

1978

Midwest China Oral History Interviews

Arna Quello Sovik

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

Recommended Citation

Sovik, Arna Quello, "Midwest China Oral History Interviews" (1978). *China Oral Histories*. Book 87.
http://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/china_histories/87

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.

ARNA QUELLO SOVIK
ORAL HISTORY ABSTRACT

BORN: July 18, 1892, in Atwater, Minnesota.

EARLY LIFE: family background; education; called by Mission Board of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church to serve as a nurse.

CHINA EXPERIENCES: memories of Sister Thone Sandland; emotional struggles faced by single women missionaries; description of first year spent at language school in Peking in 1923; experiences at hospitals in Kioshan and Hwangchuan; memorable people at Hwangchuan; Hwangchuan ladies' aid society; evacuation due to civil unrest, 1927; experiences as school nurse at the American School-Kikungshan (ASK); why ASK moved to Kuling; training nurses and other responsibilities at Union Hospital, Sinyang; the reputation of Dr. Skinsnes in Sinyang; supply problems at Hwangchuan hospital, 1935; effects of Japanese occupation and bombing on city and hospital of Hwangchuan; uncertainties created by the war; journey out of China to America, 1944; work in Fancheng after return to China, 1946.

INTERVIEWER: Jane Baker Koons

DATES: 1-13-78; 1-14-78

PLACE: Northfield, Minnesota

NUMBER OF PAGES: 89

+ Complementary archival and museum material from Arna Quello Sovik is also housed in the Midwest China Oral History, Archives and Museum Collection.

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: Could we begin with something of your family background?

SOVIK: I was born in Atwater, Minnesota, a small town in Minnesota, on July 18, 1892. My parents both came from Selbu, Norway, 30 miles out of Trondheim, and they were married in Minneapolis, in 1873. My father had a home, or maybe a farm, up at Lac Qui Parle County, but he traded it for a farm near Atwater, Minnesota. Our farm was three-fourths of a mile from Atwater. My parents were church people, and they helped start the church there.

My older sister Hedvig was born, and the next child was Mali. Mali died from some contagious disease, when several little babies died. It was pioneer times. Then another little Mali came, and she lived until some years ago. Olina was the name of another sister. She was in the first high school class of that little town and after further study in St. Cloud, she was teaching school. Little Tina was born, but when she was four years old, she died of diphtheria. She could sing so well, and my dad just loved her. He walked to the next town and bought a little coffin and carried it home all those 12 plus miles for her. Then we had another Tina. I was born two years after her; I was the seventh girl born in the family. I got my name Arna, from my dad's name, Arnt. Two years after that we had a brother, and he had the two grandpas' names, Thomas Olaf.

Mother, Johanna, died very suddenly when she was 52, and my older sister, Lena, became our mother. My two older sisters were already married when Mother died; so it was Tina, and Thomas and I at home with my dad and Lena. When I finished high school and after teaching country school for three years, I went into training at the Swedish Hospital in Minneapolis in 1914. I received my R.N. degree in 1917. I recall a nursing instructor telling us that we wouldn't find everything ready to work with after we left the Swedish Hospital. And I had plenty of experience with that! My first experiences with a Chinese hospital were homemade wooden beds with straw mattresses; no electric lights, no running water; a wood stove in the operating room!

When we finished training, they were calling for nurses for the First World War. Seven from our class from the Swedish Hospital went in. I was assigned first to a beautiful hotel in West Baden, Indiana, that was taken over for soldiers who came back--all kinds of them. Whatever they had, they came in on the train and we took care of them. After half a year there, I was transferred to Rahway, New Jersey. An amputation camp hospital was built there, not too far from Rahway and New York, with 1,500 amputation patients. It was hard in a way, because when those poor boys came home, they wondered what their people who loved them would think--without limbs, and so on. There were 34 patients in every ward, so there were

an awful lot of dressings. In my ward, the doctor whom I worked with was a mission doctor of the Presbyterian mission on furlough from Siam. I learned a lot about dressings from him, and when he couldn't be there, he let me take care of things. So it was good training.

It was the year of the flu, and my sister Lena had gotten the flu. They called me home after I'd been in the service a year to care for her. She died shortly after Christmas; she had gotten TB throat from that flu.

I: What led you into the mission field and especially to China?

SOVIK: Our pastor in Atwater was Dr. Olaf Norlie, and he was very interested in missions. We were so close to the church that we never missed going. We were interested in singing in the choir, and Sunday school. My Sunday school teacher was Anna Peterson who wanted to be a missionary. Also, the last year in high school I had a good principal, Anna Warren, and she was interested in missions. There were other girls in our church who were interested: Ruth Gilbertson, for example, went to China. She went out to teach in the American School shortly after she finished St. Olaf. Another family in our town, my Sunday school teacher's family, the Fred Petersons, were interested in missions, too. My teacher, Anna, had planned to go, but she died before she was able to fulfill this. Then Clara Peterson, her younger sister decided to go and arrived in

China in 1921. Clara assumed her sister's mantle and went to China in her place. So there were three schoolmates from our small town who went into China missions.

It was hard for my father to have me go away. He used to say that he had gone away from his home, and he knew how it was and he battled with my going. I was working on cases in some of the other hospitals in the state, sometimes going up into northern Minnesota. I visited another pastor, Pastor Hoifjeld in Duluth, and then he wrote a letter to my dad, supporting my going to China. My dad became resigned to my decision because the morning I was leaving home he read from the 118th Psalm. "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." Then I went. It wasn't easy to leave home to be sure, but God was good to help me decide and has continued to be good all the years.

I: Why were you specifically interested in China?

SOVIK: Anna Warren knew that we were interested, and she wanted us to go to the Near East someplace where Pastor Lawritz Larsen was in some religious work. Finally, Clara Peterson and I went to the Mission Board of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church because they wanted registered nurses. No other country was mentioned when we applied and the board accepted us at once. I couldn't go just then. My dad and brother got sick and I had to stay home and take care of them.

Clara went in '21, and I decided that I wouldn't write to Clara in China. I could just battle this decision to go to China myself. People thought Clara was trying to get me to go to China. When things were worked out better, the offer was still open, so I went in 1923. It just didn't go away that I was supposed to go to China. And when my dad read from Psalm 118, I felt he felt more sure about it, too.

I went to China with two deaconesses: Sister Clara Kravig and Sister Marie Fredrickson. Sister Clara Kravig, who was from the Deaconess Hospital in Chicago, was also going out to China for the first time. But she knew all about China because the deaconesses who were out there would come to the hospital while on furlough. I didn't know anything, really. I had never met a deaconess. I thought they were so religious and I was afraid I wouldn't fit in. We went by train to Seattle. There Sister Thone Sandland, who had been out on the field since 1913, joined us. She had recently been moved to a station on the West Field and was very unhappy about it. It was hard for her all the way across to accept this assignment to a new field.

When we came to Shanghai, Sister Thone had lost the key for the purser's box so she couldn't get her money or passport and other valuables. In the evening her finger hurt, so she looked in her sewing box and there was her key. That changed

her completely. She had been praying a lot about finding that key. Then she was resigned about where she was going. Sister Thone had been so respected in the East Field where she had served before, that it was difficult for her to make the change to a new field and to be alone at a station. In 1922, she had been awarded the Four Gold Star Medal of the Phoenix Order for her outstanding efforts in famine relief in the East Field, so you can see how respected she was and why it would be hard for her to be transferred.

I: How did the attitude of the deaconesses affect you?

SOVIK: I was just getting to know the deaconesses. They were wonderful people, all of them. They all came to be real friends, and we became real sisters. Sister Thone was sort of baffling, and I couldn't quite understand her. Still, to me she became one of the greatest people. She was stationed close to where I was, and we had things in common. You could tell she was a marvelous soul. It wasn't easy for these single ladies who were at stations alone. We nurses were with doctors and other families when we worked in the bigger hospital centers, but many of our single ladies would be at a station all alone. There were battles with bandit raids, and so on. It was anything but easy.

After Edward Sovik and I were married, we went to the West Field. That's where Sister Thone had been reassigned. At that time Sister Thone wrote to Edward and asked if he would see that she got buried if she died. It made us think about what some of these single women went through. The church in Sister Thone's area was building after the war and didn't have enough money. Sister Thone gave some of hers so she hardly had any. She was concerned that there might not be enough money to cover funeral expenses. But she got home to the United States and worked in the Lutheran Family Welfare Society in Chicago, and was at the Deaconess Home for many years. She died in 1976 at the age of 94.

Sister Clara Kravig was with me quite a few years, but she went home, too. She didn't live too long. She was a wonderful person to go with because she had prior knowledge of what it was going to be like in China.

I: What were your first impressions of China and the initial adjustments you had to make?

SOVIK: It was the coolies who manned the rickshas. They were trying to get all the money they could out of these new people. But, of course, I came with people who had been out there and were coming back, so they took care of things and that made it easy. I remember the boats in the harbor in Shanghai and all the people everywhere.

