

1980

Midwest China Oral History and Archives Collection

Leita Partridge Christianson

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/china_histories

Recommended Citation

Christianson, Leita Partridge, "Midwest China Oral History and Archives Collection" (1980). *China Oral Histories*. Book 18.
http://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/china_histories/18

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Archives & Special Collections at Digital Commons @ Luther Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in China Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Luther Seminary. For more information, please contact akeck001@luthersem.edu.

LEITA PARTIDGE CHRISTIANSON

ORAL HISTORY ABSTRACT

BORN: July 29, 1907, in Hobart, Tasmania.

EARLY LIFE: family background; education; called by and application process of China Inland Mission (CIM); financial arrangements of CIM.

CHINA EXPERIENCES: CIM cultural education and language school; trip to and description of station (Yungping) in West Yunnan, 1933; impressions of Shanghai; adjustments to life in China; evangelical and medical work and CIM baptism requirements; medical risks of mission work; effects of Japanese and Communists upon CIM work; adjustments to western lifestyle during furlough; memories of wartime Chungking; description of post-war Lungling; experiences with Communists in Lungling; journey out of China; lessons learned during China experience; memorable missionaries.

INTERVIEWER: Jane Baker Koons

DATE: 1-31-80

PLACE: Robbinsdale, Minnesota

NUMBER OF PAGES: 94

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: Mrs. Christianson, will you begin by telling us your full name?

CHRISTIANSON: I was born Leita Emily Partridge.

I: Could you tell us where and when you were born?

CHRISTIANSON: I was born in Hobart, Tasmania, July 29, 1907.

I: Could you give us a little of your family background?

CHRISTIANSON: My grandparents came from England and settled in Tasmania. There is not too much to tell about my family.

I: Why did they come from England?

CHRISTIANSON: People like to come to the new country to settle. I think that is all it was.

I: Could you tell us what kind of vocational involvement your family had?

CHRISTIANSON: My father was a saddler, which meant when the cars came in his business was worth practically nothing. He finished until he retired in the country, taking care of saddles. The saddlery business just went to pieces when cars came in in 1910 or thereabouts.

I: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

CHRISTIANSON: There were eight in the family, six who grew up. Now there are four of us left.

I: What is your educational background?

CHRISTIANSON: I did the usual--grade school and high school (I had to earn my living during high school). Then I went to Bible college, at age 21.

I: Where was the Bible college?

CHRISTIANSON: In Melbourne, Australia. It is the Bible college there. It was called the Melbourne Bible Institute in those days. It is now the Bible College of Victoria.

I: Was there anything in your youth that sparked the interest in missions and being a missionary in China?

CHRISTIANSON: Not particularly China, but as a child--a little child--I wanted to be a missionary.

I: Do you know any reason why?

CHRISTIANSON: No. No one else in the family seemed particularly interested. When I was 18, I pledged my life to the Lord Jesus for missions. I had attended quite a lot of missionary meetings. I had heard many missionaries speak and the challenge was there.

I: When you went to Bible college, how was your idea of a missionary vocation developed?

CHRISTIANSON: It was a Bible college that trained us as full-time workers. Everyone attending went there to train for home missionary work or for overseas work. The concentration was on the full Bible, with some Greek and English. We spent the whole two years studying the Bible.

I: Could you tell us how you decided to join the China Inland Mission?

CHRISTIANSON: First of all, the reading of the life of Hudson Taylor. Secondly, the missionaries who came to the Bible college--a missionary spoke to us every Friday morning at Bible college and there were quite a few of them from China. Usually, it was missionaries who had graduated from the college, had been on the field and were back on furlough. It was during that time that my interest was sparked in the China Inland Mission. But when I left Bible school, I was not sure

where the Lord wanted me. I went back home to my home in Tasmania and did nursing to fill in my time.

It was during the time that I was nursing that God, in a very personal, remarkable way, spoke to me about China. By the resulting peace in my heart, I knew for sure that I was to go to China.

I: Can you recall when you were reading the stories of Hudson Taylor, what particularly appealed to you about this work in China?

CHRISTIANSON: His devotion to the Lord. The sacrifice he made in going to China. And also the great need of the people--the tremendous need of the millions in China.

I: When you had missionaries speaking at the Bible college, can you recall the kinds of things they told you about China and the mission there?

CHRISTIANSON: Well, the greatest need of all, of course, was the spiritual need. They did do educational and medical work; but it was the spiritual need of the people, the bondage of heathenism that most gripped us. You must remember I was just a young girl at the time. I was a little over 20. If I were listening now, I would have a more receptive ear than I did then. But it appealed to me and then the challenge came. Nothing else mattered in my life.

I: You were speaking of this remarkable experience that you had. Would you explain that call a little more fully?

CHRISTIANSON: That's something you can't explain--when God speaks to the human heart. It is something that is very difficult to explain. It is almost like a voice speaking. When I got on the field, I had no doubt that whatever I went through I was in the place where God sent me.

I: What was your process of application for the China Inland Mission?

CHRISTIANSON: During the years in Bible school, I had become very interested in the work of the China Inland Mission. I liked their faith policy; I liked the devotion of the workers. I had heard quite a lot about the China Inland Mission. Immediately, when I had this revelation from the Lord that it should be China, my thoughts went entirely to China Inland Mission. So I applied immediately.

I: To England?

CHRISTIANSON: No, Australia. There was an office in Australia. Actually, the headquarters of the China Inland Mission has always been on the field, but a home office was there in Australia. It applies now; the headquarters now is in Singapore. It's always been on the field.

I: You said that you were impressed by the faith policy. Would you explain that?

CHRISTIANSON: The faith policy means that financially you made no appeals. You'd just trust the Lord for the support. When speaking as a new worker or on furlough, you do not mention funds. Hudson Taylor started this policy. His great words were: "God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supplies." He said I would rather have workers and no funds, than funds and no workers. If the workers are there, God will provide the funds.

I: And did you find that to be the case?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes. There were some lean times, but we never went without. A missionary in the China Inland Mission, or Overseas Missionary Fellowship as it is called now, is never kept back from the field for lack of funds. Any candidate who is accepted into the mission goes out, leaves as scheduled, unless something else intervenes.

I: Did you come from a denominational church in Tasmania?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes, I was actually brought up in the Church of England, the Anglican Church. But as I grew up and was in my teens, the church was ritualistic and I joined a more alive Congregational church. It was from there that I went to the mission field. They--the Congregational church--did not support me. They supported the London Mission Society. Had I gone in their mission, I would have been supported by the church. But they did not officially support me, because I was in another mission. That did not mean that many members in the church did not help toward my support, and I had the backing of the church even though they weren't supporting me. It was the policy in many of the denominations to support their own missions.

I: Would you describe more of your application process in the home office in Australia and what qualifications they were seeking?

CHRISTIANSON: I had had my Bible training. I had done quite a bit of nursing--six months of nursing--by the time I applied, which didn't make me a nurse, but it gave me experience. Then, I had experience in church work (which they looked for, too), some experience in Sunday school teaching, Bible teaching, and that sort of thing. And then qualifications as to living with people, getting along with people. In Bible school we did not live in apartments. We had a young men's home and a young women's home and we all lived together. Shared the work, and so they got to know how you got along with other people. That was very important. Those were mostly the qualifications. Oh, and then a doctrinal statement.

I: What was considered in this doctrinal statement?

CHRISTIANSON: Oh, what we stand for. The virgin birth of Christ, the resurrection, the coming again of Christ, the resurrection of the body, life everlasting, the punishment of

unbelievers, the command of the Lord to preach the gospel to all people and to all the world. Does that cover it? There were probably more that I can't think of. Mostly the basics of faith, the Trinity.

I: After you were accepted, then what happened? Did you receive any training?

CHRISTIANSON: No. The training was thought to be completed during the Bible school. In Bible school we also went out to open air meetings, to evangelistic efforts. The girls were sent out to womens' groups in the church and that sort of thing, so that we had practical training as well. In Australia, you teach education in the schools and we were used by the public education department to teach Christian education, religious education in schools. After I was accepted, then I spent about a month in the mission home in Melbourne, Australia, just living there. I suppose they were observing me.

Now, they have a candidates' school of about three to four weeks. All the candidates come in and live together there and are given classes in the foreign language and customs, and then you are accepted after the candidates' school. In my case, I was the only one from my hometown. I just went and lived in the mission home which gave them all a chance to observe me.

I: Were there others in the mission home at that time who had either been in China or were going?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes. The mission home was mainly for people who were on furlough, who had been on the field, so I met many of the missionaries from China. The residents in the mission homes were constantly changing. Then, perhaps, some children whose parents were on the field and who didn't have relatives to live with, after they would come home from school, would be living there, too. A very happy arrangement.

I: What did you know about China, politically and culturally, before you left?

CHRISTIANSON: Very little. I had learned very little about China. I had read some books, some mission books, but politically I knew very little. Educationally and culturally, I knew very little. So actually, I was really a raw recruit.

I: Before you departed, did you know what your assignment was to be in China?

CHRISTIANSON: No. We received that after six months in language school.

I: What was the response of your family and friends to your decision?

CHRISTIANSON: My family was not very pleased. They said I would get over it, you know, when I went to Bible school. But by the time I left for China, they were quite reconciled, happy and very cooperative, and have been ever since. Had I not stood for what I thought the Lord wanted me to do and had I given in to them, I would have missed the greatest opportunity of my life. But I stood out for what I thought the Lord had called me to, even against their advice and against opposition.

I: Do you know why they were initially opposed?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes. They thought of China as a very, very distant land with a very uncertain future. They had read terrible things about things that had happened in China. They thought it was too dangerous. They didn't have the same love for the Lord that I did.

I: Do you recall, before you left for China, your vision of what you were going to do?

CHRISTIANSON: No. I don't think so. It was all very vague to me. I had heard missionaries speak and I had heard of what they were doing; but as for what I would do--I had a feeling that I would go into church work, maybe classes and Sunday school and the like.

I: How about the financial arrangements? How were you paid, then, from the very beginning?

CHRISTIANSON: Everything that comes into the China Inland Mission is pooled. It is sent to the field, with a certain amount kept back for people on furlough. But the money is sent to the field. It is pooled with the money that comes from other countries, from Australia, America, South Africa, European countries. Then it is divided up. As much as came in was sent out. There was no fixed salary. We received a remittance. Funds were taken out of that for rent, hospital supplies, national workers. All our commitments were set aside first and what was left was divided amongst the missionaries equally. But this was divided according to the cost of living in each area. For instance, the cost of living in Shanghai was much higher than the cost of living up-country, so the worker up-country did not need as large a remittance as the one working and living in Shanghai. This policy was from the general director right down to the youngest person. Everybody received alike, and still do.

I: What about missionaries with families?

CHRISTIANSON: The mission provided for the children as they came along. They also provided a school for the children. When the children graduated, they took the Oxford exams over there in North China at our school in Chefoo.

I: When you left Australia, you were handed your tickets for passage and then what money was provided for expenses?

CHRISTIANSON: Tickets for passage and it was recommended we have a little over, that we keep it for traveling and then it wouldn't be such a hardship. I remember on arrival in Shanghai, we were given an allowance for incidental expenses before leaving for our stations. I remember the treasurer said to us that it was a very close estimate and required a very careful expenditure. This was carried through our missionary life. We never made money as missionaries. Not in the China Inland Mission anyway. And in faith missions usually a salary was not given.

I: What happens to the missionaries in retirement?

CHRISTIANSON: Well, they are supported by the Mission.

I: Until death?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes.

I: You had no pensions or subsidies like that?

CHRISTIANSON: Right now, the mission takes out Social Security. But if the Social Security payments are not sufficient, they will subsidize it out of mission funds. Everyone is taken care of.

