



Remembering Father Yeh

BY JENNY W. HSU
STAFF REPORTER

The 97-year-old Hungarian Catholic priest passed away last week, but memories of his dedication and love for the poor and the marginalized live on in the hearts of many

With her stubby fingers tapping rapidly on an old, yellowing photograph, Jean Hsu smiled and occasionally let out a hearty laugh as she looked at the picture of her with a white-bearded Catholic priest sitting under a tree at school.

"She is trying to tell you that Father Yeh is her friend, a very good friend who loved her very much," said Jean's mom, who looked at the photograph with a trace of melancholy as she rubbed the back of her daughter, who suffers from severe retardation.

The scene in that picture can never be repeated again because Father Yeh, or Istvan Jaschko, passed away quietly in his sleep last Tuesday.

Jaschko, 97, was a Hungarian Catholic priest who devoted 53 years of his life in serving the poor and the marginalized in Taiwan. Through his ministry, Jaschko, often dubbed the Albert Schweitzer of Taiwan, established several clinics, hospitals and schools for the handicapped throughout the country.

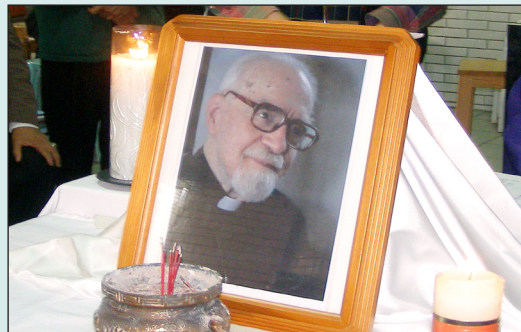
True to his Chinese name, Yeh You-ken (葉由根), literally "leaf growing from the root," was a much respected local hero who took Taiwan to his heart the minute he set foot on the island in 1955.

Not only did he dedicate more than five decades of his life to Taiwan, his body — per his request — was donated to the Fu Jen Catholic University for medical research.

Born to a religious family of nine children in 1911 in a small town called Kosice in what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Jaschko joined the Catholic Society of Jesus at the age of 26 and began his lifelong mission to spread the love of God.

In 1936, the young Jaschko was sent to China with the largest group of Hungarian missionaries — six Jesuits and five sisters from Kalocsa. He studied Chinese for two years before he was ordained a priest in Shanghai in 1941.

For three years, he worked as a teacher of Latin and theology at the seminary in Daming. One of



Left: Hungarian Catholic priest Istvan Jaschko, or Yeh You-ken, is remembered at a Mass in Hsinchu County on March 18, the day after he died. Bottom: Jaschko receives presents from mentally challenged children during his birthday party at St Joseph Special Education Center in Hsinchu last August.

PHOTOS: (LEFT) WANG CHIN-YI, TAIPEI TIMES; (BOTTOM) HUNG MEI-HSU, TAIPEI TIMES

his students was Paul Shan (單國嘯), who became the first archbishop from Taiwan to be ordained a cardinal in 1988.

Because of the raging war between China and Japan, Jaschko witnessed the flood of refugees and victims dying because of lack of medical care in war-torn China. Finally, in 1949, with the help of the Red Cross, Jaschko established the first hospital in Hebei Province with 100 hospital beds. Given the severe lack of qualified medical workers, he hired six young men to help him with his work. All six later became licensed doctors in China.

The Chinese Communist regime tried to drive away all foreign missionaries from the land. Although most of his friends and colleagues left, Jaschko was determined to stay on to look after his flock and the hospital.

Jaschko eventually fell into the hands of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), however, when his deputy hospital chief accused him of beating a Chinese child. The allegation earned him three years of hard labor in jail. The deputy chief later confessed that he had fabricated the story against Jaschko because his father had been arrested by the CCP.

"I did not feel sad," Jaschko said in describing his imprisonment, "because God lives in my heart."

Jaschko was expelled by the CCP in 1955 — the same year he came to Taiwan via Hong Kong.

