

Day 1: 5 August 1994 (Friday)

Press Conference

A press conference was held on the morning of August 5 1994 from noon to 2:00pm at the Conference hotel 's hospitality suite, to officially announced the 4th Wah Yan International Conference. A short introduction of the conference and a preview of the conference roadmap was presented to the press by Kelly Chang, the Conference Chairman. Followed by the introduction of the panel members: Fr. Coghlan representing Wah Yan College, Hong Kong, Fr. Deignan representing Wah Yah College, Kowloon, and Mr. Luke Wong, the Conference Keynote Speaker. Representatives of 4 local newspaper (Sing Tao Daily, World Journal, China Times. and The Chinese Press) and 1 local TV Station (KTSF Ch. 26) were present, together with about 20 conference attendees who arrived early.

Questions ranging from "What's Wah Yan College's future after 1997?" to "When was Wah Yan College established in Hong Kong?" to "What is the purpose of hosting such alumni conference in San Francisco?" were asked by the press. The short panel Q&A session was followed by one-on-one interview of the panelists. The press conference concluded around 1:45pm.

Reception Party

The party started from 7:00pm and was held at the Conference Hospitality Suite. Almost every attendees who had arrived were present, along with many Wahyanites who were not conference attendees joined the crowd. There was an estimated of over 70 people. Many Wahyanites drove for more than 1 hour including some from Sacramento (about 120 miles from San Francisco) came to the event, who learned the event from word-of-mouth or our advertisement in the local newspaper. The capacity, crowd forced many Wahyanites to retreat to the hallway for more private conversation. The party was forced to conclude at 11:00pm -- as the conference organizing committee member had to literally evict their guests, with regrets, in order to comply with the hotel noise regulations.

Day 2: 6 August 1994 (Saturday)

Welcome to San Francisco

The 4th Wah Yan International Conference sessions started on Saturday, August 6, with a welcome speech by Kelly Chang, the Conference Chairman, and an introduction of all delegates. Then Fr. Coghlan the principal of Wah Yan College Hong Kong (WYCHK), and Fr. Deignan, who represented the principal of Wah Yan College Kowloon (WYCK), talked about the current status of WYCHK and WYCK respectively.

Reports from the principals

Fr. Coghlan described many problems that WYCHK was facing. Some classrooms were torn down because of the foundation. The large playground was being resurfaced. The school planned to add more space by rebuilding the area where the music room and the Father's chapel locate, but the funding from government was not enough.

Fr. Coghlan also reported the current size of the school and the faculty. There were 27 classes, and the school planned to drop one class. He expected the number of students to stabilize at 950, with about 25% new students each year. The teaching population was stable, with two to three teachers leaving year. This rate was much lower than some other schools in Hong Kong. The student attrition rate dropped, but it seemed to rise again. The quality of students was good, with the exception of some difficult students who mostly were spoiled because they had an easy life.

In contrast to Fr. Coghlan's report, Fr. Deignan (representing Mr. Norm So, Principal of Wah Yan College Kowloon) talked about a well-ordered WYCK. It had a new swimming pool, a new wing, and 1,200 students. The school recently joined the School Management Initiative (SMI). Fr. Stephen Chow was ordained in July. A pastoral team was formed, comprising of a group of Catholic teachers. The intention was to delegate more responsibility to laymen. The Jesuit fathers also had a plan to write a book to introduce Jesuit spirit to laymen. This would be a follow-up of a booklet written in 1987 about the characteristics of Jesuit school and education. Fr. Deignan also mentioned a loan program started by Peter Fan. This allowed students to borrow money for their education and pay back later. The only message Fr. Deignan delivered with a negative tone was that WYCK might not be able to keep all its land in the future.

Following the status reports of the two Wah Yan was the presentation by the chapter delegates. The nine chapter delegates described their recent status, what they had done, and what problem they faced.

Keynote Speech

After a coffee break, Luke Wong presented his keynote speech. Luke talked about the influence of overseas Chinese in the 'New World', and how a melting pot concept was

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transformed to a salad bowl concept for new immigrants. He also suggested the need of bilingual education in the 'New World'. Luke highlighted the importance of Christian teaching in education, as he believed the breakdown of value system in some countries was caused by a lack of influence of Christian teaching.

Lunch

We held our dim sum lunch at Empress Court Restaurant which was within a five minute walking distance from the hotel. We asked the participants to order as much food as they wished. Everybody enjoyed the lunch very much.

Global Wah Yan Computer Network

Kelly Chang presented a global computer network in the afternoon. He explained how we could store the alumni information in a database and communicate globally via an electronic network. There was a lot of interest in Kelly's work. Following his talk was a computer demonstration in the hotel state.

Dinner Cruise On the Bay

After a day of rich conference agenda, we relaxed by taking a boat cruise in the evening. About 100 people, including alumni and then' families, boarded the Monte Carlo cruise at Pier 33 in San Francisco. We started with a buffet dinner. Then people dispersed as there were many choices of activities. Some people stayed at the second deck singing Karaoke or chatting with friends. Some went down to the casino and the dance floor in the lower deck. The rest went up to the upper deck to enjoy the evening view of San Francisco Bay. The view was especially gorgeous when the boat passed under the Golden Gate Bridge. The cruise ended around 10pm.

Day 3: 7 August 1994 (Sunday)

Sunday Morning Mass

The first event was a Sunday Mass held in a hotel conference room at 8am, co-celebrated by Fr. Coghlan and Fr. Deignan. We formed a circle, with a small community of over 30 people. It was surprising that even though people came back very late Saturday night, they managed to wake up and attended the Mass.

