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# Midwest China Oral History Interviews

Nathan Ma

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NATHAN MA  
ORAL HISTORY ABSTRACT

FATHER BORN: Paulus Ma Pui-fan on April 14, 1906, in Yung, Kwangsi.

FATHER'S EARLY LIFE: education; early contacts with Christianity; graduates from Nanking Military Academy and is assigned to North-eastern China by Kuomintang, 1937-1945; escape from Mainland China, 1949-1950; experiences in Hong Kong and Malaysia.

BORN: October 7, 1932, in Yung, Kwangsi.

EARLY LIFE: education and life in Yung, evacuation to Hong Kong, 1949; experiences in Hong Kong and Taiwan; future of Christianity in the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong; influential Christians in narrator's life.

INTERVIEWER: Jane Baker Koons

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## INTERVIEW

I: The first question I will ask you, Mr. Ma, is your father's full name.

MA: My father's full name is Paulus Ma pui-fan.

I: Where and when was your father born?

MA: My father was born on April 14, 1906 in a small village named Yung District located in the far eastern part of Kwangsi Province.

I: Could you give me some information about his family background?

MA: He was brought up with his elder sister by his mother while his father was away in Malaya running his business. He got married when he was 18 years old. All the members of the family had to go to work in the field leading a farmer's life.

I: What was his educational background?

MA: He had his elementary and junior middle school education in his native village and then he went on to attend the national military preparatory school in Nanking. Just look at a Chinese saying: "Good iron should not be used to make nails and a good son should not be allowed to become a soldier." One would understand that it was indeed very difficult for him, an only son of the family, to convince his mother to allow him to continue his study in the military academy. With the support and encouragement from his relatives and elders of the village, he succeeded in obtaining his mother's permission to take the choice to become a soldier. It was then in 1926.

I: How long was he at the military academy?

MA: He stayed there for six years.

I: When he finished the academy, did he enter the army as an officer?

MA: He did. He worked part time as a lecturer in the acad-

emy and then he studied further in the Nanking Military University.

I: What contacts did members of his family have with Christianity?

MA: His parents were not Christians. People living in the same village did not care too much for Christianity. The church workers were not active and progressive. The villagers were living a peaceful life, though they were not rich. They could not see the need to become Christians. Visits paid by church workers were just social expressions.

I: How did your father become a Christian?

MA: He would have become a Christian should he become willing to accept the invitations of his many Christian friends. During those days while serving in the army in Mainland China, I think it was the high position that he possessed as lieutenant general of the Nationalist Chinese Army which hindered him from becoming a Christian. Not until the winter of 1950 in Hong Kong when his wealth, fame and position had deserted him did he have time to learn to know Jesus Christ. It was due to the hospitalization of his wife and the visits and concerns of the Christian doctors, nurses and friends shown on her that drew him to close contacts with the church.

I: Do you know what aspects of Christianity your father found the easiest to understand and what were the most difficult?

MA: I think it was because he was in a fairly difficult financial situation that he had to concentrate all his efforts in running the farm and he had very little time to be spared for contacting church workers.

I: Did he have any contact with foreign missionaries at all until he got to Hong Kong?

MA: Yes, he had a few missionaries in the Mainland of

China. One of them I still can remember his name--Rev. Charles Reinbrecht. They met in Kweilin, Kwangsi.

I: So your father then did know a few people who were associated with the Lutheran church on the Mainland of China?

MA: Yes, but I don't think he had too much understanding about the work that the Lutheran church was doing on the Mainland of China. The contact that he had with this Rev. Reinbrecht was really a social gathering.

I: How did your father feel that Christianity could meet the needs of a modernizing China?

MA: My father was pretty well educated in Chinese literature and history. Confucian teaching had been deep rooted in his mind and he had not yet become a Christian. In comparing the 4000 years of cultural history of his own country with Jesus Christ who was born less than 2000 years from now, he was not truly convinced that Christianity would bring spiritual food to people and help uplift scientific and technological standards of China that could improve the living standard of the people.

I: Did the response of his peers differ from your father's response?

MA: His peers worried that Christianity would bring destruction to their cultures and traditions.

I: You mentioned a few minutes ago that your father's first contact with missionaries was purely a social involvement. Would you care to explain that a little more?

MA: It was in 1934 when he was attending the National Nanking Military University. He was introduced to a missionary pastor who tried to convey to him the message that God is Jesus and Jesus is also God--a true God of two in one. And that heaven and earth

and all living or non-living things are created by God. Man is the last creation of God who was made to take charge of all things. My father thought he was not prepared to have heard it in such an intruding and imparting way which he was unable to accept. In spite of this, he did not refuse to make friends with the missionaries because he had been told that missionaries were good people and their religion was to help people to become good and to do good things. In his later years serving in the army, he met many missionaries who were very friendly and helpful. Some of them had become his personal friends. Yet no one had succeeded to help him become a Christian.

I: That is very interesting.

From 1925 on the Nationalist spirit in China really began to grow. What was your father's perspective of this movement and his involvement in it?

MA: In 1926 he started to receive his professional training in the most prominent military university to become a military officer. He spent six years there as a student and a few years as lecturer in the military academy. The following eight years, from 1937 on, he entered into the combat to drive out the Japanese from the Mainland on China. He also spent a considerable number of years in taking part to help in organizing and reorganizing the army as well as in commanding forces to bring the civil war to an end.

I: During the Japanese occupation, where was your father assigned?

MA: He was assigned to work in the northeastern part of China mostly in Hunan, Hankow, Hanyang and Anhwei.

I: At this time how often did your family see your father?

MA: I would say that when he was away, the family would stay back in our native village. We didn't have a chance to see him for 13 years.

I: Was he able to keep in close communication via letters or were there long periods when you had no idea where he was?

MA: He wrote very often and so kept us informed what he was doing and where he was. We also kept him informed about what the family was doing.