Sister Clara Kravig and I were the two from that party who were slated to go to Peking. The others, Sister Marie and Sister Thone, went to Hankow by boat up the river and went immediately back to the field, Sister Thone to her new station on the West Field.

Since the single ladies were the only missionaries at some of the stations, they had to have the services. Sometimes they were at stations where there was a missionary pastor or a Chinese pastor, but they were very much alone those first years. Sometimes the evangelistic workers or pastors would visit the stations and take care of meetings and communions.

I: Particularly in the early days of the mission was too much expected of the single women?

SOVIK: Everybody was supposed to do as much as they could. Even we as nurses in the hospitals--well, you can feature, we had to train our hospital staff. In China, whatever talent you'd been given you used. For instance, if you'd had any musical talent or experience, it would be put to use. When I was at the hospital in Sinyang, I had to teach music in the elementary school there. It was the fifth and sixth grade--a room full of young children. Their music was 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, where ours was notes, so then I had to go back and learn this nights, after I'd worked all day in the hospital,

to get ready for that class. I never learned to know all those little youngsters, Li and Tung and all those names, either. Sometimes I'd have to have one of the other instructors help me with the discipline because it wasn't so easy. We had to do jobs like that that we weren't supposed to do.

Later on, it turned out that two of us took care of the English in the girls' high school in Sinyang--at the I Kwang School. I had the freshmen and sophomores, and Mrs. Borghild Syrdal had the juniors and seniors for English. That was easier than the large music class. There were eight girls, I think, wonderful young students who were easier to handle. But we had British textbooks and I had forgotten a lot of my English grammar--gerunds, and so on. Borghild did a lot of coaching to try to help me. Before the year was out, a Chinese inspector came to inspect our classes. In the textbook there was a chapter that was a dialog, and I assigned it to the different members in the class. They responded where they were supposed to, and the inspector thought that was interesting, so I got by. But all this was in addition to full nursing responsibilities at the Sinyang Hospital.

Things weren't always so easy: Once, I came back to the hospital from a class and found that a fellow had come in with a very serious condition and had died before I got there. The nurseboy was so worried that he hadn't gotten the evangelist earlier and he was crying. Things like that would happen to kind of dampen things.

Many of the married couples were good to us single ladies and that helped ease the loneliness, although there really wasn't time for loneliness. Mrs. Ella Granskou told me that when they were married and went out to China, they resolved to be awfully good to the single ladies, to have them in their home. They were so good to us and so were the Chinese--the Chinese would also get to be like your family.

I: Would you describe your journey to language school in Peking?

SOVIK: On the train to Peking we learned a lot of things. We were on a long train in a crowded coach. People seemed friendly, but we couldn't talk to them. It seemed they made a lot of noise when they ate, but we learned that was polite and permitted.

It was late at night when we arrived in Peking and Mrs. Mussen, matron of the language school, was there to meet us. She was a little lady who was a wonderful person. We language students were housed in a Chinese house with paper windows and small rooms. It was a nice place where there were many students from all the missions.

I; Would you describe your course of study and what you learned of Chinese culture?

SOVIK: The first day we were at school we had a very special teacher--everybody called him "Dearest," because he was our

favorite. The first three words we learned were "wo", "ni," and "ta." It was, "me," "you," and "he/she and it." Then we thought of "Juanita," the song, so it was easy to remember. We would try to associate the sounds with something we knew, so that it would help us to remember things. We were all taught together as a group to begin with and each day we had private teachers and small group sessions.

We were busy. We learned to write characters and had exams on a hundred at a time. We had to write them so they were legible. I sent my two exam papers on my characters back to my dad because I passed; I got 100 on them. I liked to write them--they were interesting, and beautiful.

I: Were you nurses together so that you could concentrate on a specialized medical vocabulary?

SOVIK: There were about 13 nurses attending language school while I was there. We perhaps had classes that had nursing terms, but I can't remember that the whole class of nurses was in a special class. One of my very best friends was Jean Menzies, whose father was Dr. Menzies of the Canadian Mission in North China. He had been killed by a patient in the hospital, and here she came back and was a nurse again in China. We were very, very close.

We met people from all kinds of missions. We were together a lot and it seemed to me that later on people connected with religious organizations in China really worked together. When we had famines in our area, the Catholics, the China Inland Mission, and our Lutheran mission would get the money to dispense to the different missions, and we would work together as a united relief team. This cooperative spirit was one of the outcomes of our year in Peking because we did get to know other missionaries so well.

I: Did you have special lectures at the Peking Union Medical College or elsewhere?

SOVIK: No, they didn't have classes like that, but we visited many things on Saturdays, including the medical college. The Augustana Lutherans, and us, the Norwegians that were Lutheran, would gather together and have things like prayer meetings and coffee; and we would do things together. The whole school went one Saturday to the Great Wall and another to the marble boat.

I: What was the impact of that year in Peking?

SOVIK: It was interesting to be there. We were exposed to the great culture of China through our visits. Walking along the street in Peking, one day, we passed our American Embassy

building with our flag flying. I recall how it looked like a part of home and had never looked so beautiful.

Then there was another side, too. We'd see the beggars on the street, and if we tried to help one person, there were so many other people around all the time who needed help. I remember once we were outside of Kioshan by a temple there, and a fellow was lying with scarcely any clothes. When I got home, I had a woman fix a complete padded garment for him, and I took it up there alone. I scarcely got home because other beggars already knew about it, and they were after me to give everybody one. You had to be awfully careful how you did things. I can remember watching Dr. C. C. Skinsnes do many things for people as he'd make his rounds; but he would assign the task to some nurseboy to bring something to a patient, so they didn't know who it was from. And that was good.

We learned things that way from each other, and as we went along. In Peking we studied the Chinese language on our vacations, like the two weeks at Christmas, and tried to get ahead as far as we could. I don't know if that was wise or not. It turned out that we learned to get by and get along with what we had. When we were out on the field, of course, we would learn from the Chinese. In hospital work we had so little time to study the language. For instance,

in our hospitals we always had 7:00 a.m. devotions when we came on duty, and it was reading a chapter in the gospels. The evening before, you would go to the gospel and study it so that you wouldn't be stuck on a verse. There was so little time free to study the language.

When we were in Peking, they gave me a Chinese name, "Gweilo," "gwei" from "gweihua," a little flower that looked like an orange blossom and had a lemony fragrance. But if the "gwei" were mispronounced, if the tone was wrong, it would be "devil." A Chinese evangelist in Kioshan suggested that I get a new name because this one could be abused. The Chinese doctors consulted a book and came up with "Kuai lo," which means beautiful, so I became Kuai hsiao chieh--Kuai Small Sister--as they called me as a nurse.

I: After your language course was completed in Peking, what was your next assignment?

SOVIK: When school was out, we went to the mountains to Kikungshan. The other two Atwater missionaries, Ruth Gilbertson and Clara Peterson, from my home church, had rented one of the houses and said I should come and live with them for the time we were there. We were at Kikungshan for the summer conference. We'd have conference there to station workers, and that's where I was given my assignment--Kioshan Hospital.

We had a good staff at Kioshan, which was the oldest hospital on our field. We had Dr. Olaf Behrents, an ophthalmologist, who took care of eye cases there; Dr. G.N. Fedde--internal medicine; Dr. Nellie Holman--our lady doctor; and we had two Chinese doctors and good laboratory workers there; and Sister Ingeborg Peterson and Clara Peterson were there as part of the nursing staff. The mission added me there, and I stayed until February, until I went to Huangchuan.

The hospital in Hwangchuan hadn't been running because they didn't have personnel. So Louis H. Braafladt, who was one of our China doctors, and had gone to be on the faculty at the Shantung Christian University Medical School, picked out two doctors for Hwangchuan: Dr. Chi, internist and Dr. Chang, a surgeon. In February these two doctors came, and Clara and I left the Kioshan Hospital to go to the one in Hwangchuan.

First, let me tell you one incident from the Kioshan hospital. Dr. Behrents, the ophthalmologist, had operated on a 12-year-old blind girl. I was with him when he went to find out if the surgery was successful. It was cold, so I had a maroon-colored wool sweater that I had gotten from home over my uniform. When we got to this little girl, Dr. Behrents took off the bandages and pointed to my sweater to ask what color it was, and she said, "hungti"--that's red. Then he pointed to my

uniform and she said, "baiti"--that's white; and then he pointed to my feet and she said, "da"--that is big. We knew she could see because the Chinese women would bind their feet so they were about as big as your fist, and she could see that my feet were plenty big.

I: How much were you involved with the trachoma patients in Kioshan?

