

Editorials

3-Part Flood Plan Would Be Practical

STRONG OPPOSITION which has developed to the Waterloo flood control plan submitted by the Corps of Engineers raises doubts that it will be approved.

Primary objections to the plan are the proposed removal of the Fourth Street bridge and the high walls which would create an eyecore for 99 years in order to provide protection for the one year of a 100-year-frequency flood.

HOWEVER, rejection of the Corps of Engineers' plan would not mean inaction on the flood menace. Mayor Ed Jochumson, who has made a strenuous effort to evaluate public opinion on the subject, has pledged that a local effort will be made for a less ambitious flood control program if the Corps of Engineers' plan is rejected.

This local effort could be used in combination with upstream dams and conservation programs to give Waterloo substantial protection against floods.

The Corps of Engineers, in their study of the Cedar River basin, for example, located five places where small dams could be constructed. These could impound some 158,000 acre feet of water. (An "acre foot" is the amount of water a foot deep spread over an acre of land.) Withholding this amount of water would reduce the crest of a flood at Waterloo about three feet for two or three days, according to tentative estimates by local engineers.

The Corps of Engineers declares that dams to impound 800,000 acre feet of water would be needed to provide adequate flood protection. Moreover, the objection is raised that the five dams to withhold the 158,000 acre feet of water would give no protection against two flood crests in quick succession. For, if they were used to lower the crest of the first flood, they would be filled

to capacity and could not serve to reduce the crest of a second flood which conceivably could occur from a heavy rain a few days later.

NEVERTHELESS, the Corps of Engineers does not rule out the Cedar River dams as part of a long-range water conservation measure. Col. Richard L. Hennessy, district engineer at Rock Island, reported in a letter this month to Rep. H. R. Gross: "I should add, however, that the recently adopted policy of studying entire river basins on a comprehensive basis and projecting water needs 50 and 100 years into the future may lead to the conclusion that dams in the head waters of the Cedar River are merited. However, if they are, the small reduction in flood crests realized will be incidental benefits. The major benefits will be provision of minimum low flows necessary to support industrial growth, recreation and conservation.

"Congress recently provided \$200,000 to initiate this study for the Upper Mississippi River basin of which the Cedar is part. Contingent upon the continuing provision of necessary funds, the Cedar River portion of this plan should be completed by 1970."

WE BELIEVE, therefore, in the feasibility of a combination program involving (1) a more moderate flood control system in Waterloo financed by local funds, (2) construction of up-river dams both for flood control and other purposes and (3) an intensive soil conservation program in the whole basin to absorb and delay the runoff of water.

No one of these methods would be effective in themselves. But over a period of years the combination of all three would give protection against all floods except those which have never occurred since the valley was settled.

Allen Drury Wrote in 1952:

'Five Lives Gone but Ceremony Was Nice'

(Editor's Note — Allen Drury, author of the Pulitzer prize-winning novel, "Advice and Consent," and the recently-published novel, "A Shade of Difference," was Washington correspondent for the Waterloo Courier back in 1952 when officials dedicated some crab apple trees on the Capitol lawn to the memory of the five Sullivan brothers of Waterloo. He wrote this haunting description of the event, expressing his doubts that we who survived have lived up to our responsibilities toward those who, like the Sullivans, died to make a better world possible.)

By ALLEN DRURY
Former Courier Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON, D. C. — The flags flew, the guns barked, the cameramen snapped, the radio men chattered, the reporters wrote, the sun shone bright on the green Capitol lawn.

It was Thursday, June 12, 1952, and they were dedicating some crab apple trees to "the Sullivans."

In November of 1942 the five Sullivan boys from Waterloo went down together on the USS Juneau, far away in the savage Solomons. They would never have guessed what a fuss it was going to cause, nine and a half years later.



Drury

NOT THAT anybody could say it wasn't done up right, of course.

The people whose business it is to make speeches made speeches, and the people whose business it is to listen to speeches

listened, and all of them were inspired by the kindest motives in the world.

The Sullivans' mother cried, but everybody rushed right along and tried not to notice that, and afterwards everyone shook her hand, and her husband's hand, and then they all had their pictures taken together and everybody obviously felt that would make everything all right.

Five lives were gone, but it was a nice ceremony.

BUT YOU DON'T say things like that on bright green lawns while guns bang and flags fly and people make speeches and the world goes on with the game of let's pretend: Let's pretend it was worth doing, let's pretend we have justified their deaths with this shabby remnant of all our bright hopes and dreams.

Let's pretend mankind is always right to accept second-best, to cut and scuttle and trim and run and give up the chance for salvation which the Sullivans and all their kind have given us over and over and over again through their centuries unlimited.

