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DR. JOHN C. WU

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EDGE OF THE VOLCANO

A SIGN PICTURE STORY

THE MAN beyond east and west

Dr. John C. Wu is equally at ease in Chinese garb at home or Western suit in Seton Hall University

PHOTOS BY JACQUES LOWE

A day with John C. Wu reveals how he discovered Christ as the bridge between East and West

by MILTON LOMASK

ELM TREES, STRAINING the morning sun, dropped a mixture of light and shade on the sidewalks of residential Reynolds Place on the northerly outskirts of Newark, New Jersey. When I asked a lad, mowing one of the lawns, for directions to Dr. Wu's house, he grinned. A dozen more steps, he said, would bring me to it.

It wasn't my first visit, but the others had been after sunset or by car with someone else driving. This was to be a special one. Dr. Wu had agreed to a day-long interview. In his low and rather hesitating voice, he had expressed himself as "honored" that THE SIGN should be interested in printing a story about "a man of no merit" like himself.

If you haven't met the "merit-less" Dr. Wu through his autobiography *Beyond East and West* or one of his many other books, an introduction is in order.

John Ching-Hsiung Wu is a convert to Catholicism, a professor at the Law School of Seton Hall University, and a member of the permanent Court of Arbitration at the Hague.

A dozen positions of international proportions have been his. He has been a judge, presiding over one of the highest courts of his native China. He has served China as a legislator and as a diplomat at the Vatican. He has taught comparative law in Shanghai and Chi-

nese philosophy at Harvard University.

Portions of his life exhibit the tension and clangor of a spy drama. Marooned in Hong Kong, shortly after its seizure by the Japanese during World War II, he was "invited" to the Hotel Hong Kong for a chat with the Japanese military authorities. They told him they wanted peace with his country and asked him how that could be achieved.

"There is no problem about it at all," was Wu's prompt reply. "Simply withdraw your troops from China."

The Japanese war lords were not impressed. Wu and a Chinese friend named Francis were given a room in the hotel and told to stay there.

At first they were treated handsomely and fed well. Then the food deteriorated and Francis voiced the conviction that they would soon be executed. "Well," said Wu, "the more hopeless we are, the more hopeful," which made Francis laugh.

A priest smuggled in some books, including a collection of prayers and Karl Adam's *Christ Our Brother*. Wu read and re-read them, underlining nearly every word. He and Francis turned the dresser into an altar and went through the motions of the Mass. Just when things looked most hopeless, they were suddenly released, bailed out by a British statesman.

During the war Wu translated the Psalms and the New Testament into Chinese. For a year he and his family lived and Wu worked in a little "pig-sty" of a hut in a Chinese mountain village. The Wus were very poor during this period, "but happy," says Wu.

There was only one disadvantage. A fruit tree grew through the wall of their mountainside home. When there was a storm, the wind shook the tree and the tree shook the house. The day came when Wu could stand it no longer. Rushing into the hall, he lifted his crucifix and gave the elements a piece of his mind.

"In the name of Christ," he shouted, "I forbid you, O wind, to rage a minute longer! Don't you know that I am translating the Bible?"

Wu smiles wistfully, recalling this incident. "That was a very stubborn wind," he says. "It was fully ten minutes before it subsided."

Dr. Wu is a slender, handsome, olive-skinned man, five feet eight inches tall. When he is asked his age, he is amused at this occidental impertinence. Too polite to laugh, he contents himself with a half-smile which suggests that so ephemeral a matter cannot be of any significance.

Green tea is served by Wu's wife whom he calls "Little Sister." "Old-fashioned" Chinese, the Wus do not use each other's first names

It isn't. One minute Wu is a venerable ancient, as old as the bustling industrial city of Ningpo on the river Yung, where he was born sixty years ago. The next minute he is a scamp of ten.

The scamp darts in and out of his conversation, producing bits of humor as elusive as the bubbles on the surface of a woodland stream. He is describing, for example, a meeting of the Pope and his Cardinals.

