

# My Life as I Remember It

by

Daniel L. Overmyer<sup>1</sup>

I write this informal memoir in the hope that it will be of interest to my grandchildren as they grow older (Sarai, Maceo and Adan Hertz-Velázquez and Amara and Zoe Overmyer). It is based on what I remember, supplemented by comments from my mother Bernice, my wife Estella and my sister, Mary Beth Twining. This is not intended to be a research essay, but I have checked some written sources. I realize that memories can be unreliable, and particularly for my early years have been constructed by what I have been told by and what I have told to others. On the whole I have had a good, satisfying and happy life, for which I am deeply grateful to my family, friends and colleagues, and to the marvelous universe from which my life emerged and to which, eventually, it will return. This memoir is meant to be read along with my Curriculum Vitae, of which the most recent version is dated June 30, 2010. The reader should also look at the many wonderful family photo albums organized by Estella, including photos taken on our many trips.

My grandparents, on my father's side, were Gladys and Earl Overmyer and, on my mother's side, Cora and William Hesselbart, all of whom lived many years in and near Lindsey, Ohio. Grandma Cora was an excellent seamstress. She made most of her daughters' clothing, even coats. Mom remembered excursions to Toledo where they would stand outside the department store windows while their mom sketched the styles they liked into her sketchbook. From her sketches she made patterns. She also made uniforms for the Lindsey baseball team.

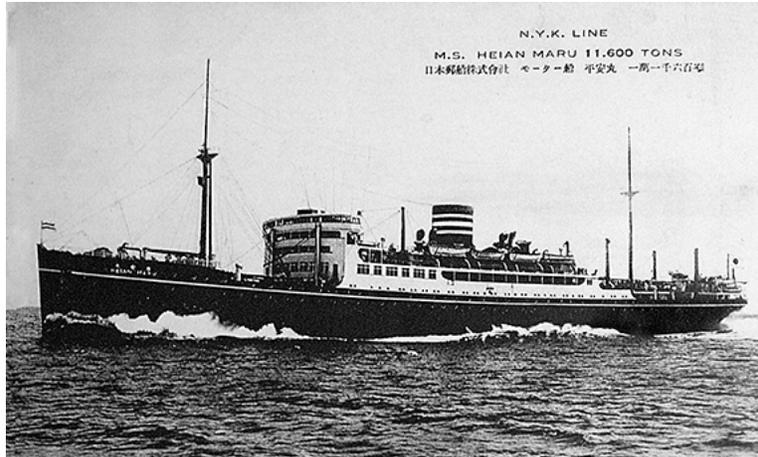
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<sup>1</sup> April, 2014; revised December, 2015, January, 2016 and November 2017 and slightly modified in March and July 2018. With contributions from Estella Overmyer and Mary Beth Twining; edited by Jordanna Hertz, who also designed the cover. Photos courtesy of Mary Beth Twining and Mark Overmyer Velazquez. Mark Overmyer-Velazquez, a historian by profession, has gathered information about the histories of the Overmyer, Hesselbart and Velazquez families. See also Barnhart B. and John C. Overmyer, *Overmyer History and Genealogy, from 1680 to 1905*, Fremont, Ohio, Chas. S. Beelman, Printer, 1905, and Laurence Overmire, *One Immigrant's Legacy: The Overmyer Family in America 1751-2009*, Indelible Mark Publishing.

Grandpa Will was the postmaster in Lindsey. Grandpa Earl and Grandma Gladys both cared for an eighty-acre farm two and a half miles north of Lindsey on Ohio Route 590. My mother, Bernice Alma Hesselbart, was born in Buffalo, New York in 1910 before her family moved to Lindsey. My father, Elmer Earl, was born that same year in Lindsey. (Later in life he acquired the nickname "Tige"). They married in Lindsey in 1932, after Elmer had graduated from Asbury College in Kentucky, just as he was to begin studies at the Asbury Theological Seminary. After obtaining a Bachelor of Divinity (B.D.) degree, he was ordained as a minister in the Evangelical Church, a denomination that eventually merged with two others to become first the Evangelical United Brethren (E.U.B.) Church, and then the United Methodist Church.

The first congregation Elmer was sent to serve after ordination was in Columbus, Ohio, and it was there that I was born on August 20, 1935. I weighed only about three and a half pounds at birth, but am told I grew up to be a lively and healthy child, loved by all. From Columbus we moved to Marion, Ohio, where my first sister Mary Beth was born in 1939. At about that time, my parents were asked to consider going to China as missionaries, which we did in 1940, when I was five and Mary Beth was one.

On the way to China we first went to Japan on the Japanese ship Heian Maru, departing from San Francisco, and stopping on the way at Vancouver, B.C. Baths on that ship were in tubs filled with salt water; my first authentic memory is of the taste of that water while I was being given a bath. (Several years ago, by the way, I saw an underwater photo of the Heian Maru sunk after the battle of Truk in World War II.) I am told we waited in Tokyo for six weeks for a ship to China, which was difficult because Japan had been at war with China since 1937. We stayed in what must have been a missionary compound; I remember standing at the gate of that compound, waving a toy sword at a passing Japanese army officer.



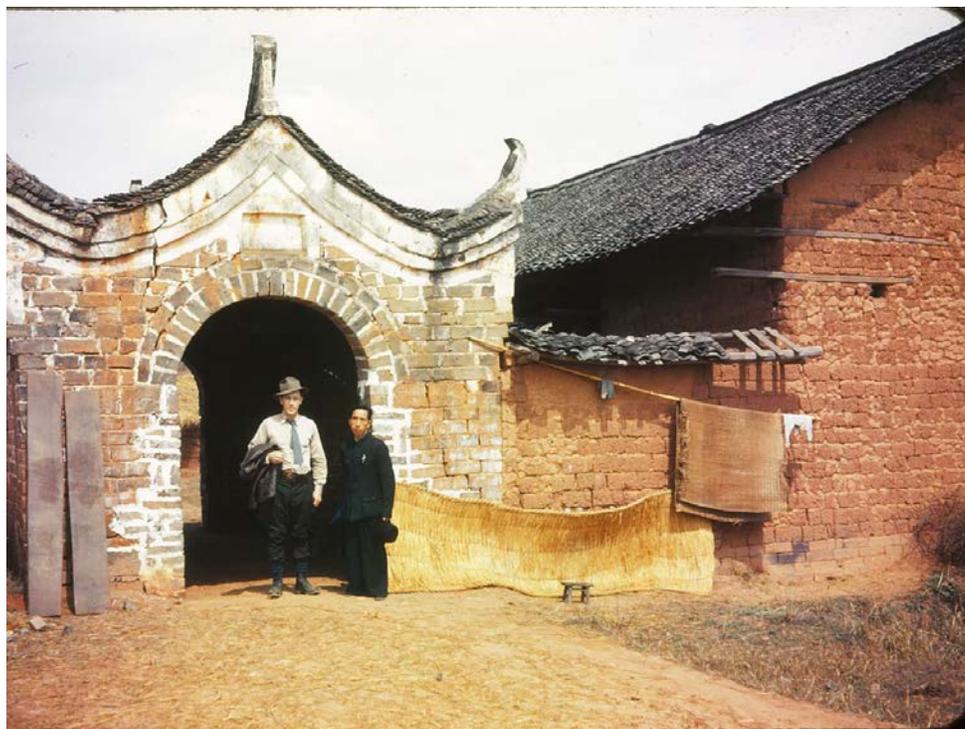
Heian Maru

Since my parents had planned to go first to Beijing (then called Peking) for language study, we eventually secured passage on a ship across the Yellow Sea to what I assume must have been Tianjin, Beijing's port city. I remember helping take care of Mary Beth on that voyage because my parents were too seasick to do so. By then Beijing had already been occupied by the Japanese army, and American relations with Japan were deteriorating, so we were able to stay only a few weeks because the U.S. Embassy urged all Americans to leave.

However, during our time in Beijing, my parents were able to begin their language study and I attended kindergarten. I remember riding in a rickshaw to that kindergarten.

My parents had been assigned to the Evangelical mission in Changsha, the capital of Hunan Province, about 600 miles inland from the southeast coast. Since travel overland from Beijing was impossible because of the war, we went down the coast by ship, intending to land at Fuzhou in Fujian Province. However, because of a blockade of the coast of China by the Japanese navy, we were unable to go all the way to Fuzhou, so the Greek captain of our ship secretly made his way to another port, where we had to offload on to sampans. Assisted by an experienced missionary, Dr. Charles Talbot, we then travelled on foot to Fuzhou, accompanied by our luggage, carried on poles by coolies. We ourselves were carried on sedan chairs. I remember my father fell off a narrow bridge to a stream below; fortunately he was not seriously injured. We took this trip together with Rodney and Marie Sundberg and their daughter, Janet, who is one year younger than I. The Sundbergs were old college friends of

my parents also assigned to mission work in Hunan Province. After much difficulty, we eventually arrived in Fuzhou where we were warmly welcomed by missionaries stationed there.



Elmer with Chinese Pastor, Village in Hunan Province



Hunan, 1943

From Fuzhou we travelled by train to Changsha (I remember that the only water safe to drink came from the engine boiler, with lots of mud and rust. I also remember my father telling us that a porter on the train offered us “Flies Lice” to eat). Changsha is the capital of Hunan province, where we moved into a big brick house in a mission compound next to a public school and near a church, in an area of the city called Dong Pailou “Eastern Memorial Arch.” We were aided in all this by experienced Evangelical missionaries who were already in Hunan, Charles Talbot and Vernon Farnham.



Changsha market

I have seen pictures of Mary Beth and me playing with other missionary children in that missionary compound in Changsha, and I remember hearing Chinese children in that school reciting their lessons early in the morning so that they could leave the school before the Japanese bombers arrived on their daily raids. While we were there, the church was bombed. The concussion shook plaster off our house walls, and I think the leg of an iron bed in the attic plunged through the ceiling below. At some point after that we moved for safety to another area of the city to a big house on the campus of the Yale University in China (Yali, the medical school) elsewhere in Changsha. During this time my parents resumed their Chinese language study, and my mother began several years of teaching me my elementary grades. All of this was in 1941, before the December 7 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that led to war with the United States.

During 1941 the Japanese had occupied the Chinese coast, but still had not penetrated very far inland (except for their bombers!) but at one point units of the Japanese cavalry struck deep into Hunan and for a few days occupied Changsha. Of course they were fiercely opposed by the Chinese army, so fighting raged all around us. Artillery shells landed on the campus, including one that killed a servant woman living across the street from us. (At one point I had a piece of shrapnel that I believe was from that shell, with a thread from her blanket embedded in it). Many Chinese people tried to flee to the relative safety of the Yali

campus, but after some were admitted, the Japanese wanted to come in after them. However, some of the missionary men, including my father and Rodney Sundberg, courageously stood at the gates and refused to admit them.

After the Japanese forces withdrew, the bombing intensified, including early morning raids by dive bombers that made a terrifying sound. I can remember seeing one that dived so low that for a few moments it disappeared behind the compound wall. There was a bomb shelter in the basement of our house to which we went when the alarm sounded. I was very afraid; my mother says that I was the first to head for the shelter! I do remember being awakened early one morning by my father frantically putting shoes on my feet so that we could all flee to the basement.

Of course, after Pearl Harbor we were no longer protected by the American flag, so as the bombing intensified we fled down the Xiang River on sampans to the city of Hengyang, where there was also a mission station. I can remember that units of the Chinese army who wanted to commandeer our boat to cross the river fired across its bow, where my father stood shouting "Meiguo ren, Meiguo ren" ("Americans, Americans").

We stayed in Hengyang for a while, but the bombing there was bad also, because there was an American Airforce base across the river. From it, P-40 fighter planes of the 13<sup>th</sup> Air force, the "Flying Tigers," flew east to the coast to bomb Japanese ships and bases in Hong Kong and Shanghai. I remember that we made friends with some of the pilots, and once I was given a ride around the airfield in the cockpit of a P-40. It was during this time as well that Jimmy Doolittle led his daring 1942 raid on Japan, flying twin-engined B25 bombers from aircraft carriers. This raid did not do much physical damage, but it both shocked the Japanese and encouraged the Americans. For the B25s it was a one-way trip; those that survived the raid crash landed in the sea or in China, where some of the American flyers made it to the base in Hengyang. There we invited them to our home for a party, where I remember we played "Pin the tail on the donkey"! Of course, that was an exciting event for all of us.