Admiral So-and-So and Admiral Such-and-Such sent polite letters: "Dear Mr. and Mrs. Sullivan — It is with deep regret that I find that a prior commitment makes it impossible to attend . . ."

HOW NICE it was for the country that no such letters were sent in 1942: "Dear America — It is with deep regret that we find that a prior commitment . . ."

No, they were all there, in a hundred lands, on a thousand shores, wherever their America needed them. And now the senators and the congressmen and the reporters and the cameramen and the radio commentators were here, and it was all very nice and beautiful on the green Capitol lawn.

In one of the letters — was it Admiral So-and-So, or was it Admiral Such-and-Such — the earnest home was expressed that "we who are still here have been worthy of these gallant young men."

WELL, WE who are still here know the answer to that one.

We who are still here are still here, all right, but that's about all that can be said for us.

We are still here, but we haven't been worthy.

We have thrown them away, millions upon millions, and they will never come back, but that doesn't make us worthy.

Nothing can ever make us worthy, except a complete spiritual and ethical revolution, the way we are headed now.

But it was certainly a nice ceremony.

The big shots spoke and the reporters wrote and the radio commentators chattered and the cameramen snapped and the flags flew and the guns barked and the sun shone down clear and hot on the green and peaceful lawn.

Waterloo Sunday Courier Opinion Pages

Family Loss Shocked the Nation

Sullivan Tragedy Was 20 Years Ago

5 Brothers Went Down With Juneau

By PATTY JOHNSON
Courier Staff Writer

TO WATERLOO ON Nov. 14 20 years ago came "one of the most extraordinary tragedies which has ever been met by any family in the United States."

The words are those of Henry A. Wallace, then vice president. The Johnson tragedy belongs to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Sullivan, now of 2028 E. 4th St.

On Nov. 14, 1942, all five of their sons went down with the U. S. S. Juneau in the South Pacific during World War II.

IRONICALLY, in the shock of grief, the parents shot from obscurity into instant fame. Nothing in their lives had prepared them for this strange ordeal of horror and homage.

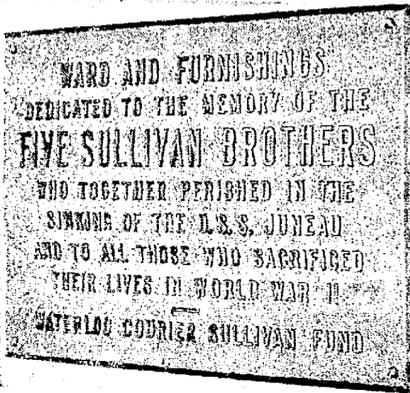
Tom Sullivan, born at Harpers Ferry, was a brakeman for the Illinois Central Railroad at Waterloo in 1914 when he married Alleta Abel. They lived in a comfortable old house at 98 Adams St., went on Sundays to mass at St. Mary's Catholic Church and raised five sons and a daughter.

They were neither poor nor prosperous. They made no headlines. The children went to school, sailed on the Cedar River, learned to ride a motorcycle and liked to sing a little. Two of the boys, George and Frank, served a four-year hitch in the Navy. The "baby", Al, got married. He and his wife, Katherine, had a son.



They Gave Their Lives That the Ship of State Might Sail On

Waterloo Sunday Courier Drawing By Jack Bender



THIS PLAQUE marks the ward in Schoitz Memorial Hospital provided by the Waterloo Courier Sullivan Fund collected in donations after the World War II tragedy. The plaque says: "Ward and furnishings dedicated to the memory of the five Sullivan Brothers who together perished in the sinking of the U. S. S. Juneau and to all those who sacrificed their lives in World War II."

They Acted on News of Attack

By 1941, all five brothers were working at the Bath Packing Co. On a Sunday afternoon in December, they sat around listening to the radio. Suddenly the news came of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

"I remember I was crying a little," Mrs. Sullivan said long afterward. "The n George said, 'Well, I guess our minds are made up, aren't they fellows? And, when we go in, we want to go in together. If the worst comes to the worst, why we'll all have gone down together.'"

It was prophetic.

AFTER THE brothers' preliminary training at the Great Lakes, Ill., Naval Training Station, Joseph (Red), 23; Madison (Matt), 22; and 19-year-old Al became seaman, second class. At 27, with four years of service to his credit, George was a gunner's mate, second class. Frank, 25, with equal service, was a coxswain.

