

TUES. DEC. 24, 1968
(Richard C. Hottelet)

SAN DIEGO

Home are the sailors - home from North Korea. Those eighty-two crewmen of the captured U.S.S. Pueblo - arriving by plane today at the Miramar Naval Air Station, San Diego. Wives, children and parents - some two hundred, in all - waiting there to greet them. A joyous Christmas reunion.

PARIS-VIETNAM

A battlefield parley still to come - has the Communists claiming a "victory" today in Paris. The Viet Cong noting an American agreement - to discuss the Christmas release of three U.S. prisoners of war. Calling this a new triumph - in the Viet Cong's battle for official recognition U.S. reaction: Hogwash.

Meanwhile, the fighting tapers off in Vietnam - under the effects of a joint Christmas truce.

MOSCOW

Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko - back in Moscow today after a surprise trip to Cairo. According to the Soviet news agency Tass - his mission a complete success. No official word of specific agreement - but Moscow seems to be putting out the word that President Nasser promised full cooperation with United Nations peace envoy Gunnar Jarring. And Moscow is not discouraging speculation of another U.N. peace offensive - early next year.

SPACE

Round and round they go - America's first men in lunar orbit; Astronauts Borman, Lovell and Anders - literally running circles around the moon; all through the day and on into the night - as we measure time here below. The "three wise men" of space performing a Christmas miracle - as the topper to man's greatest voyage to date.

Along the way - the Apollo-Eight astronauts becoming the first men - ever to see the back side of the moon with their own eyes. A view they are taking in - again and again - with cameras, too. Clearing the way for a manned landing on the lunar surface - perhaps as early as next spring. For now thought - Command Pilot Frank Borman describing the moon's grim, grey surface - like nothing so much as a "dirty beach with a lot of footprints."

Astronaut Bill Anders adding - it "looks like a sandpile my kids had been playing in a long time - it's all beat up."

SPACE - 2

On tap for tonight - a "Christmas Eve Spectacular."

To be telecast back to earth as the Apollo-Eight makes
its from the lunar surface.

TARANTO

The pomp and ceremony of Christmases past - in sharp contrast to the trappings of Christmas here and now; as Pope Paul celebrated a Christmas mass tonight - at the port city of Taranto in Southern Italy.

The setting - "Cathedral of Steel" in one of Europe's biggest steel mills; an operation that must keep on running - holiday or no. The Pope provided with a huge altar - made of gleaming steel. Behind that - a Nativity scene - also, steel. The entire "cathedral" - in the shadow of a giant blast furnace.

According to the Vatican - the Pope thus showing the Church's concern for ordinary working people.

TRAVEL

"Twas the night before Christmas and all through the land - millions of Americans were hurrying, scurrying - trying to get home for the holidays. The last-minute travel crunch - jamming highways, trains and airplanes. Although - surprisingly - not nearly as badly as in some years past.

Main reason - says an airline official - the fact that the Christmas travel season actually started last Friday; spreading the homeward trek over four days - instead of just one or two. Another reason - the Hong Kong flu; closing schools and colleges early - permitting students to return home well ahead of the normal flood.

ATLANTA

Speaking of the Hong Kong flu - an item related thereto comes today from the National Communicable Disease Center at Atlanta. Government doctors reporting that the flu epidemic now has spread to all but three states - Mississippi, Louisiana, Hawaii. Asserting though that "fantasy and fiction" about the disease - are giving it "a greater emotional impact than it may ordinarily deserve."

"Admittedly" - Hong Kong flu "is a miserable, uncomfortable affliction" - says the government. Adding, however, "it is rarely dangerous - except among high-risk groups."

For the rest of us - the message, in effect: Grin and bear it - for this, too, shall pass.

PASADENA

Dorothy Lamour gets cold feet - so to speak. The story today - from Pasadena; where the one-time glamour queen - has refused to wear a sarong in the Tournament of Roses Parade New Year's Day. Not even for her old "road show" side-kick - parade grand marshal Bob Hope.

Is the reason modesty? Not at all - says Miss Lamour. Noting that she still measures - thirty-seven, twenty-four, thirty-seven. Adding: "I'm proud of my figure." Then why has she forsaken the sarong - after all these years? Because - said she - "I simply don't want to freeze to death in Pasadena."

BANGKOK

Bangkok - Thailand announces today that ^a Thai girls will not be sent overseas anymore - at government expense - to study teaching. This - according to the Thai National Statistical Office - because too many of the girls marry and never return. A government spokesman observing that - "women are a risky investment."

So what else is new, Warren?

MOON

For a final story - we turn again to the black void of space. As he circled the moon today - Astronaut Frank Borman beaming back a Christmas prayer; one that he would have read tonight in his own church - had he been able.

Here it is: . . .

"Give us, oh God, the vision which can see thy love in the world - in spite of human failure. Give us the faith to trust thy goodness - in spite of our ignorance and weakness. Give us the knowledge - that we may continue to pray with understanding hearts. And show us what each one of us can do - to set forward the coming of the day of universal peace. Amen."

This is Richard C. Hottelet - for Lowell Thomas - a Merry Christmas to all - and as Lowell would say so long until tomorrow.