I: Was he actively fighting the Japanese until 1945?

MA: Yes, he was. He had undergone many horrible battles and was chased by the Japanese army.

I: Until the Japanese occupation what developments were there in the Christian church? Did he have any knowledge of this?

MA: Since he was stationed in the northern part of China during these years, all he could observe were activities and developments in that part of the country. The Christian church found that it needed to emphasize the living witness which was to generate faith through the understanding of the Word of God. Then by means of God's words, Christians might live a holy, faithful and Christ-like life. It was observed that Christians were not satisfied with their traditional way of church life which was concentrated mainly on Bible study. The tendency was that real Christians should do more than reading the Bible, praying to God, attending regular church meetings and activities or be busy in preaching the Gospel. They should be leading a Christ-like life, that others might see Jesus in them.

There weren't enough fully dedicated Christian preachers and there wasn't enough good literature and publications to help change people. Wang Ming-tao had been a great blessing to Christian churches in those days in that part of China, in Nanking.

I: How was it for a Christian to have been a military officer?

MA: My father was brought up in a poor family. It was impossible for the family to afford to educate him beyond elementary level. He would not be able to get a higher education had he not in the first place chosen to attend the military academy where education was free. Once he had engaged in this course, he had obligations to stay on and to serve his country in this profession. He was not yet a Christian by that time.

I: What did your father think of Feng Yu-hsiang, who is often called the Christian General?

MA: He thought Mr. Feng Yu-hsiang to be very brave. He was willing to confess his faith before his colleagues and subordinate officers. He thought that was the way a Christian should behave. Besides, General Feng was an upright person and his Christian attitude toward his colleagues and routine office work inspired my father a great deal, though he was not yet a Christian.

I: What was your father's relationship with Chiang Kai-shek?

MA: Mr. Chiang Kai-shek was the president of the National Nanking Military University while my father was a student there. My father had never been under immediate direction of Mr. Chiang whose direct contact was with the central forces. My father worked directly under Mr. Lee Tsung-yan, deputy president, and General Pak Tsung-hei, the two most



prominent and famous Kwangsi political and military leaders. However, my father and other top-ranking military officers often met with Mr. Chiang for his instruction and discussion of strategy to block up and to destroy the Japanese invasion and to bring the civil war to an end.

I: As a child and a young student, did you ever meet Chiang Kai-shek?

MA: Yes, it was in 1943. I don't recall the exact date. It was when I was 13 years old and I was accompanying my father to a social gathering that was sponsored for the top-ranking officers. Mr. Chiang was there and I was introduced. I said, "Hello." And he looked at me and he said, "Do you often attend Sunday School?" I did not answer and he just looked at me and smiled. That's the first and only contact I had with him in Mainland China.

I: Did you ever have a chance to see him in Taiwan later?

MA: Yes, I did. It was in 1968 when I was invited by the minister of education in Taiwan to attend a consultation to speak on the topic: "Reorganization of the School Districts and Reconstruction of Secondary School Curriculum." And after the conference I attended a reception. Mr. Chiang was there and we shook hands. I said to him: "I am a Christian." He could not recall the incident. And I refreshed him a little bit. And he said, "Mr. Ma, you have a great responsibility in Hong Kong. You should teach your students to become Christian." And he gave me that smile again. That's the second and last meeting I have had with him.

I: You mentioned a little earlier some of your father's assignments during the Japanese occupation. Would you elaborate on where he was and what his specific responsibilities were during this time?

MA: During the eight years of the Sino-Japanese War he had been appointed combative strategist to the division commander and to the army commander. Between the years 1945 and 1949, he had been appointed division commander and later became a lieutenant general.

I: After World War II, did your father perceive any positive or negative changes in the Christian Church?

MA: It was quite obvious that people had suffered a great loss both in materials and lives during the war. Now the war was over and they were rebuilding their homes, longing to lead a peaceful life. The church was expected to be able to provide assistance to meet these needs, be it material or spiritual. The door was opened to evangelistic work then.

I: After 1945, what did your father anticipate the future of China would be?

MA: China had become very weak after her long battle with Japan. The Nationalist government as well as the people had hoped that there would not be any war again. The Communist party and the Nationalist party had joined hands to fight against the Japanese invasion. The Chinese people had dreamed that the leaders of these two parties could continuously join their hands together to reconstruct China. Unfortunately, civil war broke out immediately after the surrender of Japanese. The Chinese people were bound to face the nightmare of war again.

My father had, in fact, hoped that the government would immediately launch a campaign to fight against corruption which had long existed in all the government departments. However, the Communists would not give her a rest, and that caused another chaotic situation in China.

I: Did your father make suggestions within the military

and to other departments that they should try to root out corruption? Was he active this way?

MA: Yes, I understand that he had many, many meetings in discussing how corruption could be destroyed, how it could be avoided. But you know, the government was busy in dealing with the Japanese and also in the meantime dealing with the Communists. So the government did not have a chance to conceal this and the corruption became worse and worse.

I: Was your father in the areas he controlled able to get rid of corruption?

MA: In his own station I think he did very good. I can still recall that when we came to Hong Kong, we had only 10,000 Hong Kong dollars with us. And it was beyond imagination that a lieutenant general's family could bring such a small sum of money.

I: What did your father know of the growth of the Chinese Communists in the late 1920s, '30s and '40s? What did he know of their development?

MA: The thought and teaching of Marxism began to merge to China in 1917. Not until the May 4th Movement in 1919 had Communism gained its root in China. The Communist Party was organized in 1921. It struggled to survive and increased its membership to more than 10,000 in 1929. By 1930 a provincial soviet government was established in Kiangsi. It was then the National Government began to beware and troops were sent to destroy the Communists. In the winter of 1936, Chiang Kaishek was taken captive at Sian and he was released in two weeks' time. And on July 7, 1937, a shooting incident near Peking furnished the Japanese with the excuse for starting her war of aggression on China. The Communists continued to gain strength. They laid great stress on the training of young recruits for the party. The number increased

progressively as the ball started rolling. Russians trained party workers to be highly skilled in sabotage and subversion, flooding into all parts of China.

