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Final Tribute to Sirgo: A 'Cop's Cop'

By ANGUS LIND
and LANNY THOMAS

Louis Sirgo, a "cop's cop" who abandoned the security and safety of his high position to go to the aid of fellow officers, was laid to rest on this cold, dreary day as policemen from throughout the nation joined the city he served in weeping unashamedly.

Sirgo, deputy police superintendent, was buried in Greenwood Cemetery after funeral services at Jacob Schoen and Son funeral home and a Requiem Mass at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church.

Sirgo was one of three policemen shot to death Sunday by a sniper who killed six persons during a reign of terror at the Downtown Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge. He was the second officer to be buried. Funeral services for the third were held later today.

Sirgo was killed as he led a squad of policemen through the hotel in an attempt to rescue policemen trapped in the building.

Archbishop Philip M. Hannan, principal concelebrant at the Sirgo Mass, described the veteran policeman as "a man of ordinary manner but heroic achievements. A man of rare balance, courage and judgment. He was completely interested in the youth of our society. The life of Louis Sirgo was

a model and there was no better example for youth."

The flag-draped coffin had been brought into the church by eight policemen - pallbearers. Sirgo's widow and two daughters followed.

Also participating in the Mass were the Rev. James J. Skelly, pastor of the church; the Rev. Peter Rogers, New Orleans police chaplain; Police Supt. Clarence B. Giarrusso, and Louis

Turner, assistant superintendent for administration.

THE ARCHBISHOP said U.S. Secret Service agents who worked with Sirgo in setting up security for the recent memorial service for Rep. Hale Boggs mourned the death of the officer. "They said they would recommend him as outstanding in his position for any police force in the country," the archbishop said.

"Those men stated what this community already knows," the archbishop added.

One of the out-of-town policemen at Sirgo's funeral was Patrolman Pat Skelly of Dallas, who came at his own expense on his day off.

Skelly said he didn't know Sirgo but, "whether you knew him or not, he's your brother."

Hundreds of out-of-town policemen from major cities and small towns

across the nation joined virtually every off-duty New Orleans policeman in paying their respects to Sirgo. They were joined by leading state and city officials and hundreds of friends who filled six funeral parlors at the funeral home and packed the church for the Mass.

Two policemen stood at attention at each end of Sirgo's coffin as one-by-

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one mourners filed past and were received by the veteran policeman's widow and two daughters.

Out-of-town policemen attending the services came from New York City, Detroit, Memphis, Houston, Dallas, Jersey City, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Mobile, Gulfport, Baton Rouge, Jefferson Parish, Lafourche Parish and a number of other towns and communities.

As the funeral procession left the funeral home for the church the out-of-town policemen joined local officers to form long lines on either side of the hearse. They walked slowly alongside for several blocks.

Prior to the service, an old friend talked of Louis Sirgo.

"If you wanted things done, that's who you went to," said NOPD Detective Dennis Redman. "He was everybody's best friend. It still seems like a bad dream. I just wish it would hurry up and get over."

In addition to the countless policemen, those paying their respects included Lt. Gov. James E. Fitzmorris Jr., Mayor Moon Landrieu, Supt. of Police Clarence B. Giarrusso and his family, U.S. Attorney Gerald J. Gallinhouse, former Mayor Victor Schiro, Atty. Gen. William J. Guste, Jefferson Parish Sheriff Alwynn Cronvich, Orleans Criminal Sheriff Louis Heyd and many other officials.

Afternoon funeral services were scheduled for Patrolman Phil Coleman, the third officer killed in the hotel incident.

Services for two other victims, Dr. and Mrs. Robert V. Steagall of Roanoke, Va., were held today in Roxboro, N.C. They were buried in Martinsville, Va.

Services for Patrolman Paul Persigo were held yesterday at St. Edward the Confessor Catholic Church before a group of mourners that included May-

or and Mrs. Moon Landrieu, most of the City Council and numerous fellow officers.

Archbishop Philip Hannan, in his eulogy, said that in the ancient church, "the day on which a Christian died was referred to as his birthday into the Lord. I think this statement has particular significance for Paul Persigo in that it was the birthday of his beloved wife."

The Archbishop mentioned the uncut birthday cake that had been sitting in Patrolman Persigo's home when he called upon the family to offer his condolences.

