

Excerpts from the China Country Reader

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CHINA

COUNTRY READER TABLE OF CONTENTS

Howard E. Sollenberger	1919 1947-1950 1950-1955	Childhood, China Director, Chinese Language Program, Beijing Foreign Service Institute, Chinese Language Professor, Washington, DC
Charles T. Cross	1922-1940	Childhood, Beijing
James M. Wilson Jr.	1925-1935	Childhood, Shanghai
John Stuart Service	1925-1933 1933-1941 1941-1942 1971 1973	Childhood, Shanghai Cherk, Yunnanfu, Shanghai Language Officer, Chungking visit to China visit to China
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	1943-1944	Consular Officer, Chundo and Sian
	1944-1945	Political Officer, Chungking
	1945-1946	China Desk, Washington, DC
	1953-1954	Office of Chinese Affairs, Washington, DC
	1954-1958	Consul General, Hong Kong
	1958-1962	Ambassador, Taipei, Taiwan
Cecil B. Lyon	1934-1938	Vice Consul, Beijing
Ralph N. Clough	1936-1937	Chinese Language Training, Guangzhou
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	1946	Consular Officer, Nanking
	1946-1947	Language Officer, Beijing
	1947-1950	Chinese Secretary, Nanking
	1950-1954	Political Officer, Hong Kong
	1955-1958	Deputy Director, Office of Chinese Affairs, Bureau of East Asian Affairs, Washington, DC
	1958	Director, Office of Chinese Affairs, Bureau of East Asian Affairs, Washington, DC
	1958-1961	Advisor, Negotiations with Chinese, Poland, Switzerland, and Great Britain
	1961-1965	Deputy Chief of Mission, Taipei, Taiwan
	1965-1966	Diplomat-in-Residence, East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Paul Good	1940-1941	Childhood, Tientsin
Arthur W. Hummel, Jr.	1940-1945	World War II Experience
	1951-1952	Office of Information, Bureau of Far East Affairs, Washington, DC
	1952	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Hong Kong
Frederick Hunt	1941-1942	Consular Officer, Shanghai
Henry Byroade	1941-1947	Army Officer, China-Burma-India Theater
Walter E. Jenkins, Jr.	1943-1945	Training Chinese Army, Kunming
	1948-1950	Office of Chinese Affairs, Washington, DC
	1953-1955	Political Officer, Taipei, Taiwan
	1969	Talks with Chinese in Poland, Warsaw, Poland
John A. Lacey	1944-1945	U.S. Navy, Chungking/Beijing

	1950-1956	Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
	1956-1957	Economic Officer, Taipei, Taiwan
	1957-1958	Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
	1960-1964	Economic Officer, Hong Kong
Edwin Webb Martin	1945-1948	Chinese Language Training, Yale University (New Haven, Connecticut) and Beijing
	1948-1949	Consular Officer, Hankow
	1949-1950	Economic Officer, Taipei, Taiwan
	1951-1955	Political Officer, Office of Chinese Affairs, Washington, DC
	1953-1954	Political Advisor to Talks with Chinese, Panmunjom, Korea
	1955	Talks with Chinese, Geneva, Switzerland
	1958-1961	Office of Chinese Affairs, Washington, DC
	1961-1964	Political Advisor, Commander in Chief, Pacific
	1967-1970	Consul General, Hong Kong
John F. Melby	1945-1948	Political Officer, Chungking/Nanking
	1949	China White Paper, Washington, DC
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	1947-1950	Language Officer, Beijing
	1954-1957	China Watcher, Hong Kong
	1957-1961	Office of Chinese Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
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	1966-1968	Bureau of East Asian Affairs/Public Affairs, Washington, DC
	1968-1971	Deputy Chief of Mission, Taipei, Taiwan
	1971-1973	Political Advisor, Commander in Chief, Pacific
	1973-1976	Director, China Office, Washington, DC
	1976	Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian Affairs, Washington, DC
LaRue R. Lutkins	1946-1948	Chinese Language Training, Yale University (New Haven, Connecticut) and Beijing
	1948-1949	Consular Officer, Kunming
	1949	Office of Chinese Affairs, Washington, DC
	1950-1952	Political Officer, Penang, Malaysia
	1954-1957	Political Officer, Hong Kong
	1957-1961	Office of Chinese Affairs, Washington, DC

William N. Stokes	1946-1950 1972-1975 ---	Vice Consul and Economic Officer, Mukden Inspection Officer, American Liaison Office, Beijing Remarks on relations with China in Later Years
Harlan Cleveland	1947-1948	Director, UNRRA Mission to China
Robert Anderson	1947-1949	Consular Officer, Shanghai
Leonard L. Bacon	1947-1948 1949-1950	Consular Officer, Hankow Consular Officer, Nanking
Joseph A. Yager	1947-1948 1950-1951	Exchange Program, Canton Consul, Hong Kong/Peking (Peiping)
Richard E. Johnson	1947-1951 1951-1954	Office of Chinese Affairs, Washington, DC Economic Officer, Hong Kong
Philip W. Manhard	1947-1949 1949-1950	Chinese Language Training, Beijing Vice Consul, Tientsin
Richard M. McCarthy	1947-1950 1950-1956 1958-1962	Information Officer, USIS, Beijing Information Officer, Deputy Public Affairs Officer, Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Hong Kong Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Taipei, Taiwan
Philip H. Valdes	1947-1949	Economic Officer, Chungking
Earl Wilson	1947-1949	Information Officer, USIS, Shanghai
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John H. Holdridge	1948-1951 1951-1956 1953-1956 1956-1958 1958-1962 1962-1966 1969-1973	Chinese Language Training, Foreign Service Institute (Washington, DC), Cornell University (Ithaca, New York), Harvard University (Cambridge, Massachusetts) Chinese Language Officer, USIS, Bangkok, Thailand Political Officer, Hong Kong Political Officer, Singapore Office of Chinese Affairs, Washington, DC Political Officer, Hong Kong National Security Council, Washington, DC

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John Wesley Jones	1948-1949	Political Counselor, Nanking
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Charles T. Cross	1949-1950	Junior Officer, USIS, Taipei, Taiwan
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	1952-1957	Political Officer, Hong Kong
Harlan Cleveland	1949-1952	Director, Far Eastern Aid Program, Agency for Economic Cooperation, Washington, DC
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	1954-1957	Office of Chinese Affairs (Taiwan), Geneva, Switzerland and Washington, DC
	1958-1961	Political Counselor, Taipei, Taiwan
	1967-1970	Deputy Chief of Mission, Tokyo, Japan
	1970-1974	Consul General, Hong Kong
Lindsey Grant	1950-1952	Consular Officer, Hong Kong
	1955-1958	Economic Officer, Hong Kong
	1958-1961	Economic Officer, Taipei, Taiwan
	1961-1965	Asian Communist Affairs, Washington, DC
Ralph J. Katrosh	1950-1951	U.S. Military Assistance Group, Taipei, Taiwan
Robert S. Dillon	1951-1954	Operations with Nationalist Chinese, Taiwan
Harvey Feldman	1954-1955	Rotation Officer, Hong Kong
	1962-1963	Chinese Language Training, Washington, DC
	1962-1963	Chinese Language Training, Taichung, Taiwan
	1963-1965	Political-Military Officer, Taipei, Taiwan
	1965-1970	Publications/Press Officer, Hong Kong
	1970-1972	UN Affairs, Department of State, Washington, DC
	1973-1975	Political Counselor, Taipei, Taiwan

	1977-1979	Office of Republic of China Affairs, Washington, DC
Paul Kreisberg	1954-1955 1956-1959 1960-1962 1965-1970 1977-1981	Chinese Language Training, Taiwan Political Officer, Hong Kong Office of Chinese Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC Director, Office of Asian Communist Affairs, Washington, DC Policy Planning, Washington, DC
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Robert McCloskey	1955-1957	Investigator, Refugee Relief Program, Hong Kong
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Derek Singer	1956-1958	Assistant Training Officer, USAID, Taipei, Taiwan
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	1961-1963	Consul General, Hong Kong
	1963-1965	Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East, Washington, DC
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	1966-1969	Political Counselor, Taipei, Taiwan
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	1967-1970	China Watcher, Tokyo, Japan
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	1962-1964	China Desk, Bureau of East Asian Affairs, Washington, DC
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	1963-1966	Economic/Political Officer, Taipei, Taiwan
	1966-1970	Taiwan Desk, Washington, DC
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	1975-1976	Deputy Chief of Mission, Beijing

	1976-1980	Office of Chinese Affairs, Washington, DC
Jacob Walkin	1958-1960	Consular/Security Officer, Hong Kong
Morton I. Abramowitz	1958-1960	International Cooperation Administration, Taiwan
	1960-1962	Economic & Consular Officer, Taiwan
	1962-1963	Chinese Language Training, Taichung
James F. Leonard	1958-1959	Chinese Language Training, Taichung
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	1963-1965	Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
Robert W. Drexler	1958-1959	Chinese Language Training, Washington, DC
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Donald M. Anderson	1958-1961	Chinese Language Training, Washington, DC and Taichung, Taiwan
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	1966-1970	China Desk Talks, Washington, DC
	1970-1972	China Expert, Political Section, New Delhi, India
	1972-1973	Talks with Chinese, Paris, France
	1973-1975	Political Officer, American Liaison Office, Beijing
	1975-1977	Political Officer, Hong Kong
	1977-1980	Office of Chinese Affairs, Bureau of East Asian Affairs, Washington, DC
	1980-1983	Consul General, Shanghai
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William Andreas Brown	1959-1961	Chinese Language Training, Taichung, Taiwan

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John J. Taylor	1960-1965	Chinese Language Training/Political Officer, Taichung
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Roger Ernst	1962-1964	Deputy Director, USAID, Taipei, Taiwan
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William H. Gleysteen	1962-1965	Economic Officer, Hong Kong
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David G. Brown	1964-1966	Rotation Officer, Taipei, Taiwan
Robert Lyle Brown	1965-1968	Economic Counselor, Taipei, Taiwan
Arthur W. Hummel, Jr.	1965-1968	Deputy Chief of Mission, Taipei, Taiwan
Thomas P. Shoemith	1966-1971	Taiwan Desk, Washington, DC
Neal Donnelly	1967-1968	Taichung Language School, Taiwan

	1968-1971	Branch Public Affairs Officer, Kaohsiung, Taiwan
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	1972-1975	China Branch Chief, Voice of America, Washington, DC
	1975-1981	Cultural Affairs Officer/Deputy Public Affairs Officer, Taipei, Taiwan
Michael H. Newlin	1968-1972	Senior Political Advisor, USUN, New York City
William H. Gleysteen	1969-1971	Director, East Asia and Pacific, INR, Washington, DC
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	1972	Bureau of Intelligence & Research, East Asia Division, Washington, DC
	1974-1978	Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Inter-American Affairs, Department of Defense
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	1973-1977	Director, Policy Planning Staff, Washington, DC
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	1973-1974	Chinese Language Studies, Taichung, Taiwan
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	1972-1974	Economic Officer/Assistant Commercial Attaché, Taipei, Taiwan
	1974-1975	Chinese Language Training, Taipei, Taiwan

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Nicholas Platt	1973	Liaison Officer, Beijing
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Willard B. Devlin	1974-1976	Chief, Consular Section, Hong Kong
Dean Rust	1974-1976	ACDA; Staff Assistant to the Director Fred Ikle, Washington, DC
Mark E. Mohr	1974-1977	Political Officer, Hong Kong