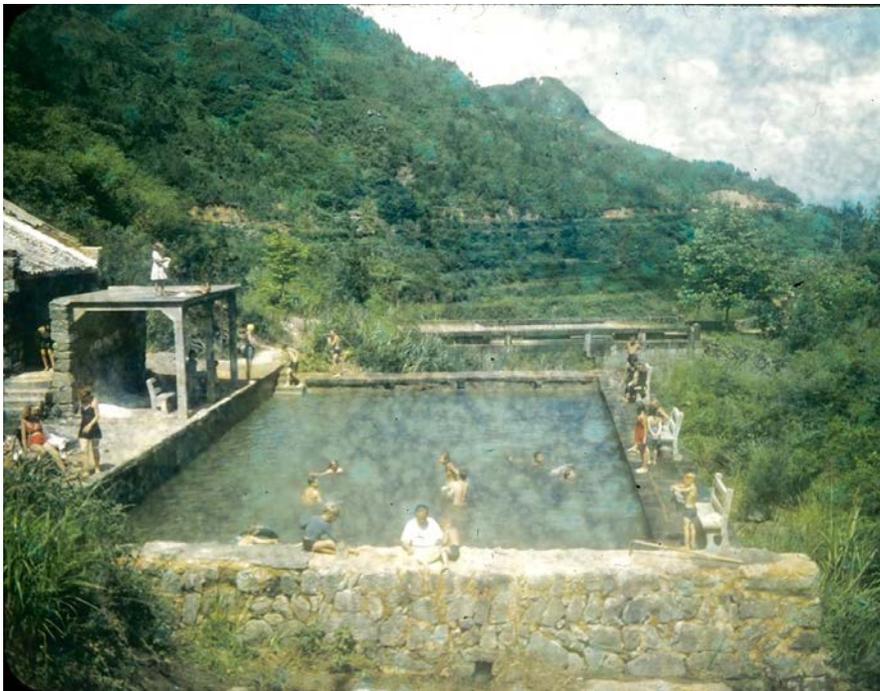
A Flying Tiger, Curtiss P-40

The other major event in my life at Hengyang was my stay in a hospital where my tonsils were removed; I can still remember how my throat hurt and how good ice cream tasted!

However, my parents decided that Hengyang was too dangerous, so we moved to a smaller Hunan provincial town, the county seat of Youxian, in You County (pronounced Yo, with a long o). Here my father served a church and tried to help the Chinese pastors in that area. There was no bombing there, but twice American fighter planes crash landed in Youxian because they got lost and ran out of gas on their way back to Hengyang. First there were two or three P40s, one of which crash landed beside the river that went through town. I remember that when my father and I arrived, the pilot was standing on a wing trying to communicate with a crowd of people using an English/Chinese phrase book; he was very glad to see us! The pilots gathered at our home to wait for trucks to come in from Hengyang to pick them up. (I presume they took the airplanes too). I remember walking along the river with my father and the pilots, one of whom shot at a big wet log with his Colt .45 calibre pistol, but the wood was so hard the blunt bullets just bounced off. Our house in Youxian was in a fairly large walled compound with the church at the other end. Beside this compound was a big fish pond where both humans and egrets fished. Unfortunately the egrets occasionally dropped the fish they had caught, so the area stank of dead fish. When the trucks from Hengyang arrived to pick up the pilots, I remember that the men stood on our front porch and shot at egrets with their

pistols and a Thompson .45 calibre submachine gun, but most of the egrets survived. Mom was furious with them for shooting the birds!

While we were based in Youxian we spent at least one summer on nearby Nanyo Mountain (= Nanyue – “The Southern Peak”), though my memories of this are obscured by our stays there in our second term after 1946. The one memory I have that is definitely before the end of the war was of watching dogfights between American and Japanese planes in the valley below us. I remember the rapid fire of the Japanese machine guns and the slower “thud, thud, thud” of the heavier American .50 calibre guns. Once a Japanese plane was shot down and fell in a straight plume of smoke in the grand amphitheatre in front of our mountain house. It was followed a few minutes later by its wings fluttering down like pieces of paper in a breeze.



Nanyo Mountain Swimming Pool, 1947

As noted above, occasionally an American fighter plane would get lost over the unfamiliar terrain, run out of gas, and belly-flop into a rice paddy. As we were the only Americans for miles around; the villagers would bring the crews to us, where they would stay

until they, and their planes, were rescued. Don't remember the logistics; I suppose they radioed to Hengyang for help. My dad always wrote to the parents of these men, to let them know that they were well.

Mary Beth reminds me of one day when our American pilot du jour was leaving us after a brief stay, we went with him and the rescue crew to check on his plane, by now pulled out of the rice paddy and waiting at the edge of the village. She remembers being terrified by the menacing eyes and teeth of the airplane; these were the Flying Tigers. She was even more impressed, when she wandered farther back, by the painting of a very pink and scantily clad lady on the side of the plane. My father, when he went to find her and saw what she was gazing at, hustled her away in a hurry. The family story goes that a couple of Jimmy Dolittle's men also stayed with us.

One of the Flying Tigers, John Hampshire, wrote a letter to his dad in Oregon about how wonderful it was to stay in an American home, and how much fun he had playing with their little girl. Later we got a letter from his father, who told us that his son had died in a crash shortly thereafter, and he thanked us for our hospitality to him. He had raised his boy alone, his wife having died when his son was just a baby. Inside the letter was a hundred-dollar war bond, for "the little sweetheart Mary Beth" who sat in John's lap. She used it towards her first college tuition.

In Youxian my mother taught me through the third grade; I remember that sometimes we met on the big verandah. We began each day with the Pledge of Allegiance to an American flag. While she was teaching, Mom took the name of Miss Brown. She was very strict about our keeping to her professional name during class. After school I played with Chinese friends, with whom I learned to speak the Hunan dialect of Mandarin. I have the following memories of my life in Youxian, one of which is of being followed by crowds of children when we went out into the street, children shouting "Yang guizi, yang guizi" and "Gao bi ze" "Foreign devils" and "high noses". Other memories are of the gate keeper's wife boiling fat to make soap, and our cook's wife having a screaming tantrum during which she threw a broken bowl at the cook that deeply cut his wrist (one of the pilots who was staying with us at

the time was heard to mutter, "Give me a nice quiet war"), and of breaking my collarbone on a porch railing when I tried to jump backward off a table. I also remember a mob of Chinese youths chasing down a cat in the compound and beating it to death in a doorway after knocking it down from a tree. My lifelong fear of dogs began in Youxian; I threw a piece of bread from the front porch to our neighbour's dog; when he didn't eat it, I went down to pick it up to give it to him, and he bit me. In those days most Chinese dogs were half wild and always hungry; not really pets. I remember that it was dangerous to walk by them while carrying any food.

Anyway, despite these strange memories, my life in Youxian was good, but in the spring of 1944 we had to leave in a hurry because the Japanese army was finally pushing into the interior. Leaving everything behind, we fled to Hengyang, where Mom, Mary Beth and I flew in a C-47 transport plane to the western Chinese city of Kunming. On the way there I sat for a time on the pilot's lap, but my steering started to make people sick, so I had to go back in the cabin! From Kunming we took another plane over the Himalaya Mountains ("The Hump") to Assam, and from there to India. My father went back to Youxian to try to salvage our belongings, but the house had already been destroyed. He stayed on in China for another year, trying to help pastors and churches as best he could. For a time he travelled with units of the U.S. Army, and then eventually returned to the States on a freighter headed west through the Suez Canal and on to the U.S. east coast. I remember he told us that most of the sailors got drunk when the ship reached a port, so they asked him to take care of their belongings! They all loved him and called him "Padre". I like to imagine him sitting with those guys in some middle-eastern dive, drinking tea and taking it all in.

He was a good and courageous man.



Elmer "Tige" Overmyer

Meanwhile, Mom, Mary Beth and I flew from Assam to Calcutta in India, carrying only the clothes we could wear – no baggage was allowed on the plane. From Calcutta we travelled by train across India to Bombay, where we stayed two months with a missionary family while waiting for a ship to take us back to the States. The train cars were divided into separate compartments accessible only from the outside. The Bombay apartment in which we stayed was on an upper floor, big and airy. My memories of the city are of snake charmers in a park, and lepers with noses and fingers gone begging for money as we passed. I also remember the rich aroma of leather shops, the beautiful dresses of Parsi women walking along the harbour in the evening, and the roar and clank of army tanks passing in the street.

Finally, we were able to return to the U.S. by ship. It must have been August of 1944, because I believe I had my ninth birthday on the ship. I remember playing ping pong with passengers on the lower decks, and making some money by shining shoes for other passengers. Mary Beth has a very vivid memory of mom's finger being crushed when one of the hold doors slid shut as the ship rolled. She remembers the walk with her up the metal steps to the ship's clinic, and the time a day or so later when a man grabbed her bandaged

hand to keep her from sliding off her seat in the dining hall. Only time she ever heard her scream.

The ship was armed against possible attacks by air, and I remember the excitement of periodic target practice against balloons released from the deck. First came the chatter of 20 mm machine guns, then the thump, thump, thump of 40 mm guns as the balloons drifted further away, and finally the loud roar of five inch guns, the shells from which exploded in the sky.

On the way to San Francisco we stopped for a time in Australia, anchored off (I think it was) the Melbourne harbor, but did not go ashore. From San Francisco we travelled by train to Ohio, where we were welcomed in Lindsey by my grandparents, in town and on the farm. We lived in a little house in the village, and I attended fourth grade at Lindsey Elementary school (the first time I had attended a school). In the classroom, fourth graders sat on one side and fifth graders on the other. Our teacher was Miss Neeb. I had a crush on a girl named Phoebe. In Lindsey I walked to school, but when we stayed out at the Overmyer farm I rode a school bus together with a neighbour girl from across the road, Ruth Ann Eversole. I think it was then that Mary Beth and I had our first childhood pet, a black cocker spaniel named Candy.

I remember two friends from that time in Lindsey; Ronnie Mielke, who lived across the street and down the block from Grandma and Grandpa Hesselbart, and Dave Anderson, who lived on a farm a couple of miles from the Overmyer farm out in the country. We had BB guns, and roamed around shooting birds in Lindsey and in the cemetery and along the creek east of town. I also shot birds around the farm and on the telephone lines above the road. I had been taught to love people, but nothing was said about animals; I first learned to show compassion to animals many years later when I first studied Buddhism at the University of Chicago.

At some point in 1945 my father finally returned from China by way of New York City, and then in the summer of 1945 we moved to Hartford, Connecticut (by then we had a

1939 Buick), where my parents attended the Kennedy School of Missions. We lived in an apartment in a stone building with a terraced front lawn. That fall I started the fifth grade in a big two-story brick school with long, high hallways that terrified me, but soon after school began I got polio, for which no vaccine had yet been developed. It began like a 'flu', but then my legs stiffened so that it was hard to get up to go to the bathroom. I remember my parents talking to a doctor in hushed tones. I was taken to a hospital, where I was put in an isolation ward for two weeks and bathed in alcohol. All my clothes were burned, as was my teddy bear. After isolation, I was put in a ward with lots of other young boys where we were given what was called the "Sister Kenney" treatment, which consisted of our limbs being wrapped in hot wet blankets, followed by painful stretching exercises. Fortunately my illness was not so severe as many there; it chiefly affected my left leg and foot, which have been shorter and smaller ever since, by about an inch and one and a half shoe size. After the initial period I did not feel sick any more, and enjoyed horsing around with my fellow patients. We were allowed to wear only skimpy pyjama shorts, and used to snap each other in the butt with wet towels. It was on that hospital ward that I first heard swear words, which I didn't know I wasn't supposed to say. One time when my parents were visiting a kid came up and snapped me on the behind, at which I uttered a string of swear words that must have shocked my parents!



1939 Buick

When I was released from the hospital I was not allowed to return to school because it was believed that sitting for a long time in a hard chair was not good for children recovering

from polio, so I was tutored at home all of fifth grade by a nice woman named Mrs. Dole. I got my first bicycle in Hartford, a red Schwinn with the fat tires that were used at that time. Not long after I learned to ride it I dented its front fender by running into the railing of steps leading up the terrace in our front lawn. I had a good time that year in Hartford playing with other missionary kids who lived across the street, Henry and Anna Louise Bucher, whose parents were also attending the Kennedy School. Henry was a strong, stocky kid – we used to wrestle in the grass.