I: Would you describe your first trip to China for us?

CHRISTIANSON: I traveled by ship from Melbourne. We went down to my hometown of Hobart and up the coast of Australia through the Pacific Islands. We stopped in Hong Kong and then we went to Shanghai. It was a trip of three weeks and very enjoyable. We didn't have any rough weather. We had older missionaries with us and took Chinese classes along the way. We had meetings on board. Each day they would have Bible study and prayer and singing, in which some of the passengers joined. It was a very enjoyable trip.

Especially, too, seeing some of the countries we had never seen before and in those days people didn't see very often-- beautiful Pacific islands, and then Hong Kong. Hong Kong wasn't as crowded as it is now. And Shanghai.

I: How many new missionaries were going out with you?

CHRISTIANSON: There were 15 in our party from Australia. At the language school, near Shanghai, there were over 60 women. In the mens' language school, because language school was not co-ed in those days, there were about 60. Actually, there were about 120 new workers altogether. They were from all over: South Africa, Germany, England, Switzerland, Australia, America, Canada, and all living together.

I: What was your common language of communication?

CHRISTIANSON: English. All the workers from Europe and all from other countries had to learn English before they were accepted. Some of them didn't have very much English, but enough to get along.

I: When you had these meetings on board ship, can you recall some of the things that were being discussed at that time, some of the issues that were presented to you?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes, really, the cultural aspects of China; how to get along; what mistakes we might make; how to talk to the people; and how not to offend them. You noticed that East was East and West was West and never the twain shall meet. That's true, very true. The East and the whole psychology-- they think differently, they act differently. One has to be very, very careful.

I: Do you recall examples of the kind of mistakes they tried to help you avoid, or how you should not offend?

CHRISTIANSON: For instance, in greeting a person you would quietly bow and greet them. You never take a person by the hand, to shake hands with them unless you knew them very well. This is not true today, but it was then. You would never touch a girl if you were a man. You would never see a young man come up and, as they do in our country, slap another on the back and say, "How are you?" The greeting was very formal and very sober, especially in the case of women.

There were rules and regulations. For instance, in most cases in their houses, there was a doorstep between the rooms and going into the houses. A woman never put her foot on that doorstep, or she would contaminate the rest of the house. There are certain seats of honor that you would not take when entering a room. A woman would never take the seat that faced the family altar, which was in every living room in the house. Lots of little things like that that you had to learn so that when you did start off on your journeys inland you wouldn't be making these mistakes. I made many mistakes because I hadn't been told enough. I learned by bitter experience.

I: What were some of your mistakes?

CHRISTIANSON: You would see the old-fashioned Chinese carrying the carry-pole across their shoulders. Well, a woman never stepped over a carrying pole. One day there was one of these carrying poles lying on the ground. The carrier had just rested his load. I was walking across there and I just stepped across it. He cursed me. I had brought a curse upon his business. I thought, "Now how am I going to get out of this difficulty?"

That was one thing I hadn't been told. And I guess I just apologized and explained that I didn't know about the tradition. A bystander there, a man who was more generous in his thinking toward foreigners, said, "Oh, she doesn't know your customs and why don't you leave her alone." The bystander spoke and I quickly moved out of the area, so the carrier would forget about it as soon as possible. But it was a very bad thing to do.

We used to string clothesline across the backyard, to hang the clothes on the clothesline. We had a workman come to work in the garden. To go from one place to another he would have to go under that clothesline. I couldn't understand

why he didn't do it, and finally he said, "Will you take the clothes down?" I discovered that a man never walks under the clothesline that held women's garments. You see, this is something that we as women have as a blessing from Christianity. All these traditions they had about women were part of their heathen background. You probably wouldn't find any of it in Taiwan today, unless it was in a very, very old section, because the world has changed tremendously.

There were many other things that we had to learn and many of them from bitter experience. And, of course, the woman had to keep her place. We found out very early (a senior missionary told me) that if some gentlemen friends came in to visit, we women must stand at the door and listen to what was going on, but we couldn't sit down. I guess we women had more to learn than the men did.

I can remember one young man who came right after the war years. Unfortunately, he had learned Chinese at Yale, so he could speak the language. This was in Shanghai, after the war years, when I was working in the financial department of our mission. Here was a young man about 25. He wasn't in our mission, but he was staying at our mission home. We had an assistant treasurer in the mission who was Chinese and he had a daughter of about 12. She was kind of an attractive little girl, and this man went and walked across the grounds. He put his arm around her shoulders and walked along with her and talked with her, in just a friendly way. He was an American. And, oh, they were shocked. Her father came to speak to the head of our offices about it. You see, that was something--he'd learned the language but not the culture.

This young man came down to Shanghai again about a year later, and really he spoke good Chinese, too. He said, "You know, I am not any further along than those who came out with

no language at all because I have been making mistakes, many mistakes. Pushing myself on people." And he could say things, but he didn't know when he shouldn't say them. It was good to be dumb when you first arrived.

Now, whether that would apply in the present day, I don't know, with all the college education and everything. It might possibly apply up-country in China, but I doubt if it would apply in Taiwan today, and Hong Kong. But there is still a lot of tradition in the families that is very good, too.

I: What year was this that you arrived in China?

CHRISTIANSON: 1932, I arrived in Shanghai.

I: When you were commenting that women had more to learn than men, did you find that you had a special role or special category as a single woman?

CHRISTIANSON: They possibly thought it a little strange, because all the girls got married. In our day in China, girls were not single. Parents arranged marriages for them within their own class.

TAPE ONE-SIDE TWO

You see, as foreigners we were strange, anyway. This is the remarkable power of the gospel. That they accepted us, even though we were strange. They believed in the message of the gospel, even though it was from a foreign country, delivered to them by a foreigner, with hair the wrong color, skin the wrong color, and still they believed! That's the power of the gospel! I can't account for it any other way.

Even though they thought that it was strange that we remained single, some of us for some years, they still accepted us. Of course, we never lived, very rarely, did we live alone. Usually, two of us lived together or with married workers.

I: What about the role of women, both single and married, in the mission itself, in making mission policies or having your voice heard?

CHRISTIANSON: In the days when I was there, the men did most of the administrative work in the mission. The director was appointed by the retiring director. Then from the headquarters, certain workers who had outstanding ability, who had acquitted themselves very well in their work and had good language, who were well-respected and understood by the Chinese, were called to headquarters as directors. There were regional directors, field directors and a superintendent in the area. The directors went to headquarters. Just like a senator here stands for his state, they stood for their own people, in that particular area. But we didn't have any women on the board at that time.

I: What happened when you docked in Shanghai?

CHRISTIANSON: This isn't very complimentary. It was dirty, it was smelly. The people were milling around in every direction with their sing-song method of carrying their loads and everything. We were rushed hither and thither. The houses looked just like shacks. There was poverty everywhere as far as we could see, even though in Shanghai there were some very well-to-do places, too. In the section where the foreigners lived, in the French section and American, I guess, people were well-to-do and there were gardens. But the general impression was one of poverty and need and millions of people! There were people everywhere!

You see, there weren't many cars in those days. Shanghai is a big city and you just got an impression that there were millions of people. How would they ever get the gospel? All were speaking a language you couldn't understand. This was my first impression. It wasn't very good because the smells were bad and the river was muddy.

Then we went up the Yangtze River. The river was muddy and the wharves were not very fancy looking. Usually there were no wharves. Shanghai didn't impress me and it was a gloomy day, drizzling rain and not much sunshine. Conditions were kind of poor in those days; sanitary conditions were very poor.

I: And then were you at the CIM Home in Shanghai?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes. The CIM had a rather nice property there. It had been donated (the money for it) and they built a very nice property with a hospital on the fifth floor, an administration building on one side and mission home on the other. We stayed there, oh, I suppose a week or so, until we got a few books together for language school.

We were impressed by the warm fellowship. At last we were members of a mission and they welcomed us and made us feel one with them.

I: Would you describe your situation at language school?

CHRISTIANSON: At language school we were living in a home that had been built for some westerners, as a kind of holiday house, which they would use in the summertime. It was very cold. The winter there is very cold.

I: Where was this again?

CHRISTIANSON: This was in Kiangsi Province, a bit north of Shanghai. It was very cold, very drafty. The mission, I think, had made some of the larger rooms into smaller ones so that there were two in each room. As I said, there were 60 of us.

Some of the food wasn't what we were used to. They tried to make it as near as possible to what we were used to. Things were different--vegetables were different, for one thing. It was a very old Chinese city. The streets were very narrow with just rickshas. You never saw a car. Perhaps mule or oxen pulling carts or wagons.

Outside of the city was all farmland. We took a walk every Saturday outside of the city with an escort. Our days were spent in study of language. We had a Chinese teacher who tutored us individually. We had a teacher who read for an hour a day with every individual. Then we had class teachers. We had our own missionaries teach us grammar. But the whole six hours a day we spent in language study and the rest of the time in study for the next classes.

By the time we had five or six months of language school, we were supposed to prepare to take our first exams. There were six exams. Then, we were ready to move off to our stations.

I: Why was the language school not co-ed?

CHRISTIANSON: It was the times. That was a long time ago. It looked better in the eyes of the Chinese, anyway, a part from anything else.

I: Where was the men's section of the language school?

CHRISTIANSON: That was down in Anhwei Province.

I: Did the CIM ever give consideration to having missionaries join the language school up in Peking, where so many other missionaries went?

CHRISTIANSON: I don't think so. I think it was Hudson Taylor's idea that since we were an inland mission, it would be better to get our knowledge of the language from the province in which we were going to work. What was taught in that language

school was the Peking dialect, which wasn't used in many parts of China. It was an understood dialect, but it wasn't the dialect of the area. The China Inland Mission did all their work inland; whereas many of the other denominational missions worked around the coast. I never really asked why, but I assume that is one of the reasons.

I: When you went out on Saturdays for those walks, who would be your escort?

CHRISTIANSON: Teachers in the language school--one of our own teachers. Our own mission had several teachers; there were about a half dozen of them. Around the language school, there were other missionary societies working such as Episcopal and others; and we used to visit them from time-to-time, too. We would have afternoon tea and that was always a very delightful occasion.

I: Then you had a chance to see some of their work?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes, and it was very delightful to meet people from outside after slogging all the way through language study.

I: After six months, how successful were you in the language?

CHRISTIANSON: Well, we couldn't speak very well. We had an elementary knowledge of the language. We had a good foundation in grammar. We could speak to our teachers and they would answer us, as we had a question and answer time. Actually, by the time we got around to our stations, we were able to go out on the street and just converse with people a little.

The first exam really would be like a primer education to a child. Some caught on faster than others.

I: What about reading and writing?

CHRISTIANSON: We had to read and write. We had to read. You see, the teachers that we had couldn't speak English. The Chinese teachers in language school who came in just read, read the Bible with us. They would read a phrase and we'd say it after them. That is how we would learn. Then we learned the tones and the pronunciations. When the missionaries had the classes was when we got construction of grammar and the construction of sentences.

I: Some of your early CIM people had done a great deal of work in compiling dictionaries.

CHRISTIANSON: Oh, yes. Mr. Baller had prepared a primer. He was an Englishman who really hadn't had advanced education, but he was just an excellent linguist! He prepared the Baller System. When I got to China, we were using the Matthews Primer. The Matthews Dictionary is still being used. Have you seen it? Mr. Matthews died not too long ago--perhaps three or four years ago, an elderly man. He was a brilliant man! We used his primer and his dictionaries and they were more up-to-date than Baller. God gave great gifts to the missions. Very brilliant men went to the mission field. Our superintendent, James Fraser (I don't know whether you've seen his book Behind the Ranges or not) spoke six languages. He was an engineer, a Cambridge man. He went to China. He was sent by our mission way back to the tribal area and he reduced the language to writing and became king among the Lisu tribe. Really responsible for leading thousands to the Lord. Yet, I suppose from a human point of view, if they looked at the qualifications of that man, they'd say, "Put him in a university!" But the mission, by the leading of the Lord, sent him way back into the hills of West China. And he did remarkable work there.