SOVIK: I wasn't in Kioshan long, so I didn't get in on that too much. At our hospital in Hwangchuan it was Dr. Chang who took care of the trachoma; he'd operate and I worked with him. He took out a little piece of flesh from the upper eyelid and sewed it together with some little stitches that pulled the eyelid up. The inside of the eyelid had become granulated and that operation pulled the eyelid up so it could not rub on the eyeball and make a hole. Some of our older lady church members came to church with a string tied around their forehead to try to keep the eyelid from rubbing on the eyeball. Once Dr. Chang let me do the surgery while he supervised because I had seen so many trachoma operations before.

I: How was your journey from Kioshan to Hwangchuan?

SOVIK: We took the train to Sinyang and then evidently stayed with some of the missionaries overnight. The next day

we each took a ricksha to get to Loshan. That would be about a day's journey, I think. We arrived in Loshan and stayed with the A.W. Haugen's. We were afraid we'd lose our rickshas. We were afraid the soldiers would take them if we didn't hold on to them; but then the men at the station there said there were horses, and that we could ride horseback to go to Hwangchuan. The next day we got started and we hadn't been riding horseback for a long time, so it was not the easiest. When we were about halfway, here came two chairs with some of our missionary personnel who were going to Shekow. We were tempted to switch to the chairs but felt that it was better to carry on with the horses and the man that we had. At last we arrived, stiff but safe, in Hwangchuan. The meaning of the name of that town was, "The City of Light," an interesting name for the city, I thought.

I: What was the medical situation when you arrived in Hwangchuan?

SOVIK: This hospital was better than either of the hospitals we had on the railroad--Kioshan or Sinyang. The buildings in Kioshan and Sinyang were two-story with long stairways, and the patients would have to be carried up those stairs on litters to get to the second floor. Dr. Braafladt had planned this hospital, and it was a one-story hospital. It was

close to the mission compound where there were three homes; one was for the persons in the hospital and evangelistic work; another was for the pastor of the district, who was Herman Bly; and the third was for Dr. Gustav Guldseth, who came later, the missionary doctor. Then, just going through a gate, a door in the wall around that compound, we came to the dispensary-- a nice, big square building which was very nicely arranged. The Chinese doctors' homes were close to the dispensary.

The hospital building itself had four large wards: There were two big wards; the women's ward and the men's ward were on one side of the entrance and there was the medical ward and another wing, where the nurseboys lived. Back of those wards were the operating rooms, and the delivery room, the kitchens, and the laundry. It was very nicely arranged and we had a good cart to transfer patients since it was all on one floor. It was all new since they had only tried to run dispensaries because of lack of workers.

A few of the previous staff were still around but not many. One was a nurseboy, Chang Shengheng (Mr. Chang) and he spoke English very well; we called him, "The Englishman." He was a good helper and worker. Then there was a very good druggist, Mr. Tung. He had been working in hospitals as a druggist. There were a couple of women, too--not nurses, exactly, but

helpers. It was just a small nucleus of people who had been kept on. They hadn't been able to keep the hospital running, but they had helped. If anybody had come in there, they would have been able to do something.

The family we lived with was N. Astrup Larsens. Clara and I had a room with them. He was a very, very fine person to help us open up the hospital. He also helped us with business with the Chinese magistrates and some of those people we had to have dealings with. His wife made home life good for us and they were very nice to live with.

Coming from home where hospitals were so convenient even that long ago to these hospitals with, as I mentioned, their straw mattresses, wooden beds, no running water, no heat, small kerosene lamps and all, one didn't think it would be very easy, but throughout the years we were able to manage and get quite a bit of work done. The tinner had built a stove for us for the operation room, a wood stove. We put it in the very corner of the operating room and positioned the table so that the anesthetist would be on the opposite corner of the room as far away from the stove as we could have him to avoid any trouble. Then when Dr. Fedde came back from his last term after 16 years at home and saw this wood stove in the operating room, he was afraid we'd all be blown up with that there. But we always tried to be very careful. Somebody would come in and

put more fuel on that stove, perhaps when we were still working in there, but we managed to get by without any trouble.

We decorated the walls of our patients' rooms and the reception rooms in the hospital and dispensary with posters and with Bible verses written in big characters. One patient came who was good at calligraphy, and we had him write posters with the table prayer and we taught the patients to say grace before they started their meal trays. Then in the mornings at 7:00, as I mentioned, we'd have devotions, and the nurses and the doctors, and all the help, and any patients who walked around, anybody could come in, and we'd have our devotion before we started work. In the wards, after the patients had their baths and were ready, the Bible women and the evangelists would take over and work with the patients and teach them to read and many other things.

I can still see the faithful floorwasher who would lead a group of the eye cases to the church and to Wednesday evening prayer meetings--a line of these patients and the leader, holding hands on the way to church.

On Sunday mornings, we went to work early to help get work done, so as many as possible could attend church and they, too, were good at helping whoever was able to attend.

For quite some time we would have church for the children in the women's chapel. Our doctors, Chi and Chang, would lead those--one Sunday Dr. Chi and the following one, Dr. Chang.

Even though we had the two physicians, Dr. Chi and Dr. Chang, we had to get more help in. We tried to get boys and girls. Of course, we almost had to start from scratch to show them how to help us.

It didn't take long at all before the news got around about the Hwangchuan Hospital re-opening, and the patients started to be carried in. Some very, very bad ones had been sick a long time. They had all sorts of conveyances: They carried patients on doors, or in baskets. Children would be in baskets more. We had dispensary hours and that would fill first; then the doctors would check the patients, give help to outpatients and those who had to stay in the hospital moved into the hospital. There was a gradual filling up, and it seemed like it didn't take long before we had patients everywhere. It was an 80-bed hospital, but I remember the times we had 100 there--on the floor, on benches, or anywhere because there were many needy people who hadn't been helped for so long.

I: Where were your primary responsibilities--in the dispensary or in the hospital?

SOVIK: We worked in both. Usually there were a lot of dressings, and they would be started early in the morning in any one of our hospitals. For example, when I worked in Sinyang from 1933 to '36, I think Dr. Skinsnes would get up at 5:00 and go over to the hospital because he had so many patients. He wanted to see the patients, so he would go with the boys that took care of the mens' dressings and check them first. Then there would be dressings in the womens' ward in the morning, and following that was the mens' dispensary. Then, some hours for operations.

For us in Hwangchuan it started kind of gradually because we didn't have so many to begin with as we had later on. In the afternoon the doctors and we would go home and have something to eat, and then come back again for the womens' dispensary. The day would go so fast; and when we'd come home in the evening when the day was finished, we never knew when we'd have to go back for an emergency case, an OB case or an accident case. We were on call every night. Some nights we'd get by so we could get a good sleep, and some nights we'd work all night.

Years before, when the missionaries first came out there, the people were a little wary of them and didn't come right away. They had stories that weren't authentic; they thought they wouldn't be treated as they should. But after they learned

to know the people, then they'd come. If they were in the hospital, usually they'd have someone in the family stay with them and help and cook for them, in their little kettles. We didn't have too much of that later, though, because we had kitchens and we would have trays. I can remember how we used to be so surprised at some of the patients, because the Chinese are so polite. If they'd get something to eat on a tray, they'd offer you some of it. Oftentimes you'd be offered things by beggars that needed it badly.

I: How were you equipped with supplies and medicines at this time?

SOVIK: There were things there to work with. It was later on, when things were kind of worn out more, that we had the business of trying to scrounge around and find things.

In peaceful times it wasn't hard to get supplies from Hankow, but the time came when supplies had to come from Chungking. During the war a Chinese military hospital was not far from us and soldiers said that they could get some of the new sulfa drugs for us. It was dispensed, all of it, a half an hour after it arrived.

I: How were you affected by the growing Nationalist Movement beginning with 1925?

SOVIK: Often we were kept so busy that we knew little about outside conditions, it seemed. It was in the spring of 1927,

that it wasn't peaceful; we knew it wasn't good, but we seemed to carry on. There were rumors and all; I think our doctors would know, sometimes, a little bit more than we would. We were so busy we didn't have time to read, or could read, the Chinese papers. That would take too long for us; we'd just study enough to get along and working in the hospitals it seemed all we got done was care for patients.

We were three in our home: Clara Peterson; Miss Soderberg; and I. When we had to evacuate, Miss Soderberg didn't feel like she wanted to leave; still, we felt that we all should go so we all got rickshas. We had been told to leave. We weren't out more than about 10 li when one of the tires burst on Soderberg's ricksha. She wanted to go back, but the ricksha boys took it off and put straw into it and put it back on. We got to Loshan; there they had it fixed and we stayed overnight. Bert Nelson and A.W. Haugen were there yet. We went on to Sinyang from there. The missionaries were evacuating; some stayed a little longer and some went a little earlier. The people who had families would try to get their families out first. Some of the other single people were later in going.

I: What expressions, if any, of anti-foreign sentiment did you experience?

SOVIK: None. Our doctors and the people we worked with were so nice. I can remember once when we got a call from Loshan to come, I think it was an OB case, and Dr. Chang and I went there on horseback. We met some Chinese on our way and they said, "A foreign devil is coming." Dr. Chang didn't want me to hear it; he tried to keep it hidden so I wouldn't hear it, but it didn't bother me. Anyway, he was a good person to go with.