From Hartford we returned to Lindsey, Ohio for a time, where we stayed on the farm, which I loved. That farm was like heaven to me.

In 1946 we returned to China for our second term in Hunan, traveling first by train to San Francisco, then on by a converted troopship called the Marine Lynx, with hundreds of berths in several holds. I have no specific memories about that trip; I presume we landed at Hong Kong and travelled by train to Changsha but I am not sure. In any case, in Changsha, Hunan, we lived in a big brick house in a small compound behind the Yali campus. Since a lot of foreigners had returned to China after the war, my playmates were Americans like Tommy and Mercer Kepler, the sons of Presbyterian missionaries, so I didn't need to speak in Chinese so much as in the first term. My mother taught me the sixth and seventh grades using Winnetka correspondence school materials. (I think she had used Calvert materials in the first term). My memories of this time in Changsha are of hiking about with the Kepler brothers, playing with a Chinese carrying pole and baskets made for me, blowing empty tin cans two stories high with big firecrackers, and trapping rats under the beds in the servants' quarters behind the house. I remember Dad shutting off the electric generator at night before we went to bed. (It was a 1000 watt gasoline generator for which he had rigged up an elaborate exhaust noise muffling system with big jars buried underground, but the sound still echoed around within the compound walls. We had to turn off the lights when the clothes iron was turned on.) The only time Mary Beth ever heard dad almost swear was when he was pulling for the umpteenth time on the rope that started that generator.

The summers of 1947 and '48 were spent on Nanyo mountain, where we shared half of a nice bungalow with the Sundbergs. There was a pavilion made of granite slabs on the hillside below the house, and a beautiful view of the valley below. We rented the house from a Nationalist government official or officer who had inscribed a Confucian saying on a horizontal slab in the pavilion. Other missionaries stayed in houses scattered across that area of the mountain, where we raised our national flags to celebrate birthdays. We kids called all the adults aunt or uncle. The women and children stayed on the cool mountain all summer, while the men continued to work down on the hot, steamy plains, and came up to be with their families when they could. I remember the sound of their jeeps as they labored up the narrow, stony road. (During the first term we walked up the mountain or were carried in sedan chairs; I remember pushing Mom from behind as we climbed). One year for some reason I was sent up the mountain by myself with a German missionary doctor named Eitel and his wife and a big German shepherd dog. I sat in the back seat with the dog, which turned out to be okay. The Eitels' place was somewhere else on the mountain, so from there I was carried by sedan chair to where we lived. I can still remember the creaking of the bamboo poles, the panting of the bearers and the tramping of their sandals on the path.

The Keplers and other missionary families stayed in a former inn at a wide spot along the trail, about half a mile from our place. We had a wonderful time hiking all over the place, making mud dams beside the trails, killing and burying snakes to dig them up later, and swimming in the missionary community pool, which was not far below our house. This pool was fed by a stream and had to constantly be repaired to slow the leaks, but it was wonderful to have there. I remember two traumatic events associated with that pool. First, when some of us boys were playing in the wet rocks above the pool, one boy slipped down with an awful clunking noise. I remember that on that occasion I was a useless wimp, because instead of going down to see how he was, I ran up the hill to our house to tell my parents! (The boy was not seriously injured). The other scary event occurred one morning when I went down to the pool, I discovered some people looking at the blueish body of a Chinese man who had drowned in it.

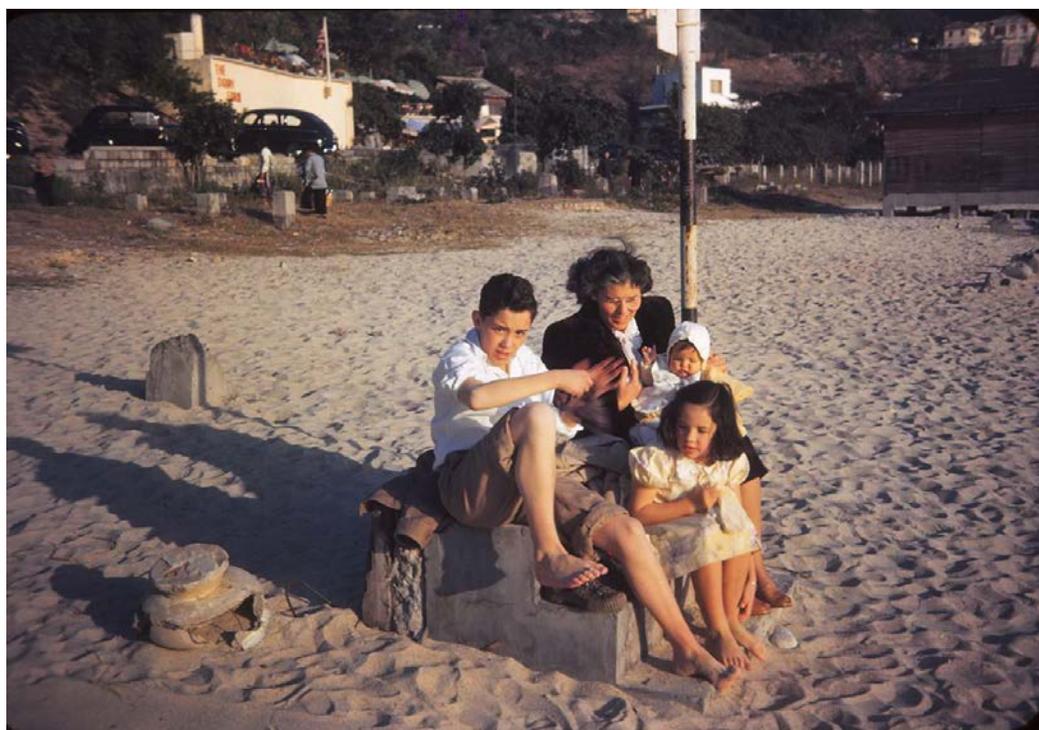
My other memories of summers on Nanyo include seeing tiger paw prints in the soft earth around a well, learning how to play canasta with my Presbyterian friends (such card playing was forbidden in our home!), and the names we gave to big rocks and peaks as we played among them. Some of the rocks had Chinese inscriptions on them that I couldn't read until I returned to Nanyo in 1981 (of which more later). My sister Bonnie was born on Nanyo in the summer of 1948, delivered by the same German missionary Dr. Eitel, but I was too self-absorbed at the time to remember much about it.

In the fall of 1948 I entered a little boarding school for missionary children in Hong Kong because my mother did not want to teach me the eighth grade. I lived with other kids in Phillips House, a nearby missionary hostel at 11A Carnarvon Road in Kowloon. My roommate was Fred Brandauer, who later became a professor of Chinese lit. at the University of Washington in Seattle. Every weekday morning we walked to the Star Ferry terminal about 15 minutes away, passing the Peninsula Hotel and the old Hong Kong railway station. There were still bullet holes in the fence around the station. We rode the Star Ferry across the harbour, then walked, turning right, to a No. 7A bus toward Aberdeen. Our school was on the way there, just below Queen Mary Hospital. There were not very many students in this school; the only other person in the eighth grade was a girl quite a bit taller than I.



Bernice and Tige, Phillip's House, 1949

My memories of Hong Kong at this time are not of the school, but of the adventures we had on the evenings and weekends, particularly making friends with sailors from U.S. Navy ships that visited Hong Kong. From the ferry crossing the harbour we watched for such ships and where the boats taking the sailors for shore leave were landing. Then we went to those piers to introduce ourselves, and were always invited to go back to ships with them, where we were treated to food, ice cream and movies. It was great sport; I remember the names of two of the ships we visited, the light cruiser USS Oakland and the aircraft carrier USS Tarawa, but I think there were more. We also went to look at some of the big fires that broke out in shop and warehouse buildings across the harbour (on the Hong Kong side). Back at Philips House we once dropped balloons full of water from the roof to the sidewalk below, and I distinguished myself by blowing up a toilet! This I did by dropping a lighted firecracker in a toilet bowl! (Don't ask me why!)



Repulse Bay, Hong Kong, 1949

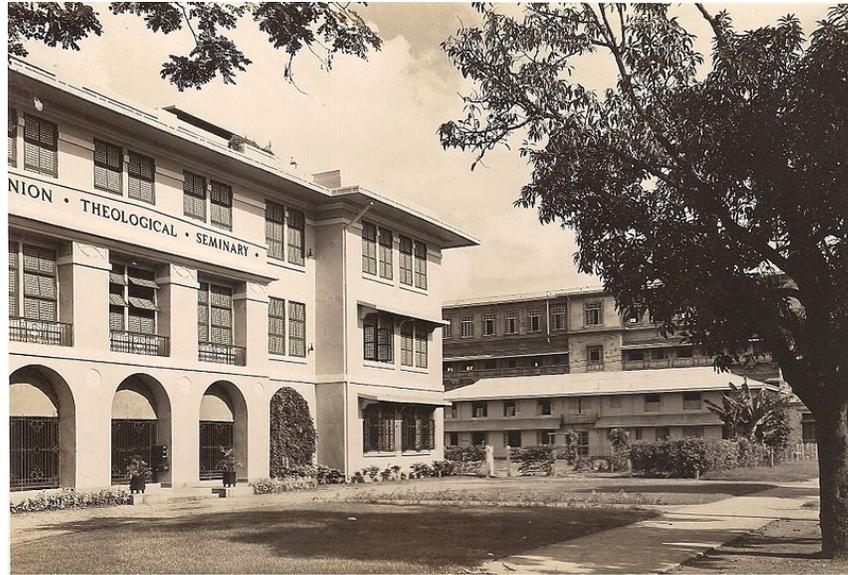


USS Oakland



USS Tarawa

In 1949 the family had to leave Changsha because of the advance of the Communist Army into Hunan, so my parents and sisters joined me in Hong Kong. Once again they lost everything in our home except what they could carry. At first we planned to return to the U.S., but then my father was asked to go to teach at the Union Theological Seminary in Manila, so we went to the Philippines instead. There we lived at 912 Wright Street, in a wooden bungalow not far from the seminary on Taft Avenue. In the fall of 1949 I entered the ninth grade at the Manila American School, the funds for which I believe were provided by the U.S. Embassy.



Union Theological Seminary in Manila

So it was that in high school I finally attended a normal school for an extended period of time, the first since my fourth grade in Lindsey. I had good teachers there, and made lots of friends, played basketball and finally discovered girls. There were three informal categories of students at the school: the children of the families of wealthy Filipinos, the U.S. military, and business people and missionaries. There was a tradition of lots of parties, almost every weekend, as I recall, at the homes of the well-off families and sponsored by the school. Sometimes parents hired bands and bartenders for these affairs, which of course were entirely new to me. I wasn't supposed to dance or drink beer, but everybody else did so I did too, but said nothing at home. My parents knew I went to parties, but expected me not to dance at them, which was of course impossible (though I never really learned to dance very well). The social environment in Manila was radically different from that of Lindsey and Columbus, Ohio! Ah well, I had fun anyway. In the process I got a crush on a girl from a wealthy Filipino family, and we even went on a couple of dates, but only with her older sister acting as a chaperone. This girl, Manuela Adeva, eventually became the friend of a Filipino college basketball player! Sigh!

My other good friend at the Manila American School was a fellow student named Jim Bell, with whom I stayed in touch for years, but then we gradually lost contact.



Manila American School

At the school I did well, and was first a reporter and then an assistant editor of the school newspaper, The Bamboo Telegraph. One story I wrote was about a class field trip to the San Miguel Brewery, at the end of which we were all served free beer!

In Manila, by the way, travel at the time was by jeepneys, converted jeeps with long seats in the back. They would stop anywhere, wherever you whistled or waved your hand, to pick you up. Most people hissed, as in psst psst! There were no bus stops. The seats ran lengthwise along the back side of the jeepney. I also began learning to use a camera for the first time, and developed my own films with friends there.

Another Manila memory I have is of playing at U.S. military bases with friends whose families lived there. At first I also was not supposed to go to movies, but I soon did anyway, sometimes more than one a day!

In the summers we went north to the mountain resort city of Baguio, where missionary friends of ours lived. There was also a mission station in the mountains north of Baguio in an area inhabited by Bontoc tribes who not long before had been headhunters. It was there that I first began to learn to drive by driving a jeep along the mountain roads (accompanied by an adult, of course!). Once as I was driving by a small village, towing an empty trailer behind the jeep, a little dog ran out in front of us. I managed to miss it with the jeep, but a trailer wheel hit it, but I just kept on going! I wasn't about to stop to negotiate with ex-headhunters!