My father knew so well that there is no truth and peace and love in the Communists. That is, in the Communists' belief, you cannot find peace, you cannot find love. They do talk about liberation and equality. These are in their mouth; yet in their hearts you can find nothing but slavery, hatred and deceitfulness. Christianity would never be allowed to exist in their midst.

I: Would you trace the sequence of events that finally led to your father's leaving the Mainland and your family's arriving in Hong Kong?

MA: Yes. It was indeed the most wonderful thing that God has done to let him be reunited with his family in a foreign country--Hong Kong. In the spring of 1949 while his army was stationed in Liuchow, a major city of Kwangsi Province, he had arranged for his family to leave their home town to come to stay with him. A few months later he had to leave them for the battle field. His family was then removed to Nanning, the capital city of Kwangsi, which was under the direct control of one of his divisions. Not long after the arrival of his family in Nanning, he was informed that the Communist army was advancing the same direction. He cabled the division commander there in Nanning to evacuate his family to Hong Kong. Four days later Nanning was liberated and taken by Communist Army.

Upon arrival in Hong Kong, his family rented a flat in Kowloon City and his wife waited there to give birth to his youngest daughter. In those days the local daily newspapers gave very detailed reports concerning the situation and the Communist activities in Mainland China.

The news of my father's captivity was on the daily news one day. The whole family was distressed greatly and shocked. My mother fainted three times from the bad news.

Another month came to pass. One evening my father came unexpectedly to knock on the door of our flat. It is beyond lips and pens to describe how happy we were. God indeed has taken very good care of each one of us.

I: How was your father able to make his way out undetected?

MA: It was because of one of the relatives in Hong Kong. This relative came back to the Mainland to attend the funeral of his grandfather. Then he met my father and he offered assistance to help my father to smuggle out to Hong Kong. He disguised to be a merchant dressing in merchants' dress. It took him almost two months to pass along districts that were heavily guarded by the Communists-- by train and by boat and also on foot.

I: Did he have to take any goods with him to pretend to be selling along the way so he could truly look like a merchant?

MA: He was bringing along some dry, sweet potatoes. He thought it might look like a pauper and at the same time, in case they were in need, this would serve as food. One day when finally he came to the border of Hong Kong, he was waiting in a queue moving along with others and he was grabbed by his package. Oh, he thought, now that must be the end of my trip. But the Communist soldier asked him: "What do you have in your package?" And he was quite relieved that he found out now that the soldier was looking at his belongings, not his person.

I: Did he have to be careful at all about how he spoke? Did he have to speak a certain dialect and perhaps talk like a hawker, or else people would realize that he was a more educated person?

MA: Very interesting question. He mentioned to me that when he was on a train leaving for Hong Kong it was very crowded. He didn't dare to speak because he could not speak like the others. To be a pauper you have to use a different kind of dialect. But he was not used to speaking like that, so he tried to keep his mouth shut and avoid talking too much.

I: I would think in China where there are so many different dialects and different levels of speaking that it could have given him away.

MA: Yes. It did not give him too much difficulty because he speaks both Mandarin and Cantonese--the northern dialect and the southern dialect. So it is very easy for him to communicate with others.

I: When he left the Mainland, were his troops beginning to scatter so that there was nothing really left of his command at this time?

MA: That's correct. Then he was hiding in one of the small villages. It's very close to our own village. And he wanted to come back to visit his home. At first he was led by one of his elementary schoolmates. My father came across this schoolmate on the way to his elder sister's home. But he was informed that the Communists' soldiers had visited his home and tried to put up posters convincing him to surrender. He was not able to make this trip to his own home. Instead, he stayed in the mountains, in the caves, for two months, hiding away from the Communist army.

I: Was it the Communists, then, that had sent the news that they had captured him?

MA: That's right. They reported this in order to invite the families to come out to make contact with him. That's a very tricky way to deal with it.

I: Did your family take the bait?

MA: We were in Hong Kong then, but we did consider going back to China because it seemed to us that since the main person of the family was gone, what was worthwhile about staying in Hong Kong? So we were going to go right back to China, but we had to make arrangements. Later my father made his appearance and we were so happy.

I: Mr. Ma, once your father did come to Hong Kong, how was your family able to become re-established? You mentioned that when your family came out, you did not have a great deal of money, and by this time your father had lost his position.

MA: I think it was indeed a blessing for the whole family to be able to come to Hong Kong safe and sound, but the problem of living for the family was yet to be solved. All my father had and all the family had was 4,000 Hong Kong dollars left. Later a gift of 3,000 Hong Kong dollars from our good friends was given to support my father to begin his poultry farm in Kam Tin in the New Territories. Since he was born and brought up in a farming village, he was quite confident that he could do well to earn a living by running a farm. He employed a few workers to help in growing vegetables and raising chickens and pigs. He retired completely to become a real farmer. He was strong and diligent. The farm business earned him enough money to educate his four children so that they could complete their college education and to continue to provide for his family a peaceful life.

I: Was it difficult for your father to re-adjust to being a farmer after the position that he had held in the military?

Ma: My father was quite different. Even when he was in a very high position, in his letters he always reminded us that we needed to know, that we needed to trace the source of our family and to know the background of our father and our grandfathers who were farmers. He often said to us: "Whatever you do, whatever you are heading for, you need to know how to spend your money wisely, how to treat others in a fair way and how to be prepared to become in a very low position again." So I think he adjusted to the situation very easily.

I: He had, then, prepared your family for times when things might not go as well.

Ma: Yes.