He could play almost an organ recital on a baby organ. He was a great musician, too. Great people were in the mission field.

I: Did you ever have a chance to meet Matthews?

CHRISTIANSON: Oh, yes. He was an Australian, you know. I knew him down there and his son, Arthur Matthews, was in the mission. I know the son quite well.

I: Would you tell some about receiving your assignment and then going to your station?

CHRISTIANSON: When we had almost finished the studies in language school, then the director of the missions came up to the school and had an interview with each one of us. He had a great map on the table before him and he showed us exactly where they had decided we should go. My appointment was to West Yunnan. Later, it became the Burma Road where I was stationed.

After about two weeks, after his visit, then we went back to Shanghai and put together any supplies that we needed to take with us and to get advice from older missionaries about that.

Then we took a French ship again around to Hong Kong, stopping at Pakhoi on the way. In Hong Kong we were met by friends of the mission and had a really good time for two or three days. They took us all over Hong Kong and showed us the sights.

Then we went to Haiphong in French Indo-China by the same ship and from there we took the train up to Hanoi. From Hanoi we took the French Railway up to Kunming, which was the capital of Yunnan Province, where we were going. We spent a couple of nights in Hanoi. Then we got supplies for the train, because we would be without food on the train. We had to take our own food with us. The train didn't travel at night. We had two nights when we had to get off the train and go to an inn or a hotel.

I: Why did it not travel at night?

CHRISTIANSON: It was very dangerous, really. There were 200 tunnels. It was a very famous railroad that the French built there. It went out of a tunnel, across a ravine, into another tunnel, and I think it was possibly because of that. Of course, much of it was uphill. Hanoi was sea-level. Kunming, where we arrived, was approximately five to six thousand feet above sealevel, so we were rising all the way.

A most beautiful country, jungle territory, and swelteringly hot. It was the first real heat I had ever been in. When we arrived in Kunming, it was beautiful, clear, sharp air at 6,000 feet. Lovely sunshine. It is the most beautiful province. They call it the "Switzerland of China." The mountains are covered with snow. When you are on a plateau, you get warm, beautiful sunshine. A most beautiful place. Many lakes and mountains.

I: What month would this have been when you arrived there?

CHRISTIANSON: This was in April of '33.

I: What things did the older missionaries advise you to take from Shanghai up to Yunnan?

CHRISTIANSON: It wasn't food supplies. It was mostly supplies you would need: a few medicines, some notepaper, writing materials, books to study, and perhaps a little clothing. They never advised much in the way of food supplies. You were supposed to, as much as you were able, to live on the food supplies there. We did send for supplies later. We had a business department and they mailed stuff out to us. About three times a year we would send in an order. We'd order a few things like white sugar, spices and baking powder that we couldn't buy there. The sugar there wasn't very clean and we would like to have it for people to put white sugar in their tea. A few other things like powdered milk; we couldn't get milk where we were either.

Otherwise, we tried as much as possible to live off native food and make it through, which was good. Just took getting used to it, learning how to cook it and everything.

I: From Kunming you went to?

CHRISTIANSON: We spent about two weeks in Kunming. We had to really get supplies in then to go overland, and that meant having different clothing. I had the clothing they had suggested. Those I had made in language school weren't really suitable for Kunming because of the climate.

I: What kind of clothing did you have?

CHRISTIANSON: Chinese clothes--the dresses that had slits in the side and the mandarin collar. The men wore them then, too. Then, we had to get supplies in because we had three weeks' journey ahead of us and we had to eat all the way.

We had to be careful, because in those days there was a lot of dysentery. Flies were on everything. A lot of dysentery, typhoid, typhus, so it was a good thing always to have some food on hand in case you couldn't get clean food. The only food we felt was safe was food that came straight off the fire. It was hot.

We had to organize our coolies to carry it. The coolies carried 50 chin approximately, about 70 to 90 pounds weight, over their shoulders. When we went like that, there were senior missionaries. Actually, I traveled with a couple of other friends from language school and John and Isobel Kuhn. I don't know if you read any of Isobel Kuhn's books.

I: I don't believe so.

CHRISTIANSON: They were my senior missionaries, John and Isobel Kuhn. She wrote several books. We traveled and then, you see, they'd have to get enough carriers. We also carried camp cots for sleeping on because of pests. We knew that if we slept on

the beds in the inns, we wouldn't get any sleep at all. So, as much as possible, we carried our own beds and insecticides and whatever. We had to have coolies to carry our beds and our bedding. We had to carry bedding, our food supplies and our clothing and our books, so we had quite a caravan by the time we left. We had a long caravan. Sometimes 30 people in the caravan.

We rode mountain chairs. Later on, my fellow worker and I did most of our travel by horse or mule. But at that time, we traveled by chair, that is, a hammock slung on two poles, carried by two men, one in front and one in back. Then we had a canopy over us to protect us from the sun. The sun is very strong there. We would go a three days' journey and then rest at a mission station for a couple of days, get some laundry done and things like that. Then we would go off again. But it took us three weeks to get to our station, traveling that way.

I: Did you have any particular adventures along the way that made it difficult, the first time in?

CHRISTIANSON: No. We didn't have any. It was a very easy trip, and having the senior missionaries along made it easier. There were some other times when we had experiences, but not that time. We were held up by bandits once.

I: During these three weeks, what were some of your impressions?

CHRISTIANSON: We were young, of course, so we didn't get as tired as we did later on, but the scenery was just beautiful. The country was lovely. We were perfectly safe and we weren't afraid of being molested at all. Each night we found some place as clean as possible in which to stay. It was a very thrilling experience. The final destination was a station that had been opened just about a year before by the Kuhns and there were no Christians. It was virgin soil. Immediately, we settled down to study.

There was hardly any furniture. We used boxes as a table to study on. Gradually, we got a few pieces of furniture. We got a local carpenter to make a few things. The Kuhns looked after the household arrangements and the cooking and everything. We gave our time--six hours a day--to study. It was a mission rule: six hours for study and one hour for walking. After two or three months, you had to spend so much time amongst the people. That was a rule, too. It was good. It was discipline.

I: What was the name of this station?

CHRISTIANSON: Yungping.

I: Did the Kuhns have a house there?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes, they had rented a house. It was not property of the mission, but they just rented it from some of the local people.

I: Did you have servants helping you?

CHRISTIANSON: Oh, yes. We had a woman to do the washing and one to do the cleaning and one to do the cooking. There was a lot to do because we didn't have any conveniences. There were no washing machines, and all the bread had to be made. Each servant had plenty to do. It depended upon the number of people as to the number of servants. It was easy to get servants. They loved to work for us. That was very easy. Your time wasn't taken up with all those things. The shopping--the servants always did the shopping. Not that there were any groceries, but meat and vegetables needed to be purchased.

I: What were your language studies in Yungping?

CHRISTIANSON: We hired a teacher. Usually, the teacher didn't speak any English, so they couldn't help us by explaining. We had to find that out for ourselves and that was what we did in our private study--hunting things up in the dictionaries or asking our fellow workers. Then, usually after another six months, we would take another exam, until we had taken the six. Very few people did the six in three years, because after they went on they got harder. By the time we had finished the six exams, we had studied some of the classics and could read newspapers. Newspapers in Chinese were different from the regular spoken Chinese.

I: Were you required to complete these exams?

CHRISTIANSON: The women could just take four of the six, but the six were required of the men. In the case of most of the women, they had household responsibilities, and most of the women didn't go into teaching, and that sort of thing, like the men did. The mission would accept four for women, but they liked the women to do six, too.

I: Would you describe Yungping for us?

CHRISTIANSON: It was a village on a plain, surrounded by hills and, of course, about 6,000 feet above sea level. There were two large villages on this plain. One was entirely Chinese Mohammedan and the other was what you would call Chinese Buddhist. They were all Chinese, but the Buddhists ate pork and the Mohammedans ate beef. Yungping had a telegraph station and a post office, and that's about all.

They had what they called the official residence, the "yamen" it was called. That was for the official. That was about all. I can't tell you the population of the village. It was a small village, but enough population to keep itself provided.

I: And you were the only foreigners?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes. There was no church. There was no church building. We didn't try to build one. In the house that we rented, there was a very large downstairs room that we opened up for holding meetings. Gradually, people began to come. But our work at the beginning was very much onto the streets and into the homes. People always asked you in. Doors were always open.

Maybe you just passed along and they would say, "Come in. Come in." So it wasn't difficult. It wasn't ever difficult to start preaching immediately about the gospel because they are very close to spiritual things.

I: Can you describe how these conversations would go, after they would say, "Come in?"

CHRISTIANSON: They'd say, "Come in," and you'd come in and sit down. They'd ask how you were and where you came from and they would say, "Oh, your skin is so beautiful," and flatter you a little bit. Then they would make some tea and you'd drink tea together. Then you'd begin to ask them about their family--how many children or grandchildren they had. Then, gradually, you'd ask, "Have you heard about the God of Heaven?" "Well, we worship such and such a god." "But have you heard about the one true God?" "Tell us about Him." You would talk about Him and go on from there.

I: What did the CIM require for persons to become baptized?

CHRISTIANSON: A change in life after they said they believed in the Lord, forsaking idoltry and other heathen practices; attendance at services to show that there was an interest in the gospel; a willingness, if they were not educated, to learn how to read their own Bibles. Usually, by that time, they had learned how to pray in public. Really, you depended a good deal on the testimony of friends and relatives. Even

though the relatives may not have been Christians, they would all say, "Oh, she really believes." Nothing like your own people to tell whether you have really changed.

TAPE TWO-SIDE ONE

I: After you were in the home, did you invite them to come to your meetings?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes. We would invite them over and they came. Most of them came out of curiosity. They wanted to see how the Westerners lived. Then they would go out to the kitchen and ask the servants how we did this and that and they would get much more information from the servants than they ever got from us.

I: Do you remember specific types of questions that they would ask?

CHRISTIANSON: Oh, they wanted to know how we did our washing and what we wore underneath our clothing. They'd ask what we ate and how we slept. They wanted to know all the practical things of every day. Very curious.

I: When you would have them come to a meeting, what would be the format?

CHRISTIANS: Oh, usually the one who had the best language would have a chorus or something. He'd go over the characters and teach them the chorus and we'd all sing together. They liked that. They didn't have much singing in their religion. Then we would just have a very simple message from the Bible and then we would lead them in prayer. The people would sit around and talk for a little while. The meetings in the beginning, when they were just inquiring, were very short. We didn't try to make them long or orderly services. They were just like a little meeting,

to acquaint them with the gospel. We used a lot of posters which were prepared usually by Chinese evangelists and teachers in other parts of China. They depicted the way of salvation and other things. We used these pictures to preach from quite often. It got their attention.

If you just started preaching to them, you'd probably find that they were examining your shoes or sweater, if you wore a foreign sweater, or something like that. But if you gave them a picture to look at, one upon the wall, their eyes were riveted on that and that held their attention. We used that quite a lot.

Then, we usually started, too, in the early days, to gather the children together on Sundays, for a little Sunday school. They really liked to sing.

