

First Trip to China

Their first glimpse of China was Shanghai, where they joined forces with other missionaries going to various posts in China, some of whom had travelled over on the same ship from Vancouver. In Shanghai they were met by Dr. and Mrs. ^{Cram} Leslie Kilbourn, who were to look after all the newly arrived missionaries. They stayed in Shanghai a week, shopping, buying groceries for a whole year.

For the trip inland, first they took a fairly large steamer - 4 cabins - up the river to ^{Hankow} Hongkong where they stopped at the ^{China Inland Mission} CIM Mission and transferred to a smaller steamer to ^{Ichang} Ichang and then to a houseboat which took 10 weeks to complete the journey to Chengtu. On this journey the missionaries were accompanied by a cook and a teacher ^{sent from Lyashuan} so that they could start learning to speak Chinese immediately. The cook would go ashore every night to buy vegetables and meat and that is how the Canadians learned their first words in Chinese. The cook would come back on board the houseboat with the food and name it in Chinese and the "students" would thus learn to say it and also the price of it. The teacher would sit with them all day, helping with the language so that by the time they got to Chengtu, they knew the names in Chinese for many articles and also could keep their accounts.

Summers in the Mountains

Many of the missionaries would move their wives and children into the mountains during the hot Chinese summers. The Johns and their friends went to Kivonchan, 40 miles away. It was a two-day trip by sedan chair, and of course, everything the family needed for living had to be moved with them. The Johns would take 3 or 4 sedan chairs, a cleaning woman, plus ^{Am} helper and a cook. ^{Kylie's father did the cleaning} Dad would ride his bicycle and the boys would walk as much of the way as they could. When meal time rolled around, the whole

family would stop at an inn, bring out their own tablecloth, cutlery and food, which they would prepare and eat, only ordering hot tea from the inn. This tea was prepared in the traditional Chinese way - a few tea leaves put in the bottom of a cup, boiling water poured from a *bottle* over the shoulder of the servant into the cup, the cup then covered to sleep, and each one then had his individual pot of tea to which endless additional cups of boiling water could be added. There were dogs running around underfoot and fleas everywhere. To sleep overnight on the journey, the family would stay in a chapel because it was cleaner than the inn. They would choose a spot to make up the beds, then put down oiled sheets to keep away bed bugs, then the bedding and over it a mosquito net. Before the children were put inside the net to sleep, mother would climb inside and kill off any mosquitoes still in there. Such was the fear of malaria - and no preventative was available. They often had trouble keeping the carriers moving. The men would stop at meal time, begin to smoke opium, and then refuse to continue the trip. So they would have to be bribed with promises of extra money and rewards if they got the party to its destination at a specific time. The children walked as much of the way as they could and there was always fear of kidnapping. The little boys would run on ahead and if they got out of sight they could easily be snatched - or if they were riding in a sedan chair, the runners could easily take off with the children and disappear, especially if it were getting dark. So the whole journey was over ridden with a haunting fear of misfortune.

Harold has two vivid memories of Kevonchan - His birthday is July 4th, and one year when he was about 7, the night after his birthday, his mother wakened to see someone moving around the bedroom. She wakened her husband, and as soon as whoever was in the room heard them talking he ran. Fred chased the robber and he dropped a lot of what he had taken, but hung on

to Harold's birthday presents, which included a Mechano set. The next day his parents produced a whole new set of presents for him.

Up the mountain from the temple, where the family stayed in Kevonchan, was a large cave where the boys had a secret club, and they wouldn't let the girls belong to it.. As members of this secret club the boys one day went into the temple and knocked an idol over a cliff. Harold and Martin both remember doing this and also remember they were too frightened to tell their parents they had done it.

Shopping for food supplies in China was somewhat different than in Canada. The cook would take his big basket and long string of cash and go out early in the morning to buy supplies, especially meat for the day. In the mountains in the summer there were lots of lovely vegetables, which they bought directly from the priests - corn, potatoes, cucumbers, peas - 3 crops of peas a year. There was a meat, mostly beef, chickens and fish. When food seemed to get too expensive, Fred and Myrtle would go out and try to buy the food themselves. First they would watch some Chinese buy some food and find out what the natives paid for it. Then they would buy the same food for the same price, take it home and tell the cook what they had paid for it. Next day, the prices the cook said he paid for the food would be reasonable. This had to be done quite regularly to keep the food costs in order.