For a time Wu's words convey all the solemnity of a meeting of the ruling body of the Church. And then—

"One of the Cardinals," he says, "made a remark that touched the heart of the Pope. The Holy Father burst into tears. Whereupon the Dean of Cardinals wept; and then all the other Cardinals wept, each in his turn, according to protocol."

You may not leave the presence of Dr. Wu with your sides splitting with laughter. He isn't Bob Hope, after all. But sooner or later it dawns on you that you have met an Apostle of Joy, an ageless and charming man who, although he was received into the Catholic Church twenty-one years ago, is still kicking up his mental heels in quiet celebration of his conversion. Wu recalls one occasion when, suddenly overwhelmed anew at his good fortune in having found Christ, he hied himself to his bedroom to give vent to his feelings in a series of "clownish acrobatics" on the floor.

For the last eight years he has been lecturing on jurisprudence to Law seniors at Seton Hall. A visitor to his classroom describes him as sitting behind a little desk on a platform, clothing his fluent thought in impeccable English.

Wu's students are mature men and women, most of whom hold full-time jobs. He says "they know far more law than I. I supply the theory. They supply the cases to illustrate it."

Wu's teaching schedule, four hours a week, permits him to devote most of his time to writing and lecturing. His next book *Jurisprudence: Cases and Materials* has taken four years of work. As written, it would have run 1400 pages. Wu's final job was to cut it in half.

"The publishers," he explains, "said that would make it more wieldy. It would appear that they do not hold in high regard the physical strength of American law students."

There is wit and wisdom in Wu's books and a spring-like clarity which brings even difficult subjects well within the ken of the general reader. *Beyond East and West* is not strictly an autobiography. It is rather a record of Wu's spiritual development, a book in the tradition of St. Augustine—in short, a confession of the author's love for God.

It is an endearing confession. One of the things that makes it so is that Wu seems untouched by modern psychology. Granted that Sigmund Freud has helped us understand and forgive one another, the fact remains that Freud and his scientific descendants are a pack of killjoys. Their world view is a secular Puritanism with its mournful tendency to see a mean motive in every human impulse and a neurosis under every bed.

There is none of this in Wu. He is at pains to tell us that what he sought in marriage was a mother, and having

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found an excellent one he couldn't be more delighted.

En route to his classroom in the 1950 De Soto owned and driven by his son Francis, Wu wears a neat American business suit. At home his garb is Chinese: loose blouse and trousers and cloth slippers. Over these he throws a woolen robe for his daily trip to Mass and Communion in the chapel of Seton Hall.

That Wu should feel as at home in one garb as the other is symbolical. You are not with him long before you get the feeling that this brilliant Chinese convert, having found the "bridge" in Christ, has arrived within himself at that synthesis of East and West of which he so often speaks. He is as Chinese as temple bells, as American as the Rotary Club.

While at the Vatican in the late 1940's as China's minister plenipotentiary, Wu was invited by Msgr. (now Cardinal) Montini, the acting Secretary of State, to present his family to the Holy Father. During the audience, Monsignor Montini informed him, a photograph would be taken of the Pope with the Wus.

"Would it not be wise," Wu said, "to forget the photograph? It might give future diplomats an idea. The Holy Father is busy enough without being called on by every new diplomat to pose for a photograph with his family."

Msgr. Montini replied that there was nothing to worry about. "To cite this case as a precedent," he said, "every future diplomat must show evidence that, like yourself, he is the father of thirteen children."

Seven of the Wus' thirteen are married and living in various parts of North America, Latin America, and Europe. Wu, his wife, and the remaining six live in a ten-room house on the fringes of Seton Hall's main campus.

It is a yellow house of Dutch Colonial design. Plastered to the window in the front door is a picture of Our Lord and one of Our Lady of Fatima, circled by the words "Pray the rosary for world peace."

Inside, the big, oblong living room is dotted with many other homely religious symbols, and a large picture of Pope Pius XII, with a citation to Wu, hangs near the front vestibule door.