I: What particular patients or cases do you recall from Hwangchuan?

SOVIK: There was a young girl, about 18, Wang Ta-Chieh who could not walk. Her bound foot was full of dead bone, and it had to be operated on. Her brother and her father (her mother was dead) brought her into the hospital. She had tried to kill herself by taking opium; she was so uncomfortable. She was operated on, and she got crutches, so she was walking around. In three weeks, the father and brother came back; they wanted to take her home because they didn't have money to keep her there. She lived with her father, her only brother, and his wife. The brother's wife became angry when money was spent for this girl's stay at the hospital, so the father had to divide their inheritance to be sure the brother wouldn't lose on it. Wang Ta-Chieh absorbed the Christian message. After she'd gone home, an old man came to the hospital with a fractured patella.

When we asked him if he had heard about Jesus, he told us that Wang Ta-Chieh had told him. Her father allowed her to go to Kioshan to a reading course. I saw her once more when she came back and was in church to have communion. She was married and helping with the ladies aid in her hometown.

Other memories come to mind from Hwangchuan: We used to sleep on a screen porch upstairs in the heat, and some sound would steal in on us--a hollow beating of a drum--not just like ours: Tum-tum, tum-tum. You would awaken wishing it would be quiet just so you could sleep, especially on this rare night when you hadn't been called yet for perhaps a very hard OB case, as was the experience on so many nights--called over for an emergency to work by the light of a small kerosene lamp, and with only a teakettle of water kept hot by the night nurse.

At the sound of the drum, marching feet would come nearer; coming closer, they would strike up a dirge--a strange melody. I often wished I had taken pencil and paper to bed with me and could jot down the melody of the mournful dirge, but I would think instead, "No, I wish they knew the song of the angels that first Christmas night; 'For unto you is born this day in the City of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.'" But they, as so many others, didn't know the song; and as soon as they got to the crossroads, which was only about a block away from our house, would proceed to burn the effigies they'd brought along; bright paper over bamboo frames, perhaps a ricksha; people; a horse; things for the use of the dead; and, of course, paper money.

Then I remember a family from Hwangchuan days. The mother was Tsan Shu Mei and her husband was dead. She had two older girls, Tsan Sho Yin and Tsan Hu Chen, and these two older girls were 18 and 16. The one who was a patient in the hospital so long was 16; and she had a bad case of trachoma. They had two little sisters--Tsan Shu Yun and San Shu Mei; one was 12 and one was 10. The mother had five looms--one for herself and one for each of the girls. They made little bands to be tied around the stockings to hold them up. They sold these and that's how they made their living.

The two little girls went to school in the daytime; it got to be only the mother and the oldest daughter, Tsan Hu Chen who could work. Tsan Sho Yin had started to come to the hospital; she didn't have money for her treatment. The people who didn't have money would get a little "ticket." This was kind of a little stick that would tell the approximate time the paid patients would be ready, and when they'd start taking care of the people who couldn't pay--and we had many.

Meanwhile, Tsan Sho Yin had lots of time to listen to the evangelists and the Bible women. They had devotions there and would teach the people how to read. Tsan Sho Yin got a lot of help because she was there so long. The mother didn't like this business at all; with the two girls in school, this girl at the hospital, and only two people working all day, they didn't earn much. So the mother would scold a little bit.

The other girl, Tsan Hu Chen, who was working at home, got interested in some of the Bible material. She could read; she'd been to school and she liked to read, so Sho Yin, who had eye trouble, would listen to her in bed when they slept together at night. Both girls got interested, and both prepared for baptism. Then the mother saw a change in the girls and she prepared for baptism. She couldn't understand how, when they would all attend all the meetings and church besides, they could still manage financially. But things were working out for them. I can picture the mother at Wednesday evening prayer meetings; she would pray so earnestly.

Tsan Sho Yin had been promised to a non-Christian to be married, and the family just couldn't stop it. After she became a Christian, she didn't want to get married to that fellow, but she had to go through with it. She had to move into the mother-in-law's home, and the mother-in-law thought she was hopeless. She'd run to church Sunday morning; she would come running into church, and would sit right in the front bench, as close to the middle as she could, and not talk to anybody. As soon as the service was over, she'd run home. Then she got all kinds of bad whippings from her mother-in-law. I think she ran away from there afterwards. Those are some of the things the Christian converts had to go through.

Often in Hwangchuan on Sunday afternoons, we'd also go to an orphanage, and some Chinese workers would go with us.

Tsan Hu Chen would go with us to the orphanage as well as to the prisons and the Bible women would go, too. Going to the orphanage and the prison gave us a chance to know some folks outside of the hospital. We'd gather something to bring to the children at the orphanage because they really had nothing. They would look forward to our coming and would be lying close to the street door to listen. We tried to teach them, "Jesus Loves Me" and tell them about Jesus. After leaving them, we went to visit the women's department in the prison. It was all in one big room with one wall fitted with a bed stretched across the wall. And there they found their places at night, sometimes there would be seven or eight women in the room.

During the war, there was a Communist lady; she'd been with the Communists. Her name was Agnes Smedley, and she came to Hwangchuan. Sister Hilda Petterson had dysentery so she was at home; I was alone at the hospital. Clara Peterson, at that time, had gone into evangelistic work, and was out to the outstations. So here came this Miss Smedley.* She had a gun, and she was in a military uniform traveling with the Chinese soldiers.

I: How long did Agnes Smedley stay with you?

*The city mayor referred her to us. Clara's bedroom was empty, so we gave it to Miss Smedley.

SOVIK: Several days. We tried to do things for her, too. We tried to give her good food; she'd been traveling with soldiers and it wasn't good. We also gave her medicine for a cold she had. Agnes Smedley couldn't stand missionaries so we weren't going to tell her about Sister Thone Sandland in Sishien. But the city mayor directed Agnes Smedley to Sister Thone and she found her. We heard later that Agnes Smedley was good to Sister Thone and had gotten medicine for her.

I: What kinds of discussions did you have with Agnes Smedley?

SOVIK: She seemed busy all the time and, of course, with me alone at the hospital and caring for things at home, we had little time together. She was mad at us though. Hilda had something to do with the dispensary--getting the people in--and when Agnes Smedley came over there, there was one soldier who didn't get in or something and she was mad about that. We would take people in there and keep them for months, like Wang Ta Chieh and help them all that time for nothing. Of course, we tried to make the hospitals somewhat self-supporting so that the work could be carried on. But we always had this troupe of poor people we were helping and didn't get anything from. Agnes Smedley was mad because this soldier didn't get what she thought he should. We tried to tell her about all the people who had been with us months, and never paid a cent.

I: She thought you turned away all poor people because of this soldier?

SOVIK: It was not a correct interpretation because we had soldiers there for months with different kinds of sores and things; we did dressings every day.

I: Arna, did you try to discuss religion or spiritual things with Agnes Smedley?

SOVIK: With Clara at the outstation and Hilda sick in bed at home, I saw her very little as she was with the Chinese soldiers she was traveling with most of the day, but I tried to be good to her.

I: Before we forget, you mentioned during a break about the ladies aid in Hwangchuan.

SOVIK: Our ladies aid in Hwangchuan collected money and sent it to Shanghai to those German Jewish refugees. These Chinese women didn't have jobs and those little coppers they sent were a sign of the willingness of their hearts. Mrs. Berliot Evanson and Clara Peterson as part of their evangelistic work, would interest the Chinese women in trying to help those refugees from Germany in those coastal towns where they were stranded.

The ladies aid met three times a month in the homes and the fourth meeting in church. The church meeting was the meeting they recited memorized scripture. And they put me to

shame. I remember the time I came into the ladies aid a bit late. I guess it was my first town meeting in the church, and Mrs. Nien, our pastor's wife, was standing reciting verse upon verse. I tried to listen to what it was. It was I Peter, Chapter 3--the whole chapter!

It was interesting to see some of these folks in church and watch the transformation Jesus made in their lives. Old Mrs. Hsu was a deacon's wife, but she was filled with hatred; she didn't want to hear anything about the gospel. Finally, she got interested--intensely interested. When she was old, she studied her catechism and she was baptized. She wouldn't miss a day of the month-long reading course. The women got a small certificate after three years' perfect attendance at a reading course and for completing work of the reading course. Mrs. Hsu became sick during her third course. This old lady felt so badly, but the evangelistic workers brought her a diploma. She died before the course was finished. She had admonished her daughter, who was a registered nurse, to read her Bible. Mrs. Hsu's ministry eventually carried into her own home, but she hated everything to begin with.

I: Arna, what happened now when you were leaving in '27, you got to Loshan and then what happened from there?