We took a few trips to other places on Luzon, the main island of the Philippines, so I saw farms, and water buffalo and the Mt. Mayon volcano, but never went elsewhere off Luzon in the Philippines (which I regret. When I was in the Philippines, I had no anthropological consciousness at all – it was just where I grew up, and did what was natural for a kid of that age).

Then in 1952 our second term ended, so we returned to the States by ship; I think it was on the President Cleveland of the American President Lines. We landed in San Francisco, where Grandpa Overmyer's 1947 Chevrolet was waiting for us on the dock (presumably dropped off there for us by friends – I don't remember now how that happened). We drove first to Missoula, Montana to visit my Aunt Ethel and Uncle Lewis Magsig, (pron. Moksik , German style) and their children, Linda and Phil. (Ethel was my father's sister, raised on the farm in Ohio. Her husband Lewie was an E.U.B pastor and District Superintendent; they had lived in Michigan earlier, where Lewie introduced me to fishing and duck hunting. He was a really fine man).

One of the first things I did when we got off the ship in San Francisco was that I went with Dad to buy a .22 rifle, which was a big deal for me at that time. In Montana I went hunting rock chucks and actually shot a couple. (A murdering little bastard I was, for goodness sake!)

After leaving Montana we drove on east to the farm and other places in Ohio. At the farm I worked together with two boys my grandparents had hired to help around the farm. We hoed weeds out of pickle, corn and tomato fields. We also hauled manure out of the barn to spread on fields, helped with milking the cows, fed the chickens and pigs, and at night hunted rats in the barn. We would sneak up in the dark, then turn on the lights and charge in, chasing the rats with clubs. While at the farm, I also loved driving my Grandpa's tractor (an orange Co-op tractor), and I enjoyed walking through the woods at the far west end of the fields.



Co-op Tractor

Every year, migrant workers from Texas came up to help harvest the pickles and tomatoes. They lived in rows of little shacks behind the house. (For sure not good housing, but I didn't know any better at the time). They put the pickles and tomatoes in wooden crates piled in rows in the fields. Then we drove Grandpa's '39 Chevrolet truck in "creeper" gear, very slowly down the rows, so that the boxes could be loaded on it. Once the truck was full, grandpa and I took the load to the Weller processing plant in nearby Oak Harbor that made ketchup and pickles out of what we delivered.

In other farm memories, I remember that once I got the tractor stuck while pulling a loaded manure spreader out to the field, and another time almost put gasoline in the tractor radiator, stopped only by a loud bellow from Grandpa, "Danny!" (The caps for both gas and water were on the top of the tractor hood, and I got mixed up – but that's no excuse).

Also, I remember at another time going with Grandpa to help another farmer thresh his wheat. We drove a wagon pulled by two big draft horses. I remember the big threshing machine in the middle of a field powered by a long, flat belt attached to the "power take off" on a tractor. There were big, stinging horseflies there. Later, one of Grandpa's big horses died at night and was all stiff when Grandpa found him in the morning. (They had to take down part of a barn wall to get him out of the stall.)

Another memory of the farm is of butchering hogs, which were first shot between the eyes with a .22 short rifle bullet by a friend of my grandfather who was a veteran of WWI. When the hog was hit correctly it dropped like a rock with no sound. The carcass was then scalded in a big vat of boiling water to loosen the hair from the skin. Then it was hung on a hook and gutted, with some of the entrails saved to make sausage casings. The excrement was squeezed out of the intestines, which were then washed out and taken to the farmhouse kitchen. There my grandmother and several other ladies from the area cooked and chopped the filling, added spices and then stuffed the casings with it, which were then cooked (it was a wonderful sausage).

The hams from the hogs were then smoked in the smokehouse, a little wooden shed behind the farmhouse that had a wonderful aroma from years of use. My grandfather also took some of the meat to a butcher shop in an old schoolhouse a few miles north of the farm for the butcher to make sausage. This fresh sausage is the best tasting I have ever eaten; never found anything quite like it.

There were chickens in a coop in the back yard and also running around outside it, which gave us the original form of "free range" eggs! I remember helping feed the chickens and collect the eggs. In the fall my grandmother boiled a huge pot of chopped up apples in water to make a delicious dark red apple butter. The pot was hung on a frame over a wood fire that was kept going for days.

After that wonderful summer of 1952, we moved to Princeton, New Jersey, where my father studied for his M.A. degree at the Princeton Theological Seminary. We lived in an apartment in town. Mary Beth attended the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Witherspoon Junior High and I was a senior at Princeton High School. I really enjoyed that year. Most courses were offered at different levels, with the top three (as I remember) for college admission preparation, which were the ones I took. My social life at Princeton High School was even better than in Manila, with lots of parties, including drinking beer and driving around in cars. In Princeton I had my first real girlfriend, Arlene Epstein, a junior. We got along very well; I particularly remember canoe rides on the lake on the edge of the university campus. I also had three good friends,

all fellow seniors, Jim Kuist, Rod Carnarvon and Charles Odenweller. Charlie and I enjoyed playing chess, and joined the high school chess club. We both got jobs as office boys at the Princeton Opinion Research Corporation, located on Nassau Street in Princeton. We kept a chess game going in a drawer that we closed when anyone called us! Jimmy Bell, my best friend in Manila, came to see me in Princeton, and gave me a beautiful gold-embossed wallet, which I still have. I remember thinking it was a bit strange to have a best friend from one of my social worlds meet the one from another, but that's how my life was, lived in separate compartments that had almost no mutual contact.



1953 Princeton Theology School/Masters Degree

At that time in high school I wrote a paper on the influence of King James Bible on English literature, and gave a copy to Arlene and her parents, who were Jewish. I don't know what they thought of it. One good thing about me was that I never had racial or religious prejudices. How could I – I grew up in a totally socially and culturally mixed environment. I didn't even know what prejudice was.

Not long after I graduated from Princeton High School, our family drove west toward San Francisco to take a ship back to Manila for a second term. On the way we stopped at Lindsey for a while, and then they dropped me off at Westmar College in Le Mars, Iowa, an

E.U.B. school that my parents wanted me to attend because it was a Christian school in their denomination where they felt I would be safe. I have no recollection of discussing this choice with them, nor of thinking about what school might be best for me. I moved into a men's dorm, where my roommate was an upper classman named Bob Link, and got a job with the college painting crew for \$1.00 an hour. We painted the inside and outside of college buildings, and some of the barns at the college farm outside of town. It all seemed fine to me at the time; I remember waving goodbye to my family from a ladder on a barn as they drove away west. I do not remember feeling homesick, I just jumped in to the social and academic life of the college, such as it was (which wasn't much).



1953 - LeMars, Iowa - saying goodbye to Dan, going back to Manila

As a conservative religious school it forbade dancing, drinking and smoking, so on dates people just went to movies and necked in cars. I think a few drank off campus, but I did not join them. In my freshman year I began dating a girl from Loveland, Colorado named June Machmer, who was cute and fun to be with. We went steady for a couple of years, and eventually got engaged, but in the end I got tired of her and we drifted apart. I was mean to her, because I took advantage of her love for me. She eventually married someone else. I

dated other women after that, including a girl from North Dakota named Eileen Schuler, in my senior year. One summer I went to Eileen's family farm, where I helped pile up corn stalks for the cattle. They had me drive an old dump truck. After it was loaded I was to put it in low gear and drive it to the top of a huge pile of silage; on one run, as I was dumping a load, the truck frame bent from the weight! I also remember riding in a little crop-duster airplane with Eileen's brother, who dived around trying to make me sick, but I was fine. Great sport!

While at Westmar I bought my first cars, first a 1937 Chevy that used about as much oil as gasoline and smoked terribly. I spent \$30 for it and sold it for the same a month later. I then bought a 1941 Ford sedan, which I realized too late was also worn out. But anyway, I had fun driving around!

When I started college, I had no idea what I wanted to major in, though I think my parents hoped I would study to become a minister, which I vehemently rejected. I realized that Westmar was not a good school, so I joined the Navy Reserve in the hope of eventually getting the G.I. Bill support for education, but then the Korean War ended, and with it the G.I. Bill! All I did was go to weekly navy reserve meetings, in Sioux City, Iowa (which were not very good). Years later, to my surprise, I received an honorable discharge from the U.S. Navy!

At Westmar, I majored in science, took a lot of courses in biology, physics and chemistry, and prepared for admission to a school of medicine. Eventually I took the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT), and was admitted to the School of Medicine at the University of Iowa.

At the college, I worked from 20-30 hours a week during the school year and full time during the summer, mostly for the college crew, for \$1.00 an hour, but also for a time in the men's clothing department of the Le Mars J.C. Penney Store and in the advertising section of the local newspaper. Beginning in my sophomore year I lived and worked in the college heating plant taking care of the boilers, cleaning the buildings and grounds and washing athletic uniforms. One semester I took 19 credit hours of courses in which I got straight A's

while continuing to work and got so exhausted I came down with pneumonia! (That was the first of three or four times I've gotten pneumonia from working too hard).

In the summer of 1952 I lived in Cincinnati, Ohio, where my family had gone after leaving the Philippines. I took chemistry and biology courses at the University of Cincinnati, and worked first at a Sohio Gas station, and later as a lab technician at Proctor and Gamble. I remember we tested Comet cleanser before it was put on the market. With these extra courses I completed my BA course work after 3½ years, and then moved to Naperville, Illinois where the family had since gone so that my father could take up a position as professor of New Testament Studies and Greek at the Evangelical Theological Seminary (E.T.S.). In the summer of 1953, after graduating from Westmar Magna Cum Laude, I took organic chemistry at Wheaton College near Naperville before entering the University of Iowa that fall.

I was one of two non-resident students admitted to the Iowa medical school that year, and joined a fraternity, where I lived. I began attending classes and labs, but had the growing feeling that I didn't belong there. The challenge for me had been getting admitted to medical school, as a kind of reward for doing well in my undergraduate work. Despite the sometimes intense religious atmosphere at Westmar, I had always resisted the idea of becoming a minister, which I presumed many expected (though my parents never said a word about that -- they accepted me as I was). At Iowa, to my surprise, my consciousness underwent a major change, and I became increasingly convinced that God wanted me to go to seminary and become a minister. It was amazing! I guess when I realized that I did not want to become a physician after all, this other possibility came rushing into my mind.

When I went to talk to the Dean of Medicine about my feelings, he said, "What is this word Gawd you make with your mouth?", so I called my parents to tell them what had happened, and left Iowa City for Naperville, Illinois to attend Evangelical Theological Seminary (where some of my Westmar friends there were surprised to see me). I began my studies in a kind of ecstasy; in what for me was a form of mystical experience.

I studied at E.T.S. for three years, taking some courses in Greek and New Testament studies with my father. I got a job with the campus maintenance crew, cutting grass and painting buildings and rooms. In the preceding summer Eileen Schuler had come to visit me in Naperville, but when I called her about what had happened she said she did not want to marry a minister, so that was the end of that. My best friends at ETS were Bill Wolf and Ned Hawbecker. Bill's father was the pastor of Grace E.U.B. church in Naperville, so I joined that church. Eventually I met Barbara Harr, the daughter of a professor of missions at ETS named Wilbur Harr, who had worked in Africa. Barbara was then a student at North Central College, an Evangelical United Brethren school in Naperville across the street from the seminary. She was bright and beautiful and we had fun together. We married during our senior years. At first we lived in a room in an old house near the seminary and then moved to Chicago after I graduated. In the 1958-59 academic year I was an advisor to the youth group at Downer's Grove Methodist church, and during 1959-60 was the part-time pastor of a country church southwest of Chicago at Symerton, IL, where I went every Sunday. (By then I had purchased a 1954 Chevy sedan, an excellent car that I later traded for a new 1960 Volkswagen Bug.)

While at seminary the courses I enjoyed the most were those taught by Professor Paul Eller in church history. It was assumed by some at Naperville that, upon graduation, I would go directly to graduate school, but I wanted to get some real-life experience first. So, after I was ordained as an "Elder" of the EUB church, I accepted the position of pastor of Second EUB Church in the Lincoln Park area of Chicago, which because of its location on the near north side (1900 N. Sedgwick St. near Ogden Ave.) had been named "Mission Church of the Year" by the Illinois Conference of the Church. Barbara and I moved there in the summer of 1960.