At first glance the house seems to be built of books. Knee-high piles of them on the floor line the walls of the big dining room beyond. At the end of the living room a curtained alcove encloses a more or less formal library, presided over by a madly-singing parakeet.

We—Wu and I—walk and talk. The walking is Wu's idea. He has a way, when an idea strikes him, of leaping up and taking off in all directions. He does this even at lunch. Laying his chopsticks on the tablecloth, he springs up and moves away a few feet, his hands folded into the sleeves of his blouse. It is as though the physical action helped him to find the words for his thought.

Mrs. Wu joins us occasionally. She is a uniquely beautiful woman, and when she smiles, she smiles all over her face. She speaks no English, but she makes the guest at home in a universal language. At the lunch table she extends her wine glass with a bright lift of her head. The clink of our glasses and Mrs. Wu's smile are "Welcome" in any tongue.

Mr. and Mrs. Wu do not address each other by their first names. This is customary among "old-fashioned Chinese."

Wu called his wife as "Ni Chia," meaning Little Sister. She caught his attention with a quick, sharp "Ah!"

"I myself can never speak of our Lord by His first name," Wu says. "It is always 'Christ.' I have other old-fashioned Chinese notions. We Chinese are a clothed people. The Chinese woman covers the whole of her person, and the higher in the scale a man is the more clothes he puts on. When I became a Christian, I had to get used to the barefooted figure on the crucifixion. To this day I prefer to see people fully clothed, especially women, whose attractiveness, it seems to me, increases to the degree that their bodies are covered."

Hopefulness and concern are intermingled in Wu's comments on the human condition. He finds the contemporary mind sick, "fragmented and trivialized." "Modern man," he wrote in *Fountain of Justice,* "by dismissing hell from his mind and losing the sense of sin, has made a hell of the world."

Not long ago Wu traveled to Rome to address the Second World Congress for the Lay Apostolate. The theme of his talk was one of several close to his heart. He discussed the advantages to world peace of attempts to fuse the roundabout and intuitive outlook of the Orient with the direct and practical outlook of the Occident—a fusion, said Wu, that can