I: When your father was here in Hong Kong, Mr. Ma, what was his involvement in the Lutheran Church?

Ma: He and his family were enlightened and encouraged and confirmed in Christian faith by Miss Annie Bailie and her co-workers, Miss Pauline Tang and Miss Grace Poon, of the Assembly of God Church in Hong Kong, but they were assisted by the Rev. Charles H. Reinbrecht to receive baptism by Dr. Peng Fu into the Lutheran Church of Hong Kong.

Owing to the fact that there was a pressing need for evangelistic work in the Yuen Long district, my father and family were the first Lutheran members to be appointed to work in this district. The church, in realizing the need, sent Rev. Thomas Lee and Rev. Wu Ming-chieh to represent the church to explore the possibilities of starting chapel services in Yuen Long. My father began his direct involvement with the project. As a starting point, a flat was being rented where services could be held and Rev. Wu Ming-chieh was the full-time parish worker. There were only seven attendants at the first



meeting. The church workers worked hard. The Christian members of the church worked hard and God, too, worked with them. Their work developed very rapidly so that the church had to be moved three times to ever larger flats to accommodate more attendants. Eight years later, in 1959, the church workers had increased to seven persons and congregations numbered more than 1000. Then the church built her own church building. My father served as a chairman of the Board of Deacons of the church for seven years, from 1954 to 1960. At that time he immigrated to Malaysia with my mother and my younger brother and family.

I: At this time, Mr. Ma, what were some of the difficulties that were being faced by the Lutheran Church as it was trying to become established in Hong Kong and especially in Yuen Long?

Ma: In the early '50s Chinese refugees were everywhere trying to settle in various parts of Hong Kong and New Territories. Many of them were Mandarin speakers from the northern part of China. As a Mandarin-speaking church, which was also from the north, the Lutheran church was able to work very closely with the Chinese refugees. Many of the refugees were in difficulties financially and spiritually. The Lutheran church became very popular in relief work. Many souls were won and many churches were established in those days. Nowadays, people have come more settled and evangelistic work has become more difficult. People are not so actively and willingly responding. Spiritual growth of many of the Christians has been very slow.

I: What do you think Pastor Wu Ming-chieh's role has been in the development of the church?

Ma: Actually Wu Ming-chieh was one of the three persons who was appointed to come out to explore the possibilities. Pastor Wu Ming-chieh was young then, and he was amicable and very active. He concentrated all of his mind into the work so that the work developed very rapidly. Then he thought of organizing the activities at Yuen Long as a church. The Board of Deacons was organized and many people suggested that youth activities and adult activities and family activities be organized to make this church the largest of all churches--the largest one of the Lutheran churches in Hong Kong. He has indeed done a great deal in helping the people of Yuen Long in nourishing their spiritual lives.

I: Now that your father is in Malaysia, what is his current involvement in the church?

Ma: August 23, 1964 was the dedication day for the Tenom Church of Sabah, Malaysia, of which my father has helped by collecting donations and funds for construction expenses. Dr. David Vikner was there then to officiate the dedication ceremony. The church is located seven miles from my father's rubber plantation. My father used to preach there for Sunday service once every two weeks. He served as chairman of the Inland District Convention of Basel Church there from 1969 to 1975. Two years ago he retired from his rubber business to live close to my younger brother in Sandakan. He has been actively involved in the local church in family visitation, in preaching at the family fellowship twice a week, and at the Sunday service once a month. He is happily enjoying his retirement with my mother and

has finished writing two books, namely The Growth of a Church and A Memory of the Last Seventy Years--the Life with the Army and the Life with God. He is going to write more books to witness his faith.

I: Mr. Ma, may we now go to your own life experience at this time? Will you please tell us where and when you were born?

Ma: I was born in October 7th, 1932 in a small village called Yung District of Kwangsi Province.

I: What was your educational background on the Mainland of China?

Ma: I was brought up in a typical Chinese traditional way, spending the first 17 years of my life on the Mainland of China where I had elementary and junior middle school education.

I: Did you study any English during this time?

Ma: Yes, we did. But only very little in the middle school.

I: Your father was not then a Christian at this time, but did you have any contact with Christianity as a young person on the Mainland of China?

Ma: It was a pity that I was not born to a Christian home. Yet to become Christian at the age of 18 is still quite fortunate. It was a wonderful experience that the whole family became Christians at the same time. We shared our understandings and experiences. We were able to grow together in our spiritual lives. Some were faster, some were slower, but we were all growing. My parents played very important roles in my Christian growth. I guess because they are good, respectable parents--that made the difference. That helps a great deal in

encouraging the members of the family in their faith. Now they are living examples of good Christians. I was quite convinced that to stay on to be a Christian is a good thing despite all different kinds of temptations. Christianity was beyond my contact when I was on the Mainland of China because in those days, as I mentioned before, the Church did not actively participate in the activities of the local people and they were not well-trained to be good church workers. And they were not in a mood to be progressive. So even neighbors and relatives living nearby were very seldom provided opportunities to become Christians.

I: As a student were you not faced with the question of how Christianity could meet the needs of a modernizing China?

Ma: Well, as a high school student I am not at all sure whether I had ever thought of this type of question before. However, I did dream about how nice and fortunate it would be if the Chinese people would become a Christian country. If China would become a Christian country, the Chinese would be able to lead a happier life and a more fortunate life. When I grew older and studied in the college, I came to realize that it's impossible for a Communist country to allow freedom of religion--be it Christian, Catholic, or Buddhist. This leads to a conclusion: a country without freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of publication can never provide her people happiness, joy and security. China, so far as she is still under the Communist control, will never, by any

chance, allow the existence of Christianity. China may be expected to improve her own condition as a country as a whole by centralizing all the efforts and strength of her people, but you can never expect her to improve her people as individuals because of Communism.