Second Church was a multi-racial and multi-ethnic congregation with people of different economic levels. The congregation was half English-speaking and half Spanish, with a Puerto Rican Associate Pastor named Hector Navas. It was next to what had been a church hospital. I look back on my time there as an introduction to the real world, and an initiation into manhood. There I learned that many families were broken, fathers abusive and children

delinquent. I learned about death by being on call at the hospital and from the suicide of a man in the neighbourhood whom I found with his brains on the floor. I learned about insanity and the state mental hospitals from helping a woman in the congregation during her periodic psychotic breakdowns, when I drove her to the hospital. I let a young man fleeing an abusive father stay in the parish house, and became active in a local association for community renewal and dealing with the causes of juvenile delinquency.

At that same time I was asked to join the Board of Directors of the Department of Social Welfare of the Church Federation of Greater Chicago. Along the way I learned about art at the Art Institute of Chicago, I went to the Chicago Symphony, I took a course on music and music appreciation at Roosevelt University. (I was too busy to complete it, but did read the textbook which was helpful later!) I also systematically went through the Field Museum of Natural History, two hours at a time.

While I was doing all this, Barbara, by then a National Merit Scholar, was studying for her M.A. in English Literature at the U. of Chicago, writing poetry, and playing her guitar and singing in the local folk music scene in the near north side. I also enjoyed folk music and made friends with a guitarist who made his own instruments. Nonetheless, Barbara's world and mine increasingly diverged. I tried to keep up with her by going to the clubs where she was performing, but it became clear that she wanted out of the marriage, so eventually we moved toward divorce. Barbara's mother, Juanita Harr, made it clear to me that reconciliation would not work. Bishop Heininger of the E.U.B. church invited me to lunch in a downtown restaurant, where he told me that I would be welcome to stay in the pastorate even if divorced.

However by then I was thinking more and more about doing graduate work, perhaps in church history, which had been my favourite subject in seminary, but I was also reading books on comparative religion by Mircea Eliade, and by the German theologian Helmut Thielicke, who incorporated Swedish mythology in his writing. A meeting with Martin Marty, a church historian who was also editor of the magazine, The Christian Century, convinced me that there were so many church historians that I would quite likely end up teaching in a

seminary, which did not interest me. By then I had learned that the best history of religions program anywhere was at the University of Chicago, so I applied there, for admission in the fall of 1965.

I received a scholarship from the University, but it was not enough to live on, so I took a part-time job with the Chicago Commission on Human Relations, in their New Residents Services Division. (I had met the CCHR Director, Ed Marciniak, during my work in the Lincoln Park community, where Second EUB Church was located). I was made Director of New Resident Services in the commission soon after I joined. My work there primarily involved setting up volunteer tutoring projects in churches and community centers. We recruited and trained the tutors, some from suburban communities, and arranged for them to meet with local young people who needed help with reading. We also set up some programs in factories for their workers, and organized city-wide workshops for tutors.

I continued working at the CCHR into 1966. My job there also included helping to enforce Chicago's fair housing regulations. For this I worked with African-American partners. In response to advertisements for apartments or houses, I would go and see if I could rent them. Then later my partners would go to the same realtors; if they were told that the properties were not available, we would issue the owners a court summons for discrimination. For this a few times I had to testify in court; once or twice I was called late at night to be invited to a loud party by women with African-American accents!

### My Life with Estella<sup>2</sup>

In 1963 I was invited to become a member of the Board of Directors of the Department of Social Welfare of The Church Federation of Greater Chicago, and attended their monthly meetings, chaired by their Director, Doug Still. Luncheons for these meetings were organized by Estella Velazquez, Doug Still's secretary, who greeted us as we entered the room. In 1964, sometime after my divorce, I was contacted by a few young women who knew me through my work at the church and community, but none of them interested me (they all

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<sup>2</sup> Please see appendix for more details about my dear Estella.

seemed so desperate!). I started thinking about Estella, who was so beautiful and pleasant, but to contact her I had to go through my associate pastor at the church, Hector Navas, who was a friend of Jose Velazquez Jr., Estella's brother (and also a United Methodist minister). When I first called her, she said she couldn't go because she was going to wash her hair (which really ticked me off!) but eventually she agreed that I could join her and her family to go to a soccer game at Soldier Field. We met at a Walgreen's pharmacy, together with her brothers Joe and Chuck, and their wives Ruth and Billie. The game was between Mexico and Germany, and Mexico won, which I took as an omen! As I sat beside Estella, I noticed that even her hands were beautiful!



The next day I sent her a big bunch of roses, which was a big hit, and after that we started going out by ourselves, sometimes ending up at my little apartment at 5482 So. Greenwood, a university owned building. It was here that I first met David Kinsley while he was sunning himself in the parking lot of the building! He became my best friend ever! Eventually, Estella and I decided to get married, so I asked her father Jose Velazquez for permission to do so. He was opposed to the idea, in part because I was divorced, and asked me a lot of questions, but in the end agreed, on the condition that I first talk with their pastor at the church the family attended. We were married in that church on June 19, 1965, after which we went on our honeymoon by train to Denver, CO. There my sister Mary Beth and her husband Ed Twining had arranged with friends to borrow their old Pugeot, which we drove to

Rocky Mountain National Park, where we stayed in a little cabin. It was a very nice honeymoon, after which we returned to the University of Chicago and moved into a two-bedroom apartment owned by the university. Estella returned to her job at the Church Federation, and I to my studies at the University and my job at the CCHR.

The courses I took in the H.R. program were wonderfully diverse, and opened my mind to things I had never imagined. Two levels of examination were required for admission to the PhD program, qualifying exams and field exams. The qualifying exams were in church history, theology and Biblical studies, etc. and the field exams were on world religious traditions all H.R. students were expected to know something about, such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc. To prepare for these exams we formed groups of four or five students who met weekly to give and discuss reports on questions in past field exams, copies of which were available to us. Our reports were detailed, and our discussions intense, which provided good preparation both for the field exams and for the courses we hoped to teach after obtaining our degrees. At the same time we were thinking about dissertation topics. I first considered focusing on pre-Hispanic Mexican religion, but soon realized that this would involve a lot of archaeology, which didn't interest me as a focus for my studies. Then for a course I was taking with Professor Joseph Kitagawa I wrote a paper on Chinese imperial worship at the winter solstice, for which Prof. Kitagawa gave me an "A" and the comment "I hope you will continue this study"! That was in 1965; I continued to study Chinese culture and religion from then through 2009, a period of 44 years! I began to study classical Chinese with Professors Herlee Creel, David Roy and Edwin Kracke, and so became eligible for U.S. National Defense Foreign Language Fellowships in Chinese, which I received through the summer of 1970.

My ideas for a dissertation topic came from a paper written by a fellow H.R. student, Chris Chou; it was on Chinese groups considered as rebels by the government, but which at first glance seemed to be a form of popular religion. (Chris gave me the paper, but not until much later did I tell him it had led to my dissertation topic.) When I suggested this topic to Professor Ho Ping-ti at Chicago he said it was not worth studying because these groups were just rebels and outlaws. When I reported this to Professor Kitagawa he suggested that I talk

to another professor, Philip Kuhn, who thought it looked like a promising topic and encouraged me to work on it. (Professors Creel, Roy, Kracke, Ho and Kuhn were in the Department of Far Eastern Languages and Civilizations; all H.R. students were expected to work with area specialists in preparing their dissertations).

I continued my studies in 1966, and Estella continued to work for the CFGC until a month before Becky was born, and began working six months later for Carson Pirie Scott, a department store in the Loop. It was in 1966 as well that Becky was born, on September 7, a wonderful and happy event. I will always remember that, as the bassinet was wheeled out of the delivery room, she looked up at me and yawned! She was a beautiful baby and grew up to be a good kid, an excellent student, and a fine young woman. I have always been proud of her, and love her unconditionally. She is now an excellent professor at Whittier College in California, where she also works to protect the environment and to organize her local community.



In the summer of 1966, Estella and I travelled to Windsor, ON (our first time in Canada), which we enjoyed. I remember that "God Save the Queen" was played before the movie began! Later we drove to an Illinois State Park (west of Chicago), where I caught a turtle with a fishing line and a hook. I remember hearing the turtle breathe, because the hook went through its nostril. I was horrified. I'd fished before, but of course fish don't breathe that

way. We removed the hook and released the turtle; that is the last time I ever fished. I think this mutually reinforced my studies of Buddhism at the University of Chicago, where one of the fundamental teachings was ahimsa “no harm to any living things”. That was an experience that changed my life.

That summer I also worked as a part-time pastor for an African-American E.U.B. church on the south side. I still remember how courteous and friendly the people were, inviting me out for dinner every Sunday after church. It was a nice experience.

In the spring of 1967 we drove to New Mexico with Becky ; there were no seatbelts in those days, so we arranged a flat area for her in the back seat of the Volkswagen where she could play and rest!

In the fall of 1968 we went to Taipei, Taiwan, where I enrolled in the excellent Chinese language program run by Stanford University on behalf of a consortium of American universities. There for the first time I studied modern Chinese, which had not been taught at Chicago (I think because of Professor Herlee Creel’s opposition to it). The “Stanford Program” was located on the edge of the campus of Taiwan National University, next to Heping Dong Lu (Peace Road East). We moved into a second floor apartment on a lane off Bade (Eight Virtues) Road not far from the campus, which I reached by walking to Heping Road to take a bus there. At that time this area was at the edge of Taipei city. Across the road was a pig farm, small shops and an opera stage. There were still lots of street peddlers at that time, hawking such things as eggs boiled in tea, knife sharpening and shoe repair. We set up a tape recorder in our apartment window to record the peddlers’ calls. Every few weeks, pigs would be slaughtered across the street early in the morning, with loud screams. Along the road there were funeral processions and processions in honor of the gods at local temples, particularly during festivals on their birthdays, accompanied by opera performances. It was a lively place, and we loved it.

In 1968, my father died at 58 of an unknown degenerative brain disease and was buried in Naperville. We had been in Taiwan and couldn’t return for his funeral. In 1971, I put

a copy of the Graduate Program for my Ph.D. degree on his grave.

While we were in Taiwan, we hired a cook and housekeeper, Mrs. Liu (Liu Tai-tai) who had worked for other Stanford program students before. She cooked, cleaned, shopped for groceries, washed our clothes and took care of Becky, all responsibly and cheerfully. With her help Estella was liberated and could devote her time to taking courses in Chinese culture and cooking and to teaching English and Spanish to people from our community, including a Taiwan Army officer. Estella also learned Chinese free-stitch embroidery, with which she made many beautiful works of art. As for Becky, she became trilingual, and helped translate between Estella and Liu Tai-tai!

At the language center I worked hard and learned fast, though my teachers laughed at my residual Hunan accent. I think my childhood experience with the language helped me learn, as did the example of my parents learning to speak Hunanese, in which my father had preached sermons! In 1969 I resumed work on my Ph.D dissertation, which was helped by two fortuitous events, the first of which was that when I first walked into the Academia Sinica library in Taipei, there on a table was a source I was looking for, the Po xie xian bian, "A detailed refutation of heresy", written by a Qing dynasty County Magistrate in the 1830's and 1840's about his investigation of what the government considered to be heretical groups. In this book he quoted at length from their scriptures, ending each quote with the phrase "Bu ke xin ye", "this cannot be believed"! The texts he quoted became the basis of my dissertation!

The other lucky event occurred one night when I was attending a boring lecture. In the background from across the street I heard the "tok tok" sound of a small wooden drum accompanying the chanting of scriptures, so I left the lecture room and found a small group of people wearing aqua colored jackets and pants dancing slowly in the street while thumping their chests. They appeared to be in trance; as taxis drove by, they were gently herded to the side by others, all of this in front of a small storefront chapel. On an altar in the back of this chapel was the image of a female deity, Yao-chi Jin-mu, "The Golden Mother of the Jasper Pond", whom I recognized as a variant of Wu sheng Lao mu "The Eternal Venerable Mother", the chief deity of the old groups I had been studying. The next day I returned to this chapel

with Mr. Cai Mao-tang, a teacher of Taiwanese at the Stanford Center, to interview the people there, and discovered that they were members of a popular religious sect called the “Ci hui-tang”, the “Hall of Compassion”, dedicated to this goddess, the “Golden Mother”. So the traditions I had been reading about were still alive! This, plus the magistrate’s report, confirmed in my mind that these old groups were not “heretics and bandits” but popular religious sects similar to those elsewhere in the world, including forms of Christianity. For me, this was a big discovery that gave shape and focus to my research, and was confirmed by further study.