SOVIK: Our doctors Chi and Chang carried on until their five-year contracts were finished. Since their homes were in eastern China, they left and the work ceased once again in Hwangchuan. We got to Loshan and then to Sinyang. Then we went to Hankow, and we lived in the Lutheran Home and Agency. Some of the missionaries were patients at that time and needed care. When we were going down the river, we were 300, seems to me we were 300 on a river boat that was a 19-passenger boat; 300 people: And we took care of patients on it.

They'd start serving breakfast at 6:00 a.m. and while one person was eating breakfast, somebody was standing back of them, waiting to sit at the table. Those of us who had patients had to be up all night. The officers of the ship let us nurses use their quarters so we could sleep a little in the daytime. When we were going down the river, we were asked to crouch at times so that if shots would come in the windows they wouldn't hit us. Then we came to Shanghai.

To find housing was almost impossible. I was in one room with Mr. and Mrs. P.E. Thorson. We had a screen; Priscilla, their youngest daughter, and I were on one side and Mr. and Mrs. Thorson on the other in a Britishers' home. And then Clemens Gronsious and the Irvin Jacobson family and Clara Peterson and Miss Gursli, a Norwegian girl, and I got passage in the tea rooms on one of the President Lines. They converted

the tea room into quarters for passengers. I was taking care of Mrs. Irwin Jacobson, who was sick, and then I'd have to try to help Irwin to get the children down to breakfast. We were helping each other, and we made it to the United States.

I: What did the mission board tell you when you returned to the U.S. in 1927?

SOVIK: They told us we should get jobs because they didn't know how long we'd have to stay home. Clara Peterson and I decided not to get jobs in the summer; we stayed home and I suppose we had to go around speaking. In the fall we felt we needed a term at the Lutheran Bible Institute so we went there and took that fall term until Christmas. Then we decided to get jobs. I decided that I thought I'd like to get into the university emergency service because that would be more like our dispensary work out in China. Within two weeks I had a job at the university in the extraction room and I helped a plastic surgeon in another room. They treated me so well.

I: And then did word come that China had opened up now and they asked you to go back?

SOVIK: Yes, we were supposed to go back. I think it was John Gronli who called and said, "I know you'll be glad to go." Well, I wasn't quite sure the first minute because this job

at the university was regular hours--five days a week. I liked it a great deal. But I knew I had to go back to the work in China and I went back.

For three years I was assigned to be the school nurse at the American School--Kikungshan. Besides my nursing responsibilities, I was supposed to teach Home Ec. Now I wasn't a teacher, but I had had dietetics in nurses' training and I had the books and got through it with the help of Mrs. Lindell, the matron. The only bad accident we had was one of the Covenant girls who had been running down a hill and fell down and she broke her leg. This was at 11:00 in the morning, and we had to take care of her. We called for Skinsnes 15 miles up the railroad at Sinyang and he came up about 11:00 at night. He decided to transfer her to his hospital, so he took her. That was my worst case.

I: After your first year at Kikungshan, you had to move the American School to Hankow. What were the troubles that caused you to leave?

SOVIK: The warlords were fighting each other and it just wasn't safe on the mountain where our school home was. Oh, there were always troubles, either bandits or warlords or one thing or another. It seemed like many of the years were filled with

dangers and troubles. One of the Norwegian missionaries stated it this way and I saved this quote throughout the years: "Peace seems to have fled from China in this generation. Only occasional lapses in the incessant struggle have given hope to a peace-loving people, only to have hope robbed from them before they could imagine what blessings that peace could bring to them and their nation. Civil war, banditry, Communist troubles, have succeeded each other stepping on each other's heels in rapid disorder to cause suffering to all and death to millions."

It was during these troublesome times that Daniel Nelson, Sr., was killed in Sinyang. Soldiers had stationed themselves there and were shooting right across the mission compound to try to get at Sinyang. The missionaries were huddled into the rooms that were farthest away from their windows. Edward's (Sovik) study was one of those and then the day before, in the daytime, the missionaries had gone out and put some metal sheeting on the windows to try to keep the bullets out. Then that night they had been together before Mr. and Mrs. Nelson went back to go to bed. Daniel Nelson was kneeling praying, and then Mrs. Nelson called, "Nelson is shot!" A bullet had gone through all that metal and hit him in the head. He didn't regain consciousness.

Many people were trying to help and when he died, they tried to get ready for the funeral. Chu Hao-jan, our good old pastor, was living in Sinyang so they got word to him. Chu Hao-jan was influential in the city and he got a coffin sent off to the church. Daniel Nelson was placed in this coffin; they put it right below the pulpit. It was there 40 days before they could bury him.

I: You were with the American School for a year in Hankow and then it moved to Kuling. Why was this?

SOVIK: We were able to get a British building the third year on Kuling--half way to Shanghai and it was easier than being crowded in the Hankow Mission Home.

It was terrible to try to take care of that school in the Mission Home and Agency because it was so full of people. After we had been in Hankow three weeks, then Mrs. Anna Lee Wold came and went to Kikungshan. Then it was peaceful up there she said--it was perfectly fine. They moved the whole school back; the whole thing had to go back to the mountain, and it was a long trip on the train and up the mountain with the equipment and all the supplies. But it still wasn't peaceful enough to work on the mountain, so we had to return to Hankow to finish the first year there.

They were hoping to find other quarters in the Wuhan area, but a flood eliminated that possibility. The school ended up on Kuling in a British school that was not occupied.

I: When you were asked to fill this position as nurse at the American School, how did you feel about working in this position as opposed to working with the Chinese?

SOVIK: I was scared stiff. To be a nurse on the mountain with the doctor way down the mountain and on the railroad to Sinyang and to be entirely responsible and to have all those young children that you had in your care, with their parents far away at distant points, I was scared. But God takes care of all those things. And by giving a matron that was as helpful as Mrs. Lindell, who had been a deaconess before marriage, then we learned to work together and were able to work together and help each other. That's what we all did out there; that's why we became so close to our missionary friends. They became like your family, because you go through so many hard things with them.

But it was interesting to be with the American School, too, although it isn't easy to be shifted. Clara Peterson and I had started that hospital at Hwangchuan from '24 until '27. When I came back, I wasn't going with her out there because of my school assignment, and she had to go alone to Hwangchuan. When she got there, soldiers had the hospital; it was theirs, and their horses were all tethered in the grounds of the hospital.

There they stood; they owned that place. And she was supposed to take care of it and start the hospital again. They put out an order that the hospital was open and then the patients started coming to the hospital. The soldiers would come and try to keep the patients from going into the dispensary. Clara Peterson would go there, and she'd take them by the arm and lead them into the dispensary; she wasn't scared of those fellows.

I: In 1932, then, you were stationed at the South Honan Union Hospital. Who sponsored this hospital and what kind of work were you doing there?

SOVIK: The South Honan Union Hospital was owned by the Chinese and they had full responsibility for building and running expenses. Our mission provided the foreign medical personnel. In 1932, Dr. Skinsnes was the doctor at the hospital--a wonderful doctor. Then we had Chinese doctors; we had Dr. Kan, who had worked in Kioshan Hospital before that time. We didn't have a big staff, but we had a good staff. Their druggist, Mr. Fan, was a person who had good training. He was musical so he helped with programs and things like that. Then we started trying to have classes, a real nursing school.

I: Will you give us more details on how you tried to get a nursing school going?

SOVIK: Sister Clara Kravig, who came out when I did, had been stationed there in Sinyang all the years except the two when we were home in 1927. She worked with Sister Hilda Petterson, also a nurse from the Deaconess Hospital in Chicago. They had a wonderful group of nurses we felt, well-trained, when Sister Bergitta Nelson and I came. It seemed as if there was a drive to help nurses get registered at that time.

The hospital of the Augustana Church in Hsuchang was also trying to plan for registering. We got material from a Miss Simpson, who was in charge of nursing schools in China. We got material for the classwork and the doctors and the druggist all helped us with materia medica. Then we carried out the work in practical nursing.

Because I was registered from my hospital, I went to Hankow and got a certificate through the Nurses Association of China. This certificate enabled us to provide regulation training. When we felt our students were ready, we sent for the standard exams from Hankow. The written exams were returned to Hankow for correction. A registered nurse from the Augustana Mission came down and checked our practical nursing and I did the same for them in Hsuchang. Results: 10 of our nurseboys passed, and two of the girls.

In addition to the nursing responsibilities, I had to teach at I Kwang--music and English. In the evenings you'd have to prepare for those classes. We worked all the time.

I: You made a comment a little earlier about Dr. Skinsnes' schedule. Would you tell us more about his involvements not only as a physician, but also as the mission superintendent?

SOVIK: In the hospital in Sinyang they had a house for the doctor, and the two of us nurses that worked there lived at the Skinsnes home. Mrs. Skinsnes made a good home for us and the days were always busy. Dr. Skinsnes was especially busy. He would get up, as I said, at 5:00 in the morning and go over and help the nurseboys with the dressings so he could watch the patients and know what to order for them during the day, and that would take a long time. Then he'd come home and have breakfast and go over again. Perhaps it would be time for the operations.