I: Did your work with children bring you contacts in the home?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes. Then, of course, the minute they heard we were there, they started coming for medicine. They hadn't had any hospital or doctor or medicine or anything in Yungping. They'd come over and ask for medicine. Bicarbonate of soda was one we used a lot in China. Also aspirin, and mustard patches if they had pain. We couldn't use anything very strong. We didn't have it, anyway, because we weren't qualified, but we used these simple things. They were troubled quite a lot with scabies and there was a sulphur ointment that cleared it up. There was a lot of trachoma, which is very contagious. It is possibly caused in the beginning by the very smoky fires. You can sit down below the smoke; but if you get that smoke in your eyes, then your eyes get very sore. They had trachoma and the eyelashes turned in. It irritates the eyes, very, very much, and they get terribly sore.

The only treatment for it was to turn the eyelashes out again, which the nurses did who came later and worked among our people. One of our nurses just gave herself to trachoma, because there was so much of it. You see, the thing was that

they had to use hygiene in the homes at the same time. There was no point in treating trachoma unless that person with trachoma had his own towel for washing. Otherwise, you would pass it on to the other members of the family--very contagious. But it was very pathetic. You'd see these people come in with their eyes almost closed up and swollen, sore, red and draining. Very pathetic. I didn't actually do any of that, but I did try to treat some of the scabies and some of that type of thing. And it helped. That was a way of preaching the gospel, too.

I: It's interesting that they would almost automatically come to you for medical treatment.

CHRISTIANSON: Oh, yes. Well, they had heard from the others in the outside world how wonderful America was and they had all these new methods and modern medicine and things like that. Even though they didn't have newspapers, they got the news around. Very warm-hearted people.

Many of the Christians who came to believe were over 50 and had never read in their lives and they learned to read. We started teaching them to read from the day they believed. You would just take the hymn books and teach them. They'd learn hymns by memory and then they would begin to recognize the characters.

Some of them, maybe, were dull from the hard lives, making them a bit dull mentally--you know, the country people. They didn't read easily. Some of them never learned to read, even though they tried. They memorized. But most of our people learned to read. Not like a scholar would, but enough to read their own Bible.

I: Did you ever use the phonetic system?

CHRISTIANSON: Not in our part of China. The people on the east coast used the phonetics.

I: Did you find that people had different responses to an American as opposed to someone who was British?

CHRISTIANSON: No. In our part of China they called us all Americans. They had heard about America, so that everyone with white skin came from America. We tried to explain, but there was no need to. It didn't matter.

I: What about your own medical needs?

CHRISTIANSON: We lost quite a few missionaries because of that. Typhus took several of our missionaries, because the typhus vaccine that came had to be kept on ice. We had no refrigeration, so it took three weeks to go down to the capital city to get an injection. I think we needed one every two years. I can't remember exactly. It was a three weeks' journey and usually we would stay there for a couple of weeks and get all our dentistry done at the same time. It kept us away from the station for more than six weeks.

You never went in the rainy season. In that part of China we had monsoon rains and in the rainy season you just didn't travel. The roads just ran water. You had to go in the dry season which was the wintertime; but that was the best time for evangelism because you were able to travel around to more distant villages. Our mission did open a hospital in Tali, which was halfway from the capital city and where we were. One of our missionaries went down to the capital. He died of typhus. The shot he had evidently hadn't done him any good. We did lose quite a few missionaries to typhus or typhoid, mostly typhus.

And then, in our part of China, they had a malignant malaria that they called cerebral malaria. It affected the person like a stroke. South of us, dropping down into Burma, were some plains where this malaria was very prevalent. Even the Chinese would get off the plain before dark, before the mosquitos got

busy. If they were traveling from Burma--many of them used to go down to Burma during the winter months and work on the railway, and they'd come up for the summer. When they came up going through these plains, they would always get up onto the hills again before dark because of the mosquitos.

The Chinese couldn't take it. The people who lived down there were Shan people and they were one of the Thai groups. They seemed to be pretty immune to the cerebral malaria, but the Chinese themselves would come home one day and die the next. They would die just like that. This was malignant malaria.

The Rockefeller Institute, just before the war years, started a campaign over there to help the people. But it was hard. It meant having their rice fields--I think it was two kilometers from where they lived. Two kilometers was as far as the mosquitos could fly. The people were also supposed to get into their houses before dusk, but they couldn't get them to cooperate.

Malaria took Mr. Fraser. It was malaria of which he died. One or two others of our missionaries died of malaria and two or three of them died of typhus.

I: So you really were taking some medical risks?

CHRISTIANSON: Oh, yes. They would get out what they called Serum One, for the typhoid and dysentery, and what was the other one? But, you see, the problem was that you had to get the vaccine and then you had to get someone to give you the shot and then you had to get it at the right time and then what was left had to be taken on to the next station. It was a real problem. Then we had our hospital in Tali and things were much easier.

I: How was your own health?

CHRISTIANSON: I kept well. My husband had typhus fever. He nearly died of dysentery. He had almost died of typhus. It was just a miracle that he recovered. He contracted malaria, too, once, but not too seriously. But I didn't have anything like that.

I: You mentioned in your village you had Chinese Mohammedans. How were their practices and lifestyles different from others?

CHRISTIANSON: They didn't have any idols. They said they worshipped the true God and they knew about what we preached. You couldn't get anywhere with them with the gospel. There are a lot of Mohammedans in China.

I: How did the Mohammedans respond to you as people?

CHRISTIANSON: A little standoffish. They weren't encouraged to become friends with us. Their leaders didn't want them to be friends with Christian missionaries. They were opposed to the gospel; you see, Islam is.

I: Did you have Muslem converts?

CHRISTIANSON: No, no, actually, we didn't stay there too long in Yungping.

I: How long were you there?

CHRISTIANSON: I guess it was two years. Then the superintendent moved us off to a place where there were a number of new believers and they didn't have anyone to teach them. There were about 16 new believers in one place. It seemed as if a movement had started. The superintendent said that we had very few believers where we were, and they were not very strong. He thought we should go where the Lord was really working.

I: Where was this?

CHRISTIANSON: This was in Lungling. Then, that is where I stayed--near Lungling.

I: What was the CIM policy about furloughs and vacations?

CHRISTIANSON: It depended upon where you were. In Yunnan we didn't have an annual vacation. Our superintendent advised us, if we felt washed out and tired, to go over to one of the other stations or hill houses. We didn't have any other vacation stations or hill houses as in some of the other provinces.

In some of the provinces, where they had a very, very hot summer, they had hill stations and the missionaries would go off for a month. But furlough was after seven years. We had seven year terms.

I: At your own discretion, you would take some time off if you needed it?

CHRISTIANSON: We would ask the superintendent if it were okay and he always said yes. Or we would go down to Kunming to have our dentistry done and take a rest while we were down there.

I: What did you do when you were in Yungping for recreational or avocational activities?

CHRISTIANSON: We just walked. We would walk for an hour. We would go right into the villages--not visiting the people, just walking. If anyone spoke to us, we'd stop, of course. On purpose we didn't go on crowded streets with too many people. We went for exercise. When we had a dog, we took the dog with us.

I: How did you receive news about what was happening in the rest of China as well as America?

CHRISTIANSON: Well, the post office was pretty good. Lungling was quite near the border of Burma. Mail came in from Rangoon up to North Burma into Myitkyina and across what later became the Stilwell Road. The route was not exactly the same, but almost. The mail came in from there. We ordered the London Times from England. It went out to Rangoon by air, came up from Rangoon to North Burma in a couple of days, and came over to us in a couple of days; so we used to get that paper about a week after it was printed. That was news! We read that cover to cover, because that was all the news we had. It was a weekly Times. In the larger cities like Shanghai they had radios. We didn't have radios where we were.

I: What was the situation in Lungling?

CHRISTIANSON: At that time just us two girls. Later on, my husband and I were there and a couple of other workers.

I: Who was the other woman with whom you were working?

CHRISTIANSON: A friend from New Zealand, Catherine Galpin.

I: Did she come to China about the same time?

CHRISTIANSON: She came a year later than I.

I: Why do you think the people in the area of Lungling were more receptive to the gospel?

CHRISTIANSON: They were intellectually a little bit more advanced than the Yungping people. The Yungping people were very countrified, were set in their ways. The Lungling people were intellectually a little bit more advanced and more ready to accept anything that might better them. We found them very warm-hearted and very, very good to us. They had better homes than the people of Yungping. Some of them came from very well-to-do families and many of the women could read. The boys went to school in Yungping but very few girls. In Lungling quite a lot of girls went to school.

I: Was it only the CIM at work in Lungling?

CHRISTIANSON: Mostly, yes. Oh, there were some Swedish Pentecostals coming in. They came in through Burma and came in to some areas there, but otherwise we were the only mission. There was a British consul over there. The closest American consul was in Kunming, which, as I said, was three weeks' journey away. But the British consul was right on the border of Burma and so he used to visit us from time-to-time. It was always very good to see him. He'd travel by horse. He'd have his soldiers with him. It always caused quite a stir in the village when he came.

I: How long would he stay?

CHRISTIANSON: Oh, he would just visit and have tea with us and ask us if we had any problems and then move on again.

I: Did you ever have any problems he could assist you with?

CHRISTIANSON: No. At one time, one of our missionaries lost her husband and she was expecting a baby. Had that baby been born in China with the father not living, it would have been Chinese. At this time the British consul's advise was very, very helpful. He told her to go down into Burma as fast as she could, so the baby would not be Chinese. It was born on British soil. It was just little things like that he would help us with. They didn't try to interfere in any of our ways of working or anything like that.

I: Was it in Lungling that you usually went out on horseback or muleback?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes. We did that in Yungping, too. It was a hilly country and to go by horseback was easier then. It was hard on a person to sit on a chair and have a coolie carry you-- and see the sores on his shoulders from carrying the poles. And the chair coolies usually smoked opium and it was rather pathetic. We preferred horses. They could negotiate the hills much better than these poor men.

I: Would you tell about a typical experience when you would go out to villages or outstations?

CHRISTIANSON: We wouldn't go usually for more than two or three weeks, because we couldn't stand the change in food for that long. We would eat entirely Chinese food. You see, at home we might eat one Chinese meal a day, but when you were home we would have perhaps an American breakfast. If we couldn't get cereal of some kind, we ground our own wheat or corn for cereal, or we would just eat congee, or soft rice, with a little powdered milk or sugar, if we could get it. This made it more palatable. Then in the evenings we'd have a sandwich

or something. We made our own bread. When we went out to the villages, we didn't have the milk nor the cereal and we found ourselves getting indigestion quite often.

In the villages the food was very well-cooked and was very delicious food. It was just that we were not used to three meals a day like that. And we missed our own food. I think that was really what it was. You weren't hungry, but you were hungry for a piece of bread or a cup of coffee or something like that. So we didn't stay away for more than two or three weeks and then we would come back.

Of course, when we'd go to the villages, we'd go to one of the homes and see if they would give you a room. They'd say we could come and stay there. Then they would look after your food, but you would have to take care of your laundry and things like that. There weren't the conveniences. Physically it was a bit hard on you to stay too long. When we arrived there, we would find a nice place to stay.

I: Would you stay with Christian families?

CHRISTIANSON: No. Not very often. Sometimes you would go to a completely heathen village. They were very good to people passing through. We paid, of course, and then each day after breakfast, we would go out and visit around, house-to-house. If there was enough interest, we would get people together and we would say to one of them: "Can we have a meeting in your home?"

Mrs. Kuhn had a guitar and that would really draw a crowd. I didn't have anything like that, but we could sing, of course. Oh, she really drew the crowds with that guitar.

I: Usually just the two of you would go out together?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes. We always went by twos; we never went singly. Some villages were more responsive than others.