Dennis G. Harter	1974-1978	Political Officer, Hong Kong
David G. Brown	1974-1976 1976-1978	China Desk Officer, Washington, DC Office of the Republic of China Affairs, Washington, DC
Herman Rebhan	1974-1989	General Secretary, International Metalworkers Federation, Washington, DC
Leonard Unger	1974-1979	Ambassador, Taiwan
Edward H. Wilkinson	1975-1978	Consular Officer, Taipei, Taiwan
Frank N. Burnet	1975-1979	Political Counselor, Taipei, Taiwan
Charles Lahiguera	1975-1979	Political Officer (Refugee Office), Hong Kong
William W. Thomas, Jr.	1975-1979 1984-1986 1986-1990	Economic Counselor, Beijing Consul General, Chengdu Science Counselor, Beijing
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Walter A. Lundy	1977-1979	Republic of China, Desk Officer, Washington, DC
Walter F. Mondale	1977-1981	Vice President, Washington, DC
Thomas P. Shoemith	1977-1981	Consul General, Hong Kong
William Andreas Brown	1978 1978-1979	Deputy Chief of Mission, Taiwan Trustee, American Institute in Taiwan, Taipei, Taiwan
G. Eugene Martin	1978-1979	Deputy Political Counselor, Taipei, Taiwan
Mark S. Pratt	1978-1981	Political Counselor, Taipei, Taiwan

Virginia Carson-Young	1978-1982	Consular Officer, Hong Kong
David Dean	1978-1987	American Institute in Taiwan, Washington, DC
Charles T. Cross	1979-1981	Director, American Institute in Taipei, Taipei, Taiwan
Anna Romanski	1979-1981	Chinese Language Training, Washington, DC and Taiwan
	1981-1983	Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Beijing
David E. Reuther	1979-1981	China Affairs, Economic Officer, Washington, DC
	1981-1982	Chinese Language Training, Washington, DC
	1982-1983	Chinese Language Training, Taipei, Taiwan
	1983-1985	Chief of American Institute in Taiwan, Taipei, Taiwan
	1987-1990	Economic Officer, Beijing
G. Eugene Martin	1979-1980	Staff Secretariat East Asia – China Policy, Washington, DC
	1980-1981	Special Assistant to Deputy Secretary of State, Washington, DC
	1985-1987	Deputy Director for Political Affairs, Washington, DC
	1990-1992	Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, Asia and Africa, Washington, DC
	1992-1996	Consul General, Guangzhou (formerly Canton)
Howard H. Lange	1979-1980	Chinese Language Training, Taipei, Taiwan
	1980-1982	Economic Officer, Beijing
William Piez	1980-1982	Director, East Asia Bureau, Economic Policy Office, Washington, DC
	1985-1989	Deputy Assistant Secretary for Economics, East Asia Bureau, Washington, DC
James T. Laney	1981	Visitor, China
David G. Brown	1981-1983	Chief of Economic Section, Beijing
Mark E. Mohr	1981-1983	Deputy Director, Office of Taiwan Affairs,

		Washington, DC
Thomas P. Shoesmith	1981-1983	Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian Affairs, Washington, DC
Clarke N. Ellis	1981-1984	American Institute in Taiwan, Taipei, Taiwan
Marshall P. Adair	1981-1984 1984-1986	Economic Officer, Hong Kong Economic Officer, Beijing
Elizabeth Raspolic	1981-1983 1983-1986 1986-1988	Chinese Language Training, Washington, DC and Taiwan Chief, Consular Section, Guangzhou Consul General, Beijing
Dennis G. Harter	1982-1984	Chief of Political Section, Hong Kong
James R. Lilley	1982-1984	Director, American Institute of Taiwan, Taiwan
Mark S. Pratt	1982-1986	Chief, Taiwan Coordination Office, Washington, DC
William Andreas Brown	1983-1985	Assistant secretary, East Asia and Pacific Affairs, Washington, DC
Russell Sveda	1984-1986	China Desk Officer, Washington, DC
Ruth Kurzbauer	1984-1986 1990	Assistant Press Officer, USIS, Beijing Branch Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Shenyang
Jon M. Huntsman, Jr.	1984	Advance Work, White House Staff, Beijing
Herbert E. Horowitz	1984-1986	Deputy Chief of Mission, Beijing
Harry E.T. Thayer	1984-1986 1986-1989	Director, American Institute in Taiwan, Taipei, Taiwan Dean, Language Studies, Foreign Service Institute, Washington, DC
Joan M. Plaisted	1985-1987	China Desk, Economic Affairs, Washington, DC
Marie Therese Huhtala	1985-1987	Political Officer (China Watcher), Hong

Kong

G. Eugene Martin	1985-1987	Deputy Director for Political Affairs, China, Washington, DC
Winston Lord	1985-1989	Ambassador, China
William Lenderking	1986-1988	East Asia and Pacific Affairs, USIA, Washington, DC
Robin Berrington	1986-1989	Director, Junior Officer Training, Washington, DC
David G. Brown	1986-1989	Taiwan Coordination Staff, Washington, DC
Mark S. Pratt	1986-1989	Consul General, Guangzhou (Canton)
Thomas R. Hutson	1986-1987 1987-1990	Mandarin Language Studies, Taipei, Taiwan Chief Consular Officer, Taipei, Taiwan
Richard W. Carlson	1986-1991	Director, Voice of America, USIS, Washington, DC
David G. Brown	1986-1989 1989-1992	Taiwan coordination Staff, Washington, DC Deputy Consul General, Hong Kong
David Dean	1987-1989	Director, American Institute in Taiwan, Taipei, Taiwan
McKinney Russell	1987-1991	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Beijing
William Primosch	1988-1991	Office of Chinese Affairs, Washington, DC
Kenneth Yates	1988-1989 1989-1992	Chinese Language Training, Washington, DC Deputy Public Affairs Officer, Beijing
Mark E. Mohr	1988-1990	Deputy Director, Political Section, Beijing
G. Phillip Hughes	1989-1990	Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, The White House, Washington, DC
Clarke N. Ellis	1989-1993	American Institute for Taiwan, Rosslyn, Virginia
Dennis G. Harter	1989-1993	Consul General, Guangzhou

David Dean	1989-1995	Trustee, Board of American Institute in Taiwan, Washington, DC
Mark E. Mohr	1990-1992	Deputy Director, China Affairs, Washington, DC
Robert Goldberg	1990-1993	Economic Officer, Hong Kong
Greg Thielmann	1990-1993	Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Chief, Officer of Strategic Forces Analysis, Washington, DC
Marshall P. Adair	1990-1992	Consul General, Chengdu
Natale H. Bellocchi	1990-1995	Chairman, American Institute in Taiwan
Michael H. Newlin	1991	Retired Annuitant, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Washington, DC
J. Richard Bock	1993-1996	Deputy Managing Director, American Institute in Taiwan, Rosslyn, Virginia
Winston Lord	1993-1995	Assistant Secretary for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, Washington, DC
Michael A. Boorstein	1993-1996 1999-2002	Administrative Counselor, Beijing Director, American Embassy in Beijing Project, Washington, DC
Robin White	1996-1998	Director, Bilateral Trade, Economic Bureau, Washington, DC
Robert Goldberg	1996-1999	Economic Officer, Beijing
Paul P. Blackburn	1996-1997 1997-2000	Chinese Language Training, Washington, DC Public Affairs Officer, Beijing
G. Eugene Martin	1999-2000	Deputy Chief of Mission, Beijing
Harold W. Geisel	2001	Chief, Negotiating Team with Chinese for Embassy construction in Washington and Beijing
Robert Goldberg	c2007-2009	Consul General, Guangzhou

Howard E. Sollenberger was born in Indiana in 1917. He attended schools in China and received his bachelor's degree from Manchester College. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: Could you tell me a bit about your parents?

SOLLENBERGER: Yes. They were both from a rural area in southern Ohio. Grandfathers on both sides were farmers, and ministers in the local church, Church of the Brethren, which is the religious background in which I come, mixed with the Quakers and Mennonites.

Q: That's a very strong, solid background, heavily rooted in the farming area. What was it like growing up as a young lad in North Manchester?

SOLLENBERGER: Well, I didn't grow up in North Manchester. I was born there, I grew up in China. My parents were missionaries to North China.

Q: How old were you when you went out to China?

SOLLENBERGER: Two years old. I don't remember [much of those early days]. I came back to North Manchester later.

Q: What spurred your parents to go as missionaries to China?

SOLLENBERGER: I've often wondered that myself. They went to China in 1919, and in those days that was not [unlike] going to the moon.

Q: No, but damn close.

SOLLENBERGER: Damn close to it, you're right. There seemed to have been a movement at that time of American church people interested in spreading [the word] and saving the world. They were a part of that movement. According to my father, the impetus came from my mother, and he followed her rather than she followed him.

Q: Where did they go?

SOLLENBERGER: They went to north China, Shaanxi Province, Taihang mountain area which is really a rural and very poor area. My father, when they first started, spent most of his time in road construction. There was a major famine in the area at that time and, with the International Red Cross, [he] had undertaken a work for food project and my father was assigned a section of road that he was to supervise the building of for which relief food was handed out.

Q: What was your mother doing?

SOLLENBERGER: Basically raising a family. At that time I had an older sister, but both parents went out as missionaries. Part of her function was to try to contact the local women in the area, and to do something with them which ultimately would lead to their salvation.

Q: I can see coming out of Indiana, not much Chinese is spoken there. How did they prepare themselves? I assume you'd get this from stories when you were older. How did they prepare themselves and how did they communicate?

SOLLENBERGER: I've been really amazed that the organization of the church that sent missionaries overseas had the foresight to understand that language and some knowledge of the culture was important. The first year that they were in China, they went to the College of Chinese Studies in Beijing to learn the language. They were ahead of the Foreign Service in those days.

Q: Was there a Foreign Service Chinese school at that time?

SOLLENBERGER: No, not at that time. That came on later.

Q: What was it like growing up as a young lad in northern China?

SOLLENBERGER: For a long time I resented it. The expectation was that I would come back, my home was in the United States, I was an American citizen, I would go to college in the United States. And it seemed that growing up in China did not particularly prepare me for the culture shock you ran into when you came back to the United States. But there were lots of interesting things that happened.

Q: Could you talk about what you remember? Did you have Chinese friends, that sort of thing?

SOLLENBERGER: I did have Chinese friends. Being in quite a rural, mountainous area, the contact with Chinese was probably greater than for those that grew up in places like Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, [the major urban centers]. So, I did have that contact, and I've always been amazed at how free my parents were in letting me move around in that area. The earliest memory that I have is going with my father when he was supervising road construction. I was left behind in a room while he was out doing something, and I'd fallen asleep. When I woke up, there was a strange man with a beard, something like you have. He turned out to be a White Russian engineer that the Red Cross had hired for the purpose of road construction, a civil engineer. I, of course, was young enough at that point to not only be worried, but to start yelling for my parents. At which point he brought out a nice big red apple, which was very nice.

There were other missionary children in the area. I had contact with them. We went through the usual childhood experiences of learning how to get along with other kids, and in this case to get along in a different culture. We had Chinese servants, and from the beginning I found learning Chinese easier than my parents did. So in some circumstances, I had to be the interpreter for them.

