

The Reverend Walden Pell II
1903-1983
Headmaster, St. Andrew's School 1930-1957

REMARKS TO THE SCHOOL BY WILLIAM H. AMOS, SENIOR MASTER, AT THE MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR WALDEN PELL II, MARCH 24, 1983.

The last time I saw Walden Pell was two weeks ago in the hospital. I'll come back to that in a bit.

The first time I met Dr. Pell was when I came to St. Andrew's in 1947 as a new teacher. Catherine and I were immediately embraced by the warm, close-knit family atmosphere that made up the School in those days—it was far smaller than it is today—a caring, intimate atmosphere that made the School unique among all those I have known. Traces of this feeling remain to this day in our far larger and more complex School. It was *all* Waldy's doing, augmented by those who shared his vision of what St. Andrew's was to be. How much of this School is still Walden Pell's, you will never know.

Waldy was the first headmaster and, when the School was founded, the old man of the faculty at age twenty-eight. When I arrived, he was a handsome, virile, powerful and ramrod straight man in his mid-forties.

Without question he was the father of the School family—in every way—as our headmaster, priest, confidant, and friend. Being a headmaster was not easy for him, because he had to deal with mere mortals: all of us who had frailties, failures, made mistakes, were ignorant of procedure, or were petty. He was, in truth, a saintly man. If I use this term often in speaking of Walden Pell, I do so intentionally, because it was absolutely true. Saintliness is not perfection, remember, but—as Webster defines—"a true Christian....consecrated to God."

Students went off the track—and how they could do so back in those days—doing things that probably would never cross your minds. For example, a IVth Former taking a faculty car at midnight—without permission, should you wonder—driving to Smyrna, loading up with cases of beer, coming back and selling them at a profit to upper formers at 2:00 AM. Waldy never saw the devil incarnate in such a IVth Former, but simply a poor misguided young man in need of attention—and a bit of cash—and loving, understanding attention is what he got, even if he had to leave the School. And that is what we all got when problems and mistakes and misunderstandings arose. Waldy simply cared *more* about *all* members of his School than he had time and energy for, despite his incredible vigor. And that greatly tired him as the years went on.

I served under Waldy for ten years until he left permanently for a well-deserved rest, but soon he and his beloved wife, Edith—beloved, I might add, by all of us—left to serve in the ministry on the other side of the world in a city and country most Americans had not heard of in those days: Saigon, in Vietnam, long before the United States became militarily involved.

Waldy's faith was absolute. Every member of the School community—staff, faculty, student, or nearby alumnus—who fell ill and was hospitalized, was immediately visited by Waldy who offered bedside prayers and communion. I know. I was one, and when I was hospitalized for long weeks in a distant city, Waldy was there at once and repeatedly. This lovely chapel was Waldy's spiritual home. Every detail was planned by him. I remember standing here and watching him advise the gilders and painters as they decorated these magnificent carved figures.

His faith, his family, and his School were joined by another love. Birds. He was a first-class ornithologist who could hold his own with any professional.

When I arrived here, never mind that I came as a marine ecologist. Because I was to teach biology, in Waldy's mind I

therefore had to be an ornithologist. And I didn't know one end of a bird from the other. He didn't blame me for this failing. He simply assumed I did know, and that I cared to know.

The first week I was here, he took me, and his teenage son, Stuyvie, on a tramp in the woods to an eagle's nest up the pond. It was a large nest, high in a tall tree.

"I'm sure you want to look in the nest, Bill," Waldy said. I got up about twenty feet and could go no further. Nothing to grab. He sent Stuyvie up, but he didn't have any more luck. Waldy clucked a bit. Superman that he was, he grasped the tree and went almost all the way until a branch broke and he fell at our feet. I remember my horror. "What a way to start a career," I thought. "Out on a field trip with the headmaster and he kills himself showing me his prize." Waldy picked himself up, brushed himself off, and said, "Well, the eagle wasn't up there today anyway. Let's go look at an owl's nest." And away we went. This was vintage Waldy. Indefatigable.

There was a saying all those years that the sun always shone on Walden Pell. If ever there was a School function, a baseball game or an outside reception, and the weather threatened, everyone knew Waldy would simply say, "It won't rain; it will be nice," and he would stride out, erect and faithful, and the clouds would break and the sun would shine. I know at this moment, the sun is shining on Waldy.

So when Catherine and I saw him in the hospital a short time ago, eighty years old and very ill—although he assured his nurses in our presence he was comfortable, ever mindful of the feelings of others—the beauty of the man was still there. His Bible lay on his bedside table; he folded a picture of our grandson into his packet of cards, and in his hands was a book he was reading on birds.

I loved that man. He was perhaps the finest, certainly the saintliest, the most thoroughly Christian man I have ever known. Join those who knew him in understanding that the spirit of St. Andrew's School is Walden Pell's.

Postscript: There was a torrential downpour on the day of Waldy's funeral. With many others, I stood at the gravesite hardly aware of the heavy rain. Afterwards, his younger daughter, Lili Whitmer (she had been at the memorial service earlier in the week) grasped my arm and said, "So the sun always shines on Waldy, eh?" And as I grew flustered and unable to reply, she laughed and said, "Don't you know a strong and healthy seed needs a good watering?" She is indeed Waldy's daughter!