I: You mentioned that one time you had an encounter with banditry?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes, at one point we did. We were coming back from being away and we had been gone a couple of months. It was more like a station where we were. And we were coming back. They held us up with their guns and took practically what we had. But they didn't do any harm to us or to our coolies and they just went on. We lost our watches and things like that, valuable things that we couldn't replace. Usually the authorities would warn us if there were bandits. The bandits worked in gangs. If bandits had been out in certain areas that we were traveling in, they would say, "You can't go there without a military escort," and would send an escort along with us. We would provide the food for the escort who would go along. There would be some six soldiers.

Afterwards, after the danger had passed, the soldiers would return and we would go on. But we never did, even when we had the escorts, feel that they were really necessary. Of course, the day we did meet the bandits, we had nobody along with us! It was kind of a scary experience, but it didn't last too long--maybe 10 minutes or so and the bandits were gone.

I: Did you have Chinese staff who would go with you when you would go out?

CHRISTIANSON: Oh, yes. We never traveled without them. If we were in an area where there were Christians, we would always take a Christian woman to preach because she would explain. When my fellow workers married and I was alone for awhile, then, I would always take one of the women with me to the villages to stay with me.

I: Had these women been trained in a Bible school?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes, they had.

I: How did you meet your husband?

CHRISTIANSON: He went out a year later, and it was the year of '33. We met at one of the stations. I am Victor's second wife. His first wife died after nine years of marriage. She died of cancer. Then we were married in 1949. We were just married 30 years when he passed away in 1979.

I: Was he also from Australia?

CHRISTIANSON: No, he's American. He was from Albert Lea, Minnesota. That's why I happen to be here.

I: During your first term out, what did you hear about Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang?

CHRISTIANSON: Oh, everyone was pretty loyal at that time. You know, the Communists were active. At that time, two of our missionaries were taken captives. John and Betty Stamm were killed in '36 and Mr. Bosshardt and Mr. Haymen were taken captive. I think Mr. Bosshardt was with them for two and one-half years before he was released. He is still living, too. They traveled right across Central China to the mountains near Tibet. Eventually, they released Mr. Bosshardt. Mr. Haymen was released earlier because he was ill and they were afraid he was going to die. But they kept Mr. Bosshardt for two and one-half years. By that time he had beri-beri and was quite ill.

One night when they got in, they said, "Tomorrow morning, when we leave, don't you bother to get up. You just stay here. After we've all gone, you get in touch with your friends." They told him where he was. He was just a day's journey out of the capital city of Kunming. We always felt he had endeared himself to them, so they didn't want to see him die of illness. He was getting so he couldn't walk; he couldn't travel with them. That was Mao Tse-tung's army that had him. You see, from the time I went to China, there was trouble in the government.

Then, of course, the Communists went up into the hills of North China, into Yen-an. Then the Japanese war started. They carried on guerrilla warfare during the Japanese war. They caused a lot of trouble for the Japanese. It was after the Japanese war was over that they came down and started to take over the country.

I: John and Betty Stamm were CIM people?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes.

I: How did their deaths affect the mission?

CHRISTIANSON: Oh, we had had deaths before, but it was quite tragic and they were just a young couple. In a remarkable way the little girl did get saved, the little baby. It was a tragic thing really. Evidentially, that group who was responsible for their killing had got some false reports about foreigners from people who were in the surrounding area. It was very tragic.

TAPE TWO-SIDE TWO

I: When did you start hearing about Japanese activities and when did that start to impinge upon your work?

CHRISTIANSON: I can't remember exactly when we first started to hear. It leaked in gradually about the Japanese. The war went on and then came Pearl Harbor. Up to that time, we carried on fairly normally.

I: So after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, you didn't notice too much until Pearl Harbor?

CHRISTIANSON: No, no. Our mission moved from Shanghai to Chungking and set up headquarters in Chungking in West China, because Shanghai, they felt, would be taken over by the Japanese. And it was. The next thing that was outstanding was the fall of the Burma Road.

The Japanese went through Hong Kong, you see, and then went up into Rangoon. At that time, Chennault's group, the Flying Tigers, were in Burma. We were a bit nervous, especially when we saw people evacuating from Burma--coming up in great numbers. And then some of Chennault's men, the Flying Tigers, came in and they said they reckoned it would be about three weeks, but we'd better prepare to leave. I guess the Japanese were there in three days. We got out just in time.

There was an American technical group, traveling along with the American Air Force, and they were in our village, in Lungling. By this time I was with a couple of young fellow workers, the Coxes. They were English and American. We were at the station together, and Eric Cox had gone out on a trip to the villages. We two women were there and she had a little baby. We noticed that things were getting very tense. Also, the value of the rupee had dropped tremendously. The people themselves, the people in the villages, were closing up their homes and moving up into the hills.

Finally, Eric came back from his trip and he went downtown to see if we could get any transportation to take us out. We found this American technical group and they gave us half a truck to put our baggage on. Then they put the Cox family in the cab of the truck, and they put me in one of their jeeps.

We left one morning and by, I guess, about 4:00 in the afternoon of that day the Japanese had taken the city. They said by 10:00 in the morning they heard the mortar fire around the bend of the road. Then the people just ran for their lives up into the mountains, those who could get away. In traveling from Lungling up to Paoshan, which was the next city, we had to cross the Salween River, and the Salween River runs through a deep gorge. You can't navigate it. It has a suspension bridge over it.

When we got down to the Salween River, the cars and the trucks were bumper to bumper, with all this traffic out of Burma. They would only allow one car or truck every five minutes across the bridge, which slowed it down, because it was feared that the bridge would collapse with the weight.

In the jeep I was in, we got over all right because we went around the traffic; but the Coxes were in the truck. They just got over the bridge onto the other side, when the Chinese blew up the bridge, so the Japanese couldn't get across. There were thousands of trucks and cars that were held up on the other side. But the people just got out of them and took to the hills. I don't know how many were killed. When they blew up the bridge, the people on the other side could go ahead; but then the truck with the Coxes broke down and they couldn't get anyone to repair it. They had to pick up what they could carry and walk the rest of the way. When the time came that the American technical group wanted to go back and get their truck and repair it, they found that the Chinese army had mined the whole mountainside, so no one was allowed back. Every bit of our baggage was gone.

I arrived in Kunming in a Chinese gown. I didn't even have a toothbrush or a Bible. Everything was gone! They were bombing all the way. The Japanese had come in and started bombing all the towns on the Burma Road. It was tragic. No hospitals. They were giving away gasoline to anyone who wanted it. It was a very tragic situation!

I: What was the date now?

CHRISTIANSON: This was 1942, April.

I: What happened in your area when they started building the Burma Road?

CHRISTIANSON: It was built by hand labor. The engineers came in and spoke with the authorities and required of the authorities that they provide so many people per family. The people went out and broke the rock up by hand. Then, it was surfaced by the engineers. It was a remarkable road, cut out of a precipice really. Cut out of a mountainside--a precipice on one side and the mountain on the other. But actually, there were very few accidents on the mountains. It was just hairpin bends, but very few accidents. The accidents were on the plains when they started to speed up.

I: What was the response of the people to the rock breaking?

CHRISTIANSON: Well, they just couldn't do anything about it. They had to go; that was all. Each family had to provide so many. It was like taxes. They didn't pay taxes. When their harvests were in, they had to pay so much grain to their city, but they didn't pay taxes as we do. So this was more or less like taxes. When we go to war, we have to do without things, too.

It was really remarkable. Then, just about two months before the Japanese came up the road, the government had decided to get the road surfaced with asphalt. They got right from the border, right through our place, and a little farther on when the Japanese came up and took advantage of it. It was beautifully surfaced. They never did get the other part surfaced.

I: What did you hear about Stilwell during this time?

CHRISTIANSON: Not very much. I read about him after I came back, but not too much. They called the road the Stilwell Road, but we didn't really know too much about him. It was much better to stick with our own work and not take sides one way or the other on what people were doing.

I: You went for your first furlough around 1940?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes, at the beginning of 1940 I went home for my first furlough. I went home via Hong Kong. Then we had to return via Burma. We didn't get back to Hong Kong because of the Japanese War. Then we left western Australia and traveled up through Indonesia and Singapore and up to Penang and Rangoon. Then by railway up to the border and by car from the border to our station.

I: How was it for you to be home after seven years in China? Were there certain adjustments that you had to make?

CHRISTIANSON: There really is, and you found yourself a visitor, too. You weren't a part of the home life anymore. People got along without you very well (laughter). You were more of a visitor. It was wonderful to go home on furlough, but you were just as anxious to get back.

I: Can you remember things that you had to adapt to at home?

CHRISTIANSON: I think one of the things that we found very difficult was the complacency--the seeming indifference of the people to the needs of the mission field. To us it was of deep concern that the people were in such desperate need. But we found the people at home satisfied and complacent in their nice homes and going along fine. It took you awhile to get adjusted to the fact that, well, they weren't all called to be missionaries. If we hadn't had this deep concern, we wouldn't have been real missionaries. The Lord hadn't called them to that particular task. I think that was the hardest thing because you felt that their lives seemed so empty and useless. That wasn't true, of course. But that is the impression it gives you when you first get home.

I: How about lifestyles because you had been living in a modest manner?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes, that was difficult, too. Everything is so lavish and extravagant, compared with the kind of life we had been living. It was hard to get used to. I remember I was talking with a friend of mine--I'd grown up with her--and she was in the Nurses Christian Movement at the time. She had an apartment. Nicely carpeted floors and nice easy furniture. I said to her when I was sitting there one day, "I used to think how lovely it would be to have a room like that, way off in the hills of China." She said, "I'd give it all up to have what you have." It made me think then that even though she had it, it didn't mean that much to her really.

I: How was the lifestyle of the CIM missionaries compared to that of other missionaries in China?

CHRISTIANSON: Oh, we had much less. We lived much more simply.

I: How do you think that affected your relationship with the Chinese? The reason I ask is that other missionaries have said that they admired the lifestyle of the CIM missionaries.

CHRISTIANSON: And the Chinese have, too. You know, the Chinese have an expression, "to eat bitterness." The Chinese character for bitterness is "chih ku." To eat is to "chih" and the phrase for eating bitterness and accepting suffering is "ku." This is an expression they used constantly for the CIM. These people are able to "chih ku"--eat bitterness.

I: We got you to Kunming and you were without a toothbrush or Bible. What happened from there?

CHRISTIANSON: Then the authorities in Kunming said the Japanese would definitely get to Kunming. So they moved us up to a station near Chungking, and we had to go along the best way we could. I had to make a few things to wear and then some people gave me a few things and we were able to buy a few toothbrushes and things like that. Hudson Taylor used to say all you really needed on the mission field was about a Bible and a toothbrush! I arrived without either a Bible or toothbrush!

Then I went up to Szechuan and I worked there during the war years. I worked in the headquarters of the mission in the financial department and that's how I came to go down to Shanghai in 1945, after the war ended. Then I went back up to Yunnan later.

I: What were your responsibilities in Szechuan?

CHRISTIANSON: I just lived with a family there and did church work: Bible classes, church work, and teaching and visiting house-to-house. They had a Bible woman and I used to go out with her.

I: How did you get the position in the financial department?

CHRISTIANSON: Well, I had gone to Chungking where the headquarters were at that time, to have my eyes examined. I had to stay over because the doctor told me that my main trouble was fatigue. I stayed over there for awhile. And while I was there, they got busy in the office and asked me to help and then I stayed for three years.

I: This would have been '43-'45?

CHRISTIANSON: It was after '45 we went down to Shanghai. It was '43 and '44 and in '45 I was in Chungking.

I: What was the atmosphere and morale while you were in Chungking?