When we returned to the U.S. in late 1969 we lived with my mother Bernice in Naperville, Illinois. There I worked on my dissertation in a little office in the basement of the Seminary, taking trips to Chicago to get materials from the library. While there I slept in an apartment where my sister Bonnie was staying and walked to the University from there. Estella typed my dissertation chapters as I completed them, with our son Mark jumping in her womb as she typed! We had a good time staying with Mom and visiting Estella’s parents in Chicago. (They also drove out to see us in Naperville).

Though I did not know it at the time, in 1969 Professor Kitagawa informed three colleges that I would be available for a teaching position the following year, the University of Vermont, William and Mary, and Oberlin College, so when we returned to the U.S. I applied to all three. The William and Mary position was no longer available, but I was immediately invited to Vermont for an interview, and they offered me a job, which I accepted. Then a short time later Oberlin invited me for an interview, and after I returned to Naperville from there, they also offered me a position. So I was in a quandary. I had told Oberlin about the Vermont offer, so I told Vermont about the Oberlin offer, acknowledging that I had a prior obligation to go to Vermont and would of course do so, but that I would prefer to go to Oberlin if that were okay with them. The Vermont department head sent me a telegram, “Good luck at Oberlin”, so that is where I went. (Years later a Vermont professor told me that they had understood my decision and were not angry with me). The Oberlin position was in the Department of Religion, with part of my salary paid by their East Asian Studies program.

Meanwhile, back in Naperville and Chicago, I finished my dissertation and submitted it to Professors Kitagawa and Kuhn. I had been concerned that they might reject it because of its new interpretation of the Chinese sects, but they liked it! Professor Kuhn had it put in the reading room of the Far Eastern section of the Chicago library.

In July 1970 Mark was born, another joyous event for us! He became a fine young man and an excellent university teacher, scholar and administrator at the University of Connecticut. In September of that year we moved to Oberlin where we rented an old brick house at 39 N. Cedar Ave., behind the campus. At the college I began teaching in the Department of Religion there, led by Professor Charles Holbrook. I taught Introduction to World Religions and courses in Buddhism in China and Japan (and Chinese and Japanese Religions).



Later I developed a course in tribal religions, assisted by Barbara Fuchsman, who had an M.A. in Native American art. (Her husband Bill Fuchsman was a professor of chemistry and we became good friends with them both.)

Oberlin had the practice of “faculty governance”, which sounds good, but actually meant that faculty at Oberlin spent lots of time in committee meetings, doing things that, in other places, college administrators are paid to do. Hence, before long I became chairman of the Student Life Committee and other activities that were not really central to what I wanted to do.

Oberlin is a college town, and we had a good life there. For exciting trips, we went to Elyria, the nearest city, to buy hamburgers at a Burger King and visit farms in the area to bring home apple cider. As I had in Chicago earlier, for exercise I played handball, and also tennis. Estella learned to drive our 1970 Dodge Dart, which we had bought in Naperville, Becky attended an elementary school there in Oberlin, and Mark played in big round collapsible play pen we put up in our back yard, surrounded by neighbourhood kids.



1970 Dodge Dart

I had pneumonia again, in the winter of 1971, brought on by working too hard to prepare for classes in my first year of teaching and at the same time making final corrections to the dissertation. I remember that a professor in my department took me to a clinic several blocks from our home and just left me there, so I had to walk home in the cold! That has always remained in my memory. In 1970 I was invited to give a lecture at Harvard, where they also asked for a copy of my dissertation, and their grand master teacher, John Fairbank, liked it. They wanted to publish it there, but the first reader criticized it, so they sent it out to a second reader who did like it, and it was recommended for publication. I think the second reader may have been Professor Alexander Woodside, of whom I later became a colleague at U.B.C.

At Oberlin, I had large classes, with lots of exams and papers to mark. During holidays we went to visit our parents in Naperville and Chicago (we stayed with my Mom). In the summer of 1968, we had driven to New Mexico in our Volkswagen (bought in the meantime) in which we made a bed for Becky in the back seat (it was a fun trip).

We liked Oberlin, but knew we didn't want to live there permanently; we hoped to live on the west coast, and we kept our suitcases and many unpacked boxes in the attic. Though I had not been looking for another position, early in 1973 I was invited to interview at University of Virginia and at U.B.C. I hadn't applied, so I don't know how they knew about me, but they did! I went to Charlottesville, VA for an interview at the University of Virginia, and then a bit later to UBC in Vancouver. I was offered teaching/research positions at both schools. At that time Estella's brother Joe and his wife Ruth were visiting us in Oberlin, from where they planned to drive to Texas to visit their parents, who had moved there earlier. Since I was going to be gone to Vancouver, they suggested that Estella, Rebecca and Mark go with them, so they did!

I flew to Vancouver, sitting between a Canadian government official and a rancher or oil man who argued all the way west over my lap – it was a good introduction to Canadian politics!

In Vancouver, I was met by Professor Ted Pulleyblank, the Department Head in Asian Studies at U.B.C., who took me to a hotel. I woke up the next morning to a swishing sound; when I looked out the window, I discovered that it was the sound of waves on the beach below! I was in the Sylvia Hotel on English Bay. During the next two days, I gave a lecture in a classroom in the Buchanan Building that went well. I remember walking out to a bluff above the harbor, and having a deep feeling that I wanted to come here!

Shortly after I returned to Oberlin, Professor Pulleyblank called to offer me the position of Assistant Professor of Chinese Philosophy, so I called Virginia to tell them that I would not be going there and told Oberlin that I would be leaving (Oberlin had offered a higher salary, but I wasn't interested in staying on). I really wanted the challenge of teaching classical Chinese at UBC, which I desperately needed because my language skill was not that great.

In the summer of '73, all of us went to Taiwan. I should say that on the way to the west coast Estella drove the car, with Becky, Mark and a young woman from Oberlin, and I

drove a huge rental truck full of our belongings to Livingston, Montana and where we left them in a warehouse due to the kind arrangements of my Uncle Lewis Magsig. In Taiwan, I was the director of the Oberlin in Taiwan program that year, and took about a dozen students from Oberlin and other colleges around that area for intensive language study. The students stayed with Chinese families. We rented from a Chinese family an apartment on the top floor of a building with a flat roof, with chickens running around above us (every once in a while a chicken flew off the roof cackling loudly! Our apartment was fully furnished, including sacks of flour and rice, with lots of mice, some of which lived in the kitchen stove and would put up their heads when we were working, to see what was going on.

During that summer Estella took Becky and Mark to different places by bus. I continued studying the THT (ZHT, the sect I had discovered that night of the boring lecture). Most weekends we took the students on trips to temples and parks, ending each trip with dinner at a restaurant. At one restaurant after a day of hiking in the countryside, I apologized to the manager because we were all sweaty and dirty, and he replied that it was no problem, because their restaurant was dirty too! Good old Chinese courtesy! At the end of the summer we flew back to Livingston, where Uncle Lewie had put our truck load of stuff in a warehouse during our absence. I drove to Vancouver to look for a place for us to stay, and rented an old house on W. 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue in West Point Grey near the University. Then I flew back to Livingston, where Uncle Lewie had packed all of our belongings into a very large U-Haul truck. With all four of us sitting in the cab, we then drove to Vancouver!

In Vancouver, in the summer of 1973, Becky attended Queen Elizabeth school (on 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue), Mark was in a preschool at a nearby Baptist church. Estella took care of family business. I began teaching courses in Classical Chinese, History of Chinese Philosophy and History of Chinese Religions. The Department, at that time, had its offices in the Buchanan building.

I entered Canada with an employment visa. To get a permanent resident visa we had to apply at the Consulate in Seattle, so we all went to Seattle where we stayed with Fred Brandauer, a childhood friend of mine in China, who was then teaching at University of

Washington. We gave the consulate Fred's address, then returned to Vancouver. When our permanent residence permits arrived, we all drove back to Seattle to pick them up. (I don't know if it was legal, but it worked! ).

After a year on W. 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue we decided to try to buy a house, and found a nice old house at 3393 West 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the Dunbar area, south and east of Point Grey. We paid \$58,000 for it. Since we didn't have any savings, for a down payment we used the Dodge Dart for collateral and cashed out our insurance policies (which didn't amount to much). Estella got three jobs, one at the UBC Centre for Continuing Studies, another as hostess for the restaurant at the Vancouver Planetarium, and also worked as a private tutor in Spanish for Berlitz! I taught summer and night courses for extra income, though my UBC salary was much better than it had been at Oberlin. We enjoyed exploring Vancouver and its surrounding area.

At home, I bought a soccer ball and we practiced playing in the front lawn so Becky and Mark would be encouraged to begin playing soccer (after seeing 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue neighbor's boy collapse after a Rugby game!) Both of them ended up playing in the Dunbar soccer league.

That same summer of 1973, I became director of boys' section of the Dunbar soccer league one year, and we went to many games, rain or shine, to support Becky and Mark. In 1978 I led a group of western Canadian school teachers on a trip to China, just after the so-called "Cultural Revolution" ended. Not many foreigners had been there for a long time, so I had fun surprising people by talking to them in Chinese. One woman at a shop in Shanghai said to me, "You must be a Uighur". When I said I wasn't, she said, "Then your father must have been a Uighur". (Uighurs are a people in far west China who look a bit like Europeans.)

In 1975, while in Chicago attending an annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, I met with some friends in a pub on State Street to plan for the founding of a new academic society, the Society for the Study of Chinese Religions (SSCR). We elected Prof. Laurence Thompson of the University of Southern California as Chair and me as Secretary-Treasurer. I later became the President of the Society. I also started the Bulletin of the Society, for which I

solicited news and articles, and composed with a mimeograph machine! This Society is still active, and the Bulletin is now the Journal of Chinese Religions, published annually by a university press.

Meanwhile, in 1974 our dear friends David and Cary Kinsley invited us to visit them at their summer house on the northern Oregon coast. David's mother, Margaret Airey and his step-father James Airey, had purchased property in Manzanita, Oregon years before, and eventually built a Panabode split-cedar log house on a beautiful spot at the foot of Neahkahnie Mountain, facing the ocean about 500 yards above a long beach. We returned to that house every summer for several years; Becky and Mark loved it, playing on the beach during the day and Monopoly with all of us at night. I particularly enjoyed long walks with David through the forest above the beaches, discussing Indian and Chinese religion and lots of other topics. He was a dear man, and I still miss him.

Oregon was wonderful! Eventually Estella and I decided to try to buy or build a house there, and did buy a vacant lot, but building a house would have been very expensive. As they grew older, Margaret and Jim Airy decided to sell their house and move into a retirement home in Portland. At that point, Cary had a brilliant idea, which was for her and David to join with us to buy the house together, splitting all the income and expenses. So, that is what we did! Over the years Estella and I made many improvements to the house, and arranged to rent it out when we were not there. I resumed my old college occupation of house painting, and painted one side of the house every year, including the storage shed down the driveway to Reed Road. As we grew older we arranged for our half of the title for the house to be transferred to Mark and his wife Jordi, and Becky and her partner Pam in equal shares. As I write this, Estella and I are unable to drive the 340 miles down to Oregon, but the rest of the clan goes to the coast house when they can, and dear Cary drives all the way across the country every summer to the house that she and David had built for them down the hill from us

In 1981 I returned to China on a research trip, looking for old books that had been produced by religious groups. I stayed principally in Nanjing, an old capital of China, (actually, over the centuries it has been the capital of old states in China twenty-one times!). From

Nanjing I went to other cities, including Suzhou and Shanghai to look for materials in libraries, and talk to old scholars I knew had collected some sectarian scriptures. I also returned to our old summer place, Nanyou mountain, where now I could read the old inscriptions on rocks and buildings. Our former vacation house was still there, occupied by vacationing workers from the cities below. Boy, were they surprised when I told them that my sister Bonnie had been born in that house!

While I was away, our Dodge Dart was hit by a VW bus on McKenzie Street as Estella was driving Becky and her good friend, Dharni Thiruchittanpalam to school. The car was demolished but no one was seriously injured. When I next called Estella she cried, but I told her not to worry, because we really didn't need a car anyway! She was horrified; after several months in China riding buses, trains and bicycles, I was temporarily convinced that we could get along without a car. So, in a state of automotive confusion, without consulting Estella, I bought a new Datsun 510 with a manual transmission, which was a dumb, inconsiderate move, and very unfair to poor Estella! How could I have done that? After much effort she eventually learned to drive the Datsun, with the help of a friend who was a former Hong Kong policewoman. (Estella has told me that she was so angry with me that she thought about getting divorced!)