Q: There is a long oral history of John Stewart Service who grew up in some of the same circumstances, but he was saying how his mother really kept him away from Chinese. She was worried about catching disease, so he was really not as fluent in Chinese as he later became because of this separation which often happens with both Foreign Service and missionary

families. But I take it this was not so with you.

SOLLENBERGER: It was a little different in our situation. In fact, I'm surprised as I look back on this. For one thing, you could understand the nervousness of parents with little kids. I think a recent study of missionaries and their families overseas indicates that the fatality rate among missionaries is higher than with any other group of people. Largely from disease, but not entirely, because in those days as you know they didn't have all the wonder drugs, etc., that we have right now. I can remember within our small mission group a number of the people that didn't make it. And yet my parents seemed to realize that we were kids, we were in this [strange] culture, and that we ought to have some contact with it. And we did. As a matter of fact, my parents did put me for a short period of time in a traditional Chinese school, which was run by mission people. I was [put with] other Chinese kids, I was the little foreign devil, and had to defend myself on several occasions.

Q: What Chinese were you learning?

SOLLENBERGER: It was Mandarin, northern Chinese but with a Shaanxi dialect which is rather strong and well understood.

Q: In later life did you have to unlearn that dialect?

SOLLENBERGER: I've never fully unlearned it. As a matter of fact just within the last month I returned from a sentimental journey to China, which took me back to the same area where I grew up. And I had a chance to not only hear but to try to practice, and I discovered that my Chinese has become a mixture of the standard Beijing variety, but all too frequently with the tones of the Shaanxi dialect which raises some eyebrows. But when I talked with the people in Shaanxi, they thought I spoke Chinese better than they did because I spoke the higher social level [vocabulary] that obviously had been picked up while I was serving in Beijing.

Q: You got out there in 1919 and were there during the '20s. I'm not familiar with Chinese history at that point except to know that there was a lot of turmoil and warlordism. Did that impact at all on you all?

SOLLENBERGER: It did, but Shaanxi Province was then under the governorship of Yan Xishan, who was referred to frequently as a model governor. But nonetheless he was a warlord, independent, printed his own currency, collected his own taxes, built a narrow gauge railway into his capital so that these outside trains that were on a different width of track could not freely move into his province. But things were relatively under control, although Shaanxi Province has always been considered a strategic province to the defense of the capital, Beijing and the north China plain. So that on several occasions, we ran into military operations in the area that, of course, to a child were exciting.

Q: Were there any incidents of things that you recall during that time?

SOLLENBERGER: I should perhaps mention here that foreigners in China at that time had extraterritorial privileges, much like diplomatic privileges, where foreigners were basically a law

to themselves. They were not subject to domestic law and control. It didn't take the kids long to realize this, and sometimes would take advantage of it. There are several things as I look back on, I'm ashamed of now, but it shows that kids will be kids wherever they are. I went to boarding school for five years, eighth grade through high school at Tongzhou, which is a suburb of Beijing now. [Editor's note: for another account of Tongzhou School, from a student who also later joined the Foreign Service, see Charles T. Cross, Born a Foreigner: A Memoir of the American Presence in Asia, Rowman and Littlefield, 1999] We would have to go back and forth from home during the summer vacation, and sometimes for Christmas. I remember one Christmas trip that we made on the train, there were several of us missionary kids, we'd purchased some of these concussion firecracker, things that you throw down on a hard surface and they explode. Being poor, although we didn't know we were poor at the time - missionary kids - we didn't have much money, we traveled third class. And in this particular incident there was an old Chinese gentleman that was stretched out on a bench across from two of us who were there, and we had these little concussion bombs. He was asleep. We also had a lot of chewing gum which apparently, as I heard the story, came to China from Wrigley's chewing gum, who when they heard about the severe famine in north China decided it would be a wonderful thing if they could get the Chinese hooked on chewing gum. At that time they were talking about 300 million [people in northern China].

Q: We still talk in the same terms. There's always those million, or whatever number, potential Chinese customers out there.

SOLLENBERGER: Well, the Chinese didn't take to chewing gum at that time, but the missionary kids got all the chewing gum their parents would let them chew. We took some of this chewing gum and stuck these concussion crackers on the soles of the old gentleman's feet while he was asleep. And you can imagine what happened when he woke up. And yet a trick like this, I'm ashamed of right now in terms of what I did and the reaction [we stimulated in the] other Chinese in the train, [because we foreign kids did] something of this sort.

On another occasion, we went through the train with punches and punched everybody's ticket ahead of the conductor and got them all mixed up for him. And yet he could do nothing about it, because we were foreign kids. So we had experiences that I'm sometimes ashamed of as I look back on it.

Q: I think we all do it. What about Chinese when you were in the school outside Beijing, were you still getting Chinese, or was this pretty much a traditional American education?

SOLLENBERGER: A traditional American education to prepare us for college. We did have a course, but it was Chinese as a foreign language. They did think that we ought to be learning about Chinese, but there were no Chinese students in the boarding school for foreigners. There were several Russian but it was basically a segregated educational experience.

Q: Did you experience, and you only realized it later, that there was almost segregation between the foreign students, the missionaries, and the Chinese in general... How did your family feel about this separation?

SOLLENBERGER: There was definitely segregation. The missionaries at that time, and to some extent this was because of the Chinese insistence on it, built little separate compounds. They built American-style structures, that's the only kind of structure they understood and knew. It was difficult, particularly for the women in these rural area to establish any sort of close relationship with [Chinese] women. Partly this was because of the role and status of women at that particular time. I remember one of the missionary women, who was there before we were, talking about the way in which she was finally able to establish contact with Chinese women. And that was through the death of one of her babies. At that point the Chinese women expressed sympathy and came to her to express this. And she often said it was through the death of one of her children that she was finally able to make contact with the Chinese women.

This was, in a sense, driven home to me later on when I was back as an adult and was able on several occasions to see the mission establishments through the Chinese eyes as something that was clearly foreign, clearly from the outside. Something that from the Chinese point of view had a lot of money behind it. Also, foreigners who had special privileges, or appeared to have special privileges in China, before whom the Chinese had to, an expression they use, is to kowtow, which means to lower your head and not look at the other person in the eyes. So we had that separation, but my father was always uneasy, mother also was always uneasy with that sort of relationship and did what they could under the circumstances, as I look back on it now, to bridge that, not only for themselves but for [us] kids.

Q: While you at boarding school were there any winds of change coming around like the Kuomintang or anything like that? Were you getting any reflections...

SOLLENBERGER: ...of what was going on in China? Oh, a good deal of that. As a matter of fact there were several occasions where there were military threats to the area. The major one being from the Japanese in 1935 as they made a feint towards north China. They didn't actually invade until '37 but large troop movements in the area, Tongzhou was considered the east gate to Beijing so there were concentrations of troops there. That created a good deal of excitement, and also created some interesting school experiences.

Q: What were they?

SOLLENBERGER: Well, the major one had to do with a group of boys, there were five of us that roomed together in the same room. With troops [arriving], we wanted to go down to the railroad station and look at this. We were under strict orders not to do so. The headmaster of the school was a Danish gentleman who believed in the old discipline of the Danish navy, he'd been in the Danish navy, and applied that liberally to the students. On this particular occasion, after being denied the privilege of going down to the railway station, we decided we'd go into the city. The gates were locked to the city at that time and we had to climb over the city wall, which we did, [we were young] and had scouted out the area well before hand. And found getting into town rather interesting under these circumstances. We did it three times. And one of the roommates had a girlfriend, she found out about it through him. The matron found out about it through the girlfriend, or through gossip in the girl's dorm, and the headmaster found out about it. The result was that, since we'd gone in three times, we had to be punished three times. His pattern was, you'd be invited into [his] interchamber, he had a drawer in the dresser, the lower

drawer, and he had a variety of instruments there, bamboo canes, hair brushes, straps, and generally you were given the option of choosing the one that you wanted. But after three nights of this we began to get a little sore on the behind, took pillows to school with us to sit on, and the parents finally decided that was a little too much. The gentleman did not stay with the school. But that's school life for you.

Q: Eventually you ended up in the United States, didn't you, for schooling?

SOLLENBERGER: That's right.

Q: When was that?

SOLLENBERGER: That would have been '35.

Q: So this is in the midst of the Depression. Where did you go?

SOLLENBERGER: I went back to North Manchester. I had free tuition there. It was a church college.

Q: What was the name of the college?

SOLLENBERGER: Manchester College.

Q: You were at Manchester College from '35 to '38.

SOLLENBERGER: [Yes], at which time I dropped out. And the reason for dropping out basically was that it seemed to me that the kids in college at that time were much too focused on their own problems, and were not aware that the world was on fire. From my point of view the world was on fire. In '38 the Japanese had invaded north China and the word that I got back from north China was that [the Japanese] had [implemented a] scorched earth [policy] in much of the area where I grew up. And, of course, things had happened in north Africa and began to happen in Europe. I just felt it didn't make sense to sit in school at that particular time.

Q: You're about 21 at this time.

SOLLENBERGER: So I tried to find a way to get back to China to see what I could do to help.

Q: While you were at Manchester College what were you studying?

SOLLENBERGER: History and political science. I was fortunate in my education to be with Andrew Cordier, who was the history professor at that time. He later became the Under Secretary for the United Nations, and [acting] president of Columbia University (1969-1970), [and dean of faculty at Columbia's School of International Affairs]. I was his assistant for a couple of years.

Q: That's really amazing to find that in a small school.

SOLLENBERGER: That's right. My education was really from him, as I look back on it. I found a way to get back to China in relief work for both the Church of the Brethren and the Quakers, sort of a joint emergency project. I wanted to go back to an area that I knew, and [I made it]. I spent from the end of '38 to 1940 in emergency relief work.

Q: Were your parents still in China during this period?

SOLLENBERGER: My father was there part of the time. My mother was not, her health was such that she remained in the United States.

Q: You got back in 1938. Where did you go and can you describe how you saw the situation where you were at that time?

SOLLENBERGER: I went back to the Taihang mountain area. I went to the city where I had spent the years when I was in high school, that was the home base. The area had already been invaded once by the Japanese who had gone through in an effort to weed out, or to destroy the guerrilla base. Of particular interest in that area was the fact that this was area that was under the control, at that time, of the Eighth Route Army, the communist Eighth Route Army. It was not too long after their long march, and they had moved across into Shaanxi, and set up a military base in the Taihang mountain area, and were attempting to operate against the Japanese. The city that I'd set up base in was not destroyed by the [Japanese] scorched earth [policy]. But the villages around and all the way back up to the northern area, Yangchuan, had been pretty well wiped out. The refugees when I got there, the end of '38, were drifting back into the cities. But the problem there was an emergency problem in how to deal with their homes in the rural areas. The Eighth Route Army at that time was not engaging very often with the Japanese, they were being very selective. But they had had several significant engagements in areas not far from where we were. In one of these, [the Japanese] suffered rather severely when they were waylaid in a mountain pass by the Eighth Route Army, and they retaliated by literally destroying two county seats, two walled cities. [it was] in this area we concentrated on trying to do something with the refugees, a drop in the bucket considering the problem.

Q: How were you treated, both by the Japanese and by the Chinese communists, during this period? Here you were where the line was moving back and forth?