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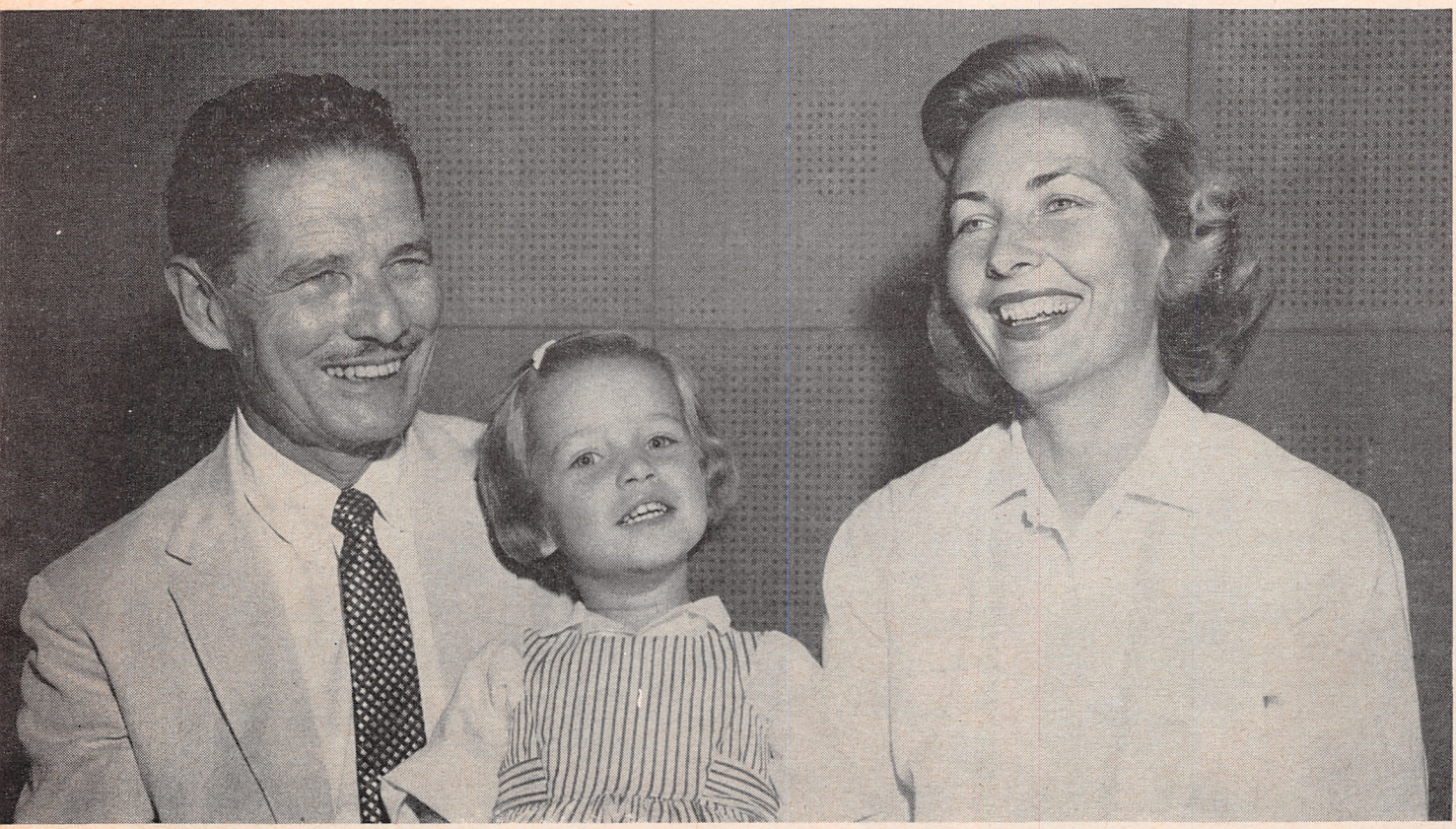
The Wus' thirteen children, ranging from 16 to 40, have kept Chinese customs while embracing Western ways

From Satan to St. Francis

From time to time in *The Hour of St. Francis,* a weekly radio program which dramatizes a supernatural solution for a frustrated life, such diverse characters as a gangland gunman, a Korean war orphan, Satan, and even St. Francis himself find their way into the script. Chances are their lines will come through the versatile voice of a 51-year-old actor-announcer, Patrick Joseph McGeehan. In fact, McGeehan has been "the voice" on the skillful, 15-minute drama since it began its run in Los Angeles in 1945. In the interval, the program has grown from 40 station outlets to its current peak of 615 stations in the U.S., 45 in Canada, and 17 in Australia.

Often, McGeehan has found himself playing two or three roles in a single show. "Pat is more than a talented actor," says Father Hugh Noonan, O.F.M., originator and producer of the program, "he's a pillar of strength in every dramatic requirement, and a cheerful spirit wholeheartedly spending himself for the apostolic purpose of the *Hour.*" For his service, McGeehan recently received the annual Peace Award of the Third Order of St. Francis (previous recipients have been Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Richard J. Cardinal Cushing, and Ralph Bunche).

McGeehan's career has been almost as varied as the qualities in his voice: from circus barker and apprentice seaman in the early days to announcer for the Red Skelton and Art Linkletter shows. But helping to spread St. Francis' brotherly love has been his greatest satisfaction.



Pat and Bernice McGeehan and daughter, Mary, 5: "Fashioning from tears and laughter a deeper truth for life"

MEXICAN CATHOLICS

(*Continued from page 22*)

the future? Political realities are always in the background of the Mexican Church's influence or lack thereof. Catholic leaders there have in recent decades played out one of the great diplomatic dramas in the history of Church-state relations. The old anti-religion laws are still on the statutes and a slight change in political winds could send the Church scurrying underground again. The 1,900 Catholic schools in Mexico exist illegally, but the government doesn't bother them.