Continuing with his passion for medicine and serving the underprivileged, Jaschko set up the Catholic Hospital for the Poor in the farming county of Chiayi, where he hired a Taiwanese girl who had barely finished elementary school to act as his translator. For half a century, the little girl, Wu Fumei (吳富美), kept close contact with the father.

Jaschko was inspired to start a school for disabled children when he saw many of them left in poor care as their parents worked in the fields. He set up his first classroom in a dilapidated Buddhist temple, Wu recalled.

In 1974, Jaschko was transferred to Hsinchu County, where he wasted no time in helping disabled children. One year later, the St Joseph Special Education Center had its grand opening. The center

currently houses more than 160 children and is often credited as the birthplace of special education in Taiwan.

In 1983, at the age of 72, the silver-haired priest who then walked with the aid of a cane, decided to open Hua Kuang Cognitive Development Center. Established in the town of Guanhsi (關西) in Hsinchu, Hua Kuang, which is now headed by Wu, is what Jean and more than 200 residents call their home away from home.

One staffer, Peng Hsiu-yue (彭秀月), said the priest was a serious man, but whenever he was around children, he was all smiles.

"He didn't even mind when the students played with his beard," Peng said.

"He saw himself as Taiwanese a long time ago," Wu said, recalling that Jaschko had his alien permanent resident certificate, which he received in 2002, proudly hung up on his humble bedroom wall.

"The minute he found out that he was staying at a more expensive hospital room, he asked to be discharged because he wanted to be back at the center to be with his children, the residents," said Jean's father, Hsu Yu-yuan (許玉源), who is also the president of the Parent Teacher Association, describing Jaschko as a "truly great man."

On the morning of his passing, more than 250 people came to pay their final tribute. His body was immediately brought to the medical center in Taipei at noon.

"He has done an excellent job and his ministry has touched the lives of many people and brought the love of God to many people. We mourn for his passing and pray that God will reward him for what he has done," said Monsignor Paul Fitzgerald, charge d'affaires of the Holy See to Taiwan.

A formal memorial service for Jaschko will be held next Tuesday at the chapel of the Hua Kuang center in honor of his life and legacy.



Visitors have fun at the annual spring fair at Taipei American School in Tianmu on Saturday.

PHOTO: JENNY W. HSU, TAIPEI TIMES

Quoting the association's director, David Brown, who visited Taipei to conduct the week-long evaluation, Hennessy said the evaluators said "a dark cloud has been lifted from TAS."

"We are extremely pleased with the evaluation and huge

credits go to the parents," Hennessy said.

"We just can't put a dollar and cent on what the PTA has done for the school," she said, commending the school's parents as the major driving force behind the remarkable change.

Government may issue four-in-one Employment Pass

CONVENIENCE: The pass would simplify procedures by combining visas, work and re-entry permits and alien resident certificates

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA

The government plans to issue a new Employment Pass by combining four different permits to streamline the application process for foreign professionals who want to work in Taiwan, the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) said on Friday.

The card will combine the applicant's visa, work and re-entry permits and alien resident certificate into one, the ministry said in a statement.

TIME-CONSUMING

Currently foreigners who want to work in Taiwan must first file an application with the Council of Labor Affairs for a work permit, apply to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a visa, and then apply to the MOI for a resident certificate, the statement said, adding that the procedure is tedious and

time-consuming.

The National Immigration Agency (NIA) has formulated the key points of the plan, which will be submitted to the Executive Yuan for approval, the statement said.

If the plan is implemented, the NIA will be responsible for the collection and transfer of application forms, the MOI said.

TRAVEL CARDS

The government is also planning to grant speedy immigration passage to foreign dignitaries and select businesspeople. It will issue academic and commercial travel cards to those who have won first prize in world-renowned competitions or who are internationally acclaimed academics and businesspeople, including research fellows in national research institutions.

Moreover, a "plum blossom" permanent residency card will be issued to immigrants with high-level professional and technical skills that are needed in Taiwan, and to immigrants who invest at least NT\$30 million (US\$882,000) in the country, the statement said.



NURTURING

Nei-hai Elementary School principal Yeh Chun-ying, left, the school's foreign teacher Jenna, second left, and two students have fun transplanting rice seedlings in a muddy field in Taoyuan County last Tuesday.

