

The First Five Bishops . . . a Personal Recollection

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Laymen he had known. A young secretary had a chance to learn his Bishop's real thoughts.

One final recollection: Bishop O'Hern died of a heart attack on Monday night, May 22, 1933. The previous Friday he visited Doctor Carroll's office and staggered on the walk coming back to the car. He insisted he was all right as I clasped him around the waist. He spent most of Sunday in the chapel, praying. One wonders what went through his mind.

While he was being prepared in his bedroom for burial, Monsignor Hart and I were sending out telegrams in his study.

Jack Hedges came in about 1:00 A.M. and said he was ready. Bishop O'Hern was covered by a purple mantle. The beautiful white hair was reflected in the candlelight and he looked like an old Roman. His term was brief - four years - but he accomplished more for the Church and his people than most bishops could do in ten.

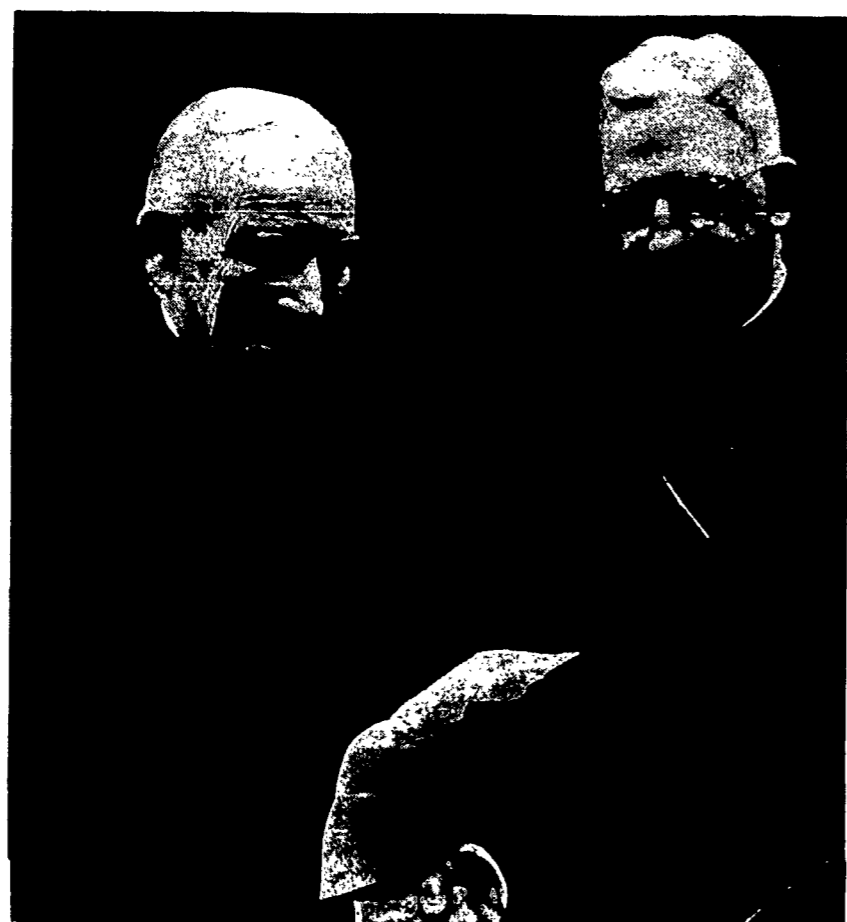
Archbishop Edward Mooney. The fourth Bishop of Rochester arrived in the New York Cen-

tral Station from Buffalo on October 11, 1933. As we stood on the platform we wondered what he'd be like. His record was impressive - teacher, principal, pastor, spiritual director and the first American to be named Apostolic Delegate. After India and Japan, it was the Flower City.

"After one week, I sensed his stay in our midst would be short. Rochester was just a stopover for him but he never acted as though it was.

Looking back on the four years the Archbishop was in the diocese, one can see more clearly the part Providence played in his life. He claimed there was more detail work in running a comparatively small diocese than supervising all the bishops of India. But it was useful experience as he made the transition from diplomat to administrator. His time in Rochester prepared him well for the more difficult assignment in Detroit.

Some thought Edward Mooney was cold and aloof. He believed in protocol and correct procedures. He never called a priest by his first name unless he visited him on his deathbed.