CHRISTIANSON: It was war--a wartime city. It was crowded with downriver people. The people from Nanking, Shanghai and all the big cities down there had just come swarming up to Chungking, which was a country town. They brought with them education and wealth. A big hospital out of Shanghai opened up just out of Kunming. The students were everywhere. Many American soldiers were there. It was a very, very busy city. And it was very, very hot in the summertime--terrifically hot! You just dripped all summer. We had to go out to the hills

for the office work. We couldn't do the work in town. We had some hill cottages over the river. We used to go over to do the office work. About September then we'd come back into town. The city was just crowded. Of course, it was good for business. But a lot of corruption came in with the big city-ness.

I: How about bombing raids?

CHRISTIANSON: Before I got there, they had had some bombings. And they had some air raid shelters. But while I was there, they didn't have any air raid signals.

I: In Chungking, since there were missionaries from so many groups, what kind of ecumenical contact did you have?

CHRISTIANSON: Many missionaries stayed in our mission home. We got to know a lot of other missionaries from other missions. They lived with us, they stayed with us for long and short terms. The Red Cross people lived with us. We had missionaries from all over.

There was another Methodist mission in Chungking and they took in other missionaries, too. Our mission home was jammed all the time. Quite often it was people just passing through because Chungking was the jumping-off place for Calcutta. They went across by plane to Calcutta. You couldn't get out of China any other way. Our own missionaries were also there and they were leaving their areas, except for those who were kept in internment.

I: How many CIM missionaries did you have in internment?

CHRISTIANSON: I don't know the exact number. There were quite a few in Weihsien and Chefoo.

I: Did some of the missionaries who were staying with you join in the work?

CHRISTIANSON: Not so much in the work. They had their own work, but they joined in all the meetings and Bible study and prayer meetings. They joined in all of that. They were a real part of us. Usually, they had their own activities.

I: When you would have different societies or denominations worshipping together, what would be the format?

CHRISTIANSON: We didn't change it. Everyone fitted in. Actually, denominations don't run too strong in China. We often had prayer meetings together. If other missionaries knew that the CIM had a meeting on Friday afternoons, they would come along. Whenever possible, we shared the work together. There were times when we just couldn't work with some of them; but most of the time we could. It was a time when we needed each other, a place where you needed each other. Everyone went to everybody's wedding. They were the only weddings you got to go to! The fellowship with other missionaries was really wonderful!

I: What about students? Did the CIM do any work with the students who were refugees in Chungking?

CHRISTIANSON: Some, but in those days they used to say that the China Inland Mission was sent to the poor. The years have passed and now, I suppose, they are working more with students than with the peasant people. It is just a period. You see, the other missionary societies worked amongst the intellectuals, because they were in the big cities, and we were always upcountry. Where there was a need and where there were students inquiring, our missionaries always held Bible classes, usually in English. But we didn't go especially out to get students.

Today, it is entirely different. Really, there is a great movement among the Chinese students. They say, in America, wherever there is one or two Chinese, they have a Bible study. But that is not true of other nationals--of the Japanese or the Indians, but it is true of the Chinese. Where there are two or three, there is a Bible study group. There are over 100

Chinese in Mankato. There are three believers and they are already having a Bible study group. Some of the people from our church go down and help them with it. They are a very alive group--spiritually. There is a great movement among the Chinese students, amongst the PH.Ds.

I: How did you hear about the end of the war in Europe and then the end of the war in the Pacific?

CHRISTIANSON: We were in Chungking at that time so we got it by radio.

I: What was the response?

CHRISTIANSON: Relief! Great relief! We had a very hard time being cut-off and trying to carry on the work from Chungking, and people having to go home and being unable to get back. If you went home on furlough, the government wouldn't let you back in those days. The mission had some very difficult problems to solve. Of course, it wasn't too long before the Communists came. All the years I was in China, the country was in turmoil.

I: What about your funding during the war years?

CHRISTIANSON: Very difficult! It wasn't reduced. There was just as much money sent from home, but the banks froze the exchange. Before the war, the exchange on the American dollar was 3 to 1. It got to about 300 to 1 and we were still getting 3 to 1. We were scraping the barrel as far as funds were concerned. None of us had problems being overweight. Most of us were undernourished. For instance, that time I was in with eye trouble, it was just fatigue. It was probably due to malnutrition. We didn't have the proper food. We sold furniture, if we had furniture. We sold clothing, that we thought we could do without.

Then, finally, it got to a place where it was practically impossible to carry on. The British Embassy and the American Embassy got together. They worked with, I suppose, someone in

the government and in our country and London, and they formed a clearance board. The American one was called the American Clearing Board; the other one was called the British Exchange, I think. All they used were notes of exchange.

The merchants in Chungking and other places would buy foreign currency and give us the real street value. It was approved by the government. I think the first month it started working we received about 10 times our former remittances. Then we were able to live a little more decently. It was a very hard time. The worst went on for about two or three years, and I guess the break came just about a year before the war ended. So we didn't deal with banks at all then. The embassies came through for us.

I: What happened to missions like yours when inflation really became full-blown?

CHRISTIANSON: Of course, by that time, we were getting a better exchange on the currency. You see, the war was over. We were getting a better exchange. The money wasn't worth much so we didn't ever cash in more than we actually needed. It was getting difficult--difficult for everyone. It was difficult for the local people, too. Nobody had very much after the war. They couldn't eat as well; they couldn't live as well. Whereas food before was really our smallest consideration as far as money was concerned, then it became very important. We had to do without things. We couldn't pay our servants so much. It was difficult because the cost of food was going up all the time. Just like inflation here, only worse.

I: When you were working in Shanghai after the war, what was the atmosphere? How were people viewing the future?

CHRISTIANSON: There was a lot of Communist influence and they were a bit anti-foreign. We could feel the atmosphere; it was quite tense. Other than that, I can't tell you very much.

I: What was the state of indigenization in the CIM at this time?

CHRISTIANSON: Very strong. The mission, at this time, wasn't putting any foreign funds into churches at all. They had done some in the past, but not like other denominations. They were stressing the local church, self-government, self-propagation. Let the local church take responsibility because our days may be short. That was greatly stressed in the mission. It was in all missions.

I: Did you have another furlough before going back to Yunnan?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes, I had two furloughs altogether. I had one in '48. In '49 I went back and was married in August of '49 to Victor.

I: When you came back, where did you go from Shanghai?

CHRISTIANSON: After furlough in 1948 and '49, I returned to Hong Kong. Later, when Victor arrived with the two children, we flew in to Kunming and were married there. Later, proceeded to Lungling.

I: What was the situation when you got back to Lungling?

CHRISTIANSON: Pathetic! They had just begun to kind of make the town again. It had become a fighting area. It had been mined by the Japanese, so that when the people went back, they couldn't find the main street. Imagine, a city with no streets, no cats, no dogs, no pigs--nothing! They finally began to find little landmarks so they could tell what land belonged to them. Most of the houses weren't left standing. Just about three houses in the whole village were left, and we fortunately were able to rent one of them for our meetings.

The others had just built shacks. For washbasins they were using hubcaps from cars that had been thrown away. They would go to dig in the garden to plant vegetables and dig up bodies.

They would be out somewhere and see a piece of wire sticking out of the ground and pull it. It would be a land mine and blow off their hands.

There were human bones lying around in many places. It was a pathetic situation and yet the bravery of the people was simply amazing! They went in, and built these huts. They would get old pieces of metal that the army had left behind. The Americans were in there, too, and they'd left behind all sorts of things. They would flatten these pieces of metal out and use them for walls and build a little shack and live in it. As I told you, they'd use hubcaps for washbasins. They managed to get a few chickens and things from up in the hills. They started their home life again. They started business again.

When Victor and I were married, we went back to the west of the province. I went back before furlough and then I went home from there. When I went on furlough in 1948, I went through French Indo-China and the Japanese were bombing it at that time. We were settled back in Lungling until the Communists came.

TAPE THREE-SIDE ONE

So the condition there in Lungling was pathetic.

I: How were you received when you first came back to the village?

CHRISTIANSON: Oh, they opened their arms to us and received us. They were so glad to see us. We started meetings again in the upstairs rooms of one of the few houses left standing. It happened to belong to one of the believers. She let us rent one of the upstairs rooms. We fixed it up with a few benches and things. We had meetings there and quite a few believers gathered there, too. Some had lost their lives; some had been killed. We set up housekeeping and went about things as we used to do. We had no idea Communism was so close.

I: Before you went on furlough in '48, what had you started to hear about the civil war?

CHRISTIANSON: They were very active up in the north. And we knew that all this was happening, but, you see, the home life and the clan system was so strong in China that we felt that they would never take over China. We underestimated Communism. We felt the clan system and family life was so strong that they couldn't possibly penetrate the whole country. We quite expected that they would stay around the northern part. Shanghai had fallen in May of '49. We went in by plane from Hong Kong in July of '49. We flew to Kunming. We were married and then went by truck (we didn't travel by chair anymore) to Lungling. Communism didn't come in until December.

I: After the new government had taken over, how were you affected?

CHRISTIANSON: Oh, that was really quite a terrifying experience. They came in first of all and they just marched in very quietly. But before they marched in, the people themselves had wind of it. Anyone who was afraid for his life at all had already gone up into the hills. They lived with relatives and friends. It just seemed as if the whole city went dead when they heard they were coming. You could almost hear people talking across the street it was so quiet. Everything stopped. You could buy a few vegetables, but most people were in their homes. They had heard rumors.

Then the Communist army marched in. Things seemed to be okay for a week or two until they started clamping down. Then the trouble started. First, they took no notice of us whatsoever.

I: Were you and your husband the only foreigners in Lungling?

CHRISTIANSON: We had two boys then. There were two other single ladies who lived there, too. One lived with us and the

other one had her own home. Gradually, they began to clamp down on people. First the landowners, they put them in jail and started torturing and executing them. They apparently ignored us to the extent that they despised us--they wouldn't even take notice of us. Then, they began to send someone to the church meetings to listen in. Finally, they told us they needed the church for meetings and the meetings were always scheduled for Sundays, which put an end to our services. Then they stationed guards at our gate. They just sat there. Every house had a gate. They sat outside the big gate that was shut at night. The guards would sit outside and read or play or gamble a bit, apparently innocently, but no one dared cross the threshold.

Then they came in and they examined everybody in the house. Took a tally of everybody who lived in the place--who they were, what relationship--and made a list of them. On the main gate they put a notice that there were so many people who lived there. Then they could visit your house at any time of the day or night. If anyone was there who shouldn't be there, he and the head of the house were taken off to jail. You didn't take in any visitor without permission.

Then, it got difficult for servants to work for us. Our woman who did the washing told us she would have to leave. The cook wanted to get married. He wanted to marry one of the Christian girls. He had wanted to marry her before, but now he had to get permission from the official residence for the wedding. They held him and tried to make him say that we had transistor radios, that were sending out messages to America, because they called us all spies, imperialist spies. Jerry had a very bad time. He was tortured, but he remained true. He married the girl finally and soon after that, anyone who came to our house was marked. Then anyone who did any shopping for us was marked. Then, we found it probably wasn't very good

for the boys. We'd go to the market and take them just for the walk. The Chinese liked children very much. I'd go over, say, to buy some vegetables. I could feel the presence of someone behind me, and there was a guard standing there.

You couldn't talk to a person in the market. So nobody dared talk to us. It was awful. We felt we weren't doing any good. We were useless. We felt we were an embarrassment to the people. Then, we received a telegram from the mission telling us to pack up and leave. Then we had more trouble. It took us six months to get out.

I: Would you give us the highlights of the trouble that you had?