SOLLENBERGER: It was not only the communists. Yan Xishan was still in the province as the military warlord. He had a deputy who was in charge of southeast Shaanxi which is where we were operating. We had contact with him. We had to because he had authority over all of the magistrates in the area, and relations with him and with [him and] the local governments was very good. I mean, they saw rather quickly that there was an advantage in having some foreign assistance in dealing with the problems that they had. As it turned out the deputy governor, Bo Yibo, was really an under cover communist at the time, and at the appropriate moment in 1939 he turned over, and turned over with the provincial troops that were under his command, turned over to the communists. He was later rewarded, became, I think, Minister of Finance under the communist regime, and is now probably the oldest senior communist still living in the Beijing area. I had direct contact with him because of the work that I was doing at that time. To begin

with, [we had] only minor contact with the Eighth Route Army. I did have to get permission passes from them, [but] there were no problems in getting those. They again, I guess, saw the value of [our work], and at that time they were treating the local people with kid gloves. They realized they couldn't survive in the mountains without at least the tacit approval, if not the help, of the local population. And by contrast the way in which they were treating the people at that time was so much better than the way in which the government troops were treating the people, that they pretty well got the cooperation that they were looking for.

Q: Did you run into the Japanese at all?

SOLLENBERGER: Yes. While I was out on one of my relief trips in the mountains taking care of refugees, the city where I was stationed was occupied. I eventually had to go back into the city. They were obviously not pleased, made it clear that if I was going to stay in the area, I had to stay in the city. But basically they would prefer [that] I should leave. And it eventually became clear that I should leave, so I left, but came back again through the back door, going back into free China, trekking up through the Taihang mountains from the Yellow River, back to near the city that was still under occupation by the Japanese.

At that time I had some interesting contact with the communist army. On one occasion trying to get through the Japanese lines, I ran into a group of students that were coming from [the] Beijing-Tianjin area coming back to the mountains in Shaanxi to get into a school. And the communists were running some open air schools literally on the mountain side, in the little villages. It was interesting that they gave a high priority to education. There were about 300 students of them, as the students were coming through the Japanese lines from the other side, they had alerted the Japanese somehow, and all hell broke loose. It was obvious that I couldn't go through at that particular point. But we met some of the students as they came through. Their Chinese guides had gotten scared and run off and left them. They were in a strange area and didn't know where they were at night. I knew the area and knew it fairly well, I trekked over it, had hunted there as a kid. So I started back with them and we ran into some of the Eighth Route Army people who were coming down to see what the chaos was, and they took over and took me and the students back to headquarters. It turned out to be the central headquarters of the Eighth Route Army General Peng Dehuai, who was then the commander of the Eighth Route. I spent three days at headquarters basically getting acquainted, and they getting acquainted with me and finding out what I was doing. Among other things I spent one evening playing chess with the general, Chinese chess which I had learned as a kid and since I could speak Chinese it was interesting to be able to sit down with him, doing something from his culture. As it turned out I could do almost as well as he could, and speak Chinese. Among other things I wanted to get from him his story of the Long March. How he became and why he became a communist. What his view of the world was at that particular point. It was a rare opportunity.

Q: One hears about the discipline of the Chinese communist troops. Did you find this?

SOLLENBERGER: Very much so.

Q: ...as contrasted to the government type.

SOLLENBERGER: That's right. When I came back from the back door on that trip, I had to come through an area that was under Nationalist control, where the Nationalists had placed one of their most dependable generals and military units, a pretty large one, north of the Yellow River, both to block the communists from expanding south, but also to deal with the Japanese. As it turned out, this was 1939, this was the beginning of the breakdown of the United Front that [the Nationalists and Communists] had worked out to fight the Japanese. There was, in fact, going on minor scrimmages there on a three-way front, Japanese versus communist, the Nationalist versus Japanese and communist. A very mixed up situation. I ran into that.

Q: What exactly were you doing, and where was your support coming from?

SOLLENBERGER: The support was basically in money. The supplies had to be somehow [transported into] the area. At the beginning, with money, you could buy grain millet which was the staple in that area. And you could distribute it either through work projects, or directly. And because of the emergency nature much of it had to be direct. Clothing was another problem. [During] wintertime, [when it was] cold in the mountain area, the Chinese wore padded garments. The normal commerce did not bring either cotton or clothe in. One of the things that we did was to send refugees from the mountain area into the north China plain with currency to buy both millet and cotton, and to bring it back. The cotton could be used in home industry, women knew how to spin, weave, make clothe. The arrangement there was that by issuing a certain amount of cotton, say to a woman and her daughters-in-law, whoever were about, that by turning this into clothe they would get a certain percentage of this, and the rest of it would come back to us which we would hand out to people who needed it. Part of it was a psychological thing of getting the people back into their villages, even to build lean-to for temporary shelter from the ruins that the Japanese had left. You could do that by issuing grain back then. In other words, it's not hopeless, cooperatively you could get together and do something. But again, it was so frustrating because you'd get it done and the Japanese would come through again. I spent two years, probably the most interesting, and in some respects the best two years of my life.

Q: Here you were trying to build up villages while the Japanese were trying to destroy them. I would have thought they would have taken a very dim view of what you were doing.

SOLLENBERGER: They did. That's why I left.

Q: They didn't arrest you at that point.

SOLLENBERGER: No, they didn't arrest me. Well, let's back up a little bit. There were risks involved there. We were well aware of these. In another town along the railway which was 100 miles from here, three of the missionaries of this domination, Church of the Brethren, disappeared during the Japanese occupation, and all the evidence pointed towards the Japanese. We were all aware of this, and that we had to be cautious. We wanted to be cautious also because we didn't want the Chinese that were associated with us to be punished by the Japanese. So, it became clear that I couldn't deal with the refugees in the mountains, I couldn't go back and forth in other words, or I would have been arrested. I decided to leave but to come in by the back door.

On my recent trip back to China I went to the same town, the same city, and I met with an

elderly woman who after we had left, probably a couple years after we had left, both her husband, her husband's brother and a third person had been, for some reason, selected by the Japanese to be examples of what happens to people that they suspected of whatever. Whether it was being suspected of communist affiliation, or because of their contact with the foreigners. But these three people had been publicly bayoneted in a demonstration to the populous, a public demonstration of what happens. That sort of thing happened. I've also felt very guilty and I expressed my feeling about that. When I met with them this time, with some of the children, it was interesting that they said it probably would have happened anyhow, and they seemed to hold no feeling or grudge about it. In fact, we were welcomed, we were warmly welcomed by them. One thing the children wanted to know what [was the wartime] situation [like]. The old lady wouldn't talk about it, and had never told them.

Q: How did money get to you?

SOLLENBERGER: Well, two ways. One way was to take a trip out to Beijing and Tianjin and bring it back. The other way when I came in the back door, arrangements had been made to the Quakers in Shanghai to send money to Xian, to a mission group in Xian, where I picked it up and then carried it into the area.

Q: What about the other people you were working with? Were there other groups, or was this pretty much an American missionary group?

This was strictly American. My father and two other missionaries were also involved in doing relief work, but they were basically there as missionaries. I was there strictly on a relief assignment. When I came back through the back door I brought with me a young Quaker, Lewy-Whitaker, then teaching in the Peking American school and when he learned what I was doing and decided that would be more interesting and joined me. He did not make it. When we were crossing the Yellow River coming in, both of us had contracted typhus. We recovered from that and then made the effort again and I made it back up [to where I was before]. But later he, because of the weakness I guess from typhus, he got typhoid fever, and died in Chendu.

Q: How about the Catholic missionaries, and other groups?

SOLLENBERGER: Yes, there were a few that were there. But so far as I know, in the area where I was working, we were the only [foreign] group. [You know that the missionary groups] had divided up [China into exclusive] territories.

Q: By the time you came back was Kuomintang the government at that time?

SOLLENBERGER: There was a new government. In 1940 was the government and I think everybody recognized that it was the end of the Nationalist and probably Chiang Kai-shek. That they could effectively mount any sort of resistance against the Japanese on a nationwide basis. I think that's basically why when he was kidnaped in Xian.

Q: By the young marshall, Jiang Xueliang.

SOLLENBERGER: That's right. Apparently was one of his, or at least allied with him and I believe he was released and according to the information that I had, at least because of the communist insistence that he be released, and their willingness to join the United Front providing he would stop the civil war and focus on fighting Japan. At least that's the story I got from Marshal Peng Dehuai.

Q: You left in 1940, how did that come about?

SOLLENBERGER: Well, one, I wasn't well, and two, it became apparent [that] what I had been doing in that area, I could no longer do. So I'd spent two years and decided that I should come back and complete my education.

Q: How did you get back?

SOLLENBERGER: Evacuation boat at that time out of Shanghai, that took me down through Australia, New Zealand, and back home. There appeared to be enough nervousness at that point about what was happening in the Pacific, even though we were not yet at war with Japan.

Q: As you came back to the United States in 1940, were you seeing the Japanese as a very real enemy to the United States?

SOLLENBERGER: I would, very definitely.

Q: Had you by any chance run across anybody in the American Foreign Service?

SOLLENBERGER: I did when I got back to Chungking on my way out. I stopped in at the embassy. It was at that time located there, and gave them a report on what was happening up in Shaanxi with the so-called United Front. They had heard rumors of that, but had no direct reports from observers [actually in] the area.

Q: Did you get any feel from the embassy at that time, what was the interest?

SOLLENBERGER: Only in a marginal sort of way. I did get the feeling that there was some exasperation in the way in which the Chinese were, [meaning the Generalissimo], in conducting the war, and was not getting the cooperation that they had hoped. And there was interest also in whether the communist would be a reliable temporary ally in dealing with the Japanese, and what the prospects were [the KMT-CCP] getting together. I could not be very encouraging about that from what I'd seen. It wasn't going to work for reasons on both sides.

Q: Do you have any recollection of who talked to you particularly?

SOLLENBERGER: One of the people I talked to was Drummond. There were a couple of people that I talked with, but I've forgotten.

Q: Where did you go when you took this circuitous route down to Shanghai to Australia, to New Zealand, and back to the States? Where did you go?

SOLLENBERGER: You mean when I came back?

Q: Yes.

SOLLENBERGER: I came back to Manchester to see if they would reinvent me to finish my education, undergraduate education. At that point I felt rather, what's the word I'm trying to think of...rather frustrated, at the slowness of the educational process. I tried to work out a deal with my professors whereby if I could pass their final examinations, I wouldn't have to sit through all the classes, I could compress within one semester a year's work. I felt I could do it. Cordier said okay, but some of the other professors felt this would be setting a precedent that they could not live with. But I did manage to finish up [in 1941].

Q: This is a great time to be a young single man graduating from college. What happened to you?

SOLLENBERGER: Well, the draft came along, and with the background that I had with the Brethren, Mennonites, Quakers, the three historic [peace churches], my feeling at that time was that I could not participate in warfare, and this was sort of re-established by what I had observed going on as a result of war in northern Shaanxi. So I took an alternative, I complied with the draft, and was assigned to alternative service under the draft. I was four years in alternative service in projects in the United States, [Puerto Rico, and] South Africa.

Q: When you say alternative work, what did this consist of?

SOLLENBERGER: Almost anything you can think of, depending on what you could agree on as meaningful. It involved conservation work on the farms, environmental cleanup projects, it involved establishing a rural hospital in Puerto Rico. It involved working in hospital wards. And the reason for South Africa on this was that I was determined to try to get back to China to work in that situation. I was trying to join the Friends Ambulance Unit, it was a British operation, operating in China and got as far as South Africa. There were six of us at that time en route [to China] with the war [still] on. [Our route was to go around the Cape to India and up the Burma Road into China.] We got as far as South Africa and an Act of Congress turned us back and I spent about six months in South Africa.

