



The NEW BERN MIRROR

Regional Library
400 Johnson St.
New Bern NC 28560

PUBLISHED WEEKLY
IN THE HEART OF
EASTERN NORTH
CAROLINA
5¢ Per Copy

VOLUME 14

NEW BERN, N. C., FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 1971

NUMBER 7

Passing years have done little to erase the memory of Monsignor Michael A. Irwin. Protestants and Jews, along with parishioners at St. Paul's Catholic church, knew him well as a familiar figure on the local scene.

Much of his more than half a century in the priesthood was spent in New Bern, and during those years he became part and parcel of the town. Few recalled that he was a native of Portsmouth, Va.

Everyone who knew him was aware of his great love for music. What many didn't know was that the Monsignor was an accomplished violinist, who once played in Norfolk's St. Cecelia orchestra under the direction of Anton Kerner.

A non-paid community organization, composed of 30 to 40 musicians in the Norfolk and Portsmouth area, the St. Cecelia orchestra presented numerous performances in the Old Dominion.

Father Irwin's favorite composers were Beethoven, Chopin and Mendelssohn, but his tastes were as broad as that big body of his, and his knowledge of music exceptional. He leaned strongly toward any good concerto.

He credited Father Julius at Belmont Abbey, in western North Carolina, with his basic musical training. Later at Norfolk, he studied under the great Hernrah Singerhoff, a German who was not only a famous teacher but a musician of world note.

Monsignor Irwin's happiest hour of earth came at the age of 84, when a golden jubilee celebration was held here at the time of his fiftieth anniversary in the priesthood.

At his request the observance was delayed several months to coincide with the dedication of St. Paul's handsome new auditorium. Priests from 10 states—New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina—were here.

Included among high ranking Catholic leaders present for the occasion were four bishops and eight monsignors. Never before in all history nor since has there been such a gathering here. More than 150 priests were seated together at lunch in the spacious auditorium.

Father Julian Endler of New Bern's St. Joseph's Catholic church served as toastmaster, with the usual complimentary speeches by visiting dignitaries. Incidentally, Father Julian's twin brother, Father John Joseph, was here.

They looked exactly alike, and even close friends had extreme difficulty figuring out just who was who. There were two other brothers in the family, and they were priests also.

Solemn high mass was said by Monsignor Irwin in the auditorium that morning, in a religious ceremony that is as rare as it was impressive. Seldom indeed are there enough



PROUD MOMENT—Congressman Walter Jones and William V. Griffin of Route 3, New Bern have good reason to beam happily as they pose for cameras in Washington, D. C. Griffin won a national award for efficient production

management in the raising of soybeans. It was presented at a special luncheon honoring him, and later Griffin met with Clifford M. Hardin, Secretary of Agriculture. Hardin was impressed by Griffin's 36.5 bushels per acre average on 252 acres.