The new president, Adolfo Lopez Mateos, is a man with a great talent for making a strangely unaristocratic range of friends. During the election campaign, last year, he said, "This country has now reached that point of maturity which makes it possible to govern all with equity," and few doubted that he meant it. He is an exceptional (for a politician in Mexico) and tolerant man characterized principally by an easy temperament and humane reasonableness. Another significant fact is that Lopez is a man of strong intellectual and cultural motivations. The country's leading writers, teachers, and professional men were drafted to make up the new party ticket. Thus the present government took shape and will apparently operate in an atmosphere of enlightenment and discipline instead of under the direction of party hacks and leaders-on-the-make.

Before I went to Mexico, a friend who has lived there several years told me in forthright, convinced terms: "In twenty-five years, Mexico will in no sense of the word be a Catholic country." I went there expecting to write a gloomy story on the disappearing character of the Church. Nothing I saw or heard in any way confirmed what my friend had told me. The reality of faith that cuts through the country like a magnetic presence was made dramatically clear to me on my last night in Mexico. I was stranded in the lonely, dust-encrusted northern city of Chihuahua. It was late at night and a cold rain had begun to fall. I was waiting for a bus that seemed an eternity away when a *mestizo* with the soiled sombrero and rough hands of a working man stopped to inquire about my predicament. I told him I was a priest on my way back to the States.

He insisted that I spend the night with him and his family. His home was little better than a hovel. But the *Virgen* glowed over the fireplace and there was an unmistakable atmosphere of family warmth and happiness. The next morning as I took my leave, he slipped a 10-peso bill in my hand. *"Por nuestro padre,"* he said. "For our padre." He could ill afford such a gesture. And I had no need of money. But I took it. I wanted it as an abiding souvenir of the Catholic people of Mexico.

THE MAN BEYOND EAST AND WEST

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be accomplished only "in the bosom of Christ."

Christianity, Wu has frequently observed, is not western, "although one wishes sometimes that the West were more Christian." Christianity, he says, is supranational. "It is beyond East and West."

It is, also, he adds, "beyond plumbing," referring to the tendency of Americans, traveling abroad, to let the material backwardness of a country blind them to any genuine knowledge of its people.

From time to time, as we talk, a cup of tea appears, courtesy of Mrs. Wu. "It is green tea," Wu says. "Very soothing." He drinks his from a small metal pot, sipping it through the spout. This, too, it appears, is a custom among "old-fashioned Chinese."

Wu's eyes dream again. His thoughts take a little journey and return. "That is the difference between the East and the West," he says. "The East is tea and the West is coffee." A breath or two later, he confides that the first liquid he takes in the morning is a cup of coffee.

"It shocks me into complete wakefulness," he says. "But for the rest of the day it is tea. Green tea. Very soothing."

The day at the Wus' house begins at seven when Mrs. Wu arises. At 7:45 she wakes her husband so that the two of them can make eight o'clock Mass.

"I never awaken on my own," Wu says. "She has to waken me. When she first calls, I find the action unwelcome. I am a lazy man and it takes all my will power to arise and face another day. But my wife is very diligent about getting me up.

"She has two reasons for being so. One is that she loves God. The other is because she knows me. She knows that if I do not go to Communion in the morning I will be fidgety all day. You see, I am still a sort of spoiled child.

"Well, we do go to Mass. Often we are late because of my indolence, but we get there. And afterward, I am so full of joy and gratitude, and I thank God again for giving me such a wonderful wife—for, after all, it is she who has given me the day.

"You see there are still some Catholics who do not fully understand what marriage is. True marriage is not a man and a woman in love with each other. It is a man and a woman mutually in love with Christ. It is He who keeps a marriage together, and it is when He is not there that a marriage falls apart. My wife and I are most truly married when we go to church together in the morning and when, just before we retire at night, we kneel with the children about us and say the Rosary.

"Now here is an interesting thing. Every once in a while I do not get to Communion in the morning and every time that happens, sometime during the day, we receive an unexpected visit from a priest. You see now why I say that I am nothing at all, that I would mess up my life in a minute were it not for the grace of God."