Q: What was the Act of Congress?

SOLLENBERGER: Basically, that people not in military uniform could not go overseas. That was the result basically.

Q: What was the situation that you saw in South Africa? This would be '43 or '44. It was not an official policy.

SOLLENBERGER: [Yes, in 1943, we saw apartheid even though it wasn't an official policy.] I volunteered while I was there waiting for transportation, first to go over to China, and then coming back and had to return. I volunteered to work in a hospital basically set up for the blacks

in Durban. So I had a direct experience with observing the practical [application of] apartheid.

Q: Was the hand of the British administration pretty heavy there?

SOLLENBERGER: No. It seemed to me [that one saw] the hand of the local administration in Johannesburg, [rather than policy from London].

Q: How was that? Could you have social contact with the blacks, or was this pretty much...

SOLLENBERGER: Well, I had a good deal of contact with them in the hospital, and only on one occasion did I have social contact outside. That was through a special incident, I guess. They assigned me to the emergency room, and one day a Zulu warrior came in, and his ear was almost cut off. He'd been in a fight; it was dangling down. And the European doctor who was in charge, said, take it off. And I said, isn't it possible that this could be put on? Yes, he said, it is but this is a black and minus an ear is not worth the bother, just cut it off, it's much easier that way. I said, would you mind if I tried to put it on? He said, go ahead. I very carefully stitched his ear back on. He came back several times to get it dressed, etc., and it stuck. But he then invited me to his home and his wife gave me some beads. So I had that one memorable social contact. But otherwise it was just [seeing people in] one of the wards, and a few of the Africans and some of the Asians, the Indian doctors were in the hospital.

Q: You got back when, about 1944 to the United States?

SOLLENBERGER: I left the alternative service, civilian public service, and was immediately recruited by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, UNRRA. They were in the process here in Washington of getting people ready to go overseas. The focus had shifted to the Far East, and China, and they somehow learned that I had a good deal of background in China in relief work, and had done some training people to do relief work. So I was recruited [and came to] Washington, College Park actually, and was in charge of training people to go to China with UNRRA, an international mixed group.

Q: When was this?

SOLLENBERGER: This was '45.

Q: So this really started you off in your career of training people.

SOLLENBERGER: That's right.

Q: What type of training were you giving?

SOLLENBERGER: It was very brief. We tried to give them a little language, enough to deal with the social situation, the courtesies. There was great pressure at that time to get people out, as soon as possible. Gave them something in the way of history, background, and culture. And then on the nature of the projects that they would likely be working in. When that was winding down another project came up, and this was again initiated by the Church of the Brethren that I'd been

associated with. This was through a negotiation they had had with the Chinese as to what they might do in terms of relief work back in China because of their historic interest and background [to] understand China. And what they came up with was what turned out to be the forerunner of the Peace Corps. One of the things that was needed was to as quickly as possible return to cultivation of land that had gone out of cultivation as a result of the war. The major area was the area that had been flooded by the Yellow River when Chiang Kai-shek blew up the dikes to stop the Japanese advance. [It was successful], but it washed out several million acres of the best agriculture, [which was now overgrown] with stubble and brush. [The objective was] to as quickly as possible get [area] this back into production. The idea here was to use heavy equipment. The Chinese were not familiar at all with [mechanization], meaning sending some operators. The Brethren said, we [are a rural group and] can recruit fifty young men who can understand the operation and maintenance of heavy equipment, farm equipment. UNRRA said we could put this under the wing of UNRRA, and you can work with the Chinese counterpart of UNRRA which was SINRRA, the Chinese National Relief. And because of my background and I was being freed up at that point, UNRRA said you go out and be our liaison with this unit. I agreed and the Brethren said, you'll simultaneously be the director of the unit. I said, okay. That was another interesting year that I spent in China.

Q: This would be what?

SOLLENBERGER: '46-'47.

Q: How did you get there, and where did you go?

SOLLENBERGER: We flew from California. At that time the UNRRA people had a special contract, and I guess with the cooperation of some officially associated with the military unit, and military troop transports, we flew to Shanghai, with many stops along the way. At that time I was married, and had a young son, and dependents were not allowed to go at that point, so I went alone. They came about six months later. We were stationed in Shanghai as the headquarters. From there on [we] struggle [with] the bureaucracies of UNRRA, bureaucracies of the Chinese, and the renewed civil war, trying to carry out [our] project.

Q: You got there in '46. Where was your group concentrated?

SOLLENBERGER: The headquarters was in Shanghai. We had to bring them into Shanghai, and then disburse from Shanghai. The area that we were most interested in was the Yellow River area, where we thought we could do a concentrated job, a quick job, and move out. The idea at that point was not to try to introduce mechanized farming in China. Some of the major tractor manufacturers donated 2,000 tractors to our project. They probably had in mind eventually maybe...

Q: For all those millions and millions of customers.

SOLLENBERGER: That's right. As it turned out for political reasons the Nationalist government, SINRRA, wanted to satisfy demands [for] little projects all over China. [Well], we couldn't operate without their cooperation in China, [so] basically [our] group's [efforts] had to

be dispersed which was the first mistake that was made. Although we did get the major operation started in the flooded area, and we got it started in time so that when the dikes were repaired and the river was put back in its course, the area was safe to operate in. We were there with tractors and training and so forth. But by that time the civil war had resumed in the area. [Our] units that were operating in the area were sometimes captured by the communists, and sometimes by the Nationalists. In a few cases they were required to haul military equipment, and we decided because of our [neutral] position, we would pull out. We couldn't operate in a situation of that sort.

Just to jump ahead very briefly. My last trip out I went back to Xian to see the terra cotta army. While I was waiting, in the area with the visitors outside, there was a woman and her young daughter sitting there and I sat down beside them. We got into conversation. Her husband and their older son were continuing walking around the area. I was sitting down because I was tired of walking, and we got into a conversation and it turned out that she came from near this flooded area, a city that I had been in and knew about. She said, after we'd talked a little bit, "You know, my grandfather told us about these foreigners that came in with iron cows, [which is what they called the tractors], in the flooded area [to prepare the land. They were very uncertain about what this was all about, and were wondering whether this another type of Japanese invasion, or just what it was. But they were persuaded to go back," and that he, in fact, had benefitted from this tractor operation, and had gone back into the area to resume his farming. At that point, the daughter, [who was] in the third grade, came around her mother and gave me a little gift, a jade locket. I said, "I can't accept this. Why are you giving it to me?" "Because of what you did to help my grandfather."

It's interesting how some of these things come back, and under circumstances one would never expect. But I think probably the interesting thing about this project was that in a fairly direct way, it became the forerunner of the Peace Corps. Here was a group of people working under an international organization, [a] government type of organization with volunteers [working] for subsistence, [an] agreement [which] was very similar to what the Peace Corps is now. You get your subsistence and your travel, your medical, and things of this sort but basically no remuneration. So when the Peace Corps idea began to blossom, I got involved with it as a consultant.

Q: How did the young men work? What was your impression of the effect on the young men of doing this type of work?

SOLLENBERGER: Well, last December we had a reunion, the 50th year reunion. Fifteen of the group got together down in Texas and we reviewed what had happened. How it affected the lives of the people. So far as these were concerned, there was a direct relationship between the experience they had, [even though] there were many frustrations and complications, and what they chose to do later on in life, almost inclusively did service type of work in their communities. And many of them as a result of this had gone on. One of them particularly had seen the health problems and decided he wanted to be a doctor. He became a doctor. Interestingly he wanted to pursue the [holistic] approach on which he had gotten from the Chinese - their approach to medicine.

Q: So we're talking about 1947 when you had to pull out. What did you do then?

SOLLENBERGER: I was approached, I think from the consulate in Shanghai. They were looking for somebody to head up a post-war Chinese language training program for young Foreign Service officers in Beijing and would I be interested. They obviously had some knowledge about what I'd been doing in the intervening years. So I went out to take a look at it. Beijing seemed very attractive as a place. My wife at that time was with me in Shanghai. She agreed [to go to] Beijing. [During the fall] of '47, [we] went up to Beijing, [where I] directed a program for young officers specializing in Chinese.

Q: I was thinking this might be a good place to stop. We'll pick it up next time, we've got you in 1947 starting a language school up in Beijing.

This is December 17, 1997. Howard, let's start with the setting of the language school - what was it called in those days? Beijing or?

SOLLENBERGER: In 1947 we called it Peking, or in Chinese Beiping, because the Chinese capital was at Nanking. I guess before we get to the school here, I was invited to come up [late] in 1947 by Tony Freeman who was then I think he was the acting CG, Consul General, in Beijing at the time, or maybe he was the consul general. He had been a language officer, perhaps one of the better ones in terms of his facility with the language. He had been instrumental back here in Washington, as I understood it, in talking with the people at the Foreign Service Institute about setting up a field school for advance training in Chinese. Training in Chinese in the Foreign Service had been suspended during the war. [There was the pre-service group]; Tony had been a member of that. He had more or less learned on his own and did very well at it, but he had the feeling that it ought to be an organized program, particularly for adult students who came in, and in the beginning didn't know their way around at all in terms of how to approach the language, or what we saw the priorities were in terms of the different skills that were necessary.

I had an interview with Tony, and a little later when I got back to Shanghai I received an invitation to join the staff, to go down to the consul general's office in Shanghai, and be sworn in, which I did, and found myself to be a member of the Department of State, having never set foot in the Department of State up until that particular time. Not knowing who my bosses were back in Washington. I did not actually open the school. This was done by another person who didn't stay with the program, he was [there only] briefly. But there were some preliminary things that were done, taken care of before I arrived. But my responsibility, as defined to me by Tony Freeman, was to run the school, and design a program training the future Foreign Service Chinese language officer corps. I took that as a responsibility throughout my entire career.

Q: Could you give me sort of your approach? This is a very important step. Chinese is, I won't say unique, but it has ideograms and it has the language. In most other languages you kind of learn the language anyway you can get it. You did not come to the language really from the academic side, but really from personal experience.

SOLLENBERGER: Personal experience and some experience in training, but at a much lower level than was required by the Foreign Service.

Q: You and Tony Freeman, you had to have almost a philosophy and approach. I'd like you to talk about what it was.

SOLLENBERGER: Well, basically, starting off with the assumption that language is what is spoken. That's what we concentrated on during the first part of the program. There's general agreement on that. And only after you are able to comprehend what is spoken to you and are able to respond to that, we felt only at that point it would be judicious to introduce the characters. We had to decide what characters to learn out of the 50-some thousand that are available. What would be useful to the Foreign Service within the limits of the training period, to be learned within the limits of the training period, and then to gradually build up from that.

The second part of the philosophy, I think, on the training was that it needed to be job oriented. We needed to find out what these officers would likely be doing when they went into assignments as Chinese language officers. And then you begin to prepare them for that. Among other things, we found that the duties that would be required involved reading the Chinese newspapers, at least being able to scan it. You probably couldn't depend on most of them for good translations of that, but at least enough to read to find out whether it was worth turning it over to Chinese translators to be translated in full into English, or whomever needed to review it. The second part of this was documentary Chinese. Documentary styles, as you probably know, have changed and were in the process of changing from the old very formalistic styles that were used, to new formalistic styles that were being introduced and were a much more informal approach basically. And that required specialized vocabulary, and specialized phraseology to be used under appropriate circumstances.