I: Mr. Ma, as you look back on your childhood and youth, what are some of your most vivid memories?

MA: I can still remember so clearly and vividly the place where I was born--a small village surrounded by small hills. A small brook passed right through the middle of the village meeting a river at the entrance of the village. There were trees and paddy fields which made the village a peaceful place to live. Villagers, our cousins and relatives were all good friends one to another. Generation after generation they had lived in contentment. Children attended their own village elementary schools. Secondary school kids had to go to nearby towns for schooling. College students needed to travel to a distant city far away from home. Education was not compulsory--there was no pressure at all. Everybody worked hard at school and in the field and even at home.

Things have changed--the political situation, the good Chinese traditions, the lifestyle of the country. We welcome change, but it should be for improvement of the people's life and for advancement of the country.

Thinking back on those days, one wonders now where is the best place to live or what life would be the best life to live the rest of your life.

I: Mr. Ma, in your village were there many of the students who went to secondary school and then on to college?

MA: To my memory, at least 60 per cent of the children finished their elementary education. 40 per cent completed the secondary school education. Only 10 per cent could further their study in the college.

I: There was definitely 10 per cent?

MA: That's correct.

I: Would you like to say anything more about that at this time? Would you explain what your situation was during the Japanese occupation? We have talked about your father's, but what about the rest of the family?

MA: The Sino-Japanese War took place in the north-eastern part of China. It did not affect my hometown at all. Kwangsi is at the far south end of China. Many residents from Hong Kong, as I recall, escaped to find refuge in Kwangsi during the Japanese occupation. We were quite lucky.

I: After the Sino-Japanese occupation ended, you mentioned that your father moved to a different place and then had to evacuate. Would you relate that in more detail, please?

MA: My father was then the army commander of the central part of Kwangsi. We left our home (my brother, my eldest sister and my younger brother) and went up to meet my father at Liuchow city where the commanding headquarters were located. Owing to unfavorable situations, we had to move to Nanning and had to leave behind my father and his

army to fight against the enemy. We could have gone to Vietnam, the neighboring country of Nanning, if we could not catch the last airplane to Hong Kong. The last plane happened to be a chartered plane of the minister of finance of Kwangsi Province who was, in fact, the elder brother of our fellow teacher, Mr. Wai. Mr. Wai's brother was to evacuate his property, or the property of Kwangsi Province, to Hong Kong. The commander-in-charge of the city who was under direct command of my father forced the plane to take us to Hong Kong.

I: Was it quite a large plane?

MA: It was not a very large one. It was using propellers. The finance minister used this plane to carry silver coin money and dry meats to Hong Kong.

I: How much time did you have to prepare for this evacuation?

MA: We were informed. Referring back to what I said, my father informed us that the Communist armies were marching toward our direction. So we took only one night to prepare for leaving Nanning. The plane was the last one to leave there. Four days after our departure, Nanning was captured.

I: And how much money were you able to carry with to Hong Kong?

MA: All we had to go along with us was the amount of some 10,000 Hong Kong dollars.

I: How were you able to obtain this cash?

MA: We did not have a bank account. We had to send our people to various money exchanges to exchange what we had brought to be sold into dollars.

I: You were able to fly directly to Hong Kong and they gave you permission to land in Hong Kong without any difficulty?

MA: Yes. We were flying directly to Hong Kong. To my memory the Immigration Department of Hong Kong was not so strict as they are doing by now. I remember I did carry a pistol, too, but nobody cared to search me. I threw it into the sea just as I entered the airport.

I: How old were you at this time?

MA: I was 17 years old.

I: What schooling did you have in Hong Kong?

MA: I chose to enter the 10th grade of an Anglo-Chinese grammar school. Later my father convinced me to switch to continue my study in a Chinese middle school where I stayed to complete my 12th grade education. My father was a bit conservative and was thinking of keeping the Chinese cultural tradition.

I did not go on to college after completing high school courses but entered into the Lutheran Bible Institute instead. Upon completion of the courses, I was not sure I was being called for church ministry. Then I furthered my study at the Taiwan University, taking civil engineering as my major field of study. After working four years in the Yuen Long Lutheran Middle School, from 1961 to 1965, I was given a full scholarship and a one year study leave by the church to further my study in the field of education. I went to study at the University of Minnesota in September, 1965, and returned with a master's degree in education administration on



August 1966 to resume my duty in the school.

I: When you went to Hong Kong, did you find there was a period of adjustment for yourself and your family?

MA: Yes. We had spent the first two months in Kowloon City in a rented flat. We were not used to living in the city. Money spent was like putting it into a hole. Sooner or later we would use up our savings. Then my father came to join us. We moved right away to the New Territories to get settled down in Kamtin, running a poultry farm. Members of the family were all entering into work--planting and watering vegetables, feeding and attending chickens and pigs. A farmer's life is simple, regular and healthy. We all loved it.

I: In Taiwan you were very active in the student ministry, in church work there. What exactly was your involvement in the student work in Taiwan?

MA: I went to Taiwan to further my study in civil engineering in Taiwan University in the fall of 1955. As soon as I arrived in Taipei I went to visit Rev. Peter Chow of Truth Lutheran Church. I have known him in Hong Kong. I was introduced to Miss Clara Jones who was a missionary to work among students. The church and the student center were sharing the same roof. The student center was built in 1954. Activities began in the same year. However, formal organization for staffing, programs and activities began a year later in 1955 when I arrived there. I was elected the first president of the Lutheran University Student Fellowship. Activities of the student fellowship included regular weekly fellowship, student choir rehearsal, Bible

class, prayer groups, leadership training programs and winter and summer conferences. We tried to involve as many students as we could--be they Mainlanders, Taiwanese, or Cantonese, or overseas Chinese students. Students from all universities and colleges were equally welcomed. With the concerted effort of the staff and the committee members as well as fellow-member students, the work developed very rapidly. I had been the president for four consecutive years in the student center. God has richly blessed the students' work there. God answers prayers.