Soon the Canadian missionaries were growing garden vegetables in their own compound. Seeds had been taken out from Canada and soon there was a flourishing garden. The Chinese servants could not understand why the Canadians would not fertilize their garden with the refuse from the toilets as the natives did. The Canadians preferred to use a fertilizer that would allow them to eat the vegetables green and uncooked.

Toilets were all outside and every morning someone would clean it out and sell it for a substantial sum. The refuse from the Church toilets were reputed to be the best fertilization in town and sold for much more than any other. Coolies would come with buckets on their shoulders, two pales on a rod carried over the shoulder, clean out the toilets and carry it away.

Helping Servants

One cook we had died very suddenly, leaving a wife with 4 small children who of course were destitute and had to be looked after. It would not be possible for the wife to come to work at the compound as she had her little children to look after, and as well most natives had to be housed and cleaned up a whole lot before they could enter service. So Myrtle decided to teach this woman to knit boys socks. She learned quickly, how to knit, but not how to turn heels. At the end of a summer's knitting when the Johns returned to Chengtu from the Mountains, there were seven pairs of stockings ready to have the heels turned and the feet knitted on. Myrtle taught her how to turn the heels and she did all 7 pairs one after the other, so she never forgot how to knit the whole stocking. Then she went on to learn how to knit sweaters and so made money to support the family.

Life in China

When they first reached Chengtu and while they were still studying the language the Johns family - there were still only 2 of them - lived in the city, in Chinese houses and sometimes in communes with other missionary families. After a couple of years the Baines went on furlough and the Johns moved into their house on the campus compound. The next year, when the Baines returned, they lived in the ~~W~~^Kilburns house while they were on furlough. By the time the Kilburns came back there was a permanent house

available for the Johns, and that is the home the Johns children remember, with verandahs running all around the house both upstairs and down, where the children could sleep on the porch under mosquito nets. One time when Harold injured an eye and it became infected, the housekeeper got the pillows all mixed up and everyone got the infection. Dad worst of all. The children weren't really harmed by it, because as soon as they got the infection they were bandaged and their vees treated, but Dad would not give up teaching because it was the beginning of term and he was registrar. Finally, he almost went blind and had to spend several months in a darmed room, before leaving to come back home on furlough in 1917.

Myrtle had a firm hand with her children. When Harold was a little boy, just starting school, he preferred to drop his nightgown in the middle of the floor in the morning, while his mother preferred that he hang it up. Myrtle finally told him that next time he didn't hang it up she would send ~~it~~ for him to come home from school to do it. Next time was next day, and sure enough Myrtle sent word to Harold's teacher, Mrs. Crutcher that she wanted Harold to come home and hang up his nightgown. Mrs. Crutcher told Harold that his mother wanted him home but did not want to tell him why in front of the class. So Harold went home at recess and hung up his nightgown. The next day it had to be done all over again, and this time Myrtle insisted Mrs. Cruteher tell Harold in front of the flass, which she did.

There was always fighting in China - one war lord against another, and many times the University compound was in the middle of it, as this was a sort of no-man's land. One night the Amah wakened the Johns to say that there was fighting and shots were hitting the back of the house. The parents moved the children's beds directly on to the floor directly under the window so that if the bullets hit the walls they would not injure the

children. The children went right back to sleep but the parents remained awake and alert. The next morning they did indeed find bullets imbedded in the verandah.

The Chinese people were always curious to watch the foreign missionaries. Whenever they walked in the streets, they'd be surrounded by the curious. The only place they could get away was in the graveyard, where the Chinese did not seem inclined to go so there the families would go for picnics.

When Martin was born he came along early and seemed sickly so the doctors fed me up on too much milk and too many egg-nogs, and poor Martin had real trouble trying to handle all that rich food. I finally convinced them that what he needed was a wet-nurse, and we were able to use the wet nurse Mrs. Avery was using for her baby - that Chinese woman had enough milk for 3 babies. Martin got one feeding a day from the wet nurse and in the first week he gained a pound. They all went up into the mountains for the summer and kept up the wet-nurse feedings so that by fall - 2 months - Martin was a lovely plump baby. We stopped using Mrs. Avery's wet nurse when we returned to the city in the fall, but Martin went downhill so quickly without the auxiliary feeding, that we knew we had to find a wet nurse for him.