Bishop Casey was secretary and later Auxiliary for Bishop Kearney before moving to the Paterson, N.J., diocese. He also served as secretary to Bishops O'Hern and Mooney.

He was tipped off on that.

His intimates knew, however, that he had a warm heart. On occasion, giving the eulogy of a priest, he found it difficult to control his emotions.

One of his great qualities was that he was aware of you, talked to you as a person and drew you out. There was a constant flow of conversation during the long confirmation trips. It was a liberal education to see him operate and to hear his views.

He was a shrewd bargainer on the first tee and neither asked nor gave quarter during a golf match. As a result, I dogged some 18-inch putts while he looked on with amusement.

Blueprints had a fascination for him but he did little building, due to the depression. He kept a close eye on his diocese and knew what was going on. He had the long view and was interested not only in immediate results but in the future. Despite his duties as Chairman of the Administrative Board of U.S. Bishops, and they were extensive, his own diocese came first.

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When the time came to go to Detroit, he left with genuine reluctance. He was a soldier who would go wherever the Holy Father assigned him. But he knew Rochester was a paradise compared to the difficulties he faced in the Motor City. He remarked wryly, "I had everything in shape here, even had my tomb built, and they pulled me out."

The Cardinal was one of the great American churchmen of this century. He died unexpectedly on the eve of the papal conclave which elected John XXIII as Pope. Those who were aware of his stature wished the Lord had spared him for the Second Vatican Council. His contribution would have been significant.

Bishop James E. Kearney. The night he arrived at 947 East Avenue, November 10, 1937, he called Monsignor Hart, Monsignor Bergan and myself into the library and asked us, in an offhand manner, to keep the posts we'd had with his predecessor. This was typical of the easy way he ran the diocese and his chancery for 29 years.

It was a low-key operation.



The Diocese sent 42 priests into chaplaincies during World War II and 12 are in service today. A group of returned chaplains here gave a testimonial to Bishop Casey, center, then the Bishop's secretary, for publishing a news-letter of diocesan doings for the chaplains. The total of Rochester diocesans in the armed forces for World War II was 31,603.

He didn't breathe down our necks; he gave each of us a job to do and expected us to do it well.

Like Bishop O'Hern, Bishop Kearney has been primarily the parish priest. He likes to get out among the people, especially the young, and he'd take any parish function he could fit into his busy schedule.

The Bishop's physical stamina in the earlier days was fantastic. He'd have five confirmations on some Sundays, covering a range of 200 miles, and when the secretary, careening along some country road, fumed about "getting to the church on time," the Bishop would say, "Take it easy. They can't start until I get there."

Bishop Kearney should know every bump on every road in the diocese. He has crisscrossed it hundreds of times.

As a speaker, he has been equal to every occasion. At a Holy Name Rally in Red Wing Stadium the main speaker laid an egg before 14,000 people. The Bishop got up, without any preparation, and gave a beautiful talk on the ideals of a Holy

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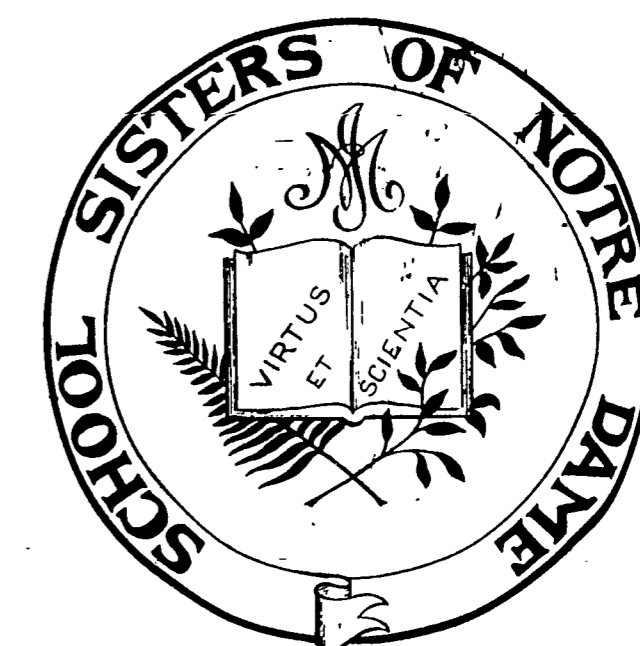
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