I: What difficulties did you face at this time in getting the student work started?

MA: You are putting me into a rather difficult situation to refer to the difficulties. Sometimes it's difficult to point out what the real difficulties were we had encountered in those years. We understand there are visible or seen difficulties which come from unavoidable conflicts which would be easily observed. But the invisible or unseen difficulties could only be sensed or felt and they could not be clearly stated. We had had many difficulties. Some were from the church. Some were among ourselves. We would never hide them. We never ignored their existence; we never talked about them behind somebody's back. We brought them out and discussed them. We apologized bravely; we sincerely forgave. We brought our difficulties to our Lord. He is always there to help us out.

I: So even though there were difficulties, it was a very healthy situation?

MA: It was.

I: When you came back to Hong Kong, Mr. Ma, you were trained as a civil engineer. How did you become involved in Christian education?

MA: I began working in the Yuen Long Lutheran Middle School in April 1961. I was to teach till July of the same year and then take up a job in the government department as an assistant engineer. At the end of the school year, the board of schools would not let me resign; instead, they appointed me principal of the school. Rev. Charles Reinbrecht was then the supervisor. He was a very close friend of my father. They made their acquaintance on the Mainland of China. The school was facing administrative and financial problems. Pastor Reinbrecht needed me badly. I stayed on as principal to earn a monthly salary of 470 dollars instead of getting 740 dollars per month as a civil engineer. I did not regret my decision. I was happy that I could see the need and I was willing to accept the challenge to help solve the problems. I stayed on until now. I took the job as my career; I did not take it as an occupation. I thank God for that.

I: How did you initially feel when you first got the principalship since you had been trained in engineering? Was it a difficult role?

MA: Yes, it was. I was nervous. I had to face so many teachers and so many students. Now the job as a principal of a school is really a very challenging one. I was not trained to fit into this position, so I had to begin all over again. But I was lucky. The school was not a large school. We had only six classes. We had not more than 10 teachers to work with and we had very close cooperation. We very closely worked together with students

and with teachers. I went into all the departments. I worked for department heads. I first committed myself to work as cashier, to begin to know how to manage money. Then I studied how to make the master schedule for the whole school and also entered into the disciplinary activities to help the students in this area. I did all this in order to familiarize myself with the various aspects of the set-up at the school. That was quite a stimulation to me in this job.

I: As you look back on your career in Christian education, what do you think your impact has been as a lay worker as opposed to being an ordained minister?

MA: I did not insist on becoming or remaining as a layworker. I am willing to stay on whatever job that God sees me fit. As a layman serving on church-related committees, I have been provided with opportunities to observe things objectively and to speak in favor of or against the church policies objectively. I think it is necessary for a layman to be well-equipped with education and experience. It is very important if he is to function effectively and properly in this position. And after all, he should be a God-fearer and a devout Christian.

I: After these years of being in a church-related school, what do you feel is the purpose of Christian schools in Hong Kong?

MA: The purpose of Christian schools in Hong Kong has been threefold:

1. To help create a Christian life; that is, to help students into a vital relationship with Jesus Christ and to help channel them into the church worship and for service.

2. To help nurture Christian faith; that is, to help and encourage students in their Christian growth and to pray for them and to counsel them into Christian service.

3. To help provide community service; that is, to demonstrate the Christian's concern and love for society.

I: Do you think that the Christian schools in Hong Kong have been effective doing this?

MA: Well, the church-sponsored schools in Hong Kong progress very slowly due to the lack of capable administrative personnel who lack direction and concern from the education office and lack support from the central church--both physical and spiritual support.

I: As you view the future, what do you see remains to be done in Lutheran-sponsored education?

MA: I would say there is a lot to be done to make improvements. Now I can easily mention a few:

1. The educational program of our schools should be planned differently as compared with the secular schools of the community.

2. We should be paying more attention and concern to the growth toward maturity and the life needs of our students.

3. The administration and management of our school should be more effective and efficient.

4. A centralized system should be employed to conduct and supervise our schools.

5. Religious activities and Christian faith should be strengthened through capable and gifted leadership personnel.

I: When you said, Mr. Ma, at the beginning that you think that programs should be different in the church schools as compared to the secular schools, can you give an example or examples of what kind of ideas you have in mind?

MA: Yes. I think we are quite free to take an open stand. The Education Department actually sets the rules and regulations, but seldom goes in to help assist in implementing these rules and regulations in the schools. And the Education Department can only check the routine things of the schools; they cannot give practical advice or suggestions or recommendations to make the school progress or improve. So as a church school in Hong Kong, a Lutheran school, I think we could do more than we are able to do now.

You mentioned about the programs our school does plan differently from the secular schools in the community. Actually, we can see that now even church schools are walking the same paths as secular schools. I cannot find too much difference in them curriculum-wise or in the management or in the aspects of teaching. The only difference we could observe from outward appearance is that in the church schools there are religious activities, and the activities, and so on, and the personnel matter a great deal. But it is not the name of the activities. It is the inner and the spiritual side of it. So I do think we could have the same curriculum, but we should be strengthened. We should pay more attention to the spiritual side.

I: When you look at students and young adults today in Hong Kong, what are the difficulties for them in becoming Christians?

MA: This I would put this way. I would say Christian teachers, religious workers, chaplains or church pastors have direct influence upon the faith of the students. Verbal instructions or sermons preached can do very little to attract or convince students. They look at your behavior, your actions, the deepness of your spiritual life. They weigh both your words and your works. Well, what I am up to is to say that the teachers and the church workers should be responsible for the failure.

I: What are the difficulties of the students and the young adults entering church work?