CHRISTIANSON: First of all, we had our furniture and our goods that we didn't want to carry with us. We needed money to travel with, and we weren't getting much through the bank, so we tried to sell things. We did sell them. We got permission first. We went to the officials and got permission, but it was just verbal permission, it wasn't written. That was a mistake! They probably wouldn't have given us written permission. They'd probably have said we didn't need it. However, we sold things. We had things the people didn't have and they would like to have. A few extra blankets, dishes, and things like that. They just loved to have them. So we got enough money with which to travel.

When we got up to Paoshan, which was three days' journey away, we were called into the police station and they said, "You sold things down in Lungling?" "Yes." "How did you dare do it without permission?" We told them we had permission and they said, "We don't believe you." They asked to see our permission and we had no written permission.

In old days in China we had taken their word and they had taken ours. It was a gentleman's promise and you never needed anything in writing, except, of course, if you were buying property.

To have someone tell us after all those years of being trusted, they didn't believe us was really hard on us. However, we heard afterwards from some muleteers who came through that anyone who bought things from us had to return it and they never received their money back. The government took everything!

Those people who wanted to go to the next village to sell vegetables would have to leave their fingerprints at the police station. That's military control for you. No wonder people are scared of Communism!

Then, when we got up to Paoshan, a three day journey away, we couldn't leave without permission. They said we had to make application to get an exit permit. Well, that had to go to Peking. We even had to tell them our history right from the time we were born, and what the house number of the house was where you were born (laughter). It was rather ridiculous, really. It took around six months before we were finally allowed to move down to Kunming. It was nerve-wracking. But all the time we couldn't go out on the street, unless someone followed you. That kind of military control is just terrible!

I: Where did you live in Paoshan?

CHRISTIANSON: We stayed in the mission home. They had a mission home there. Paoshan was a bigger city.

I: Were there other foreigners there?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes, all our missionaries. There weren't any others. The New Tribes Mission was there, but they had left earlier. The CIM was about the last mission to leave in most cases.

I: Did you have to spend your travel money just to exist?

CHRISTIANSON: They were able to send us some in Shanghai through the local banks. Then we were selling things there, too, in Paoshan, and we had the same kind of problems about getting rid of property. We didn't dare give anybody anything because that would have gotten them in trouble.

We tried to give away to the servants, who had been very good to us, who had stood by us. We tried to give them a few things, but they didn't want to take them. It was a reign of terror and fear. Of course, the purge was going on all the time--killing off the cream of the country. That was terrifying because you could hear the people going out in the early morning or the late afternoons to the execution grounds. They would take the children out so they could get used to it. That was their order. They killed off the cream of the country.

I: Did you hear the shots from the firing squads?

CHRISTIANSON: Occasionally. Usually we stayed right indoors, as close as we could, when we knew what was going on. It was too terrifying to listen.

I: When you had the guards at the gates or the guards following you, did you have opportunities to talk with them?

CHRISTIANSON: No, no. We didn't try to, and they just ignored us. It was just as though they sat there to take a rest. We knew why they were there. They were there all the time. Another young man came around to Vic and said he wanted to learn English. He really wanted to snoop--see what we had and what we were doing in the house. Victor read the Bible with him. I was glad to get out. I love China, but I was glad to leave at that time.

I: How did you occupy yourself?

CHRISTIANSON: That was another difficulty. You see, your lives were a bit cramped. You weren't able to hold meetings. People who were coming to see us for Bible study didn't dare come anymore.

All we did was just live and you felt so useless! We used to take the boys out for walks because they needed the exercise, but that was about all. Always we kept on the streets where the guards were, so they knew we weren't trying to escape or anything.

One or two of the other two single ladies who lived with us tried to go off to some of the villages preaching and they got in trouble. They were delayed in getting home and they were nearly arrested. They didn't go out again. So it was that kind of thing. I often think of those hostages in Iran. It's all very well to say they are well-fed. How is it affecting their minds?

I: Did you have all the supplies you needed for the boys?

CHRISTIANSON: Oh, yes, we managed all right. We went out and bought the food we needed; but we didn't enjoy having to have guards watching us all the time.

I: After 1949, did you feel that if you left China, you were giving up your calling?

CHRISTIANSON: Practically, the whole mission would be liquidated. Maybe that time for China had come when the missionaries would leave the church and the church in China would have to take responsibility for propagating the gospel. Then, of course, when we did, they had conferences in Chungking and decided that the mission would continue in Southeast Asia. It was not until later years that they changed the name.

I: When you were able to leave Paoshan, where did you go from there?

CHRISTIANSON: We went down to Kunming. It was a rather harrowing journey because of the executions going on every place we stopped at. Terrifying really. Fear can be really torturing, especially with two little children.

I: Did you go by truck?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes, by truck.

I: How many foreigners were there with you?

CHRISTIANSON: I suppose there were 10 or 12 of us altogether.

I: These were all CIM people?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes. Most of the other missionaries had gone. You see the American Embassy pulled out before the British and quite a few of the other missionary societies had pulled out before the CIM.

Then we got down to Kunming and we were held up there for--well, we went out by dribs and drabs. Some went by truck to Kunming. We felt the boys had had enough of this truck journey, so we waited and got on a plane. We went to Chungking. Then down the river to Hankow and then by train down to Canton. It was remarkable that we got out as well as we did.

I: What would have been the dates of your traveling?

CHRISTIANSON: We arrived in Hong Kong in June, so I guess we were traveling out between May and June.

I: 1950?

CHRISTIANSON: 1951.

I: Where was the mission meeting where you decided about starting work in Southeast Asia?

CHRISTIANSON: That was in Hong Kong. All the heads of our mission were in Hong Kong. As each of us came through, they asked if we had any special leaning to any other field or any other country.

I: What was your response?

CHRISTIANSON: At that time, our response was a big concern for the two boys. We felt we should come home and then see how the Lord would lead. We never did go back to Taiwan or anywhere. The boys were about nine and ten at the time.

I: Had they been in boarding school in Chefoo?

CHRISTIANSON: No, they never got to Chefoo. They were born here and then Catherine died. Victor and Catherine were home during the war years. They came home and they couldn't get back. No one could get back during the war. They stayed here for five or six years. In that time, Neil and Malcolm were born. When Catherine died, they were six and seven years of age. It was about a year and one-half after that that Victor came back to China with them. They only had less than two years on the field until we left again.

I: It has been said that the CIM didn't encourage their children to study Chinese culture and Chinese history. It was said they wanted the children to come back because they had a calling and not because China was home. How would you respond to this?

CHRISTIANSON: Well, the main purpose of Chefoo was to educate the children to take their place in life. The missionary society was for preaching the gospel, not for teaching the culture and the history of China. It wasn't encouraged. It wasn't even encouraged to have them talk Chinese when they went to school. The teachers did their jobs very well, I think. The teaching of the history and culture and trying to make the children feel they were part of the life and that it was their country hadn't always worked out very well, because that meant teaching Confucianism, Taoism, and other religions as well. It was much more important that the children follow in their parents' footsteps as missionaries and not become Chinese nationalists. That would be more important to the members of the mission than to have the children learn the history and culture of the people.

I: How many children of CIM missionaries did go into mission work?

CHRISTIANSON: Oh, many of them. Nowadays, the children are trained out of the country. They do go to school until their high school level and then they come home. Not nearly so many of them are going back. You see, when they are in school in China, they are part of their parents' work. I believe Hudson Taylor was inspired in starting that school in Chefoo. Many business people sent their children to Chefoo. It wasn't only for our own children. It had a very high standard. Some of the Americans criticized that it was too British. The teaching was British; they took British exams; and they got a British accent.

I: What did your husband do when you came back?

CHRISTIANSON: We went down to Australia, because I didn't have a visa. I applied for a non-quota visa in Hong Kong. Then we went down to Australia and we were there from about September to January. We got passage back. It was very hard to get passage back by ship in those days, so we took what we could. By the time we left New Zealand I still hadn't gotten my visa. I was up in Vancouver for two months and he came down here and brought the boys down. He was down here for two months before I got into the country. Then I had a permanent residence from the time I came in.

I: Did he have a church in this country?

CHRISTIANSON: No. He went to work at the university. He was a machinist.

I: How did it happen that he came to China as a CIM missionary?

CHRISTIANSON: He was trained as a machinist and he was working in the city. He and some young men who were Christians who worked with him got together and were studying the Bible. One attended some classes at Northwestern College. Victor was so

interested in the Bible and Bible study that this young man told him that he ought to go to Bible school and study properly for the whole two years. He made application and he went in. While he was there, he was called to the mission field here. It was just the call of the Lord, really.

I: As you look back over your years in China, what are some of the things you would have done differently?

CHRISTIANSON: The thing is that you think back and imagine you might have done something differently, you think to yourself: "How could I have made it much different from what I did?" You think of the conditions as they were in those days. Nowadays, it would be entirely different. I probably would have studied more and been more patient with people. Perhaps used a little more effort to get amongst the classes that I hadn't been amongst, like the student classes and others; but I didn't really feel particularly gifted in student work. The mission didn't appoint us to it. But since we've been here, we've been in student work all the time.

I guess it's too personal to try to explain to you what I would have done. At the time, I thought I was doing all I could; but as I look back I realize I made a lot of mistakes and I didn't do my very best work. But then, I often think as I look back of the loneliness. I never saw another foreigner. You know, maybe I wouldn't have been any stronger today than I was then. The Lord can even use our weakest efforts.

I: You were completely alone at times?

CHRISTIANSON: Sometimes I was all alone--many times. After my fellow workers were married, I was alone for a long time.

I: How close were you able to get to Chinese colleagues or Chinese friends?

CHRISTIANSON: We were very close, but you are never quite as close as you would be with a person who speaks your own language. For instance, you pray together, you work together and you talk about things. In another language it is very different. You can study and study for years before you ever get conversational Chinese as well as you would with your own language. Even now, with the students here, I know them so well and we speak English together all the time that we are in the church. I feel closer to them than I ever did to the people back there.

But the love and the loyalty to each other was just as strong. They were so very good to us. Many of the things we did I'm positive they didn't understand, but they loved us, anyway. I really believe that there is something in this: If you really love the people, they will sense it. I was reading a book by a Chinese recently and he said in it--the Watchman Nee book entitled The Normal Christian Worker and there is a chapter on loving people. He says that you don't only love the brethren (which are the Chinese believers), but you love everybody. Victor was reading it before he died and he said, "You know, I have been very impressed with that." Some people have a love for church people because they are all believers and they don't have time for the others. But Watchman Nee said, "If you are going to be a good Christian worker, you love everybody." They sense it. They can feel it.

I guess that is really one of the secrets of a good missionary worker. You can be a great speaker; you can have all the gifts you could possibly train for to be a good worker; but if you don't really have love for the people, they know it. No matter what you say, it won't count for anything.

I think perhaps if I ever went back, it would only be in my own personal life that I would pray the Lord to give me more patience and endurance and sympathy and understanding of the people. Not that I ever had times when I fell out with them or anything.

I: Did you ever have contact with John Soong or Marcus Cheng?

CHRISTIANSON: No. I knew Marcus Cheng in Chungking. His Bible school was in Chungking when I was there, but I never met John Soong. When I was in Shanghai to work, Watchman Nee had a group meeting there; but I didn't go to the meetings. I went to another Chinese church. But his books are very helpful.

I: So, in Shanghai, when you had the option of going to an English-speaking church, you continued going to a Chinese-speaking one?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes, I wanted to keep up my Chinese because I had been away working in the financial department for a few years. In Chungking, we had to go to the Chinese church because that's all there was. When I got down to Shanghai, most of the missionaries appointed by the mission to work in the offices went to the Free Christian Church, which was an independent church, denominationally independent; but I went to the Chinese church because I wanted to hear Chinese.

