

Lake Placid: After the Glory a Bit of Ignominy

By Beth Spring
Religion Today

Washington — Eric Heiden won his five gold medals at Lake Placid while the world watched. Few will take note, however, when 500 men — all around Heiden's age — take up residence this fall in the new medium-security federal prison housed in the facilities the Olympic athletes left behind.

Michael Kroll is taking note, and he is deeply concerned about the prospect of a new prison facility which even the director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons has admitted is "clearly in violation" of bureau philosophy on prison location.

Kroll, coordinator of the National Moratorium on Prison Construction and organizer of Stop the Olympic Prison (STOP), has succeeded in gaining broad support primarily from the religious community over the last three years.

STOP, an offspring of the New York State Council of Churches and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, would prefer to see the facilities used for a permanent training center for Olympic athletes.

With the Winter Olympic Games behind him, and with them his fears of being branded "anti-Olympics," Kroll believes some movement toward stopping conversion of the facilities may come about, should President Carter quietly take action.

The President can't help being aware of the opposition:

- A letter from former Attorney General Ramsey Clark to the foreign ministers of all European countries participating in the Olympics urged them to officially protest the use of the village facility as a prison, saying, "As we often condemn human rights violations by other countries, we hope other countries will condemn human rights violations in the United States."

- An editorial in the New York Times said Lake Placid "would be a sensible site for the permanent winter sports training camp long sought by the U.S. Olympic Committee. New York City would be the more sensible site for the prison."

- Even Federal Bureau of Prisons director Norman A. Carlson said in testimony before a House judiciary subcommittee, "We didn't ask for this site." He acknowledged that building the prison 300 miles from the nearest urban center (New York City) was "clearly in violation" of a portion of stated bureau policy.

In a 1975 speech, Carlson spelled out the BOP policy: "We want to get away from the practice of locating institutions in

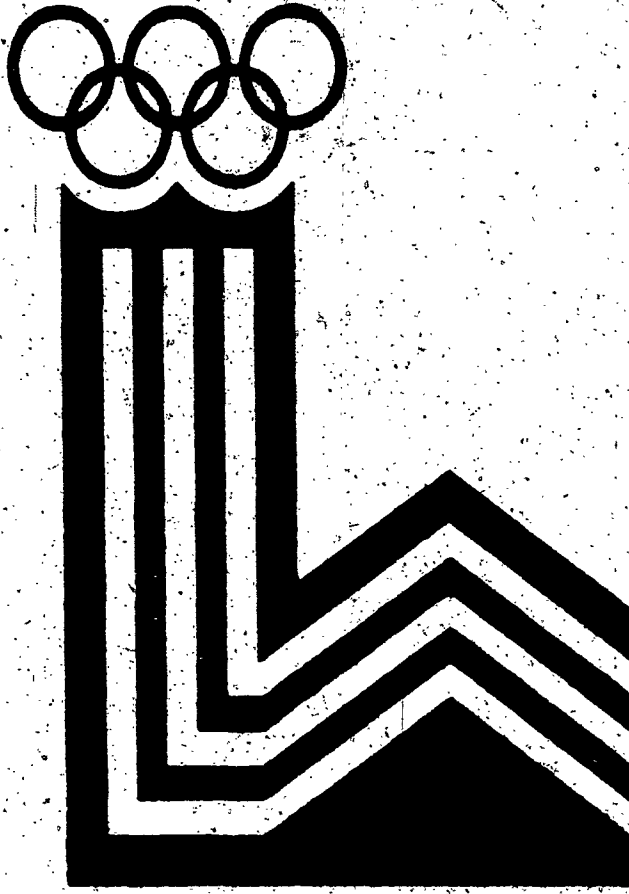
Interfaith Chapel To Host Marty

Martin E. Marty, distinguished authority on the history of modern Christianity and winner of the 1972 National Book Award, will speak at the University of Rochester's 10th anniversary celebration of the University's Interfaith Chapel this month. His topic will be "For Sale: Used Mirrors. Wanted: Windows and Doors."

The celebration, open free to the public, will begin at 7 p.m. Sunday, March 23, at the chapel.

The Interfaith Chapel, dedicated on May 24, 1970, was a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert J. C. McCurdy. The late Mr. McCurdy was a university trustee for many years. His son, Gilbert G. McCurdy is a trustee now.

Marty, an ordained Lutheran minister, is a past president of the American Society of Church History and currently first vice president of the American Catholic Historical Society.



remote rural settings. A modern prison should be built near a large urban center where adequate education, medical, and other community facilities are available to meet the needs of staff and inmates alike."

