

Few men on earth have more cause to hate the Chinese Communists than Maryknoll Bishop James Walsh. It is a lesson to one and all that there is only forgiveness and compassion in his heart for the people and the system that kept him in cruel "solitary" for so many years.

The 79-year-old priest is now back with his family in his native Cumberland, Md., after a swift and momentous series of experiences which must seem to him to be as improbable as a rose-colored dream.

In stunning sequence he was released abruptly when all signs indicated he would spend his remaining years in prison. Upon release, he was hit with the news of a magnitude fit to stop an old man's heart: America was at war in Vietnam, the President's name was Nixon, and—this was just too much to believe—men had landed on the moon! That's how isolated he had been kept, after his arrest

On the Line

## Bishop Walsh Can Still Laugh

By Bob Considine



on the preposterous charge of spying.

Bishop Walsh's first hours of freedom were witnessed by my friend Bill Coleman, formerly of King Features Syndicate and now director of media relations for the Maryknoll Order. Bill writes from Hong Kong:

"When Bishop Walsh was met at the border by Hong Kong government officials, there was discussion about flying him to Hong Kong proper in a helicopter. Then it was de-

ecided to play it safe and use an ambulance. The bishop was disappointed. 'Darn,' he said, 'I've never flown in one of those things.'

"The bishop's classmates from St. Mary's College in Maryland had tried to deliver a gold rosary to him in prison when Judge Walsh was permitted to see him in Shanghai in 1960. At that time, the guards would not permit the bishop to receive the rosary. The judge was indignant, of course, but not the bishop. 'It's all right,' he

said, 'I have my ten fingers.'

"Father John McCormack, the superior general of Maryknoll, was there to meet the bishop when he came out. He brought along the gold rosary. The bishop took it in his sensitive hands and said, 'At last, I've got my rosary.' But he didn't mean it as an indictment of those who had denied him the comfort of it for ten years.

"I can see why they wouldn't let me have it in jail,' he said, 'because it's metal, and the jailers don't want prisoners to have

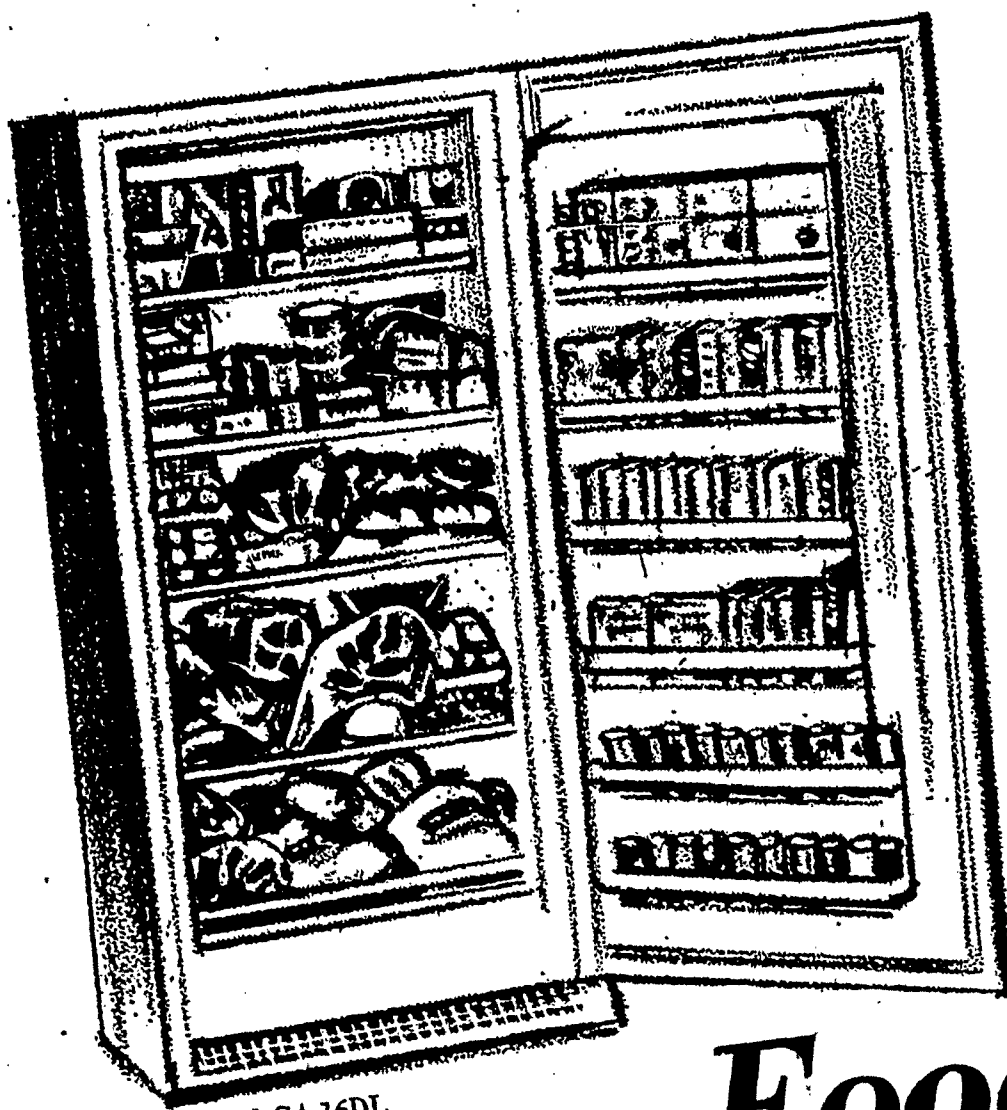
anything metal that might be used in a suicide attempt.'

"The bishop can still laugh, after all he went through. Father McCormack, Father John J. Sullivan, the regional superior, Sister Patricia Fitzmaurice, who is a great surgeon, and I were chatting with the bishop in his hospital room when someone remarked that we were all of Irish descent. It suited the occasion, so I repeated a line my brother-in-law, the late Thomas G. Dougherty, of the U.S. Mediation and Conciliation Service in New York, once used:

"It must be a terrible thing to wake up in the morning and find that you're not Irish.' It gave Bishop Walsh the first real hearty laugh he had had in we'll never know how many years.

"Charity, humility and saintliness radiate from this man like an aura.

"Bestest—Bill."



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