The first thing we had to do, when we found one, was to strip, bathe and delouse her, clean and delouse all her clothes. The woman resisted taking off her stockings, as her feet had been burned when she was an infant, and she did not want to uncover her deformity. She had more than enough milk for her own baby and for Martin - she would often come as early as 5 o'clock in the morning for Martin's first feeding, as she was so uncomfortable with too much milk. It was hard to get our own baby on a regular schedule with a wet nurse so full of milk. By the time the second child, Harold was on his way, the doctors had realized that Myrtle must be on a very strict low fat,

low calorie diet, so that when he was born, she was able to nurse him herself, and in 4 months he weighed 17 pounds, a real healthy baby. By the time the 4th baby was expected (and as it happened that one turned out to be twins) Myrtle knew what she wanted in a wet nurse. Long before the baby was due, she hired this woman as a sewing woman, paid her full wages for that, and then when she needed her as a wet nurse paid her full wages for that, as well. This was a good way to ensure that the nurse would stay as long as she was needed.

Refining sugar and cereals

When one bought sugar in China, it was not refined, but was dark brown raw sugar. So it had to be cleaned at home. And this is how it was done. The dark sugar was put into a vat of water, and brought to a boil, then some egg shells plus a whole egg was added to it, when boiled the dirt would rise to the top. Then all the dirt would be skimmed off, and the remaining sugar would be clean, powdered, almost white sugar. Then the cook would stir it, cool it, put it away in a clean crock ready for use.

We would use this sugar to make our own candy. Periodically, we would bring an extra cook to spend a whole day making different kinds of candy. Three kinds in particular stand out in memory. First the cook would make taffy and pull it on a nail, pulling and pulling until it was white and creamy, and lovely. Then he would roll some of it in little balls and put them in a big dishpan and keep shaking it until they all became round and perfect. Some he would put on sticks to be suckers. Then he would make after - dinner cream mints for special occasions. And in the family storehouse there was always a box of sweets kept as a special reward for a child who got 100 in arithmetic. For special occasions, when ladies came to tea, lump sugar was imported in from Shanghai - even 3000 miles in the hinter land of a pagan country, Canadian ministers wives loved to be reminded of tea time at home.

Cereals had to be refined just as sugar had. Raw cereal was always greasy and oily and had to be boiled to remove the oil, dried and ground up to make a cereal that one could cook.

There was always a special room for provisions, affectionately known as the storehouse (another hangover from a Canadian farm childhood), which was always kept locked and the key for which always remained around the mistresses' neck. Each morning the lady of the house and the cook would decide what was to be eaten that day, how much of each kind of foodstuff would be required. Only that amount of food would be taken out - the rest locked up. It was a recognized practice that each day the cook would estimate that he needed a little more flour and sugar and cereal than he would actually use. This extra he would take home to his own family.

Life in China

The first time we went up the Yanktze River we had Christmas dinner on board. There were several missionary families travelling together and we were lonesome for our loved ones and decided we had to have a proper Canadian Christmas celebration. We had a cookstove on board and we cooked a turkey, and even had a Christmas pudding.

Travelling up the river we would stop at all the missionary stations en route - Huchon, Chungking, etc. This way we met all the missionaries on the field and brought them all the news from home. The women, travelling fresh from Canada, would always put on their best dresses and hats for these stops, since the women on the field were out of touch with styles and trends and were all anxious to know what the latest fads were.

We carried an organ with us on the house boat that first trip up the river. Fred's mother and step father had given it to them as a wedding gift and they took it with them all the way out to China. It was put in the hold of the houseboat but it was almost too big and the top of the hold would not fit properly, so they put their bed on top of it and slept there. But en route there was a wreck to the houseboat and the organ got wet. It never really worked properly after that. It was used the whole time in China but it always squeaked.

At the end of the trip by houseboat there was still a 4 day overland trip Jadin (?) to Chengtu. This was taken in sedan chairs, one person to one chair.

In 1911 there was trouble with the war lords and the missionary families were evacuated from Chengtu to Shanghai. They were in the midst of their language study course when the trouble started so they took their Chinese teachers with them when they went down river to Shanghai and studied the whole time they were away. This was the time Fred went on Relief work for the YMCA in Shanghai.