The third thing was to act as interpreters where necessary, and to be participants in negotiations. And this required a vocabulary in economic fields, military fields, and events in the political field, and to some extent in the cultural field.

Q: Were you at that time also looking at the communist phraseology?

SOLLENBERGER: At the beginning we were not.

Q: I was just wondering in the political field there was something which one would have to deal with and what the outcome was, and they have their own special phrases.

SOLLENBERGER: As the program developed later on, and as it became clear that the communist were in the process of taking over China, that was introduced. For one thing we needed to listen to the communist radio, and to know what they were talking about which we had as part of the program. Another aspect of the philosophy was that language is really a cultural subject, and it cannot be divorced from culture or the area studies side of it. This had not been emphasized in previous training. It was something that I felt very strongly about myself. Anyone who was going to be a specialist in Chinese would likely spend a number of years either working in or on Chinese affairs needed to have a pretty good background in Chinese geography, history,

culture, religions. And the question was how to get that in. We started off by renaming the school, Chinese Language and Area Studies. We gave ourselves a mandate, in other words trying to introduce this into the program.

Q: In a way you were blessed by the fact, this is 1997, we're celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Foreign Service Institute, so you didn't have an institutional bureaucracy in Washington which was just forming at that time, sitting on you, did you?

SOLLENBERGER: Not at all, in fact, I felt rather uneasy about not having met my boss back here who happened to be Henry Lee Smith.

Q: Oh, yes, "Hocksie" Lee Smith.

SOLLENBERGER: "Hocksie" Smith, the head of the language school, and with whom Tony Freeman had discussed what should be done in Beijing. So I got indirectly, from Tony, as to what the philosophy of training back here was.

Q: The traditional learning process in the United States was, you sat with a book, and you learn vocabulary. I went through this in Latin and French, Spanish. You sort of learned the vocabulary, and you read and you read and don't talk it, or very little. That was pre-war. Were you picking up the wartime experience of military teaching?

SOLLENBERGER: Very much so. And the reason for that was that Henry Lee Smith was one of the instrumental people in getting the military program going during the war, and in developing textbooks that would approach language learning from the oral side of learning. I learned a little bit from that from the texts that were used, basically military text at that time, borrowing from some of the material that the missionaries had used, and at that time there was a college of Chinese studies in Beijing, the director whom I knew well, and I was able to meet with him and borrow and use some of the materials that they had. Henry [Finn], the then director of the College of Chinese Studies. My approach was to find out what situations our people would be in, and to develop oral dialogues based on those situations, and to learn the vocabulary that was necessary for those. These ranged all the way from the very simple social meetings, to hiring a [pedi]cab, to getting a train ticket, whatever, hotel reservations, all the way from that on up to the meetings that might be anticipated with officials in the government at different levels.

Q: You had not serve in the government, so whom were you tapping into to find out what would be the sort of getting around the city.

SOLLENBERGER: I was tapping into former language officers. I had gotten a good deal of this from Tony Freeman to begin with. There were several others that were around, Edward Rice was one, at my age names slip, but there were several that we contacted, plus we formally sent messages to the embassy in Nanking and various consulates that were still open in China at that time, asking them questions about usage of officers that would be coming in and how they would be used and what their functions would be, etc. We tried to build dialogues around that. [As to] hiring Chinese staff, [we hired] some old scholars who knew the tradition of China and the classical forms of the language, and [hired] some relatively young people. Had one person who

spent part time with us who was a Chinese-English major at Beijing University who spent part of his time with us. We had good help and good assistance in that.

By the time I got to Beijing to start things off, Mr. Oliver Clubb, had arrived and was the new Consul General. I remember my first meeting with him. He was very uncertain as to which direction I should go, but what relationships would be having never served in such a situation before. Mr. Clubb was very approachable and [made it clear] from the beginning that this is your job, you do it, and if you have problems come to me, otherwise I'll keep hands off. That was reassuring because Clubb was a language officer himself, and by reputation was a very precise and well organized, and very focused sort of person. But we hit it off well, had a good relationship during my stay there. The major problem that I had with Mr. Clubb, he was so organized. He was so precise in his timing, [that] he had a schedule that was really based on minutes. And part of that schedule was getting in a half hour of physical exercise early in the morning, and his preference was tennis. And I was the chosen person to get up and play tennis with him in the morning, which was good for me also.

Q: On the area studies side, what resources did you tap for that?

SOLLENBERGER: Well, first of all, required reading. So we developed, with the help of various scholars that were coming through, a reading list. Asked the Foreign Service Institute back here to provide us some funds to buy the books, or better yet, buy them and mail them out to us. At that time it was hard to get material out there. And then to draw on local resources. Beijing was a cultural center, a center of universities, Yanjing University, Beida, Qinghua, so there were a number of people we could call on. People really well versed in their own fields. And then there were a number of Fulbright scholars. I shouldn't say a number, there were several Fulbright scholars who were out there studying in special fields, and we were able to invite them in and to call on them. For current affairs, current events and things of this sort, correspondents liked to come to Beijing and they would usually stop by and we were able to tap some of them.

Q: Were you at that point concerned about, what in modern terms we call political correctness? For example, thinking of the book Red Star Over China by Edgar Snow, and there were some other books on China that looked somewhat favorably, if not quite favorably, on the communist side. Was this a problem?

SOLLENBERGER: It was not a problem. What we could get our hands on we used.

Q: Were there any particular books, we're obviously talking about something 50 years ago, that were particularly good for what you wanted to know?

SOLLENBERGER: Well, for basic history at that particular point, and some cultural contact, [there was] Goodrich that we turned to. But on the geography, Pearl Buck's husband, had done a good deal of work on Chinese geography.

Q: I was wondering, you talked about correspondents, particularly in this early time. The people who come to my mind are Theodore White, Edgar Snow, and is it Agnes Smedley? And there must have been others. I mean were they involved in what you were doing?

SOLLENBERGER: Teddy White was. But Agnes Smedley, no. Edgar Snow, no. Although we had Snow's book, Red Star Over China which was there. We were paying attention to what was going on. To some extent also because my own personal experience and background in China, both with the tractor unit, which had been just before this assignment, where we had run into problems with the communists. And in trying to maintain a neutral position [for] UNRRA in the work that we were doing. So I had come into contact with them, and also because I'd had contact with some of the communist leaders in '38 and '39. So I was well aware of what was going on there, and the people that were focused on them.

Q: How did your school differ from the old Chinese Language School. I think of General Stilwell, Ridgway, and other military. But I suppose with the Foreign Service prior to that. Was there a difference?

SOLLENBERGER: Well, there was a difference and it became quite clear what the difference was. When I took over the job in Beijing there was already an army language school in operation. I've forgotten how many, but there were I guess 20 or 30 people enrolled in that school. My first question really was, why do we need two government schools? Some of the things we have in common. There are some technical things that the military people would need to learn that we don't need to pay much attention to. But there's a lot of overlap and it just seemed to me...but... I was told to stay away. They were determined to have their own and to maintain a separation. I pursued it several times while I was there with the director of the army program in terms of at least when I invited in some distinguished speaker that I could also invite his people and we tried to schedule things in such a way that we could join forces on that, and certainly not duplicate. And I had contacts that they did not have.

Q: At that point, we're talking about 1947... I'm a graduate of the Army Language School in Monterey in 1950, and frankly the way I was taught there, took Russian, hasn't really differed from both languages I've taken at the Foreign Service Institute. So you're all working out of the same well, weren't you?

SOLLENBERGER: That's right, we were.

Q: This might be a point to ask about Henry Lee Smith, because he was really the person who developed the system, wasn't he? Or at least in part.

SOLLENBERGER: He was certainly one of the king pins in developing the army language system. There were half a dozen, Milt Cowin, I've forgotten the man who did the Chinese.

Q: What was his background? What did you know about him?

SOLLENBERGER: I knew practically nothing about him until I came back to the United States. But his background was in linguistics, historical and descriptive linguistics, and his approach to language training was based on linguistic analysis, and highly focused on the oral spoken language. He was a gregarious person. Had had a radio program at one point, Where Are You From, which at one time was well known. If he couldn't guess where you came from within a

certain radius, you would get a free refrigerator or something like that. In those days that was the technique that he used. This was relatively easy to do once you knew the landmarks for this.

Q: And regional accents were still regional accents, too.

SOLLENBERGER: I think the strong point for Henry Lee Smith was that he had a lot of contacts in the linguistic community, and was able to attract to the Institute a number of young promising linguists who were able to build on the system that had gone into the military training program, and to adopt and apply this to this Foreign Service. And at the same time to move ahead in really relating language to culture. In doing this, he also recruited a number of anthropologists. And we can talk about that later when we get to the Foreign Service Institute itself.

Q: We'll stick to China. In 1947 when you arrived, what was the political situation in that part of China when you first arrived?

SOLLENBERGER: The civil war was a continuing problem at that point. General George Marshall's efforts to arrive at a shared power agreement, something of that sort, did not work. And it became pretty clear that the struggle was going to continue. The communists had acquired a good deal of strength during the period of the Japanese occupation, and immediately thereafter. They were held back to some extent in Manchuria. They probably expected to get more assistance from the Soviet Union in terms of being able to take over the Japanese equipment that was left there when the Japanese surrendered. But the Russians took everything they wanted first, [and the communists got] what was left over. They also took a lot of the factory heavy equipment, industrial equipment out of Manchuria, and moved it into the Soviet Union. That probably held up the communist advance somewhat, we don't know how much, but somewhat. Even when I was there in '47, at least as I look back on it now, it was pretty clear to me and to those I was dealing with, and to Mr. Clubb, that the communists would probably at least take over north China. There was talk at that time that might be a period, maybe an extended period, of a divided China north of the Yangtze River, and south of the Yangtze River. And that Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek probably had enough strength south of the river. The frustrating problem that we were dealing with at that time was that Chiang seemed unwilling to put the resources necessary into defending Manchuria. And if Manchuria went, and we were watching to see what would happen, or if Manchuria went, it was pretty clear both in terms of the way history repeats itself and plays out, that north China would soon follow. And that's what happened.

Q: What about the students who came there? The first crew. Can you tell some of their background and as you were feeling your way around to developing this program?

SOLLENBERGER: There were several there when I arrived. One of the things I learned pretty early in the game was, we're going to get students with a wide range of backgrounds, and we'd have to accommodate that which probably meant much more individual programming in training than any sort of group training. Ralph Clough was one of the students, and he had spent some time at the...was it Yale in China?

Q: I think it was Yale in China.

SOLLENBERGER: Jerry Stricker was another one. Oscar Armstrong who had some background, having lived in China. It ranged all the way from people who had some experience, some background, and a start in the language already, to those that were complete novices that didn't have any background. One of the things that I tried to work out through correspondence with Henry Lee Smith in Washington was that we try to use the language school [in Beijing] strictly for advanced training, and that certain background could probably be provided for them back here in the States, or at universities, etc., who were using the modern system of teaching. And would come out to us only when they could really make maximum use of living and studying in the culture itself. We weren't in business long enough to get any real system going on that.

Q: Were you feeling any of the winds of what later became known as McCarthyism there? John Stewart Service is having his problems and this is mainly sourced to former Ambassador Pat Hurley who had very strong feelings. I think in diplomatic terms most of Foreign Service people would describe Hurley as a prime horse's ass. But at the same time he was politically powerful. Were you feeling any of that?