In June 1982 I gave a report on the Chinese texts I had been collecting at a conference in Moscow entitled "China in the Seventeenth Century", co-sponsored by the Soviet Academy of Sciences and the American Council of Learned Societies. For this, seven U.S. scholars were matched with their Soviet counterparts in the same topic areas. We Americans stayed in a hotel, and were given tours by Soviet guides, including lavish dinners, one at the home of the Chairman of the Soviet Academy that featured many flavors of vodka! While in Moscow I went to the Lenin State Library and found some copies of the Chinese books I was collecting. After the conference they took us to Leningrad (now St. Petersburg, its old name), where we toured the huge Hermitage Museum, and went to the old summer palace of the czars near the Baltic Sea. It had been completely rebuilt after being destroyed by the German army in the Second World; in each room there were photos of the ruins.

In 1983 I was invited to teach for a semester at Princeton University, so we bought a homemade wooden trailer mounted on part of a pickup truck chassis, packed it full of our belongings, and towed it across the country to New Jersey.

At Princeton I taught in the Religion Department. We stayed on the top floor of a university apartment building next to a lake, from where I walked through a woods to the campus. Estella took care of us, Becky attended Princeton H.S. (which I had attended in 1952-53), Mark a middle school called Witherspoon – I think Witherspoon was a revolutionary war person. I had graduated from Princeton H.S. years before, so it was nice to have Becky going there.

During our time at Princeton, we went to New York City, where we visited the NY Public Library, and we also went to Washington, DC. We went to Philadelphia – first by train to see the Liberty Bell and historic buildings – then to go to museums and the home of the artist Andrew Wyeth, whose work we enjoy.

In the New York Public library, we looked up the Overmyers in the 1800 census and discovered that they had all moved west to Ohio except for one daughter. We found her grave, along with that of her husband, back in the area of New Berlin, where my first American ancestor, Johan Georg Obermoyer, moved from Blankenloch, Germainy in 1751. He was a farmer near Blankenloch, a village near Karlsruhe. When Estella and I visited Germany in 1993 we found no Overmyers in the Blankenloch telephone directory, but lots of them in Karlsruhe. It appeared that the village had been destroyed during World War Two. 1

We travelled on west to Lancaster City and New Berlin. There we found, in the middle of a corn field, an old revolutionary war cemetery where many of Overmyer's frontier rangers are buried. They are mentioned by name in our Overmyer history book. At that point, Becky read from the Overmyer history book while we looked for the gravestones of the Rangers. We took stone rubbings of a few of them. It was in the New Berlin municipal cemetery we found the graves of Johan Georg's daughter and her husband. JG 's grave no

longer exists; it was next to a stream near to the family house. The rest of the family moved west to Ohio in 1800.

While in the Lancaster area, we looked at Amish farms and Amish villages, including a village named Intercourse!

On the way back west we stopped in Lindsey, Ohio and found graves of John George's children, beside the old Hathaway barn on Route 590 just south of Lindsey. I believe the grave of my great grandfather Amos Overmyer is in the Lindsey cemetery. He served in the Union Army during the Civil War, in the Ohio Volunteer Infantry (OVI). We still have his Civil War musket, complete with its bayonet! We found his name in Civil War military records in the New York Public Library.

From Lindsey we went on back to Vancouver.

There at UBC, I was Head of the Department of Asian Studies from 1986 to 1991, I was Acting Head of Religious Studies from 1984-85, and went to Hong Kong (all of us did) in 1996-98. In the process, we sold the Datsun 510, and I bought a 1990 Chevrolet S-10 pickup (with an extended cab, dark blue, manual transmission – which again was not good for poor Estella). Bought a 'Chev Celebrity 1988.

From 1984 to 1990 I joined a group of hard-working people who had been trying to save a big forest on the west side of Vancouver called the "University Endowment Lands" from decades before. Now the University was planning to build in this area, which we wanted to save as a park. The group, called the Endowment Lands Regional Park Committee, had built fifty kilometres of trails so that people could walk in it and feel it was their own. Our committee needed someone who could organize and chair a big community meeting, for which I was drafted. I chaired a large meeting in the gym of a nearby school, and we got lots of publicity for our cause. Some of our members lobbied the Provincial Assembly in Victoria, and contacted more Vancouver newspapers. By then I had become co-chairman of our committee, and was also Head of the UBC Department of Asian Studies, so I met twice with the University President to clarify that the department was not involved in my opposition to

the university expansion plans for the forest. He was very understanding, so there was no problem. Then one day, as I was sitting in my office in the Asian Centre, I received a telephone call from the office of the Premier of British Columbia, asking that our whole committee come to a meeting in downtown Vancouver, which we did. As we were all sitting there, with many others, the Premier walked on the stage, and unveiled a big map showing the area of a new park, extending 1000 acres from the Vancouver harbour on the north to the Fraser River in the south! It was huge, one of the largest city parks in the world! Later we sponsored a contest to name it, and chose the name Pacific Spirit Park, suggested by a young Japanese-Canadian woman. Mary Beth once told me that getting that park established was more important than all my academic work!

In 1993 I was invited to teach at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. I was there from April to August. I stayed up a hill from the town, and walked to the University, where I taught Chinese religion. I went for long walks in the forests in that area, and went to the end of the local bus lines to explore. Every weekend I took intercity trains to visit other German cities, such as Frankfurt, Mannheim, Wiesbaden, and Wurtzberg. I had a great time!! At the end of the semester, in August, Estella came to Hd., and we took off by train to Freiburg, where Mark had studied at the University there. Then we headed north to Mainz to visit our old friends, Hermann and Heide Becker, then to Cologne (Koln), and from there to Hannover, where I lectured at the university, and the Netherlands, where we stayed in Amsterdam, rode on a canal boat and visited the marvellous museums, Anne Frank's house and a cheese factory! From Holland we went by train to Paris, where we stayed about four days and zapped around on the Metro! I particularly enjoyed the marvellous museums, including the folk art museum. After leaving Paris we continued on to Spain, stopping during the night for different wheels to be put on the train because Spanish rails were a different width (gauge). In Spain we went first to Madrid, then to north to Segovia, Burgos and Salamanca, and then back south to Cordoba and Granada. In Spain, Estella was of course our translator and guide. As always, we looked at old buildings, ruins and museums as we learned about life now. In the process we saw some Roman walls, sports arenas and aqueducts.

In 1996 we went to Hong Kong. I was invited to teach at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1996–98, where I became Acting Head of the Department of Religion in 1997–98. We were there for the British “handover” of HK to China in 1997. I continued my fieldwork by visiting temples and festivals in Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories, and to places in south China, including Fujian province, with my new friend, Professor John Lagerwey, a wonderful scholar of south China village religion. I was fortunate to go with him to a village in Fujian where a community festival was taking place. We stayed in the home of the village head, who was also an officer in the county police force. I remember that it was so cold I borrowed his Chinese army overcoat! This fieldwork experience inspired me to try such work in north China as well. One of the first things I did in HK was to join the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, which was great, because the group took weekly field trips to nature parks and rural areas in the New Territories. Saw lots of birds, particularly in the Mai Po wetlands, next to the border of China.

Estella, in the meantime, had taken early retirement from UBC in 1996, and I retired at end of 2000. That is when we bought a Chevy Impala, which is a wonderful car. At about that same time we bought a used Toyota Echo from an auto rebuilding shop in Port Coquitlam, a suburb east of Vancouver, where Llalla lived at that time. It was a very efficient machine which we drove around town; the Impala we used for longer trips, like to Oregon.

At the end of 1999 we went to Hua Hin, Thailand, near Bangkok, where I participated in an academic conference, so the both of us welcomed the new millennium from our room in a five-star hotel. After the conference we travelled north through Thailand, and then to Malaysia and Singapore.

After my retirement from U.B.C., at the end of 2000, I continued with research and writing, leading to the publication of several books and articles (which one can see in the pages of my Publications Record and C.V.). In 2009 festschrift book in my honor was published, edited by Philip Clart and Paul Crowe (two of my former graduate students). I continued to go to China for research trips every year through 2004, which resulted in the publishing of four volumes of reports by Chinese local scholars in Hebei (see pp. 9+10 of Pub.

Record) about their local religious traditions, in co-operation with my former student and good friend Fan Lizhu and her husband Hou Jie, both of them from Hebei., which is the province surrounding Beijing in the north.

In May, 2001, we spent a wonderful month in Italy with our good friends Heide and Hermann Becker, from Mainz, Germany. We had known them for years, because their son Gregor, had stayed with us a month, as part of a Vancouver student exchange program with Germany. Then Mark went to Mainz to stay with the Beckers; he still speaks good German. Anyway, that May we met Heide and Hermann in Rome, and from there travelled south through Italy in their 1988 Mercedes-Benz diesel. They had been to Italy several times before, Heide speaks some Italian, and had made reservations for us. From Rome we drove south to the Amalfi Coast, Pompeii, Naples, an old Greek temple at Paestum, and other beautiful places. For several days we stayed in an old farmhouse in Tuscany, surrounded by grape arbors! On the Amalfi coast we stayed at the village of Priano, in a beautiful guest house overlooking the sea. While we were there an annual festival for the local saint took place, San Gennaro, also the saint of nearby Naples. I followed the procession around the town, as I had done with similar processions in Taiwan and in Juchitan in Mexico. I realized that local religious traditions are similar in many areas of the world, a topic on which I published an article in The Chicago Divinity School magazine, Criterion. It was called "Gods, Saints, Shamans and Processions, Comparative Religion from the Bottom Up." That would have been my next big research project if I had had the time and energy! From Italy we drove north through Switzerland to Mainz, where we spent a pleasant time with the Beckers. Be sure to visit Italy when you can!

In 2002 I was invited to teach for a semester at National Cheng-chi University in Taiwan, so we went for what turned out to be a pleasant six months. We stayed in a university-owned apartment near the campus in the Taipei suburb of Mu-cha, which was about a 20 minute walk to the office of the Center for Graduate Studies in Religion. The two bedroom apartment was a fourth floor walk-up, newly remodelled, with plenty of room. We had a great time exploring the area on foot and by bus. We ate in little restaurants in a

nearby shopping area. On weekends we took bus trips to villages and temples, and to museums and galleries in Taipei city. It was such a fun time!

At the Center there in Cheng-chi University I taught two graduate seminars, one on local religions in north China, the other on comparative popular religion, both entirely in Chinese, which was a good experience for me. For exercise, we took walks to visit local temples and I went swimming in the university pool. While in Taiwan that time Estella and I observed many rituals and temples, including a long procession in honor of a local god , during part of which we rode together on the back of a motor scooter! This procession was led by entranced spirit-mediums in colorful outfits. Taipei garbage trucks came by our apartment building several time a week, playing Beethoven's " Fur Elise", at which all the neighbors gathered to chatter, throw out garbage and recycle trash. Estella was a big help on our field trips to look at temples; while I was talking with people, she would carefully observe details and take photos of temple art that I sometimes had overlooked.

During that period my good friend Roberto Ong also visited us, and we took trips to other places in Taiwan.

We returned to Vancouver in the summer of 2002. In September of that year we went to Portugal, where I participated in a Chinese studies conference at Arrabida, a beautiful old former monastery south of Lisbon. The conference was funded by a Portuguese foundation with financial support from Macau, a former colony. After the conference Estella and I returned to tour Lisbon, where we visited churches and the old city, and the Museu Calouste Gulbenkian with its wonderful collection of Asian art. It was founded by a wealthy Armenian immigrant. From Lisbon we visited the towns of Sintra, Colares, Evora, Estremos, Braga and Barcelos. In Evora we toured a museum where there was a statue of God, and hired a guide who showed us prehistoric stone tombs, and olive and cork bark trees.

In 2003-2004 I returned to China for research and to have books of reports written and published, together with my dear friend and colleague Fan Lizhu, now at Fudan University.

After 2004 I did not return to China because my research funds were spent on getting those four books about Hebei local culture published (including reports by local scholars that we had solicited and arranged for). I wrote the English summaries for the Chinese chapters, aided in some cases by Roberto Ong.