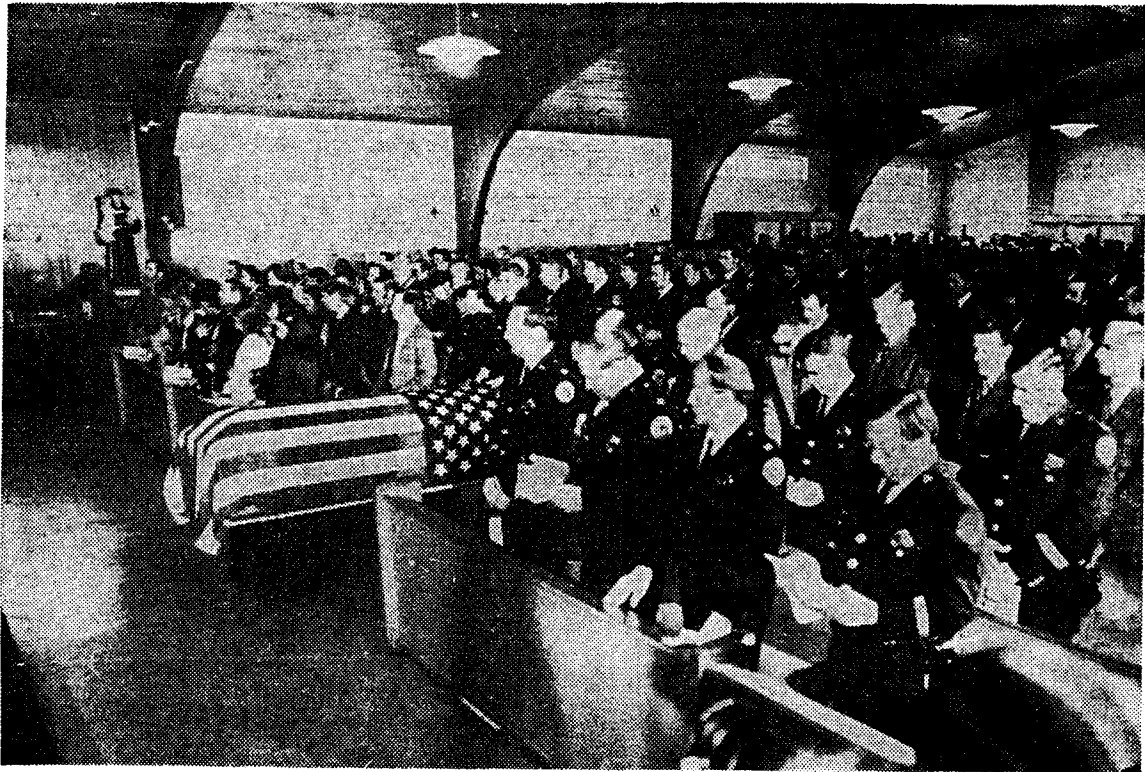
"In a sense, Paul Persigo did not have his life taken; he gave his life the day, particularly the day he joined the police force," the Archbishop said. "On that day he took upon himself the defense of the community, and he offered his life as a life of total sacrifice."

"Paul Persigo in his devotion to his family, his work with the Boy Scouts and with youth in general was a friend to all youths — and certainly Christ, who showed a particular love for children, will regard the accomplishments of Paul Persigo with his family and the children of the area."

After the eulogy, Persigo's sons Mark, 10, and Steven, 8, took communion from Archbishop Hannan. When they returned to their pew, Steven looked up expectantly at his mother, the former Judith Becker, who held his hand. Mark cried quietly as Mrs. Persigo put her arm around him. The Persigos' three-year-old daughter Holly also attended the services.

As two armed officers stood guard on the roof of a nearby apartment building and a helicopter hovered nearby, the long procession of police cars, motorcycles and friends traveled the few blocks from the church to the Garden of Memories Cemetery for the graveside rites.

As she walked away from the grave, one of Mrs. Persigo's hands, shaking in the cold, covered her mouth, as the other clasped four red roses from the casket. Tears filled her eyes.



Final rites held at little church in Pines Village



—States-Item photos by James W. Guillot.

for Deputy Supt. of Police slain by sniper Sunday