Wu smiles, or rather his half-smile makes a momentary appearance. "I have a Chinese friend," he says, "who is a very able writer. He has written some fine books but lately he has taken to writing about sex.

"Now, here is the difference between that man and me. He is not a Catholic but, morally, he is the best man I have ever known. I am a wicked man. I have done about all there is to be done in the wickedness line.

"Now my *good* friend writes books about sex, and I who am a *bad* man do not. Perhaps the reason is that he knows nothing of wickedness and I know too much. I know how hollow it is and how wise it is simply to forget it. 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'"

While Wu invariably speaks of his offspring as the "children," only 16-year-old John Jude and eighteen-year-old Lucy fall roughly into this category. All the other children are very much grown up, ranging in age from Therese, twenty, to Thomas, forty. Those still at home are a good looking lot and as different from one another as tuning forks from pianos.

John, a student at Seton Hall Prep, is a rangy boy, always dashing in and out of the house with the busyness of a teenager newly feeling his oats. Lucy is a willowy beauty with the poise of a born lady. Recently graduated from Marylawn in the Oranges, she is now attending St. Elizabeth's on a scholarship. Therese is studying biology and mathematics at Caldwell, a college run by the Dominican sisters. Psychology is the major interest of twenty-two-year-old Stephen, junior at Seton Hall. Vincent, twenty-five, is the owner of an exceptional tenor voice, a student of languages and a business man. He and a friend are currently producing and selling a new food product, a chip made of various flavors of tapioca. Francis, twenty-seven, teaches music appreciation at Seton Hall. He is a serious, clear-eyed young man, interested in political trends and given to expressing his opinion of some of them by a shake of his head and a solemn "cluck, cluck!"

The away-from-homers are business men, career diplomats, teachers, or housewives; and one of them, Peter, is studying for the priesthood at Maryknoll.

A day at the Wus' passes too quickly. It is late afternoon and there are still some blank pages in my notebook. Would Dr. Wu care to voice his impres-

sions of the American character, including any changes in it noted since his first trip to our shores in 1920 to begin his law studies at the University of Michigan.

"Americans," he says, "are more Christian than they think they are. They are sort of natural or unconscious Christians. By which I mean that, religiously speaking, many of them are in an adolescent stage. You know how it is with a youngster when he enters upon that period between childhood and maturity. Overnight he decides that Daddy and Mommy know nothing and he can stand on his own.

"So it is right now with many Americans. They flee from orthodoxy and flock to so-called liberal creeds, suddenly convinced that their Father in Heaven doesn't know the score and that they can stand on their own."

Wu is asked if he thinks this will change, if Americans will soon grow up in a religious sense. His answer, accompanied by his half-smile, is a graciously gentle reminder that "hope is a virtue to be cultivated."

"Americans," he says, "are the most unselfish people on earth. Unlike the Oriental, the average American is not self-centered. He throws himself into good works the way he drives a car, with all his attention on what he is doing and none on himself.

"This is admirable but dangerous. Absorbed in good but secondary activities, the average American is running the risk of losing his soul. To some degree the human being must be self-centered. He must be concerned with his own personal salvation."

The windows of the pleasant living room are darkening. There is time for only one more question. If Wu were to mention some of the really great people in history, whose names would occupy his list?

"Well," he says, "Napoleon wouldn't be there, or even Caesar. St. Paul would be, of course; St. Thomas Aquinas, along with the great mystical theologians, the great Chinese religious teachers, St. Teresa of Avila and the Little Flower. Prominent would be St. John-Baptiste Vianney, the little cure of Ars.

"Now there was a Saint Americans should know better. What a miracle of a man he was. How much he said in a few words. Think of him, preaching to his people in that dingy little French town, saying to them:

" 'There is no secret, no hocus-pocus, about getting to Heaven. Simply live each day in a way that is pleasing to God.' "

I close my notebook, feeling that it has got all it deserves, and a statement by Msgr. John L. McNulty, president of Seton Hall, comes to mind.

"Dr. John C. H. Wu is one of the really great men of our times."