Open Issues

When we resumed the conference in the morning, we discussed two open issues raised by INC, and selected the site for the next conference in 1996. The first issue was "should INC be based in Hong Kong?". Ambrose Wong of the San Francisco Chapter suggested to base in San Francisco because of the available technology and hardware, However, Kelly Chang preferred INC stay in Hong Kong, and use the computer resources to complement INC in Hong Kong. The conclusion was to keep INC in Hong Kong, and this issue should be raised again in '96,

The second issue was whether we should keep distributing INC newsletter. The general consensus was to keep the newsletter and further promote it. Philip Ching asked overseas chapters to be more proactive, and send their local newsletters back to INC. INC would redistribute the newsletters to all chapters.

Next (1996) Conference Site Selection

There were two candidates for the site selection: Sydney and Hong Kong. Hong Kong got a landslide victory of 8 votes versus 1 vote, because the next conference would be the last opportunity to be held in Hong Kong before 1997. Nevertheless, everybody applauded and appreciated the attempt by the Sydney Chapter.

Open Forum

After a buffet lunch in the hotel, we started a whole afternoon of open forum discussion around a few major topics: Jesuit education, Wah Yah Foundation, and aging Jesuits in Hong Kong.

(1) Jesuit Education

A lot of people wondered that with the diminishing number of Jesuit priests how would the future of Jesuit teaching look. Fr. Deignan replied that there were more priests coming. Fr. Stephen Chow was recently ordained, and there were four more coming. The trend showed more vocation in Korea, Poland, and Indonesia. He expected more vocation in China.

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One participant stated that there were 4,000 Jesuit schools worldwide in '64, and it was down to 2,000. So how were we going to utilize the diminishing number of priests? Fr. Coghlan's response was Jesuits had decided to assign priests to chaplaincy, not school and administration. Since lay people had become more well-educated, the role of priests should change.

The follow up question was whether there was any plan to merge Catholic schools because of lack of resource. Fr. Deignan gave an example that Maryknoll and Tak Shun were transferred to other religious groups. Marymount would be transferred again because of lack of resource. However, good work in the school could be carried on. The secret was to train the teachers to continue Christian teaching. There was at the moment no plan to merge the two Wah Yans. There was also a lot of discussion about Jesuit education after 1997. People raised concern about how Chinese government would change the schools, how Jesuit education would be carried on, whether religious freedom would be allowed, and whether Wah Yah should move outside of Hong Kong.

(2) Wah Yan Foundation

Thomas Chan from the Southern California Chapter initiated this discussion. He described how James Tong set up a fund to help Wah Yah alumni further their university education in UCLA. He suggested to form a committee to investigate setting up a general foundation where everybody could contribute. Luke Wong suggested to use this foundation for overseas student scholarship and funding the student ambassador program. However, Ambrose Wong cautioned that if a fund was set up for specific objectives in U.S., most of the fund had to be used for those objectives for legal reason.

Fr. Deignan suggested contributing to Jesuits in US. The money could then be transferred back to HK, and the donation would be tax deductible. He could provide a list of Jesuit contacts in different cities. Fr. Coghlan suggested starting a pilot project using this approach.

A committee was formed by James Tong, Thomas Chart, Peter Fan, Gabriel Lee, and Ambrose Wong. They will start setting up the foundation. and will report their status in the next conference.

(3) Aging Jesuits in HK

Wilfred Wan from the Vancouver Chapter expressed concern on how the aging Jesuits in Hong Kong would be taken care of. Fr. Coghlan and Fr. Deignan revealed to us the plan Jesuits started a long time ago. Fr. Kelly started a retirement fund many years ago. This was being used by 15 to 20 retired priests, and the fund started to shrink. However, their regional superior believed that he could take care of the retired priests financially. Unexpected medical expense might be a problem, but they had not seen the problem yet. Fr. Barrert's problem was taken care of by past students separately. There was a local appeal for nursing fund for Fr. Barrett and it received good response. There was money

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left but it could not be used for other purposes. So there was no plan to raise fund unless needed. INC would reform overseas chapters if there was a financial need.

Besides financial need, there were also discussion about spiritual support. Fr. Deignan hinted that retired Jesuits would feel very happy if alumni visited them. Luke Wong suggested to at least send the Jesuit priests Christmas cards. Peter Wong gave an example that when Fr. Daly and Fr. Barren were sick his class constantly visited them. A related question was brought up about retired teachers. Fr. Deignan told us that each teacher joined a retirement fund which was matched by government. It should provide sufficient financial help to retired teachers.

Banquet Dinner

The grand finale on Sunday was a banquet dinner held at Royal Palace in Los Altos. 115 people attended, including alumni who did not have time to attend the conference. There were flash lights everywhere, and many toasts around. Towards the end of the dinner all chapters exchanged souvenirs. There were a few speeches, followed by a lucky draw with classical CDs, a leather brief case, and many other prizes. This concluded the conference. People ended with a lot of joy, but also regretted that the conference did not last longer.

Day 4: 8 August 1994 (Monday)

Monterey Bay Tour

A small group (about 15) joined a local tour for an excursion mp to Monterey, a popular tourist site about 100 miles south of San Francisco. The bus tour started in the early morning following the scenic route along the beautiful California coast. Then had about 2 hours for lunch and the visit to the famous Monterey Bay Aquarium, which is the home of one of the latest aquariums in the world featuring California coast marine life. After a short lunch at a nearby restaurant (compliment of Philip Ching), the bus tour continued. Carmel and the 17-mile drive were the next destinations with several stops along the way to let bus passengers to stretch their legs and take pictures. The tour conclude around 7:30pm in the evening. The group gathered at the Fook Yuen Restaurant for dinner (compliment of Gabriel Lee) and wished each other good luck, hoping to seeing each other at the next Wah Yan Conference in Hong Kong, if not sooner.