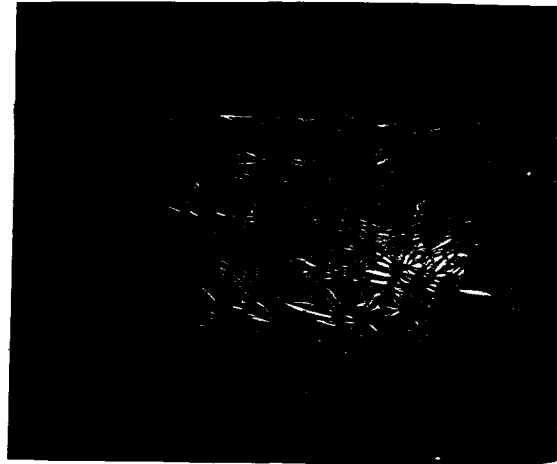
We most often had it scheduled so he would get in an immense dispensary in the forenoon and then he'd come home for dinner. He'd have half an hour on a couch and he'd be sleeping when he hit the couch and slept and was back again in half an hour for women's dispensary. And those dispensaries were big. From 1924 to 1934 more than a quarter of a million dispensary patients were treated. And over 12,000 were cared for in the hospital.

At the same time, he was the president of the mission and this was when K.N. Tvedt and Bert Nelson were in captivity. Dr. Skinsnes was trying to help to get money so that they could be released. He had very faithful Christian people to work with him so that it didn't get out what was being done. They sewed the paper money into an outfit of clothes so that he didn't have to carry the money. In this way messengers would try to get the ransom money through to free Tvedt and Nelson. He was getting all that ready so that was a lot of work to oversee. Dr. Skinsnes was also interested in the high school and helping Miss Dora Wong to get facilities so that it could be run as he thought it should be run.

And he would anonymously help where he saw it was needed. I can remember especially one of the little orphans died at the orphanage the church was running. Dr. Skinsnes just couldn't have him go into his coffin with nothing in the box. So he sent a note home to Mrs. Skinsnes to find a blanket and send it over there so he could get that little child wrapped in that blanket before he was buried.

I: What happened when the Skinsneses would come back from furlough?

SOVIK: I have two pictures taken of the posters on the large Sinyang wall around the city, stating, "Many sick people in this city are eagerly waiting for the arrival of Dr. Skinsnes."



He was known by the magistrates because he'd had so many patients from everywhere. At the depots or the places they'd meet them when they'd come home from furloughs, the Chinese would have banners, "Skinsnes coming back to the patients in China," or something, welcoming Skinsnes back. He was a fine doctor and did a big work in China.

I: After your three years in Sinyang, where were you stationed?

SOVIK: It was time for Clara Peterson to go home on her furlough because she had come out two years before me, and the mission reassigned me to Hwangchuan. It was peaceful then, peaceful enough for me to go back and take over from Clara. From 1935-1937, I worked with Dr. Guldseth and Dr. Chang again.

One thing that Dr. Chang had learned was how the doctors had to be very careful when they operated to have the patients' relatives sign papers so if anything should happen they wouldn't be sued.

I: Had you had some bad experiences with that?

SOVIK: No, because Dr. Chang was so good--he was just wonderful. I worked with him nine years but evidently there had been such cases when he worked in the hospital in Hankow.

I: You were mentioning, Arna, that you and Dr. Chang had a very interesting case that dealt with a chicken.

SOVIK: Early one morning I was called over to the hospital. They said a water buffalo had gored a little boy and it ripped his stomach open. We just boiled every instrument that we could think of that would ever be used for an operation like that and got ready for the operation.

Dr. Chang had been called so he had that little boy put on the operating table to begin with to take care of extra moving, before he was prepared, because he didn't know what to expect. When things were ready we opened the little boy's clothes, and all we could see were feathers. Dr. Chang took off the feathers to see what kind of a wound was under there. Because the skin was broken, the people had not put all kinds of ointment on the wounds that were very difficult to remove. They had killed this chicken and skinned it, and they put this large piece of chicken skin, with the skin down on the

wound and sent him to the hospital like that. The chicken skin had kept the wound clean and when it was removed, the wound could easily be prepared. It needed stitches all the way down, but we thought this was a very wise move for the people in the village to do this.

I: How did you make your sutures?

SOVIK: They made silk over there and we made our silk sutures and sterilized them. When we first came over there, we even had American cotton. Then during these troublesome years, we couldn't get anything. We didn't get letters from America for two years during the Sino-Japanese War. Then, of course, we didn't get any supplies. We had to boil the cotton that they raised there right around us and boil it in big vats and try to use that in the dispensary. We'd use that wet cotton that was sterilized; we couldn't sterilize all that for all kinds of wounds and everything. It was an awful big job. It was a lot of work just fixing things to use for the hospital. If we had anything that we could save to use, we'd use it for the worst things.

For instance, when we ran out of kerosene during the war, we'd have to have those small saucers made of pottery and there was some kind of a little wick as big as a straw. They'd put in some kind of sesame oil or any kind of oil that they used in their home and just put that little wick in and that was the light you had to go by.

We nurses had in our home a real good lamp that used kerosene that was a good light. We were careful, though, about using it in our home because we needed it for night operations. Later we came to hoard a bottle of kerosene for emergency operations at night. When I came home in '44, I marvelled at all the lights in San Diego and then I couldn't believe when I got to Minnesota that there were three torch kerosene lamps in the pastures for the turkeys.

I mentioned about not getting letters for two years. I can remember at that time that I think Syrdal was in the mission office as secretary. He felt sorry for us out there without any church news, so he would take things out of the Lutheran Herald and type it on some blue paper and send a couple sheets to the West Field and some to the East Field. And sometimes these sheets would get through. Then Friday evenings we'd get together at our home and we'd try to read those papers with this tiny light we'd had. It was hopeless to read, but we'd get it read somehow. There were people in strategic places that helped us like Dr. Syrdal who need commendations for their efforts. Boy, how we appreciated that!

I: What about shortages of other supplies?

SOVIK: Oh yes, and then we were always short of medicine, and medicine containers. I can remember one day we had to put

some medicine on little papers. We came out into the hall to find one of those little boys from the orphanage opening all of his little papers before he left for home. He'd figured out that there was one thing that was sweet, and he could eat something for a cough, so he was picking those out of each dose and eating them. The little tykes didn't take it as medicine; they picked out what they wanted, and believe me they liked sweets and seldom got any!

When I was at ASK, there was a fellow who brought his little boy in who had a burn all over his leg. The leg was so dirty and I couldn't get it clean. The burned areas had some of the stuff that they had in the house that they had plastered on, and grass. I covered his leg with those strips of ointment, boric ointment; I remember because that would be good for burns. Then I wrapped the leg up and I told the man to bring the boy back in a couple of days. He didn't come back and he didn't come back; I thought the boy had died. In about a week they brought that boy back and then we took the dressing off. It hadn't been off since they took him home. There were little islands of skin on that leg. Then, of course, you could talk to them and tell them how important it was to bring the boy back and change the dressings. From that time on, we had more cooperation.

When this boy grew up and I was back on the mountains, maybe the last time in 1946, he came to our house and told me that it was his leg I'd helped him with.

Dr. Chang did excellent skin grafts. At that time it was common to take big slabs of skin off in places and lay it on these wounds, but Dr. Chang would take little patches on a place. He'd take care of that area. Those little patches would meet and grow and it was a much cleaner process. It was a terrific way to do skin grafts, because skin grafts are nasty because if you put a piece of skin on, you'll then get pus under it. Now if you have a little patch, it would take better. These are the kinds of things we learned from Dr. Chang.

I: When did you have your next furlough? They needed volunteers to stay that extra year since so many had come back in '29.

SOVIK: Since my first term had been cut short, I thought I had better be one of those who stayed on an extra year. Ruth Gilbertson also decided to stay an extra year. When Ruth and I came home after eight years, in '39, in June I think it was, we got to Seattle and we heard that the Japanese War had started. We were so glad we stayed an extra year because we thought the war would be all over when we would go back.

I: Arna, when you went back in '39, will you tell who went with you and will you describe your journey back to China at this time?

SOVIK: I volunteered to go back in 1939. Four of our workers left their families at home and were in that group: Bly, Martinson, Palmer Anderson and Lee. Then it was Clara Jones to be left in Japan to go on to language school in Peking and Evenson and Gilbertson and me. Ruth Gilbertson was going to the American School in Hong Kong and the rest of us were going inland. When we went back in '39, it wasn't peaceful. My passport didn't come, and I wasn't sure that I was going to make it with the rest of the group. When I came up to Atwater, somebody from the Pioneer Press in St. Paul had been up and talked to the editor of our paper up at Atwater and reported that the Japanese had taken Hwangchuan. My brother and all those people thought I was just crazy to go out to a place when the Japanese had already taken the city, so it was just awful. My group had to leave for the West Coast without me.