SOLLENBERGER: Not directly, no. Well aware of it, and well aware of some of the problems that the Chinese language people had gotten into on that. Particularly where there was a feeling of criticism of Chiang Kai-shek. And Theodore White, of course, had his say on that and we got his views on that. We also had the views of some of the Foreign Service people that were coming through.

Q: I realize we're really talking about a rather short time before the place fell apart, but were you able to tap into people who were coming from the United States to tell about China and the political repercussions?

SOLLENBERGER: Very little. We got a little bit of that...I used Clubb also who had arrived just about the same time that I did, in terms of what was going on back here in the State Department. I also arranged for him to have briefings with the students as a group periodically to bring them up to date on the information that he was getting through the channels that are open only to the head person there. And he was very good at that, and took an interest in the students, and I think kept them pretty well abreast of what was going on.

Q: What was the plan for housing and getting the students coming in to get absorbed into the community? How did that work?

SOLLENBERGER: We had to take the housing that was available. We took advantage of property that I guess had been acquired during the period when Beiping was the...when we had a legation there, and Sanguangao, which had been probably a part of the old Han Institute, the Chinese Board of Examiners in the old days, studying classical Chinese, bordering on that. There were some Chinese style houses that were available there, and we put our students there first and by preference, because they were a little bit separated from the consulate general, from its main compound. We held our classes there also. It was also easier in a place like that for Chinese who wanted to come in freely to come in. They weren't faced with going past someone guarding the

gate so to speak. Later on when things became tense we had to move out of that area, and we moved into what had been the old marine barracks which was converted into office space. I was given space on the ground floor. The Army Language School had the top floors.

The other thing that I did was to have field trips much as you do in the schools here, you take the kids out to museums. So we organized a number of field trips that would take us out to look at things. Plus, and somewhat to my later regret, I argued and got funds to send [our students] on field trips outside of Beijing for two reasons. One, to get a little experience with dialects that were spoken in Beijing itself. The second reason for this was, and this was a personal view that I had, that the Department and our official establishments in China, were too much focused on the urban areas when the majority of the Chinese population lived outside, were rural. And that we needed to know a little bit more about what was going on in the rural countryside. And the only way to get that is to send them out. So we sent them out early on, sent them out with an instructor, so they would have a companion. Later on, go out by yourself and see if you can make your way. Some of them took some very interesting trips. Later on, after the communists took over, I was to learn that they were well aware of this, and considered that I was running a spy ring in Beijing, and that one of the evidence for that was that I was sending these people out all over China, obviously to gather information.

Q: Which, of course was what...

SOLLENBERGER: ...which is what I was doing.

Q: Well, I mean, this is what the Foreign Service does.

SOLLENBERGER: That caused me some problems later on.

Q: Before we come to that, was there any debate, concern...could you talk a bit about the thoughts you had, and Clubb and others...is it Chubb or Clubb?

SOLLENBERGER: Clubb, Oliver Edmond Clubb.

Q: ...about Mandarin versus Cantonese. I mean the languages of China.

SOLLENBERGER: There was no question at that particular point as to what we would focus on in the north. For two reasons, one, Mandarin is by far the language that is used by most of the population. At least 70-80 percent of the population could manage at that time to function in the various dialects of Mandarin. Cantonese, a different language basically related, Fukienese, a different language, but related. Hakka, a different language, but related. The minority languages, the mountain people, the Turkic people, the Tibetans, Mongols, etc., were at best 10 percent of the population, and were not of particular interest in terms of political, economic focus. So concentration, no question, was on Mandarin Chinese.

Q: Was there any problems from the fact that the majority of Chinese in the United States spoke, I believe, am I correct in saying they came from the area around Canton?

SOLLENBERGER: No. Later on, when we were pushed out of China, or left China, we did begin to focus on some of the other languages, Fukienese because of Taiwan. We never did get into Hakka. But Cantonese, yes, we wanted to train some people in both Mandarin and Cantonese, and Taiwanese. But that was later, that was at a later date.

Q: Could you describe events, and how they impacted on your operation?

SOLLENBERGER: Yes, it's hard to know where to begin. It became pretty clear, we'd move when it fell.

Q: Which is when, in '48?

SOLLENBERGER: Yes, and when Angus Ward was forced to leave, in other words he was held under less than free conditions while he was there, and was really pushed out. He came through Beijing and we had a chance to meet and talk with him. But it was pretty clear from what was happening in Manchuria, and the fact that Chiang was not willing to commit enough troops. He probably didn't have enough confidence in doing that, he was harboring his strength for events later on. But it became pretty clear at that point that we were a target, and we would probably go down. How that would happen we weren't sure. There was a pretty strong feeling, and Clubb had this, as well as the committee of the diplomats who were in Beijing, and the major countries all left people there to keep a finger in the pie, and then to report on what was going on. And Clubb would meet regularly with them. There was a committee that would meet and they were trying to coordinate their reaction to this about whether when to leave, or not to leave. There was a movement underway, and I think the British probably took the lead in this, and that was to get the city declared an open city so in the event the communist came, it would not be destroyed, [because Beijing was] important internationally as a cultural center. Important to China. I know that Clubb felt that in a way that was, yes, go ahead with that, but he didn't think the communists would really attack the city. His feeling, I think, was that the traditional Chinese military approach to things would be such that the communist would move in, close off the city, would isolate it, and that a deal would be made with the General defending the city, and that it would be turned over without any major attack on the city.

We began to organize ourselves, obviously in '48, for an eventuality of whatever might come. I was assigned the job of laying in stores and supplies in case we ran short of food, and if there was a siege of the city that went on for a long period of time, there might be a problem, also in charge of medical problems or services. One of the people did help with the evacuation of people that might be leaving because I could handle the Chinese language. We received information from the Department that dependents could be sent home. Among the students, most of us decided not to keep our wives there, and in one or two cases I believe, they decided they would send their families home. I decided to keep mine in Beijing. Again, feeling that the risks were probably minimal, there would be a lot of inconvenience. The personal risks would be rather minimal. And I didn't expect there would be a direct attack on the city.

The other thing was, my wife was pregnant, and we were expecting another child and we didn't want to be separated at that particular time. But the program went ahead, on schedule, without very much interruption. To the extent that we could we continued field trips in areas that were

still open to us. In one particular case, without mentioning a name, one of our students who had been a former Marine, this is when we were under siege, decided he wanted to go out and see how close the communists actually were. He borrowed a Jeep from the [motor] pool, and headed off towards the east, towards the city at Tongzhou. He was advised by the Nationalists that were at the gate of Peking at that time, not to go any further. They didn't know where the communists were, but we don't have any more troops out there, it's a no-man's land. But he decided he would go anyhow, he hadn't gone very far and he saw there was nobody in the field that he could see. He decided that he better turn around and come back. He got turned around, but as he started back, there was fire from some of the farm houses on both sides directed at him and his Jeep. A couple tires were knocked out, the radiator was punctured, a bullet through the windshield. He couldn't turn the thing off, it got too hot. He came to my office, white and shaken up. He had found out where the communists were. We had those kind of discipline problems.

Q: During this time, what was the feeling towards the communists among...I mean, your personal feelings. You'd had dealings with them, but there was this situation in Mukden where Angus Ward was our Consul General and his staff were kept basically as prisoners.

SOLLENBERGER: ...they were under house arrest.

Q: Yes, and it was not an easy house arrest at all. We have a long interview with Elden Erickson, who was there as a staff, sort of like a secretary, to Angus Ward. What was the general feeling, and your feeling about almost can we do business with the communists. After all, it hadn't been that long that we'd been allied with the Soviet Union.

SOLLENBERGER: There seemed to be a general feeling...well, first of all we had a pretty realistic view of the communists just by virtue of the experience that Angus Ward had had, and from reports that we were getting pretty regularly from Chinese who had contacts through family and so on out in the areas that were controlled by the communists. I personally had had some experience in trying to get a tractor operation started in the Yellow River, and knew the problems that were involved in that. I had also, even early on in the '30s, had run into several situations that made it clear to me that the communists, on one hand, could wear silk gloves for a while, and on the other hand, could be extremely ruthless. I'd actually seen and experienced both sides of that. Clubb, himself, was really a scholar, and was really the right person there at the right time. He knew the Soviet Union, he had served in the Soviet Union, his Chinese was good, and his contacts were good. He was realistic, and knew how to deal with them. I think he hoped that we could stay on because he felt it important that we maintain contact with them, that we don't completely lose contact with the communists. He needed to know what was going on in China, and the best way for that would be to maintain some contact there, whether informal or official, dependent on how things would develop. I believe this was the general view of the other representatives from other countries in Beijing at the time also. In fact, the reason for leaving us there, it was clear that Beijing would go, was with I think, the hope that some arrangement could be worked out whereby we could maintain some relations with the [incoming communists] however informal. That was the way we proceeded. Clubb, as I recall, really based his reporting, and his approach to this on that assumption, and was led in several instances I believe to believe that it might be possible that the communists might not want to put all of their eggs in a Soviet basket. That they might be realistic enough to know that in terms of economic development,

assistance and so on, that they would have to turn some place else than to the Soviet Union, that had been through a devastating war period, and who else was there, the United States. But he was a realist, and [knew] there were a lot of problems.

Q: Were you involved thinking about transferring the school, or did anyone think about transferring the school to Nanking, or southern China?

SOLLENBERGER: No.

Q: So how did this play out?

SOLLENBERGER: Well, we stayed on. The communist laid siege in the city, and on several occasions fired shells into the city, but carefully avoiding the old legation area, and carefully avoiding the Forbidden City and cultural places of that sort, which was encouraging to us. But Clubb maintained close contact with the defending General, Fe Zhouyi, and I remember he was probably under siege. He came to dinner at Clubb's house, I was present at the dinner also, was able to talk with his wife. He gave no indication at that point as to what was going to happen insofar as we were concerned, at least verbally he was going to defend the city. But it was pretty clear from other signs that that was not the case. He had already made a deal to turn the city over, in return for which he would be given a position in the new government.

The actual takeover was quiet. We were told to stay in our compounds. Several of us did try to get out on the streets a little bit to see what was going on, and were not bothered. One of our students was taking movies of the liberation parade and they confiscated his equipment and film. But initially there seemed to be no problems. The city was quiet and the staff would still come to work. We kept the school going. So the predictions that we had that they would exercise their initial control with kid gloves on seemed well founded.

Q: Were you by any chance, prior to this, had you dusted off the books about the Boxer Rebellion, and the siege of Peking?

SOLLENBERGER: Oh, yes. We were all well aware of that, and were prepared. But the turnover was really quite peaceful.

Q: Did this do anything to the curriculum of the school?

SOLLENBERGER: Yes, several things. One, it became harder for us to get people in on the area studies side. We obviously couldn't get the communists, they would not recognize us at all. More of my time was spent on helping Clubb with some of his problems. There were still a lot of Americans that were in the area, and some of them wanted to leave. There were property problems, there were all kinds of problems helping American citizens, and the students decided to stay on and see what was going to happen. The communists refused to recognize Clubb's official position. As far as they were concerned he was a foreign citizen staying on in Beijing, stay on as long as you mind your business, so to speak. But it presented a problem to him. When things came up that needed to be represented to the local authorities, which was then the communists. He did not want to sort of compromise his position by going himself, so he would

use me or a couple of the students to do this for him. It became sort of a game that we played with the Alien Affairs Office, which was our contact.

