

Chapter 1  
**Why This Book?**

***Why this book?*** That's a good question: why would I think anyone would be interested in my experiences? I have no claim to fame but I have found that God loves to lavish His care on no-bodies. Even though most people in this world would never be the slightest bit interested in hearing about me, our two lovely daughters gave me a stern command, "Dad, just sit in front of that computer and finish this book before you lose your mind or lose your life, which ever comes first!" Being a totally obedient father and having no idea which event might occur first and put an end to my effort, I am doing my best to obey their command.

During the past three years I have enjoyed being a member of a small writers' group here in Carlsbad, and in the course of fulfilling some of the assignments, I have described some of my adventures as a missionary's kid (an MK) in China. Several times friends in that group have urged me to consider writing my memoirs. At first I laughed at the idea, but I found myself writing a number of short pieces on various experiences. Recently I marked a three-ring notebook with the word, "Memoirs," and began placing these short stories in that binder.

The assignment handed out for Wordsmiths to start the year 2004 called for us to write a piece on the subject, "Old Photographs." For more than two weeks I wondered how I could fulfill the assignment. Then suddenly in a brilliant flash of inspiration I realized that indeed I, yes I, have certainly enjoyed looking at old photographs.

Purposefully I went to the tiny, crowded closet in our living room where we store a large number of items including my wife's coats and sweaters and miscellaneous chairs and serving trays. There is a United States flag we display on patriotic occasions, and a

variety of board games that have not been used for several years. The top shelves are filled with photo albums from as far back as 1934 with the remnants of our photographic slides.

It took only seconds for me to find an album labeled 1935-38. Eagerly I opened the book to the first page. It showed a picture of five camels, the first in a long string, as they crossed the bridge over a dry river-bed less than a mile from our home in northern China. I thought of the times when I was riding a bicycle and found my road blocked by a string of sixty or seventy camels slowly plodding across my path and blocking progress for the next fifteen minutes. Because they tended to monopolize the whole road, camel-drivers often traveled by night, and hung long bells over the camels' necks, bells that chimed with a delightful low tone: ga-loong, ga-loong, ga-loong.

The next page showed two pictures of a tower standing on two massive stone platforms ten or twelve feet apart, between which lay the main street of the town. The tower, filled with hideous idols, formed the southern entrance to the town of Siaoyi (*rhymes with wow-ee*). The first of these two pictures is a view looking northward up the street. Just beyond the tower a gate on the east side of the street leads into our compound. At the end of the nineteenth century when the China Inland Mission attempted to purchase property, this was the only available real estate in the vicinity of the town, and it was available simply because it was known to be a property inhabited by demons.

The second photo is taken from the flat roof of our home, once the home of evil spirits. Strikingly, in the background of this picture the roof of the chapel stands immediately in front of the idol-tower, a visible symbol of the very real conflict between the powers of heaven and hell. That conflict between eternal life and eternal death is what

took missionaries to China. That same conflict today is seen in the fact that although “house-churches” are forbidden by law, it is estimated that two new churches come into existence every week, and although the government does all it can to stifle any Christian testimony, it seems that between 10,000 and 20,000 Chinese come to Christ every day!

The picture shows Mother and Dad dressed in their every-day Chinese gowns. That idol-filled tower in the background provided pleasant music to our ears day and night as the bells, hanging from the corners of the roof, rang their song whenever a light breeze stirred them. To those without Christ it was an incessant reminder of the ever present power of demons.

The third page of the old album shows Dad bundled up in his fur hat. Around his neck is a warm scarf Mother had knitted. He must have been preparing to go out on his bicycle. I remember riding with him one Sunday as he went to preach in a church some forty miles away. The frozen ruts that scored the road provided a real hazard for any bicycle rider. Suddenly Dad’s wheels slipped in an icy rut and threw him onto the rock-hard surface. By the time we reached the church Dad had a beautiful black left eye, swollen almost shut. That didn’t stop him from preaching for an hour or more at the “Morning Service” which started about one o’clock in the afternoon. The sight of Chinese men and women who had been raised under the power of darkness, now singing the songs of heaven provided a thrill not easily forgotten, a thrill that stirs me seventy years later.

As I thumbed through the pages of the album I was reminded of our traveling by coastal ship, train, truck, rickshaw, bicycle, pack-mule, mule-carts and mule-litters, over roads nearly impossible for us to believe in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. There were ancient stone

bridges two thousand years old, and scary trellis-bridges that had to be rebuilt every year over mountain torrents. I remembered Su-Chia-Chuang, the village where fifteen Christian families lived in cave-dwellings dug out of the loess-soil hillsides. The average annual income for each family was about five dollars. Though they had abundant reason to “*eat bitterness*” as they put it, they demonstrated a love for the Lord. Before lying down on the “kang,” the brick platform that served as a bed for the family, someone would bring in an armful of thorn-bush and start a fire in the brick stove at a corner of the kang. The flue, crisscrossing under the top layer of bricks to the chimney in the opposite corner, would keep the kang warm enough for the family to go to bed.

As I thought of all the way the Lord led, and how He has met every need, I remembered a fascinating picture in the Bible as the Prophet Ezekiel in a remarkable vision saw himself at the Temple in the future city of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 47:1-5 – *King James Translation*). A stream trickled from under the threshold of the Eastern Gate. His guide led him eastward five hundred yards and told him to cross the stream. The water was ankle-deep. Measuring another five hundred yards his guide told him to go across again. This time the water was knee-deep. Five hundred yards farther he found the water up to his waist. Another five hundred yards, and the water had become too deep for wading; he had to swim. As I look back on my life, I see how the Lord has led me through similar stages. First there was the ankle-deep water as the Lord led me in my childhood and early preparation for life. Then there came a period of knee-deep water as He continued to prepare me for His service by leading me to Prairie Bible Institute in Canada, and then introducing me to Camp Tadmor where He would teach me many lessons in service. It was in this period of knee-deep water also that He gave me the wife

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who would walk with me into the deeper water. Then there was the waist-deep water as together my wife and I began to get a taste of service, and finally for the past forty years we have been thrilled to follow the Lord in deeper water, swimming, and thoroughly delighted with serving Him in the pastorate of several independent Bible churches.

And now that I have had to retire from active service, I can look back and see how the Lord has led and provided all the way. I find it so thrilling that I plan to put these experiences in writing as a series of short stories for the pleasure of anyone who will read them and for the glory of the Lord who has led me.

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