doesn't come in the end. It begins here."●

THE "LEOPOLDVILLE" DISASTER

● Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, in a few days a small group of veterans will gather at Fort Benning, Georgia to commemorate one of the least known tragedies of World War II.

On Christmas Eve 1944, the Belgian troopship *Leopoldville* was transporting 2,235 American soldiers from the 262nd and 264th Regiments of the 66th Infantry Division across the English Channel. They were destined as reinforcements for units fighting the Battle of the Bulge. Many soldiers on board were singing Christmas carols as they

watched the lights along the coast of liberated France.

The ship was designed to carry fewer than half the number on board, and the Belgian crew did not speak English. Reportedly, many of the American soldiers were not issued life jackets. Just five miles from its destination of Cherbourg, France, the *Leopoldville* was struck by torpedos from the German submarine U-486. Two and a half hours later, the ship capsized and sank. According to many survivors, the crew abandoned ship in the lifeboats and left the American soldiers to fend for themselves. Unable to free the ship's life rafts, many of the troops jumped to their deaths in the frigid heavy seas. The British destroyed HMS *Brilliant* saved some 500 troops. However, because it was Christmas Eve, no one else seemed to be around to help. By the next day, Christmas morning, 763 American soldiers were dead, including three sets of brothers. The dead represented 47 of the then 48 states.

Mr. President, seven of the victims were from my home state of North Dakota. Among them was my uncle, Pfc. Allan J. Dorgan. His body was never recovered, and neither were the bodies of 492 other soldiers who died in the incident. It was weeks before my family and the families of other victims heard the fateful knock on the door and were given the telegram that said their sons, brothers, uncles, or fathers were "missing in action in the European Area." It took months more before a second telegram informed them their loved ones had been "killed in action in the European Area."

Due to wartime censorship, the disaster was not reported to the news media. Survivors were told by the British and American governments to keep quiet about what happened. American authorities did not even acknowledge the sinking of the *Leopoldville* until two weeks after it went down. Later, after the war, the tragedy was considered an embarrassment and all reports were filed away as secret by the Allied governments. Some say that the American and British governments conspired to cover-up the incompetence involved in the incident. For whatever reason, details of the disaster were withheld from the public for over fifty years. Some of the victims' families never learned the truth about how their loved ones perished that night.

For over fifty years, the young soldiers on the *Leopoldville* were denied their due, and never accorded the honors and respect they deserved. Finally, a few years ago, thanks to the efforts of *Leopoldville* survivor Vincent Codianni, former New York City police investigator Alan Andrade who wrote a book about the incident, and the Veterans Memorial Committee of Waterbury, Connecticut, the U.S. Army agreed to provide a site for a monument to the tragedy.

The Leopoldville Disaster Monument was dedicated on November 7, 1997 at Fort Benning, the "Home of the Infan-

try." On the monument, the names and hometowns of those members of the 66th Infantry Division who lost their lives on the *Leopoldville* and the names of those who survived the tragedy, but were later killed in action, are etched in stone. This was the first official recognition shown to any of the victims or their families. It was long overdue.

It is almost 55 years since the sinking of the *Leopoldville*. When the survivors and their families gather again this week in Georgia, they will honor their comrades who have passed away since their first reunion two years ago. I hope all my colleagues will join me in expressing our appreciation for their courage and for the ultimate sacrifice they made for freedom.●

HONORING 150 YEARS OF CONGREGATION B'NAI ISRAEL

● Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Congregation B'nai Israel in Sacramento, California, and to celebrate its 150th year of vitality and service to the Sacramento community.

Congregation B'nai Israel was founded in 1849 by Moses Hyman and Albert Priest. At the time, Gold rush-era optimism was everywhere in northern California, attracting opportunity seekers from as far as eastern Europe, the home to millions of Jews desperate to escape violent pogroms and rampant anti-Semitism. With his profound ability to organize people and his unrelenting desire to help the destitute, Moses Hyman began his congregation in his home, and soon became known as a pioneer of California Judaism and father of Temple B'nai Israel.

Moses Hyman, a major community philanthropist, also founded the Hebrew Benevolent Society, which assisted the sick and poor, especially during the Sacramento flood of 1850. Following that devastating disaster, Hyman purchased burial land and a nearby house of worship from a Methodist Episcopal church. Moses Hyman and Albert Priest named their new congregation B'nai Israel, which translated into English, means "Children of Israel." The rebuilt temple officially opened on September 2, 1852 as the first member-owned synagogue west of the Mississippi.

Congregation B'nai Israel has suffered through many hardships. After only a decade in existence, its synagogue was destroyed by fire, and only a year later, winter floods severely damaged cemetery grounds. The congregation was tested repeatedly. They mourned but then regrouped and rebuilt, emerging stronger than before.

By the mid-1900s, the congregation outgrew its existing facilities and launched a major effort to build a new synagogue. Thanks to the generosity of congregants, its capital campaign was a huge success. In addition to a new synagogue, the congregation added an education wing, later named after Buddy Kandel, in the early 1960s.