As Kroll will readily explain, Lake Placid fills none of those bills. The town of 3,000 people — predominantly white and middle class — relies on tourism for its livelihood. Some of the accoutrements found in many prison communities, such as halfway houses and vocational training programs, are inadequate, at best.

The 18-to-25-year-old prisoners who will take up residence there in October will be, for the most part, non-violent property offenders and generally of minority descent.

Kroll said, "Picture a ghetto youth from New York City, busted for drugs, being sent to this facility. His mother or sister or pastor has the option of a 12-hour round-trip drive to visit him, or else they can take the train — 11 hours each way. And where are they going to stay overnight? The Lake Placid Hilton?"

However, a BOP spokesman said prisoners are being sent as far as Petersburg, Va., and Tallahassee, Fla. While he agreed that the site is less than ideal, he said it would alleviate the "scattering" of convicts from the urban Northeast throughout the country.

One may reasonably ask at this point why anyone wanted a prison in the winter wonderland of the Adirondacks. The reasoning is simple, and very logical.

Taxpayer dollars totaling \$22 million were allocated by Congress for Olympic housing construction with the requirement that a "secondary use" for the facilities be found. When Carlson was asked if BOP could use the housing for a medium-security prison, he said yes.

BOP sorely needs facilities in the Northeast, a spokesman explained, and they have met with solid opposition in trying to build near urban centers.

But instead of gaining approval for the dollar outlay through ordinary channels, beginning with the House Judiciary subcommittee dealing with civil liberties and justice, the BOP allocation was okayed directly by both congressional appropriation committees.

Usually all funds designated for prison construction would first clear Judiciary subcommittees but this was deemed unnecessary because of the "secondary use" loophole. Tempers and temperatures started to rise when it became clear that the "primary use" was going to last two weeks while the "secondary use" could encompass decades.

The idea for a prison originated with Rep. Robert McEwen of New York, whose district includes Lake Placid. The area suffers from unemployment rates topping out above 20 percent, and the prospect of increased job opportunities has muffled the usual reaction BOP gets when it proposes building a correctional institution in someone's backyard.

Of course, Kroll argues that any secondary use for those buildings would provide employment.

With the money all but spent, the prison appears to be a *fait accompli*. Even so, Kroll's efforts to reverse the decision are continuing. While the Olympic Games were in progress, STOP won a lawsuit filed by the U.S. Olympic Committee over the use of the widely recognized five-ring symbol in a "Stop the Olympic Prison" poster. A U.S. district court judge in New York found in favor of STOP, saying the poster did not constitute libel since the USOC has such high visibility that it would have to prove "actual malice."

STOP maintained a highly visible presence at Lake Placid throughout the Olympics. In spite of being shunned by Jim McKay and the rest of ABC television, Kroll said he was interviewed numerous times, by countries such as East Germany and Norway.

Although Kroll anticipated being "vilified and abused" both by sports fans and Lake Placid residents, he found a surprising degree of openness and acceptance, if not outright support.

"No one said boo to us" when they unfurled protest banners at the opening ceremonies, Kroll said. A few people told Kroll "not to air dirty laundry in public," but at the same time, "many local people came up and whispered in our ears, 'we're glad you're here.'"

Kroll sees the larger issue as much more than just another contribution to an unwieldy prison system in the United States. The problem, he claims, lies with all of us.


"We're eager to turn away from our failures and claim only our successes. We need to come to grips with some real problems in this country and to stop postponing an inevitable day of reckoning."

Darvish
Oriental Rugs, Inc.

Come In And See
THE LARGEST SELECTION OF
FINE QUALITY ORIENTAL RUGS
IN UPSTATE NEW YORK

We Offer The Best Quality Carpets
At The Lowest Prices

271-8520



BIRTHDAY BASH

1980

March 28 and March 29

**TWO GREAT NIGHTS OF AUCTION
FOR THE BENEFIT OF**

McQuaid Jesuit High School
1800 S. Clinton Avenue

We invite you to join us in celebrating our 25th year of providing quality education to the young men of our community. Our annual auction this year is a BIRTHDAY BASH. Hundreds of items are offered in both silent and oral auctions for your high bid.

TICKET INFORMATION

Friday, March 28th, 7:30 p.m.
Admission if \$5.00 per person. Reservations are suggested since space is limited.

Saturday, March 29th, 5:30 p.m.
Tickets are \$125.00 per couple. Reservations are required, black tie is optional.

For further information, or to make a reservation, please call the BASH office: 473-9058

Building A Scholastic Heritage