The Walden Pell II Memorial Fund has been established at St. Andrew's School, Middletown, Delaware, by Reverend Pell's Children: Melissa Pell Thomson, Mary Leigh Whitmer and Stuyvesant B. Pell.

THE HOMILY IN ST. ANDREW'S CHAPEL BY THE RT. REV. J. BROOKE MOSLEY, FORMER BISHOP OF DELAWARE, FOR BURIAL OF THE REV. DR. WALDEN PELL II, MARCH 27, 1983

"Dearly Beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this company" to give thanks to God for the wonderful grace and virtue declared in all his saints and especially for the remarkable life and ministry of our esteemed friend, Walden Pell. He has been and he still is a choice vessel of that grace and that virtue.

We are here also to yield to God high praise and hearty thanks for his marvelous gift to us of everlasting life.

It was said well by John Donne: "Any man's death diminishes me." And at moments like this we feel how true this is, for one who has been so large a part of our lives, one who has even formed part of our Delaware-Eastern Shore culture, seems to be missing. We are diminished.

But what memorials he has left! Beginning with this fine school, of course.

The inscription in London's St. Paul Cathedral, in honor of its architect, Sir Christopher Wren, applies to Waldy. It simply says: "If you seek for a monument, gaze around." For Waldy was Headmaster-Founder of this school at the age of 28, and until past mid-life he was its leader, inspirer, teacher, pastor, and caring friend. Consequently, there are living monuments to this honor all over this country and abroad.

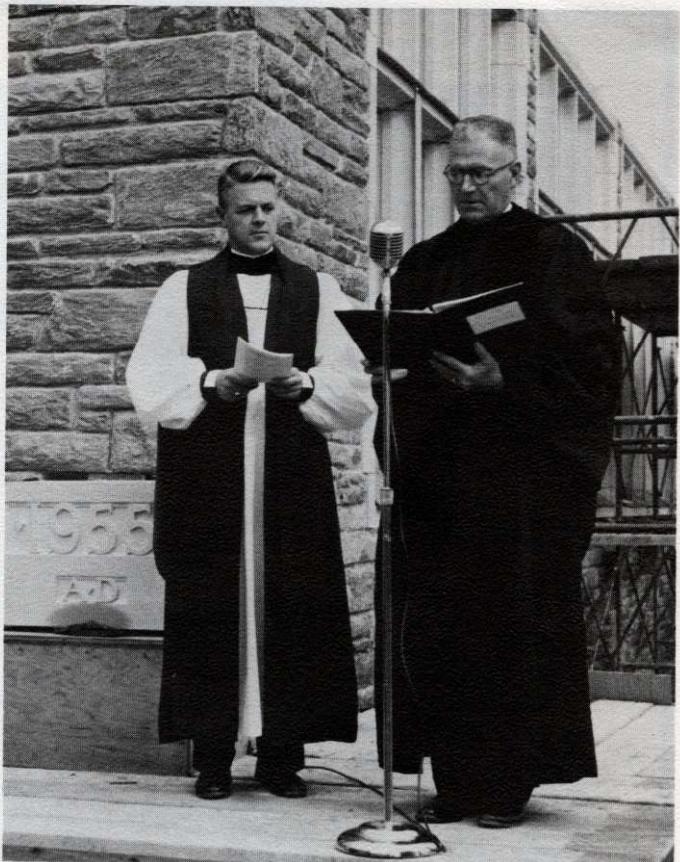
Then, at an age where others step down, he stepped up, to a brand new overseas ministry in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia—in unsettled times, to say the least. No sinecure that! And when I was privileged to visit him and Edith in their home in Saigon, there they were again, with young people going in and out of their home morning, noon and night; and on certain evenings, there was an overflowing of Vietnamese youth.

Then he returned home to a loving and creative parish ministry, still moving ever more deeply into the lives and hearts of his people.

I like to think of Waldy and Edith as aristocrats, in the best



Waldy and Edith at home.



Laying the corner-stone of the library wing, October 14, 1956.
Bishop Mosley and Headmaster, Walden Pell.

sense of that good word. That is, in the sense that E.M. Forster used it when he said: "I believe in aristocracy... Not an aristocracy of power, based on rank and influence, but an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate, and the plucky. Its members are to be found in all nations and classes and all through the ages, and there is a secret understanding between them when they meet. They represent the true human condition, the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos... They are sensitive for others as well as for themselves. They are considerate without being fussy, their pluck is not swankiness but the courage to endure, and they can take a joke."

They can also pry "one fatte calfe" out of the city of New Rochelle.

We are glad that Edith and Waldy are alive and well this afternoon. They are, of course, because our Easter message is true. (What a perfect season he chose in which to die! He always had good timing.) For Easter tells us that in Jesus Christ the dead are the living, that all who have died are at this instant in full possession of all their faculties, exercising all of their capacities, standing somewhere in God's universe ringed about with a sense of his presence, feeling with every fiber of their being that life after death is not less real but just as real, not less great but greater, not less intense but more so, than the life they once knew here.

For it is life that awaits us, life deeply felt and profound.

"Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

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