TAPE THREE-SIDE TWO

I: Once you got back to Minnesota, how did it happen that you and your husband became so active in student work among the Chinese, and what was your role in the founding of the fellowship here?

CHRISTIANSON: When we came back, David Adeney of CIM, worked with Inter-varsity Fellowship. His wife was in Mayo Clinic. Victor's sister lived in Rochester and we were in Rochester. Victor went over to the hospital to see Mrs. Adeney and her husband came in and he said, "I'm going up to Minneapolis to a Bible study group. Why don't you come up with me?" So he drove him up here to a Bible study group that had been started by a Mrs. Torjeson, who was a Norwegian lady. She had been in North China, but most of her family was here in Minnesota.

I: Was this Kari?

CHRISTIANSON: Kari's mother. Mrs. Torjeson left that same year, about September of that year. She left to go back to Taiwan. We rented the house in which she was living. The Bible study continued. But the students didn't have so many cars in those days. They just had one car to take everybody around, so we decided to meet over closer to the university.

We started to meet in the YMCA there on University Avenue. That wasn't very nice. The room wasn't always clean. One day when we were trying to get the thing tidied up to have a service, a student from Luther Seminary came over to the service and he said, "You can't possibly meet in here, but I have a place for you." We went to Luther Hall and we met there for quite a few years, until they finally said they wanted it on Sunday for their own service.

Then we got into the UCC. Remember the place? It was a Presbyterian place on the corner of 17th and 4th Street. We were there for a few years and that got too small for us. Then they built that other building behind Luther Hall and we went back there and we worshipped in what was the cafeteria. We got too big for that, also.

By this time we had formed a church, called the Chinese Christian Fellowship, and were registered. It started in 1957--the actual church. They had been saving up to try to build and we had \$30,000 in the bank. But because our budget wasn't high enough, the bank wouldn't give us more than a \$30,000 loan. We had many students in the church and not enough businessmen. A church the size we needed would cost \$350,000. It just looked hopeless. Then this school in Lauderdale was for sale by auction and they decided to bid for it. They bid what they thought we could manage with \$30,000 in the bank and \$30,000 for the loan; just a little over \$60,000. Nobody else bid.

It became ours. Maintenance is quite high, but as for the building, it won't be too long before it's paid for. It's big and roomy. The main service is held in the gym. It is beautiful in the summer, but freezing cold in the winter. It costs quite a bit to heat it. The kids put on their coats and we manage all right. It is hard for me because I have arthritis and my bones just ache. But that is when it is very cold. When it is about 0°, it isn't too bad. They have about 125 members now, but their attendance is about 200. They just love it! It is their own. There is quite a good Sunday school. The children are all small and there is no one over 13 or 14. A lot of young people.

I: Did your husband serve as the pastor there?

CHRISTIANSON: No. He took his turn at preaching. First of all, before we called a pastor, they used to invite different speakers in for every Sunday. We would get someone from Bethel or Northwestern or Luther Seminary and different speakers. Sometimes some outstanding speakers from the University who were Christians would come. Actually, it worked out very well.

They couldn't have afforded to support a pastor, anyhow, in those days. Then, gradually the present pastor, Rev. Joseph Wang, who had been at St. Paul Bible College, became a part-time pastor. As he finished seminary, they called him to be a full-time. Now they have a youth director, too.

I: Were you and your husband the two missionary-types or two non-Chinese who have been with it from the beginning?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes. We've been there from the very beginning. We were the only ones, really. When my husband passed away, they were very, very good to me. I told them that they were doing too much for me and they said, "You're the only ones who have stayed with us from the beginning."

Others came in but left again. My husband was chairman of the group for a few years. Finally, he was made an elder so that some of the other younger men coming up could take the chairmanship of the fellowship. It worked out very nicely.

I: When you look over your China years, which missionaries are most memorable?

CHRISTIANSON: There were so many. Sometimes it's just personal likes and dislikes.

I would say that David Adeney, who has been a student worker, has been an exceptionally fine missionary, one whom I could follow. But one who had the most influence on my life was Mr. J.O. Fraser. The one I told you about who was the linguist and the pianist. He molded our lives. It was not only his own accomplishments, but it was what he did for us. He was our superintendent and he was like a father to us. And yet a strong father! He wasn't given to over-sympathizing. He made us strong workers. He helped us to be better church leaders and church teachers. His life was a great inspiration and it still is to me. There are many things that he told us that to this day I follow out of my life. I still remember them. There were his messages he gave us from the Bible on practical living that stay with me and I keep on remembering them.

I: Could you give an example or two?

CHRISTIANSON: Well, one I particularly remember: He took the message one morning. When he came to our station for spiritual help, we would have prayer together and then he would have a Bible study. Sometimes it would go on for two hours.

One morning he was speaking on David and Goliath and how David slew Goliath, which was a great triumph in David's life. Then there came a time later on where there were other giants who came, if you remember the scripture story. There were other giants who came and David sent out his mighty men and some of

them killed some giants. Then, David said he wanted to go out and attack the giants himself. They said, "No, you are a king now. You stay home." They wouldn't let him go.

This was his message: You may have killed one Goliath, but that doesn't mean you will kill all the Goliaths. You may have had one mountain-top experience, such as David had in killing his Goliath; but that doesn't mean God was going to give you a lot of mountain-top experiences. You may just have the one.

Another time I remember one of our members was under deep distress because of a great disappointment in her life and couldn't shake off the distress. It was because of a particular person. She couldn't get this person out of her mind and Mr. Fraser took the message from Abraham when Sarah died. He said to the children of Heth: "Give me a plot of land that I may bury my dead out of my sight." You see, he used a message there.

Sarah had been a part of his life, a great blessing in his life. She had been his one comfort and strength and his companion and his wife and also his love, and now she was gone. But he couldn't keep her and hold on to her. He had to bury her. "Give me a piece of land that I might bury my dead out of my sight." There is a message out of that story. When God has taken something from us, we bury it. We don't hang on to it and fret over it forever. It's gone, then bury it. A wonderful message. It comes back to me again and again.

Another thing he said when he was instructing us: "The tendencies will be in your church that you will want to favor one above another. Don't. Some of the people will be better off and better educated; you can communicate better. Their children are cleaner; they don't have runny noses. You'll want to pick up their children and love them." But he said, "You won't want to do that because the others whose children

are not so clean will notice it. Keep all of them at arms' length and you will do your best work. Don't make any favorites." You know, I remembered it. I saw it happen again and again. Some of the church members got jealous of others because a missionary had showed favoritism. He was so wise.

There are many other things he said that I just can't remember them at this time. But he was such a wise man. Even here in this fellowship I remember how he said, "Keep them all at arms' length. Otherwise, you won't be a good teacher. If you want to be a good teacher, you'll have to be alone. You can't have special friends." I think there's a lot of truth in it. He was a wonderful man.

I: How often would he come to your station?

CHRISTIANSON: He lived in the district and the superintendent's job was to travel around most of the time. So he would go from one place to another. We would see him, oh, sometimes more often than others. He died at about 48 years of age of that cerebral malaria, and a very young man, really. He was a man who could pick up a dialect and use it when he got into a village. People said he was simply amazing. He would meet someone when he was traveling on the road and ask where they came from. They'd tell him and he'd immediately talk in their dialect. How they loved him!

I: How long would he stay when he came?

CHRISTIANSON: He would sometimes stay a couple of weeks and visit with the people. If we had any church problems, he'd help us with them. There was one time when in the station of Paoshan they had a village out of the city that had their own little church, and they used to send someone there every Sunday to take the service. He was great on the indigenous church. They built their own little chapel--a thatched hut with about 20 members in the church. Everything was going along fine and

then some missionaries (they were actually a group that hadn't got a very good standing) came in. They started to give away medicine and food and all sorts of things to these people. In other words, the whole church practically went over to them. Well, we didn't agree with their teachings, so we couldn't go along with them. So with this little group there of 20, they built them their benches and fixed up the chapel for them with foreign funds and did everything for them. We were waiting until they did it themselves. The result was that the whole church, practically, went over.

Then afterwards, not too long afterwards, some of the Christians began to lose out in their spiritual lives and some of them went back to worshipping demons. Finally, the decision of the whole group was to get back to where they were before to the CIM order of service and everything. So they came and asked this friend of mine about it. She asked Mr. Fraser what she should do.

He said, "You take everyone back on an individual basis. Don't take them back as a church. Otherwise, you will have more trouble later." He was right. Very, very wise man. There are so many things like that that I still remember. I still thank the Lord for the influence of one man's life.

I: Are there others that you remember?

CHRISTIANSON: There were quite a few others, but he was the most outstanding. There are many of them who have been a great blessing in my life, but he was the most outstanding. I think I have learned more from him than any of the others.

I: One question: When you were alone, how would you spend your evenings?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes, well, you didn't have very good lighting in the first place, so you couldn't do very much in the evenings. We used to go to bed early, 9:00 or so. When we were--two of us--we'd try and share things and do little bits of sewing. You didn't have many evening meetings because they couldn't

walk to the place without proper lighting. They had to use torches. I don't mean flashlights, I mean a torch, made from pine sticks.

Do you know the Living Bible? You know that translation, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path?" They have translated to flashlight. I think that is rather silly because they had never heard of them in those days. The lamp was probably a torch like the Chinese villagers carried--just a pine stick. We had meetings before dark so they could get home. After that, we had Bible reading and letters to write; but the lighting was so poor that we would just go to bed early.

I: Did you have a supply of books to read?

CHRISTIANSON: Not too many. No, not too many. Anything we had was read cover to cover. We only had what people sent us and what we took in. No libraries to go to. No TV, no radio. This was all right. We are too busy these days.

I: What about contact with the tribes? Your personal contact.

CHRISTIANSON: I had been to the tribes to visit, but I didn't work amongst them. Victor did. Victor worked amongst the Lisu before we were married.

I: Was he in tribe work from the beginning?

CHRISTIANSON: No. He did his six exams in Chinese work. Then one of his fellow workers went to tribal work and died of typhus fever. Victor felt very burdened. He asked Mr. Fraser if he could take his place up in the tribal station. Mr. Fraser was very pleased about it, so he appointed him up there. He learned Lisu. He was there, I guess, for two or three years. Then they went home on furlough.

When he went home on furlough and he was held up here, you see. Then we went back to Lungling; but the idea was that we would go into work among the Shan, which was just about 60 miles from where we were living in Lungling. We were going to open the Shan work. There are a lot of tribes in Yunnan--over 100 different tribes. No one had ever worked in the Shan tribe. So the superintendent, who was John Kuhn at that time, suggested that perhaps we could go to the Shan and our jumping off place was Lungling. We never did get there because of Communism.

I: If you had, would you have had to develop a written form?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes, we would have had to do something in the way of the language. I think they used a script something similar to what they used in Thailand, which is Sanskrit. But you see, we didn't get there. Vic was learning Thai from some of the business people in the village that went down there to do business in the cold weather. They went in what they called the dry season. They came back to Lungling in the rainy season. Then we got hold of some of these people and they came over and they were giving Victor lessons.

At that time the two boys couldn't get to school and I was teaching the boys, so I wasn't taking the Thai lessons. So we had really made a start. It would have been wonderful if we could have done something because that tribe had never been touched.

I: Did you keep teaching the boys during your six months of exiting?

CHRISTIANSON: Yes, as much as I could. I had a friend in Australia who was a school teacher and she sent me lessons. They found it kind of difficult to adjust when they got back here because of the lessons which were from Australia, British-style.

I: Mrs. Christianson, I have no more questions at this time. Is there anything else you would like to add to this?

CHRISTIANSON: That's all, I think.

I: Thanks so very much. This has been a helpful addition to our collection.