The following afternoon word came that my passport would be in the mail the following day. Dr. Gronli took me to the post office to get my passport and to the train; but I was in Montana before I looked at my passport and then there was an item in there that read this was not to be used to travel to or in China. But we eventually made it through to our fields,

even if four of us had that item on our passports. We checked with the consul in Shanghai and he told us to write to the department at home and he also did.

I remember that Edward Sovik and Pastor Kwo Ching Gua came to meet me not far from home there. This was the 12th of December. On Thanksgiving day, the Japanese had packed up and left Hwangchuan where our missionaries had been held hostage all that time. As the Japanese came to Hwangchuan, most people fled. Hwangchuan was a large inland town and it was pretty nearly emptied. The hospital had to close and wasn't running. The church fared badly in the shelling. There were all kinds of bullet holes in the structure. Edward Sovik and Clara Peterson were once granted passes so they could get in and out of the city to look for food. The missionaries had about 200 people to care for in their compound.

One day Clara Peterson was on the street--she was this kind of girl who wasn't scared of anything, so they'd sent her out to help. There was a Japanese soldier who had been in America. He saw her and he felt terrible because they were there. "Were you here when we came in?" he said to her--he spoke English. The next day he came and brought her a big fish, because he felt so bad about the Japanese being there. Since the Japanese had left Hwangchuan by the time I arrived, we were able to start up the medical work. People started coming back as soon as they knew the Japanese were gone. Dr. Chang was there, so we tried to open the work again.

I: Did you take care of a lot of soldiers then?

SOVIK: We always had a lot of soldiers. When the Japanese first came, Clara and the workers were in the entrance to the church giving assistance and medical help to the Chinese soldiers who were fleeing out the farther exit of the city as the Japanese were trying to enter close to our mission. We had soldiers, and we had beggars and we had country people who didn't have much but they'd come in, awful nice, some of them.

At one time the bomb hit a school four blocks from us. When it was so scary, you wondered if you were Christian when it was so terrible. We wondered about the people in the hospital, but we had to stay put until that stuff quit. When it became quiet, they started to carry the people into the hospital. Two instructors, fine middle-aged men, from that school were carried in. One fellow's intestines were out. The other fellow's arms and legs were broken on one side. We put both of these instructors in the operating rooms at the same time using our cart as a second table and Drs. Guldseth and Chang were able to work simultaneously. There were many other patients, old and young; we got a whole house full. We worked there all night with those people, but those two instructors died that night. It was scary, I'll tell you; but you have to get busy and work again and you try to do everything you can for those people. The second time the bombers came they were closer to the river, so we had no trouble.

The third time the bombers came, I was in the hospital and Dr. Guldseth was there. Those patients who had just come in had heard that you could pray and then God would help them, so they were--there was prayer all the way around there. We stood there wondering about the people not in the hospital.*

When the Japanese started bombing, they decided to use our church bell as an air alarm. We had started to work in the operating room at the crack of dawn in order to be ready at 9:00 when we usually heard the church bell. One morning we had our last patient on the table for minor surgery, and I had gone into the sterilizing room for something and missed hearing the bell. When I came back, only the patient was there--it was before the surgery had started. The doctor, nurses and anaesthetists had heard the alarm and run. Well, I hadn't heard the alarm and knew I couldn't leave the patient alone, so I decided God would take care of us and proceeded to get her dressed and back to the ward. By that time the people had come back--all clear.

Three bombings were so close in about two days. They said that they thought we should leave. We had left Hwangchuan twice before during the troubles, and had had our own "long marches." Once we walked 30 miles a day for five days to reach a safe station.

*You wondered if they were going to be there when you got back. It was awful.

At one point, Skinsnes wrote and asked if I'd come over to Kioshan and try to keep the dispensary open so that people around there would know that the hospital was closed and yet would still be able to receive help. He hated to go with no way to let those people know--they'd still come carrying patients in. Dr. Skinsnes fixed it so Pastor Nien's son who was a Union Hospital graduate nurse and who had some laboratory training would be with me. We carried on until summer and the conference reassigned me to Hwangchuan.

I went back to Hwangchuan and it was a hard trip, walking much of the way. I wasn't feeling too well and I didn't want to tell Dr. Chang. I was alone in Hwangchuan since Clara Peterson and Sister Hilda had left since their furloughs were due and Dr. Guldseth left from Kioshan for home. Rev. Sovik was the president of the mission, and was stationed there and he helped me with the hard decisions. Dr. Fedde had arrived alone after 16 years at home and Arne Sovik and Lydia Hanson had come so they were there with us. Food was scarce. When Rev. Sovik went to the outstations, he would come home with a duffel bag of peanuts and Friday evenings, after work and supper, we would all sit around a table and shell peanuts and Dr. Fedde, who had a Reader's Digest magazine, read for us and we made peanut butter.

I: And so you worked there until 1944 in Hwangchuan?

SOVIK: Yes, I continued working with Dr. Chang until the American Consul advised us to leave. The situation was getting more and more tense. Before we left, I was trying to get the charts and all that money business fixed up. It was so hard to get it taken care of in those hectic days. Finally, it turned out that I got together a bunch of the charts and took them bound them up so I could take them and work on them on the way. We each grabbed our packed suitcase and a duffel bag and left everything, even the beans for dinner were left in the oven. By this time, we didn't have too many possessions. While we fled from the bombing the first time, most everything was taken. We had to start from scratch when we got back to Hwangchuan. Of course, that was just a little nothing; things aren't anything anyway.

I: Arna, when you were in Hwangchuan during the war years, were you able to get enough to eat, the right kinds of things? You mentioned something about malnutrition.

SOVIK: We didn't eat correctly. Everybody ate at our house because the wives were gone. Then everybody got food and I suppose I was busy; I suppose I didn't eat right myself. I didn't realize it at the time, however.

I: Then what exactly happened because of the malnutrition?

SOVIK: I got an ulcer on my eye, right on the pupil and I couldn't see; I was blind in this eye.

Finally, we evacuated to West China. On that trip to West China, we slept in awful many funny places. One night the ladies all slept around the place where the donkey walked when he ground wheat. We made it to Chungking, but that took long. It took us six months and a day to get from Hwangchuan to Minneapolis. We walked mountains for days, two mountain ranges. Then we had each a chair that was made out of rope on bamboo poles. My chair had one good bamboo pole and the other one was like this arm, infected, so it was crooked this way. When we were on the mountain, you thought you'd fall out of your chair so then you'd walk more on account of that.

At one point we had ox carts. Boy, that was just pitiful to sit up there. You'd go across a stream and those things would be tippy and you'd walk some. It was kind of level terrain until you could get to the West Field. Finally, we came up to the West Field where a Norwegian mission was working. The Ansgar Espegrens family. His mother and dad were there and they had been there for years.

Then Ansgar the son was there and his wife had a baby that was six days old. The Espegrens had been asked to go out quite a little while before this, and the old people wouldn't go, so the son didn't feel he could leave them. Our men were talking to the son and to the old people too and trying to let them understand that everybody had to get out of there.

They had been so kind and hospitable. We left there in the morning with the old couple adamant that they weren't going out. Then when we got on about five miles or something, here comes Ansgar on a bicycle and asked if he could have two of our carts. So they went back and they got that family, including the old Espegrens, out. Just imagine her with a six-day-old baby and then in a predicament like that.

While we were traveling on the West Field, we had a conference to decide what to do with the missionaries. I had been out six years this time, and eight years the other time. Edward was ready for furlough, Sister Inga was ready for furlough and I think Therese Petersen was, too. I don't know about Tom Lee. With Guldseth gone and no other nurse there, the mission said I should go home with this crowd that was going home. Before we got to Chungking, I had a temperature of 103°. I thought I wasn't going to make it there. I thought I might die on the road like a Lutheran Brethern missionary did.

Edward Sovik and Tom Lee finally got us on a boat full of sick soldiers. We went up the river to Chungking in that boat. I was bed-ridden in a cabin with my fever. Tom Lee didn't have a bed, but slept in an open hallway on a mat of some kind. There even was a family that came on the boat with a little child, and no place to sleep. Tom put this little child there and tried to share his blanket--that's the kind of fellow he was. He tried to do everything to help us.

We were there in Chungking awhile, and then Edward Sovik, Sister Inga, and Therese Petersen got on a plane to go to India. I couldn't find my passport, and Lee was kind of mad at me because I had lost something so vital as that. Then I thought, "He'll go now, and I'll be alone here." Then I found it, and we got on a commercial plane. When we got to India, we stayed there six weeks. I didn't take any real trips because I wasn't feeling well.

But we did see things. One day they took us out to see what they did with their dead; it was terrible. They used to come through the streets with their dead on a wide board, and it looked like they were alive there. They would bring them to a place up high so the vultures could eat them, and that was the normal way of doing things.