PHOTO: LI JUNG-PING, TAIPEI TIMES

Aspiring French reporters find warmth in Taiwan

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA

Journalism in Taiwan is more interesting than in France, say a group of aspiring French reporters who have just completed a two-week internship program in Taiwan.

The interns said in an interview that the warmth of the Taiwanese had warmed them and completely changed their views about the country.

"It's very interesting to do interviews with local people because they are very kind and nice and they let us ask questions for hours, while people in France would just stop you after 10 minutes," said Maud Noyon, one of the interns.

The program, the first of its kind organized by the Government Information Office (GIO), brought 17 aspiring reporters from the renowned Journalism Training Center (CFPJ) in Paris to Taiwan for a two-week internship.

The students, who are in their second year at the institute, were required to report on Taiwanese subjects. Their articles will be published in the school magazine as well as submitted to other French media.

Nyon said that on her travels to Chiayi, Kaohsiung and other places in southern Taiwan, the people she interviewed were much nicer and warmer than the French, whom she described as aloof.

"Sometimes it was quite overwhelming because we are not used to it. The French are not very kind, especially to journalists," she said.

Another intern, Baptiste Touverey, said his view of Taiwanese had changed after several interesting conversations with local residents.

"It's a big surprise. They are not just kind, but also funny and

“Sometimes it was quite overwhelming because we are not used to it. The French are not very kind, especially to journalists.”

— Maud Nyon, French journalism student

witty," Touverey said. "I never imagined that Taiwanese had such a good sense of humor."

He said there was a stereotype of Taiwanese as being very serious.

Nyon agreed, saying that despite the language barrier, many of the people they interviewed tried to make jokes, which made her feel welcome.

Asked about the difficulties they encountered during their work, Marion Cocquet, who wrote feature stories on Taiwan's education system and cram schools, said that the language barrier was the biggest problem.

"It can be really frustrating because I felt that they had things to say to me, but they could only explain in simple words," Cocquet said, adding that this made it difficult for her to determine the interviewees' feelings on certain issues.

The French students all said they had fallen for the kindness of the people in Taiwan and would love to return.

Founded in 1946 by two journalists, Philippe Viannet and Jacques Richet, the CFPJ has become one of the most prestigious journalism institutions in Europe.

TAS hosts another successful spring fair

FUN: Thousands flocked to the campus bazaar, with more than 80 booths set up to feed and entertain visitors and live performances throughout the day

BY JENNY W. HSU
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Taipei American School (TAS) celebrated its 29th annual Spring Fair last Saturday, turning the campus into a bustling bazaar with the tantalizing aroma of barbecue filling the air as thousands joined in the fun.

Jean Liao, a member of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), said that the fair used to draw around 6,000 to 8,000 people from the Tianmu community in Taipei.

"It started out as a fun gathering for the community and a fundraising event for the school," she said, recalling that on average, the fair brought in more than NT\$1.5 million each year.

This year, the fair featured

more than 80 booths and sponsors — ranging from gourmet food provided by five-star hotels to an organic farmers' market, airline companies and even an animal adoption center.

TAS students also set up several booths, including the TAS Cancer Society, the Thespian Society, the Orphanage Club and the Student Environmental Alliance.

In addition to treats and fun-filled rides and games, the crowd was entertained by live performances from groups such as the Sweet Voice Choir, the Upper School rocker's band and hula dancers.

One of the performances was an Aboriginal number by the students of Ping-jin Elementary

School in Nantou County. Many of these students participate in the school's long-distance English learning program set up by a group of volunteer TAS mothers.

Each year's fair has been special and unique in its own way, but one thing remains the same, TAS superintendent Sharon Hennessy said.

"We always have people who are willing to do the work," Hennessy said, applauding the parents for their unwavering determination in making the fair a successful event year after year.

This year's fair was not only a celebration of the spirit of TAS, Hennessy said, but was also an occasion for the staff, faculty and parents to rejoice over the stellar review the school received from an international accreditation group — the Western Association of Schools and Colleges — last week when TAS was officially taken off the special "watch" status.