MA: I think we can apply the same situation of the school to the church. The growth and the progress or improvement of the church leans mainly on the service and the dedication of the teacher or the preacher or the pastor or the parish worker. You cannot inspire a person by merely preaching in public. You have to act out what you are saying. Then that's the only way to convey the message of God into the heart of the audience. I think it actually does not make too much difference whether it is referring to school or the church.

I: As the church in Hong Kong, particularly the Lutheran Church, continues to grow and develop, what do you see as the role of the missionaries or the western church workers in Hong Kong at this point?

MA: I would like to confine myself in referring to missionaries of our church. Missionaries in Hong Kong are not active enough in taking part in church-related activities as I can see it. I think it is true, too, that the Chinese church workers are very poor in spiritual life and they have very little growth and revival. Now we could observe very little about the growth and revival of their spiritual life and concern. Uncertainty of the future and the insecurity of their jobs might be the main causes of the poor phenomenon which spoils the relationship between the mission boards and the local churches. It causes misunderstanding, too. As the scripture says, "There are mountains to be leveled and there are valleys to be filled." There are so many mountains and valleys in our midst; I think we really need to ask God to help us to do leveling work together.

I: When you look at the future of Hong Kong, what do you see as the future of Christianity here?

MA: I think social change marks life perhaps more strongly in Hong Kong than anywhere else in the world. No one is able to predict what change is to take place. Intelligent, flexible planning needs to become a part of the growth of the church or of an institution; otherwise it would be swept away. I could only say in general terms referring to this question.

I: Do you think that the Asian Christian has certain things that he can offer the rest of the international Christian community?

MA: I think a Christian in all parts of the world can contribute to one another. Asian Christians are



more conservative. They were not aggressive enough. But nowadays churches in Hong Kong and in southeastern Asia are beginning to think about sending people into the other parts of the world. I think in terms of this outreaching of work that we need to come back again to influence our workers.

I: Mr. Ma, we were just speaking a little bit about the experiences of the Christian church on the Mainland of China. Would you begin with that question again, please?

MA: The Mainland of China has been such a nice and rich field for sowing the seeds of the Gospel. God's children were not working hard enough to win more souls. Now it's under the Communist control. The door for preaching the Gospel has been tightly closed. It's too late to say anything in this respect now.

The same experience can be applied in viewing the situation in Hong Kong. We should work harder while it is still bright daylight. When darkness comes, no one can do anything then.

I: If the People's Republic of China, Mainland China, becomes more open, how do you think the church, and particularly the church here in Hong Kong, should be prepared to respond?

MA: Now this assumption is quite impossible. Should there be such a day, I don't believe the church would be allowed to preach or work freely in the Mainland of China. Only those churches who are willing to obey the direction and instruction of the state are allowed to operate their work. They would automatically become the political tools of the states.

I: What information do you hear about the church in China? Do you have information about groups of Christians who are able to meet?

MA: Yes. Once in a while we are told that they are meeting secretly. They are not allowed to bring Bibles along. They meet to memorize whatever they can in their minds--the text of the Bible. They have to be sure that Christians meeting together, that they are all real Christians. Otherwise they would be in trouble. Actually, they need to do a lot of detective work in finding out the real attitude of the Christians. Then they are ready to communicate. They are ready to have good fellowship. But they are confined to very, very small groups.

I: Have you gotten the information about whether some of the older generation are able to teach the younger generation some of the principles of Christianity? Do you ever hear anything like this?

MA: I have never heard about this before. People mention only that even members in a family are not brave enough to speak freely to one another. So according to this observation, I don't think the older generation would be willing to risk their lives to do any talking of this kind to their children.

I: So when the older generation of Christians dies, it is possible that much of Christianity will die with them.

MA: Yes, it will. When they have all passed away, I would say we should not be so upset about that. But I would say if evangelistic work is not allowed or the

gospels are not allowed to be preached in Mainland China, later on the Christians will become less and less because the older generation would die and of the younger ones, only a very few of them would become Christian because they actually do not have the opportunity.

I: So it really is very possible that in a relatively short time there will be no remnants of the past?

MA: I think the attitude of the Christians would change quite a bit if they are called Christians.

I: Mr. Ma, when you look back on your life as a Christian, whom have you found have influenced you the most, both Chinese Christians and perhaps western Christians, and why?

MA: When I first became a Christian, I remember the first book I read was the book called The Last Fifty Years by Mr. Wang Ming-tao. Now this gentleman was born in Peking in 1900, two months after the death of his father. He was brought up by his mother and one of his surviving sisters. If they all survived, he should have had four brothers and sisters, but the others had died. Wang Ming-tao was 14 when he began to think of furthering his study and becoming a politician. He had special interest in politics, but later he tried to find admission to the university. He was refused and he could not be matriculated. He was 18 when he took the matriculation examination. At that time he heard the call to become a minister of the church. But he refused to take it as a true call. When he failed to get admission to the university, he had to consider this call again. But he then entered into the teaching profession,

teaching in a high school. He had a very good education in his childhood, reading a lot of Chinese literature. That made him a learned person even though he had never had a college education. Then he became a very, very well-known teacher in the school and he became very thankful and devout when he was about 21 or 22.

Later on, during the Japanese occupation, (he was then about 40 years old) he had become a very outstanding and popular preacher of the church. He was invited to preach in all parts of China--a very, very prominent preacher of the Gospel.

It was in 1942 when he was still working in his church in Peking and the Japanese wanted him to unite all the missionary churches. The Japanese suggested that the missionary churches should have a combined organization, one could say, a union. Now this promised to be that they would be in danger under the Japanese government. So the Japanese sent out an invitation to Mr. Wang to join this combined organization. He prayed and prayed and then he refused to be a part of it. He said, "Now Christians should have nothing to do with the Japanese. Once the union is set up, you must be prestigious to be accepted. Then you will be under a certain control of the Japanese authority. So Mr. Wang said to himself that this is not God's will. He had struggled with this for maybe three or four months until the officer in charge of the Japanese authority came to visit him. He thought now that must be the end of the church because he hadn't said yes or no. To say yes is against the will of God, to say no to this would mean the end of his own church. He prayed and prayed and he dared not take his first step to walk out the door. His wife encouraged him.