In 2007 we went on a Caravan Co. bus tour of Costa Rica, with Mary Beth and Ed and had a great time! It was Ed's first time out of the U.S. Be sure to go to CR if you haven't already! Later on we took another Caravan tour to eastern Canada and Quebec, also with the Beckers, who flew over from Germany to meet us. Canada is fortunate to have two European-based cultures and languages in addition to many native First Nations with their own languages. At another time we flew to Dunedin, New Zealand to visit an old U. of Chicago friend, Albert Moore and his wife Alexa. There I lectured at the University of Otago, after which we went on a grand tour of New Zealand with our dear friend Cary Kinsley. We saw many beautiful places on both the South and North Islands. After our tour, Cary returned to Canada, but Estella and I went on the Sydney, Australia, for nine days. We visited the capital, Canberra, saw lots of kangaroos and a wonderful zoo. Our last big trip was to Chile to visit Mark, Jordi, Sarai and Maceo; Adan was still a baby at that time. They were there because Mark was teaching for a semester at a university in Santiago.

From Chile we flew to Lima, Peru, where we were met by the aunt and uncle of Mina Wong, who had been a secretary in Asian Studies back at UBC. These dear people took us to beautiful museums and a famous restaurant that served only authentic Peruvian food, including cuy, baked guinea pig! Then we flew south to the old Inca capital of Cusco in the Andes Mountains, where we went on a bus tour to Machu Picchu, stopping at villages along the way to look at llamas, farms and roadside displays of handmade gorgeous blankets and ponchos.

My last research project was on local religion in north China, published in Holland in 2009, based on a wide variety of sources in Chinese, Japanese and English, but chiefly the reports by Hebei local scholars referred to above. I was assisted in this project by my good friend, Roberto Ong, and by my two remaining PhD students, Mary Ngai and Rosanna Sze. I

had been asked to write a book on this topic years earlier by the Dutch publisher E.J. Brill, as a source book on its topic. Materials for this topic and book chapters were in piles on the floor of my study. The manuscript was eventually typed by Neil Parker (bless his heart), who had been an office staff member at UBC, where he helped me with many papers and projects. After that book was published, a few more articles of mine came out and that was the end of it. I had been connected with China one way or another since I was five years old, which was enough!

In the meantime I had started volunteering for Nature Vancouver (the Vancouver Natural History Society), beginning with hikes and walks -- a continuation of my long time interest in the natural world. Nature Vancouver members, in their own way, were capable amateur (and sometimes, professional) naturalists, interested in everything from fungi and flowers to trees, forests birds and fish.

Nature Vancouver hikes were organized by people who had taken them before, and who knew what to look for.

I became active in one of the sections of the society, the Conservation Section, of which I later became chair (this was a small group that held intense discussions about threats to the natural environment in the Vancouver area.)

Then in 2010 the President of Nature Vancouver unexpectedly resigned, and I was asked to take her place, which I did. I organized and chaired monthly meeting of the Board of Directors, but continued to remain active with the Conservation Section.



Oregon 2014

Due to the continued effects of polio (“post-polio syndrome”) my left leg and foot continued to become weaker, so walking became difficult, and I could no longer go on Nature Vancouver hikes, which was a big loss.

In 2011 we sold our dear old house on 26th Ave. in the Dunbar area and used the proceeds to buy a nice big three bedroom apartment on 39<sup>th</sup> and Vine Ave. in the Kerrisdale area, 5475 Vine St., Apt 306, top floor of four. This concrete apartment building, built in 1958, is a very sturdy structure, located just two blocks from 41<sup>st</sup> Ave. Its 24 apartments form a co-op, each individually owned, managed by the owners themselves, who elect their own Board of a president, secretary and treasurer. We are happy here, with good and helpful neighbors, and three hired helpers, Othelia and Jocey, who clean, wash, and help with shopping. We are trying to turn our place into our own personal assisted living facility! Estella and I share the cooking, but we order out a lot from some of the many good restaurants in the area. Life has slowed down, but we enjoy reading and watching TV, particularly the New York Times, the New York Review, Scientific American, The Guardian Weekly and the National Geographic. I

have lots of good books to read as well. Calls and e-mail messages from Becky and Mark and our sweet grandchildren mean a lot. In 2011 as well we sold the Impala and gave the Echo to Llalla, Estella's sister. Then we bought our last car, a new Toyota Corolla, an excellent and reliable machine! In June, 2015 I fell on my bedroom floor, and injured my back, so had to be taken to Vancouver General Hospital (VGH), where I ended up staying about two months. While there I had a kind of brain surgery that inserted a little tube (a shunt) that drained excess fluid from the ventricles in my brain down into my abdomen. Since this excess fluid had been putting pressure on nerves in my brain that control walking, I soon noticed a remarkable improvement in movement, and began walking with a two-wheeled walker, and exercising in the VGH exercise room. I was soon transferred to the Holy Family Rehabilitation Hospital, where I underwent intensive physical therapy, and started charging around with the four-wheeled walker I had used before at home. After about three weeks there I returned home to resume my life with dear Estella, who had done a great job taking care of the apartment, accounts, and me, in the hospital. At home everyone told me my speaking and thinking had much improved. I have resumed a limited amount of driving, and written some book and article reviews!

Another delightful development has been my dreams, which sometimes are very detailed scenes of my life at the University of Chicago, which was an enlightenment for me. My love for Estella has continued to be a source of peace and comfort; she still takes good care of me! In June, 2015 we celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary with many friends, at one of our favorite Chinese restaurants. This was organized by Becky and Mark.

In September, 2017 I presented a report on my 2009 book on local community religion in north China, at a conference at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, organized by John Lagerwey. The air trip was rather strenuous for me, but the conference was a great success; I am so glad I went! Saw many old friends and colleagues, and made some new ones.

I still identify with Jesus as an exemplary human being, and my religious/cosmological views have continued to evolve; every day at breakfast I visualize in gratitude the history of the cosmos until the present, and as its conscious product invoke its power on Estella first, and

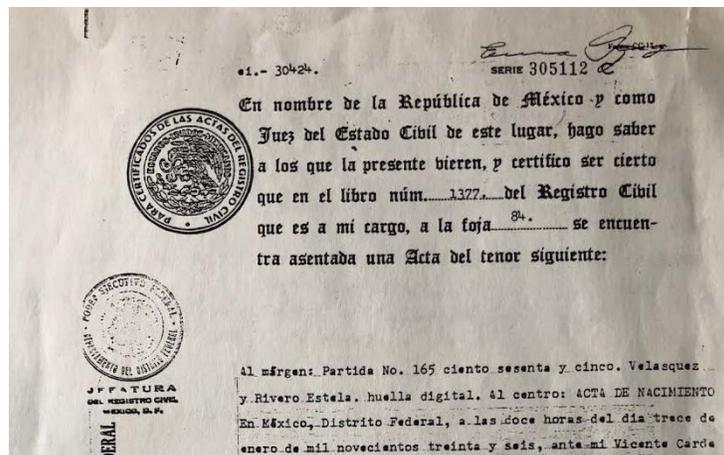
then on Zoe, Amara, Becky and Pam, and on Adan, Maceo, Sarai and Mark and sweet Jordi, and then on a particular area of the world. I have been around the world several times in this morning meditation!

LOVE THE EARTH, OUR BEAUTIFUL AND ONLY HOME!

## APPENDIX – Estella



Her Mexico City birth certificate reads... “nació a las catorce horas del día once de noviembre del año próximo pasado (1935) en Bolivar ciento cinco” [born at 2pm on the eleventh of November of the previous year (1935) at 105 Bolivar Street]. Sister to older brothers Carlos and Pepe, Estela Velázquez Rivero was the first daughter born to José Velázquez and Sara Rivero. She grew up in the heart of Mexico City’s Colonia Industrial where she attended the Jardín de niños “Angel de Campo”, Primaria Número 225 “Emiliano Zapata”, and Secundaria José María Morelos before she and her family emigrated to Chicago, crossing the border at Laredo/Nuevo Laredo in 1950.



Estella's birth certificate

As a new immigrant, she spent her first years in the United States learning English and eventually graduated at the age of 19 from Carter H. Harrison Technical High School in Chicago on June 24, 1955. Once in the United States she added an 'l' to her name, changing it from Estela to Estella.

Estella proudly worked her entire adult life. Her first job out of high school in Chicago was with Aldens Inc., where she was a Sales Associate for the Catalogue Order Department (1955-1956). From there, she worked in the Finance Department of Abbott Laboratories International until 1962. In 1957, while at Abbott Labs she became a naturalized U.S. citizen. As I note above, she met me while working as the Secretary to head of the Public Affairs Department at the Church Federation of Greater Chicago (1962-1966). After Rebecca Lynn was born in 1966, she worked at home, raising her and then Mark Edward in 1970. After we emigrated to Vancouver on August 19, 1974, Estella worked as a part-time hostess at the MacMillan Observatory's restaurant. She left that job to work full-time at UBC's Continuing Studies, where she was a Program Assistant/Coordinator for non-credited courses (e.g., Women's Resources, Children's Science, Public Affairs, Third Age Community Programs, Certificate Programs) from 1974-1996. Estella took early retirement in September 1996. On July 16, 1997 she became a Canadian Citizen.

Estella and I happily lived together for fifty-three years, through all the adventures described here, and had two beautiful children, Rebecca and Mark. Later on, we so enjoyed our beautiful apartment in Vancouver. However, Estella developed osteoporosis, which caused her a lot of pain. Then, on January 10, 2012 she was diagnosed at Vancouver General Hospital with a form of cancer of the blood and bones called multiple myeloma, for which there is no cure. Our family physician, Dr. Bradley Fritz, our pharmacist Jillian Hong, and Dr. Peter Tsang at VGH took wonderful care of her, as did the staff of the B.C. Cancer Agency. We learned of a new medication for this disease called Darzalex which was developed in the U.S. When it became available in Canada, Dr. Tsang arranged for treatment with it for Estella, which I think extended her life by a year or two, but she continued to weaken and lose weight. She kept her determination and dignity, and even completed a beautiful free-stitch embroidery painting which hangs in our apartment along with her many other works of

art. She returned to VGH several times for radiation treatments that were exhausting for her. She had told me that she knew she was dying. I did my best to care for her, and she tried to teach me about cooking, keeping accounts and programming the TV. Finally, on the evening of Sunday, June 24, 2018 she collapsed on the floor, but I was able to lift her on to her walker and her bed. We both immediately agreed that I would not again call for an ambulance, as we had several times before, and that she would die at home. I called our dear helper Othelia Labanza, who came to spend the night. The next day Dr. Fritz began the process of arranging for Estella a new procedure called assisted dying, passed by Parliament in 2015. This involved twenty-four hour nursing care at home, signing several legal agreements, and arranging for a physician to come here to perform the procedure, which was wonderfully expedited so it could be carried out on the evening of Tuesday, June 28. Becky and Mark flew in on June 25. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, many family and friends gathered in Estella's bedroom, where she firmly and clearly stated what she wanted, and then a woman physician named Dr. Ellen Wiebe administered medications that first sedated her, and then stopped her heart. It was a very sad experience, but at least it ended her suffering.

Her obituary, published in the Vancouver Courier read:

OVERMYER, Estella (née Velázquez)  
November 11, 1935 – June 26, 2018

Wife, mom, abuelita and friend, Estella died peacefully at home in Vancouver surrounded by loving family and friends. Born in Mexico City, she emigrated with her family to Chicago in 1950. She worked all her adult life and retired as a program coordinator for UBC's Center for Continuing Studies. She loved to travel the world, create beautiful pieces of art, walk and jog the beaches of Oregon and Vancouver, and meticulously organize her homes. She intensely loved and was very proud of her friends and family. She will be deeply missed by Daniel, her husband of 53 years, her children Becky and Mark and their spouses Pam and Jordanna, her grandchildren, Sarai, Amara, Maceo, Zoe, and Adan, as well as surviving siblings, Laura and Eddie. A cat lover and a feminist, donations in her honor can be made to the BC SPCA <https://spca.bc.ca/locations/vancouver/> and the Vancouver Rape Relief & Women's Shelter: <https://www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/help/donate/donate>.

As she wished, Estella was cremated; Mark, Maceo and I took her ashes to Oregon in August of that year and, with dear friends and family, scattered them on the hillside above our vacation home at 38265 Beulah Reed Rd., a mile north of Manzanita. This is the same spot where David Kinsley's ashes were placed, and where mine will be, under the spruce trees and a few hundred yards above the Pacific Ocean.