On Feb. 15, 1942, the five

Sullivans were assigned to the new \$13,000,000 light cruiser Juneau, the first warship ever commissioned in camouflage and completed four months ahead of schedule at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Almost exactly nine months later, the Juneau exploded in the Guadalcanal battle area.

THE NAVY later issued a statement:

"Loss of the five Sullivan brothers ranks as the greatest single blow suffered by any one family since Pearl Harbor and probably in American Naval History. In peacetime, the Navy has allowed brothers to serve together but in wartime it has been Navy policy to separate members of the same family. Presence of the five Sullivans aboard the U.S.S. Juneau was at the insistence of the brothers themselves and in contradiction to the repeated recommendations of the ship's executive officer. Serving together had been one condition of their enlistment."

ASIDE FROM the Sullivans of Waterloo, only Mrs. Lydia Bixby, of Boston, Mass., had made so great a sacrifice. After she lost five sons during the Civil War, she received from President Abraham Lincoln a letter which ranks as one of the memorable documents of American literature. Because it applied equally to the Sullivans, it was widely quoted.

"I pray," wrote Lincoln in the final paragraph, "that our heavenly father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom."

FDR Wrote Two Letters

The Sullivans were given no time for the "anguish of

bereavement." Reporters, photographers and newsreel cameramen descended like a plague on 98 Adams St. The postman staggered under the weight of mail from around the world. Friends and relatives arrived. President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote twice and later met the family personally. Telegrams came from public officials and resolutions from Congress.

The "cherished memory" was powerful propaganda. The United States was losing battles in 1943. The nation needed a rallying cry. So a family which might have hoped to shed its tears in silence instead found itself making speeches at shipyards, waving flags at defense plants and painfully repeating over and over again at bond rallies how it is to give five sons to a national cause.

THE SULLIVANS christened ships, one of them a destroyer named for their sons. Genevieve entered the WAVES. A motion picture was made in Hollywood and played to cheering thousands. The family appeared on radio programs, was honored by archbishops in cathedrals, was featured in magazine articles and given flowers, plaques, emblems, scrolls and medals.

Around the Sullivans swirled the Navy, the American flag, production figures, victories at sea and any wartime association able to clamber on the bandwagon for any reasonable excuse.

Family Tried To Keep Going

Every tear "Mom" Sullivan shed was immortalized by the photographers. When Al's young widow almost died of pneumonia, it made headlines. The brothers had written their family to "keep your chin up." The words kept the country in a fever of patriotic fervor. They kept Mrs. Sullivan on her feet in near exhaustion. They kept her husband trying to plug away on his job between tours.

In Boston, the Sullivans of America collected enough money to erect a statue of the Virgin Mary on the lawn of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Waterloo, Maxwell Park at the corner of Maxwell Street and Stratford Avenue.

The Public Speaks Corrects Misuse Of 'Batavia'

REINBECK—To the Editor: Enclosed is a clipping out of the Courier.

You might not have noticed it, but in 1950 Indonesia became independent from The Netherlands.

As Batavia was a name given to this city by one of the first Dutch governors several centuries ago, after independence was obtained in 1950 the name was changed to Djakarta.

W. H. VERDUYN, M. D.



THIS BEAUTIFUL statue, "Our Lady of Peace," is a gift to St. Mary's parish in Waterloo by the Sullivans of America. The inscription reads: "Gift of the people of the United States in memory of the five Sullivan brothers, George T. Sullivan, Francis H. Sullivan, Joseph E. Sullivan, Madison A. Sullivan, Albert L. Sullivan, of Waterloo, members of the U. S. Navy, who lost their lives in the sinking of the U. S. S. Juneau off the Solomon Islands during enemy attack Nov. 13, 1942."

ford Avenue became Sullivan Park. The Waterloo Daily Courier sponsored a fund drive during which almost \$7,000 was raised for a memorial ward at Schoitz Memorial Hospital.

HERE AND THERE in the United States is a park or a building named for the brothers. Sometimes a stranger comes through Waterloo looking for traces of a special page in history. But now that 20 years have passed, there are millions of Americans who have long since forgotten the name. Yet, at a moment in time when heroes were needed, heroes were produced. Out of the need for symbols of courage came five brothers who died together. Who is to say there is not a purpose in all this?

Now, at long last, the parents have the right to the blessed peace of merely being left alone. And, for an ordinary Waterloo housewife who bore five sons and relinquished them gallantly to the depths of an alien sea, there is perhaps the consolation that she achieved a bravery to equal their own.

Among her souvenirs is the Sierra medal engraved with a single sentence: "Nothing great is ever done without much enduring."



"Ya know somethin', Tommy? Your sister is almost good as a BROTHER!"

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