They were praying and his wife said, "Ming-tao, you should know what you are working for. You should know your stand. Even to risk your life, you are working for Jesus Christ." He went straight to this Japanese general and he said no to him. The Japanese officers spent one hour in persecuting him, but he insisted on saying no. Then he was dismissed. He went home and prayed and cried. Then he made an announcement to his members and said, "You must be ready tomorrow or the day after tomorrow to know what will become of our church. My answer to the invitation was no." And nothing happened. This went on for a year.

One day one of Wang Ming-tao's friends met that very officer in another occasion. He asked the Japanese officers about it: "Now you have had all the churches united and have left alone Mr. Wang's church. Do you think it is a good example to the others?" This Japanese officer said to him: "He said that he had a very firm stand. I don't think I can do anything to convince him, so I let him alone."

This was reported to Mr. Wang. He was so moved that he thought that God was by his side. From then on he worked more diligently than any other for Jesus Christ.

Then when I read this story, it seemed to me that whatever you do and whatever you face, you don't need to be afraid because Jesus is always there and he answers prayers. This is one of the characters that I feel I admired most and inspired me the most.

And, of course, Rev. Wu Ming-Chieh. I have mentioned quite a few things about him. He worked in the Yuen Long church. I would say that he is my spiritual father. It was through talking and working

with him that I made up my mind to receive the training in the Lutheran Bible Institute. It was this inspiration and the messages he had delivered from God that inspired me and confirmed me to dedicate my life in whatever field I would be, either a layman or an ordained minister of the church, and I will never stray away from God.

I remember those years when he was working in Yuen Long. Of course, our family had a very close relationship with the church. My father had been working closely with the church and became so involved with the activities of the church that my sister and my brother were also taking part in the activities. I remember Pastor Wu when we had moved a third time to a larger flat, due to the fact that we had more attendance in our church. He became very sick one day. One of the church members was Mr. Yau, who was serving on the Board of Deacons. He told me one day that he was the one appointed by the Board of Deacons to bring 100 dollars to Pastor Wu and to ask him to accept it to take care of the expenses of medicine. Pastor Wu refused to do so. Then the church Board of Deacons decided to put a box in front of the church entrance saving collections for taking care of medical expenses for Pastor Wu. A month later they opened the box and there was 700 dollars there. They took this 700 dollars to Pastor Wu. He was sick in the hospital in Kowloon. Pastor Wu said (again Mr. Yau was one of the representatives), "Now thank you for this, but would you mind to give me an envelope." Pastor Wu wrote on the envelope and it said, "Contribution offering to the church." He did not take that money.

Actually during those years, during those eight years of serving in the church, he had never accepted salary from the church. The church members would bring him a chicken, noodles, vegetables and even rice and cook for him. He set a very good example to the church. That is why the Yuen Long Lutheran Church could have such a big church. Pastor Wu was the pioneer and he was actually putting all his mind and his love and his effort into his work. I think he was lucky to be alone to be a bachelor. He left his family behind in Mainland China and he was alone and lived a lonely life. In one way, he had a very sad life, but on the other hand, in the ministry of God, I think he had the advantages to be alone. He could emphasize, he could put all he had into his work. He is another one who inspired me so much, who really encouraged me those years in my spiritual life.

One last one I think who is worth mentioning is Mr. Charles Reinbrecht, missionary from Pennsylvania. He first worked in Shantung, the northern part of China. Then he moved with the army to the central part of China and was stationed in Kwangsi for a couple of years. That's the place that my father was in.

I: Was he a chaplain for the army?

MA: He was not. He was working in the church, but since he had very, very close relations with the army officers, and he had the opportunity to move along with the army. Thinking of him, and as we think about the establishment of the high school here, he was actually the one who initiated this program in Hong Kong. But he had faced so many difficulties. People could not understand him because he was a tall, thin fellow and he was of quick

temper and he was very aggressive. It is not easy for Chinese to accept him. But he did not mind about resistance. He went ahead. (You know, that's why he had this Kowloon Lutheran Middle School set up and the Yuen Long Lutheran Middle School and a few other elementary schools. Hung Hom Lutheran Elementary School is one of the schools that was under his direction.)

It was his integral effort that had made the schools come into being. I think it was his energy and his love for the Chinese and his love for the work of education that made him help me take care of my expenses in my first year in college in Taiwan. He encouraged me a great deal to take part in the church work, and my education in the Lutheran Bible Institute was fully supported by his mission. He further supported me in Taiwan but only for the first year. During the second year my father thought he could support my tuition. He said to Pastor Reinbrecht: "Now why don't you use this money for someone else and we can take care of my son." We had very close contact with what we call the Lo-tung Mission--the mission that Pastor Reinbrecht was the chairman of. He became the supervisor of the school here in Yuen Long and the school in Kowloon. He had many difficulties in administration, as I mentioned, and in personnel management and in relationships with the church. He asked me to help in the school. I could not say no but to work here, to work here as the principal of the school. I could never imagine that I could stay in this position for so many years, but I am thankful for the privilege. I am thankful for Mr. Wang, Pastor Wu Ming-chieh and also Pastor Reinbrecht for their inspiration and their work in Hong Kong.



I: Mr. Ma, unfortunately we have no more time. Are there any further comments that you would like to add to the record?

MA: I think I have said enough and I think it is more than I should say. Thank you for giving me this chance that I could really reflect what I have in my mind and what I could understand in this concern. Thank you. Thank you very much.

I: Thank you for your time.

MA: Thank you for your time.

I: You are welcome.