We had to wait for a boat in India, and we finally got on it. Those who were minding the ship wanted us all to get jeans; they didn't want us to get on the boat unless we wore that kind of stuff because once somebody had tried to get down the ladder with a skirt and it took so much time that one lady had gotten a heart attack. Sister Inga wasn't going to wear jeans, so she started making a pair of bloomers, if needed. Therese went downtown and bought kind of a bright blue pair. I bought a piece of cloth and had the tailor make a pair of trousers and a little jacket. I almost lived in it entirely on that boat, until we got to San Diego.

I: Then you went back out in 1946?

SOVIK: Yes, we weren't even home a year. Aagoth Fosmark wrote to me and said she was going out early before Easter and she knew I was going, too. She said that I should try to meet her when I got on the train in Portland, Oregon. I did, and the two of us went together to San Francisco. But we didn't get to China together; I was all alone at that time. Edward Sovik got out there, then I got out there, but Irwin Lerbergs and Aagoth had to wait months for passage. They came out in August.

I: So when you got to Hankow, were you planning to go back to Hwangchuang?

SOVIK: I would have to find out where I was stationed when I got back to Hankow. There were letters for me in Hankow from Edward Sovik. He was concerned about me because he knew I was bringing materials out for the American School in my baggage, sent by the mission office. He said it was hard to take care of, and he thought he ought to be around to help with that stuff because he knew about it. He said he would be down there Friday, and I think I had only been there a day or so. He knew when that boat was coming.

When he came Friday morning, he talked to me. He wanted to know if we could get married. It wasn't easy for him to come out there; it wasn't easy to live there. I knew him so

well by that time, and I think that both of us knew that it would work because we had been through so many hard things together. Edward must have been thinking about asking me to marry him for a long time, but had never said a word. Do you know what he had with him? He had half-soles for my shoes.

Miss Christianson, who I came out with was there; she had come out with his first wife and I think she was present at their wedding. She knew me so well, too, and she helped me. I hadn't brought anything for a wedding, but we used to have choir concerts and were supposed to have a white dress of some kind. I had brought just a little white summer dress with short sleeves for something light in the summer, and that's what I wore. Edward's brother, Erik, came in from Shekow to marry us on Pentecost Sunday, June 9, 1946.

Doctor Heinz Bruhl was a German doctor who had to leave Germany during the war; he and his family came to live in the Lutheran Mission Home, and he had a practice for 15 years in Hankow. We knew them and he and his wife were at our wedding that night.

I: Your assignment, after that summer, was to go to Fancheng?

SOVIK: They had a conference in Kioshan; and we went to it. That's when they said we should go to Fancheng.

I: And what situation did you find when you got there?

SOVIK: I didn't realize it then, but it was very hard for Edward. I don't think he had such a good time. It was difficult working in Fancheng-Taipingtien after the war.

The house we lived in was in terrible shape--it had been occupied by troops for a long time. We had no windows. I tried to cover the windows with paper drapes so that when Lawrence Stavig, the chairman of the board of missions came, it was a little better.

When we were stationed in Fancheng, the hospital was across the river at Siangyang, so there was no sense in having me work there. Instead, for the first time, I was involved in evangelistic work. It was my privilege to work with Miss Yang, the Bible woman. Once during the war when there was an air raid, Miss Yang and a group of workers fled to the country as they had often done, leaving behind everything they owned. That evening when they tried to get back to the city, they were barred because the Japanese had taken over the city.

In Miss Yang's case, it wasn't just a little; she had fur garments and silk quilts being the only girl in a wealthy family. A brother of the teacher who was her best friend was able to help the two, so they got each a winter garment and a quilt. That's about all she had when I knew her. She had been offered teaching jobs where she could have made more money, but she wanted to be a Bible woman and a good one she was.

I went with her on her fall trip into the country, and we visited four outstations. Miss Yang had to show me the ropes because she had been doing this for years. In the mornings we would work with the people who came. Afternoons I would have a mini-dispensary because people would find out that there was somebody with medicines. I took care of the usual skin infections; someone came with a snake bite, another had been kicked by a donkey. You did what you could. In the afternoon and evening the evangelists would work on the catechism and then there would be a big meeting. And the seats were so rough. But the room was filled, and people would sit there and sit there and listen.

At the last place we visited, the outstation didn't have any roof, but still a family with six children who lived there. We set up our cots there and our mosquito nets so that the rats and mice and mosquitos would not eat us up at night. It was very primitive living.

As we walked along, there were temples everywhere, but so many not kept up. You walked by temples on the roadside and saw gods with their heads broken off, arms broken and so forth. You can't but tell the Chinese that they surely can see these man-made gods cannot even take care of themselves.

When we were in Fancheng, we'd see groups coming day after day on their pilgrimage to the temple high up on a mountain across the river that divided the two cities Fancheng and Siangyang. Work was done among these groups, tracts and Bible portions handed them and when asked if they had peace after their visit and the long, hard journey, they would invariably answer no, nothing definite, nothing sure.

I: Why did you leave Fancheng?

SOVIK: When we had been in Fancheng about nine months, Edward got a letter from George Holm who was the president of the mission; it was time for Rev. Holm to go home. He wrote to Edward saying that Edward had to come because he had to take over; so we had to leave. So we went to Kioshan.

I: How long were you in Kioshan?

SOVIK: We were in Kioshan until the Communists got so close that we had to move to Hankow, so Edward would be in a central location to take care of people everywhere. He was responsible for all of our people who were much more scattered after the war. We moved to Hankow in the fall of 1947. During that year Edward had a physical at the Peking Union Medical College and they told him either to go home or to have a radical operation. Edward thought with my eye in the condition that it was, that maybe it would be best for us to go home anyway. He felt that

we just couldn't make it. There were younger people who could carry on yet and could go to Hong Kong or Japan. After attending a LWF Advisory Board meeting in Canton, we flew from Shanghai for home.

I: When you left China in 1948, what did you think would happen after you left?

SOVIK: I don't think we thought of anything. I couldn't see. There wasn't much to plan for--Edward thought I would be blind the rest of my life. When I got to that doctor in Shanghai, he said it was from malnutrition, and he gave me IVs; so I had that to build me up, and nobody else along the way had done that during those months from December to Easter. I was getting better, but I couldn't see yet when I got home. But I got help for my eye the day after we got to Minneapolis. A Dr. Sterner took me to the University Hospital and they used beta rays to thin the scar as much as they dared.

I: How was it for Edward to leave China? He had been there since 1914.

SOVIK: He knew he couldn't be there forever. When he came home, he started to write his memoirs and became a leader of the Lutheran Literature Society for the Chinese. He edited the bulletin for the society and did all the mailing and the work for 20 years.

I: As you look back on your years in China, what would you have done differently?

SOVIK: We'd try to pray more; we'd try to work harder. I don't know if we could have done more things, though. We were busy all the time. But one of those things I feel bad about is that I didn't do as much as I should have done.

I wonder so often about the hosts of people who have gone in and out of the door of our three hospitals and dispensaries in China. I think of a soldier who had fallen by the wayside and his companions had left him there to die. He was brought in and even though humanly speaking, we were unable to help him, we were able to let him experience a bit of love and care. Many times we were the family helping people like this to their last resting place. For this soldier who was far from home, his people may never have found out what happened to him.

I remember the afternoon of one Christmas Eve when we got in 10 poor, undernourished, dirty soldiers from Kiangsi: they got baths and clean garments and beds and we had to sterilize all their clothes in our large sterilizer on account of lice. Their feet and legs were severely frost bitten, and they had no shoes or stockings. They spoke a southern dialect. We couldn't understand them, and they couldn't understand our Mandarin, even our Chinese had trouble understanding them. We put them all in one ward where they were for two months. I wish you could have seen their smiles when we came in and sang to them that Christmas.

I don't think I've mentioned about the 29 burn cases that we got as the Japanese were coming closer. Bandits would come to the homes in the country at night, and hang the man of the house up. They would start a fire under the man and he would get extensive burns on such large surfaces of his body. It really became a seige each day to take care of that type of wound. Then, when our American supplies were gone and we had to buy the cotton grown there, we would boil it and mostly had to use it wet, wringing it out the best we could. Dr. Guldseth, who had these burn patients, researched what the Chinese themselves used and found out what was good. We got to be a team who spent much of our day taking care of those patients.

Dr. Guldseth and his wife visited me recently and made a remark about something I hadn't thought about or remembered. He said that whenever he saw us we were doing dressings, but he said that we didn't lose one of our burn patients.

I: One last question: What do you feel was the purpose of medical missions?

SOVIK: I've always felt medical missions were worthwhile. We had the nurses and workers with us for long periods at a time, and one cannot work with life and death daily without seeing and feeling the need of a Savior. And wherever they

are now, and whatever they are facing, we know these experiences were of help to them. These young people were so eager to learn, and many of them became valuable hospital workers.

I: Arna, we thank you for giving us this time.