



Reuters/CNS

Pope John Paul II speaks to visitors at the villa in the Italian Alps where he was vacationing July 18. China has refused him permission to visit to Hong Kong.

China bars papal visit

HONG KONG (CNS) — Beijing's refusal to allow Pope John Paul II to visit Hong Kong has called the territory's special autonomy into question and raised fears of religious repression, said Hong Kong's leading English daily.

An Aug. 9 editorial in the *South China Morning Post* said that banning a papal visit to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China was the most effective way Beijing could have chosen to indicate that "its promise of a high degree of autonomy for Hong Kong holds good for only two years rather than 50." The editorial's comments were reported by UCA News, an Asian church news agency based in Thailand.

The Special Administrative Region was

established when Hong Kong reverted to Chinese rule in July 1997, after more than 150 years as a British colony.

Noting that mainland Catholics are not allowed to acknowledge the pope as head of the church, the paper said local Catholics hoped that through a papal visit they could "demonstrate to Beijing that adherence to Roman Catholicism in all its aspects is not at odds with patriotism or political allegiance."

The refusal heightens growing fears among Hong Kong Catholics that religious repression is increasing in the mainland, and that this could spill over the Special Administrative Region's border, the editorial added.

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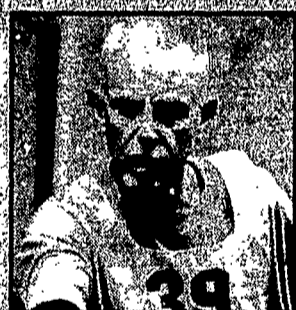


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Man asks to forgo ventilator



file photo

Bill White in his Strong Memorial Hospital bed in July 1996.

Aug. 6 came and went without Rochester's Strong Memorial Hospital removing the ventilator that has kept Bill White alive for more than 30 years.

White, a quadriplegic since a high-school gymnastics accident in March 1967, had requested his ventilator treatment end that day.

Instead, his request was being reviewed by Monroe County District Attorney Howard Relin.

Michael McBride, a friend of White's for 25 years, had taken the matter to the public, calling media and organizing a vigil.

And questions about the right to die were stirring within the Catholic and larger communities.

White, 50, was raised a Catholic and has close ties to St. Bridget's Church — he has even raised money for the parish by selling T-shirts from his hospital bed.

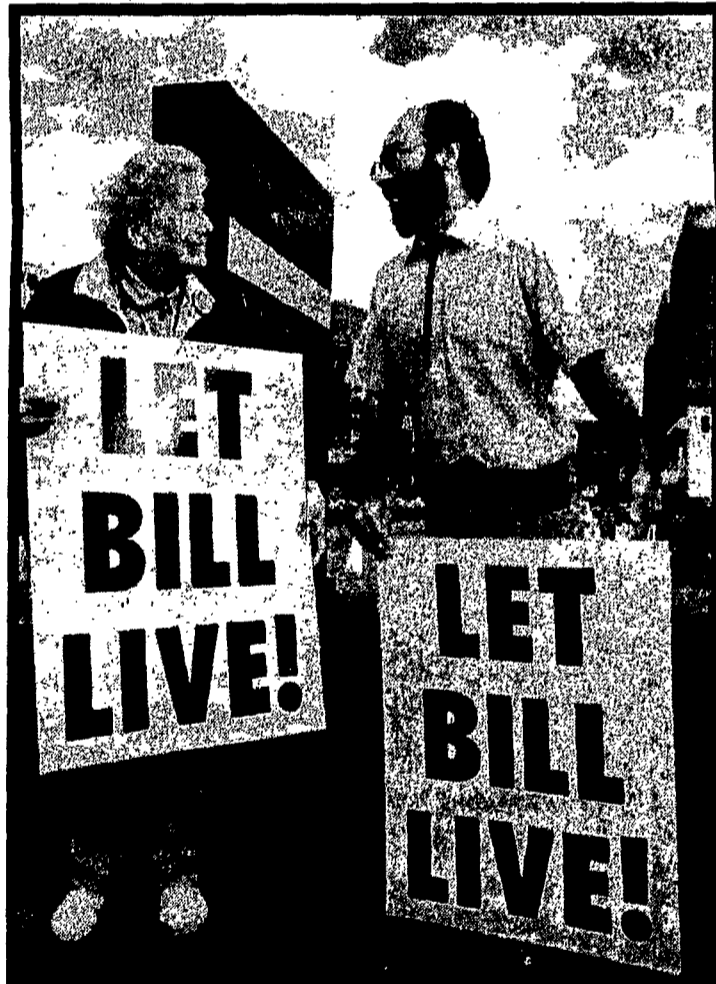
He acknowledged Aug. 8 in a face-to-face interview with the *Catholic Courier* that it is his intention to die.

McBride, a parishioner at St. Cecilia's Church in Irondequoit, said he alerted the media because he was not sure that White was in the proper frame of mind to make such an irreversible decision — despite a review of White's request by a team of hospital officials that determined he was, indeed, competent.

"I thought the guy could very well be depressed and could need counseling," McBride said.

McBride said that he realized White would have preferred that his desire not be made a public matter. Yet, McBride said, raising awareness of the situation may be the only way to save White's life.

McBride and Father Anthony Mugavero, pastor of St. Bridget's Church, Rochester, contended that the agreed-upon arrangement between White and hospital officials was for White to receive morphine Aug. 6 before the ventilator was discontinued. The amount of



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Alice Herman, a parishioner of Holy Spirit Church, Penfield, and Kevin Figler of Rochester join in a vigil for Bill White outside Strong Memorial Hospital Aug. 5.

morphine would be enough to ensure that when the treatment was stopped, he would be unlikely to change his mind at the last second. Ceasing the treatment would, in all likelihood, cause White's death.

Father Mugavero said he had visited White numerous times in recent weeks and was not convinced that White wants to die.

"On more than one occasion, he has clearly stated that if they could deal with his pain he wouldn't go through with it," Father Mugavero said.

Fine line

Officials at Strong were walking a fine line attempting to answer questions about the case while also maintaining confidentiality.

Hospital spokeswoman Teri D'Agostino explained that because of growing public interest, she drew up a statement that was released Aug. 5 after obtaining White's approval.

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STORY BY MIMI GARDNER AND PATRICIA SCHWARZ