

We Have Buried Our Dead, Our Task Continues--Giarrusso

No engraved plaques are necessary to remind New Orleans policemen of the extreme sacrifice four of their fellow officers have made in the line of duty in the past two weeks, the department's No. 1 man has told fellow officers. Police Supt. Clarence B. Giarrusso sent NOPD newslet-

ters to every member of the force.

Police Cadet Alfred Harrell Jr. was shot to death outside Central Lockup New

Year's Eve. Deputy Supt. Louis Sirgo and officers Paul Persigo and Phil Coleman died Jan. 7 in the Howard Johnson's sniper attack. Officer Edwin Hosli was critically wounded New Year's Eve, a few minutes after Harrell was shot to death.

The text of Giarrusso's letter to members of the police force:

"My Brother Officers:

"We have buried our dead, we are caring for our injured, we continue our daily task "to protect and to serve."

"Four of our fellow officers — Louis Sirgo, Paul Persigo, Phil Coleman and Alfred Harrell — made the ultimate sacrifice for this community. Their names have been entered on our Honor Roll.

"As time erodes the starkness of the Jan. 7, 1973, and Dec. 31, 1972, tragedies, this community's indebtedness to these four police officers will not be lessened. We do not need to engrave plaques to be reminded of our perpetual obligation for what they gave; we need not cast them as heroes for the price they paid; rather, we should always respect them for accepting and performing their duty as dedicated police officers.

"As I reflect now on the question, 'Why?', I can find no logical answer. Is death by an assassin's hands the price extracted for dedication to community duty, to community service, to contributing to the welfare of our fellow-man? Have we allowed, permitted the debasement of moral and religious codes that elevate man and substituted, by inac-

tion, other allegiances? These, too, are questions for which we search for logical answers.

"Sirgo, Persigo, Coleman, Harrell. They engendered a closeness with their fellow police officers because they were fellow police officers, members of our fraternity that claims individual respect, a sense of duty and obligation one to another. Their untimely, tragic demise is a personal loss to all members of the department.

"I was close to Louis Sirgo; I am diminished by his loss. I knew him as a professional police officer, as an administrator, as a personal friend. His wise counsel, his tempered decisions, his continuous striving to understand and appreciate the views of others, were the products of character forged in honesty, a dedication to God, an abiding respect for the dignity of man. Those of us who were associated with Louis — and with Paul, Phil and Alfred — are better for that association.

"We will always remember those two dates — Dec. 31, 1972, and Jan. 7, 1973; we will remember them for the loss we suffered, we will remember them for the sacrifices made, we will remember them for the personal courage exhibited by all members of the New Orleans Police Department. It is not easy to lay these memories to rest.

"Sincerely,

Clarence B. Giarrusso,
Superintendent of Police