

CHEN, BISHOP W. Y.

UNITED METHODIST INFORMATION

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For Immediate Release

WASHINGTON, D.C.--The last of the Methodist bishops to serve the Chinese mainland, Bishop W. Y. Chen, died in Chungking last Nov. 8, according to word which reached here in January.

Widely known in the United States, especially in the 1940s, Bishop Chen had been imprisoned by the Communists from 1950 to 1959, when he was released to house arrest because of severe illness. He died at the age of 70, from gastro cancer and liver failure.

Although little had been known here of the church and its leadership in China since the Communist takeover nearly two decades ago, Bishop Chen was still carried on the roll of bishops in the "effective" category. The other bishops who served with him in China all died there also--Carleton H. Lacy in 1951 and both Z.T. Kaung and Ralph A. Ward in 1958.

Word of Chen's death came from relatives in China to his daughter, Mrs. H. P. (Han-Sing) Chen Liao, who lives in Glen Burnie, Md.

Following his early education in China, Chen came to this country in 1917 to earn bachelor's and master's degrees at Syracuse University and a doctorate of philosophy in psychology at Duke University. He also did graduate study at Cambridge University and the University of Berlin.

A convert from Buddhism to Christianity, he joined Foochow Methodist Conference in 1921, served as a pastor and later as teacher in Anglo-Chinese College and Fukien Christian University, where he became dean and president. Then he was general secretary of the National Christian Council of China, where

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he organized evangelistic crusades which were cited as helping to save the morale of his people during the early days of Japanese occupation.

In 1941, Chen was elected a bishop of The Methodist Church and was assigned to the Chungking Area. There, where Nationalist China had its capital during World War II, he did much to organize aid to refugees from Japanese occupation and, at the request of President Chiang Kai-Shek, helped organize China's Youth Corps.

In 1944 in the U.S., he brought the General Conference a message from Chiang Kai-Shek inviting U.S. Protestant churches to send missionaries to postwar China, as partners in its reconstruction. At that time he was cited by Time magazine as "China's No. 1 Protestant."

He also gave commencement addresses and received honorary degrees from several schools--Syracuse, Garrett Biblical Institute, Wesleyan University, Boston University, Illinois Wesleyan University--and spoke at numerous church gatherings.

In 1947 he came for engagements including an address and honorary doctorate at American University. He participated in the 1948 General Conference before returning to China for the last time. At the time he was a vice chairman of the International Missionary Council.

Although encouraged to come to the free world, Bishop Chen decided to stay with his people despite the possibility of his detention and persecution of the church.

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