Enroute up river on the return journey, Fred got very ill with what they feared was smallpox, since two of their party had already died of the disease. As it turned out, the two who died, a baby who hadn't yet been vaccinated and a woman who didn't believe in the serum, did not infect the others. It was typhoid fever that Fred contracted but until that was diagnosed both Fred and Myrtle were put in quarantine in the hospital. Despite the fact that she was already pregnant with the first child, and not very well, Myrtle insisted on nursing Fred through his typhoid attack and at the same time trying to get their first home in China ready to move into. This first home was right in the middle of the city, not on the University Campus.

It used to be a real problem making icecream in China, because there was no way of making ice - but the Canadian parents there wanted their children - and themselves - occasionally to have a taste of home - and how better to do that than make icecream. Once in a long while, when there would happen to be a light frost overnight, the father and boys would go out early in the morning and rake up the thin covering of ice from the ponds nearby take it home and hope there would be enough to make icecream for the family. When they wanted to have icecream for a big party, they would hire a coolie to bring a load of ice down from the mountains. This was put into an old fashioned, hand turner ice cream freezer, brought all the way to China from Ontario - put the icecream custard in the middle steel compartment, pack the ice to which salt had been added, all around the outside compartment, put the lid on, and keep turning the handle, which turned a paddle inside where the custard mixture was. The icecream mixture would thus be beaten as it got colder and colder until finally it was stiff and frozen. When the mixture got so stiff you could no longer turn the handle, the icecream was made. Then all the friends and neighbours would come in, and there would be enough icecream for everyone. Sad was the party when the salt on the ice inadvertently got into the icecream mixture and ruined the whole batch of it.

Canadian School in Chengtu

This was operated by the Methodist Church of Canada for the children of all missionaries in West China. About half came from Chengtu and were day students and the rest lived in residence. There were 5 or 6 teachers and Lewis Walmsley was the principal. Miss Amy Bruce was one teacher who stands out in memory. After a week of hard work in class, she used Friday afternoon for story telling. In these periods she related many of the great works of English literature to her grade 7 and 8 students.- Dickens, Scott, Hugo - She was a marvellous story teller, telling the stories with such

enthusiasm that her listeners were inspired to go immediately and read the books for themselves. Whenever she visited a missionary family for dinner, it was a highlight for the children of the house, because she asked the privilege of going, at bedtime to kiss the children goodnight and to tell them a bedtime story. Mrs. Crutcher was another teacher whose memory is held with great affection by her pupils.

Martin's tape was in Chengtu

When Yung Sen captured Chengtu the missionary families were in the midst of the battle. He and his brigands besieged the arsenal, which was a walled city about 5 or 6 miles from Chengtu. The battle for the arsenal lasted several days with guns going off each night. That was out of bullet range of the missionary compound so there was no real danger. But when the arsenal fell, Yung Sen attacked the city itself and then they were involved. One night they were in a real NO MANS LAND between the defending army and Yung Sen's attacking troops. In the middle of the night the family was awakened, moved indoors from the sleeping porches and put their mattresses right under the windows behind the brick wall so that no strong bullets could hurt them. Next day on the way to school the children walked along the edge of the stone walls, always keeping close and then running across any open spaces in case a strong bullet came.

One trip to Quan Chin

One year it was pouring rain when we were to set off for our annual trip to the mountains. Thirty carriers arrived to carry the luggage as well as the men to carry the sedan chairs. It was so muddy that one man had to be assigned to carry a bicycle on his shoulders because it couldn't be ridden through the mire. The trip was so slow because of the mud and rain that that day only half the usual day's trip was made. So they had to find a place to sleep - not the usual one. They found a Chinese Inn but the parents

decided all the rooms were too filthy to sleep in, so they rented the courtyard at the back of the inn. There they put together several large wooden tables, laid out sheets over the tables, brought out the bedding and mosquito netting from the sedan chair, and the whole family crawled under the mosquito netting and slept in their clothese that night. By the time the luggage carriers caught up to the party the next day, everything was very wet. The sun finally came out and things started to dry out and by afternoon the party could move on. The next night we slept in a school house, on tables and under netting as on the previous night. That trip from Chengtu to Kwanshien which normally only took a day and a half, that time took two and a half days.

Going down the Yungtze in 1925

It was time for the Jonhs family to start for Canada.