

Bishop Walsh . . . a Complex New World

Hong Kong—A modern Rip Van Winkle in Roman collar, Bishop James E. Walsh spent his first days out of long captivity recapturing the past and—fascinated by it all—learning about a complex new world he never knew existed.

When the Chinese Commu-

nists put the American missionary bishop into confinement in 1958, John XXIII had just become Pope, Dwight Eisenhower was president of the United States, the space program consisted of grapefruit-sized objects hurled skyward, the Vatican Council was almost half a decade away in the future,

Catholics ate no meat on Fridays and heard Mass only in Latin.

On his first day of freedom, July 10, the Maryknoll bishop looked at the meat a nun in the order's Hong Kong hospital had just served him and reminded her that it was Friday.

She told him abstinence was no longer the order of the day.

Calling Bishop Walsh "truly a hero" to all Christians, Father McCormack said: "I find him to be in good health considering his age and what he had been through. I have also found him to be tired and weak but very willing to talk to me about his experiences since 1948.

"His memory is surprisingly keen on all that took place over the years. I found no bitterness in him and that he is surprisingly gentle and kind toward the people who imprisoned him, even though he feels that the severity of the sentence was entirely unjustified."

He said he was taken by surprise when told recently in the Shanghai prison hospital that he was to be set free.

"A good doctor came into his room, gave him a quick checkup, took his blood pressure and then told him to pack his bags because he was leaving."

He traveled by train to Canton, accompanied by a doctor, photographer, interpreter and two policemen, and then

crossed the border-bridge at Eh Lo Wu into British territory.

Doctors in Hong Kong found him "mentally alert," and in "good health."

The Chinese government said Bishop Walsh was freed prior to completing his sentence because of old age and ill health and because he had "confessed" his crimes.

Bishop Walsh told Father John Sullivan, Maryknoll regional supervisor, he was interrogated many times, day and night, from the time of his arrest in 1958 until he was sentenced in 1960 to 20 years imprisonment for espionage—but was not questioned after that.

Bishop Walsh was amazed to learn that trans-Pacific telephone calls could now be placed in seconds and heard as clearly as local calls, remembering the long delays and static of years ago.

Ahead of him still are other marvels: jet travel, color television, man's filmed record of having walked on the moon—and the wonder of seeing again his 80-year-old brother, retired judge William Walsh, and his three sisters in Maryland.



Father John Sullivan, Maryknoll priests' superior in Hong Kong, points out the sights to Bishop James E. Walsh, just released by Red China. (RNS)

Cumberland, Md.: Bishop Walsh Home Town Has Very Special Treat

Cumberland, Md.—(NC)—Nestled in Maryland's western mountains—or what passes for mountains in the middle Atlantic states—Cumberland is nobody's idea of an international hot spot.

But news events have put the small town of 30,000 on the front page around the world.

The news, however, didn't happen in Cumberland. It happened in Shanghai and Canton and Hong Kong, and more of it is going to happen in Rome.

The news has catapulted Cumberland to fame because Bishop James E. Walsh is a Cumberland boy. And anything that happens to him happens to Cumberland.

When on July 10, the 79-year-old bishop walked through the bamboo curtain into Hong Kong, Cumberland got the news. The bishop was free after 12 years in prison. The bishop was coming home after 40 seldom-interrupted years in China.

It was an indescribable day for his sisters and for his brother, William, a former Maryland attorney general and the only member of the Walsh family who had been allowed to visit the bishop in jail.

It was a big day for Cumberland too, for the people who worked on the railroad there, and at the big Pittsburgh Plate Glass factory, and at the Kelly-Springfield Tire Co.

In fact, the town council held a special meeting and proclaimed July 11 and 12 as days of thanksgiving and prayer.

What else will happen is hard to predict. A lot depends on when the bishop comes home, and how his health stands up, and what kind of a

ceremony he wants. But there will be something special.

Of course, Bishop Walsh might not go for a party or a brass band or a testimonial. If so, Cumberland can boast something more substantial.

In a modern yellow brick building, its glass wall punctuated with burnished metal, 560 western Maryland high schoolers are studying the same faith Bishop Walsh took to China.

Taught by the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the Ursuline Sisters, the Sisters of Notre Dame and eight lay teachers, the students learned a lot about the old missionary.

And they learned it at Bishop Walsh High School.

CEYLON INVITES POPE

Colombo, Ceylon — (RNS)—Madame Sirimavo Bandanarajikes, prime minister of Ceylon, announced here that Pope Paul has been invited to make a state visit to this island nation should he stop at Colombo during the course of his Asian trip in November.

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'Good News,' Declares Pope

Vatican City — (NC) — "There is good news."

That is the way Pope Paul VI spoke of the release of American Maryknoll Bishop James Walsh.

The Pope clearly showed great happiness in speaking of the bishop's release in his talk July 12 to the crowds in St. Peter's square.

The Pope said that it was "good news" because "a worthy and valorous missionary bishop has been restored to liberty, to his dignity and to his ministry."

He then added:

"It is also good news because it was unexpected . . . and it pleases us to see a sign of better days."



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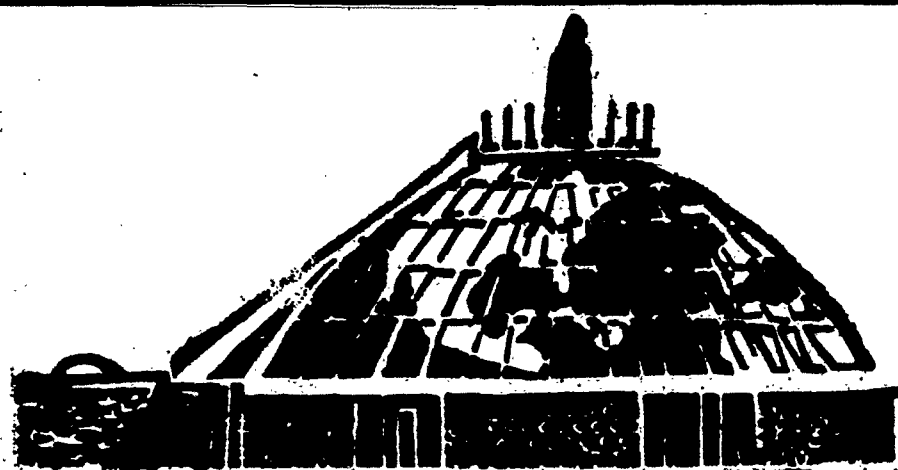
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