We would go in with a problem, so and so wants to leave, or has a property that has been occupied, this was American property. First of all, you'd be met by a low level clerk, or officer whatever it was, who would want to know what business you had, and who you wanted to see. We don't know whom we should see, but here's the problem, can you tell us whom we should see. So we would orally tell them what the problem was. Then routinely you would say, well, this was in writing and we knew this and we had it in writing, here it is. They would look it over, oh, this is signed by Mr. Clubb, U.S. Consul General. We can't accept this, we don't recognize his position. So you'd say, you know what the problem is now. Well, would you cross off his name? I'd say, I can't do that, he's my boss and from our point of view he is the American representative here, and that's his title. So, you know what the thing is, I'll just take this letter back. Oh, no, you can't take it back, you've already given it to us. So we'll cross it off. You want to cross it off, all right, then that's still what he is. Then we'd ask is there a chance that we can see somebody and talk about this issue who has some authority. Well, we'll let you know what the outcome is. This was at least a weekly affair.

Q: Would the problems sometimes be solved?

SOLLENBERGER: Sometimes it would be. Sometimes the solution would not come back to us. It would be dealt directly to the situation or the person involved.

Q: Looking at this back from the perspective, what was the American rationale, and what was the Chinese communist rationale for this non-recognition, recognition, and all that?

SOLLENBERGER: It's hard to say what the communist rationale was. My own interpretation of this was that they were uncertain when they first came in, as to whether they wanted to keep ties open or not. They could easily have made life difficult for us as they did in the south. The fact that they didn't initially do this seemed to be a very clear indication that at least within the hierarchy of the decision makers, that they were uncertain as to which direction to go.

I think the reason why they didn't want to recognize the official position of this was that they didn't want to have direct talks, negotiations, with the foreigners at that particular point. Part of it was also they wanted to wait until their position in China was clearer. Until they had achieved military control over all major parts of the country. Then their dealing with the foreigners, the outsiders would be different than when they were only partially in control. But I think there was a delay for that reason. From our point of view there was nothing we could do about it. But there was the incident that caused us to leave.

Let me build up to that. It was clear that they were moving towards the establishment of a government as soon as they were in control of China as a whole. They would formally announce an established government and the seat would be in Beijing. This was accomplished on the first of October 1949. An interesting personal incident that was involved with this. When we established official contact with the Chinese after Nixon's visit...

Q: This is in '72.

SOLLENBERGER: ...and to set up liaison offices rather than formal embassies. Han Xu was sent by the Chinese government to Washington to open their liaison office. The Ambassador came later, and Han Xu himself was later appointed as Ambassador. But shortly after he arrived the word came to me from the East Asian desk that it would be nice if we could find a reason to invite him to come to the Institute to show courtesy by recognizing that he was here. So I invited him and he came with several of his staff people. We were in the building in Rosslyn [Virginia] at that point. When he came upstairs in the elevator, following the Chinese pattern I went out to the elevator to greet him. They'd had let me know that he was coming up. He strode over to me, put out his hand, and his English is fairly good, he said, "Mr. Sollenberger, I believe we've met before." I said, "That's possible. I don't know. I was in Peking in such and such a time." He said, "I was the young officer at that time that handed to you at the entrance of the U.S. Consulate General, the declaration of the establishment of the People's Republic of China." I said, "I remember, but I'm afraid I don't recognize you at that particular point."

Back in Beijing in '49, increasingly we were having difficulty as the time went on. The Chinese feeling that they could come into the compound. And this began to cause me to wonder how much longer we could keep this thing going because we needed our instructors, and up to that point they were willing to come in. They hadn't faced any personal pressure or problems. There was another incident that occurred. The gate keeper one night came to the house that I was living in, banging on the door. He said, you've got to come out to the gate, there's a platoon of the Liberation Army out there demanding entrance. I said, all right, but we'd better let Mr. Clubb know about this also. So there had to be time out. I'll go out and see what the problem is. They were out there, and there was a good deal of tension. They were demanding to come in, and I couldn't quite figure out why they wanted to come in. They were trying to explain that they thought that we had done something to the guards that had been stationed in front of the consulate compound. Of course, we'd done nothing at all of that sort. And they wanted to come in and search. Well, Clubb joined us at that particular point, and we're talking back and forth. We finally agreed that we'd let them in, but we would accompany them, not into the buildings, but to the compound. We hadn't gotten very far, following the compound wall, where we found several rifles that had been thrown over the wall. What had happened, obviously, was that their guards had gone AWOL. They thought that we had something to do with that. As a matter of fact, we did. My son, he was then four years old, had a little Jeep and he would regularly go out to the...

Q: This is a peddle car.

SOLLENBERGER: Yes, a peddle car. He would regularly go out to the gate that led into the compound, and while the guards were under strict orders not to fraternize with us, a kid was something else. He established pretty good relations with them. I used to send tea out with him, and Life magazines to look at, and he would report back...I ask him what sort of questions they asked him. Well, they wanted to know whether we beat our servants or not. And what kind of food did you eat? In other words, there were all sorts of questions about our relationship with the Chinese. Apparently they thought we were ogres of some sort. I've always credited him with causing the first defection. One of the guards that was there at this particular time this happened

had the same Chinese surname, that I have. So he was “da Su,” and my son was “xiao Su.” They got on pretty friendly terms on the basis of it, having the same surnames.

Q: One of the ways the Chinese communist, when they first took over used were very heavy handed in Mukden, but did but later in Shanghai, and I guess elsewhere, to put pressure on us were claims that we either had caned the Chinese, or we'd mistreated the Chinese. This became sort of the lever which was used a lot. Did that hit you?

SOLLENBERGER: That hit me, yes. Towards the end, various pressure was being put on the Chinese tutoring staff from the outside. They wouldn't talk about it. They wouldn't talk much about it. But when it became clear that after the decision that we move out, made clear that we were leaving, that they had to stay and make their peace. The instructors got together accused me of withholding part of their salaries. And probably several other things having to do with the students' trips.

Q: Was this cooked up do you think, by the Chinese authorities?

SOLLENBERGER: It was cooked up. Well, it was cooked up by the Chinese authorities and it was an embarrassment to some of the instructors. They said, we know you haven't done this. You're leaving. We're going to have to stay, and going to have to face it. I had already sent the message back through Clubb, and he certainly supported it, that we ought to be very liberal in severance pay for these people. I was at that time recommending...I've forgotten whether it was six months, a half a year, severance on that service they had rendered, whatever excuse they wanted to use to do this. And the answer came back, no. It was eventually negotiated that they would get, I think, three months. In the meantime they'd taken this to the authorities and I was summoned to the People's Court to explain and fortunately the records that are kept are very detailed in matters of this sort. There was a three man arbitration panel. After laying out the evidence on this for them, and being questioned by them on a number of different things, not on the students' field trips, not on spy charges. This was strictly on the way in which we had dealt with the people we had employed. They finally told the instructors, you better take what you can get, and that settled it, and I had no trouble getting my exit permit.

Q: Which is interesting because in other cases sometimes the demands, I mean from what I've gotten from other people, the demands of the Chinese employees were one, excessive, two, not really of their own volition. The Chinese communist courts sort of backed them up in order to cause real trouble. It sounds like there wasn't an unified...

SOLLENBERGER: This is not the case where we were. We got by fairly peacefully. It was only later, as I was leaving, that a piece came out in the Chinese press that I was leaving and called me the head of spy ring.

Q: When this happened, what was the situation in China overall?

SOLLENBERGER: Well, by this time the People's Republic had been established, there was a government in Beijing. They were in effective control over most of China. In other words, there was really no major resistance.

Q: And Chiang had gone to Formosa or to Taiwan?

SOLLENBERGER: The incident that caused us to leave, maybe you have this from other sources, the incident that caused us to close down and to leave was when they announced that they were going to take over the old Marine barracks, which was part of the mission, located in the legation quarter. The American point of view, and our point of view, was that these facilities were acquired by treaty rights, and we stood by that interpretation. They said there was a difference between the old legation quarter itself and the Marine barracks, and anyway we don't recognize these treaties anymore, and we're going to come in and take it over.

Q: This is where the school was.

SOLLENBERGER: Yes, at this time. Clubb obviously was in touch with Washington back here and how do we deal with that. And we decided we would stay put as long as we could, and see if they would back down, and it became apparent the day before, and they announced that they would take over, that they were not going to back down. So everybody turned to, and vacated the old Marine barracks building. Files had already been burned, and furniture and stuff like that was hauled over to the legation compound and was stacked up out there, and they came in and occupied the premises. But we had apparently made it clear to them that if they did this, any chance of recognition, or contact, would be erased as a result of this act on their part. It was from our point of view an illegal act in opposition to our treaty rights. So from that point on we began a gradual withdrawal and that incident was the sort of thing that brought the Chinese staff into play. They were concerned about what was going to happen to them, and we were concerned about what would happen to them. We'd had enough stories about the Chinese from indirect sources about what was happening to people who had close contacts and worked for Americans.

Q: What was happening, what you were getting?

SOLLENBERGER: First of all, they would put the people through a brain washing process, and sometimes with torture, and sometimes were persuaded. There didn't seem to be a consistent pattern, and to some extent on who was in charge at a particular place at a particular time as to what the pattern would be. We had one person of the staff caught up in this, he'd gone to see about his family and had been picked up and was held for several months and ____, but came back and we got his story. We had a pretty good idea as to what might happen, and what could happen to the Chinese ____.

Q: As all this was going on, the fall of Nanking and others, did the schools continue?

SOLLENBERGER: The school continued right up until the end of the year. The schedule was disrupted somewhat from time to time, partly because some of the instructors were having difficulty in getting in. But we kept some classes going right up to the end of the year.

Q: The end of 1949.

SOLLENBERGER: That's right. Then we closed down, and it was a matter of getting ourselves

organized.

Q: Let's get to how you got organized and out. How did you? Was there any problem?

SOLLENBERGER: We had to get permission to leave the city, and you had to have a physical examinations to get out. There was some concern as to whether they would use that rule to hinder us or not. Our son developed pneumonia at the time that we were supposed to leave, and had gotten permission to leave, so we wanted to extend our stay a little bit until he got over it. There was also the problem of getting your household things out. The State Department had authorized an earlier shipment of effects if we wanted to do that before the communists came in. We took advantage of that to some extent, but we still had things that we wanted to ship out. It was uncertain as to what we would have to go through, whether they would take all the stuff apart and go through it and see what we were taking out, and just how they would deal with it, departed by way of Tianjin.

One humorous incident. I had some traveler's checks and they wanted to know if I had any currency, you can't take these out, you can't take foreign currency out. Phil Manhart was then consul in Tianjin and he was there helping me get out. So I said to Phil, "You keep these and see if you can find a way to get them out to me." They saw me hand them to Phil. I didn't hear anything about these traveler's checks for a year or so, until American Express said, "Your checks have been cashed in Hong Kong." I said, "That's news to me. I've already reported that I couldn't bring them out. I had to leave them there with Phil." A couple of years later I got a letter and a check from David Barrett, an assistant military attaché, with a big apology saying that Manhart had entrusted him with bringing the checks out, but he ran into a desperate situation and had to cash them. In the meantime, so many things had happened that he had sort of forgotten about this and suddenly realized what he had done, here's the check to cover everything.

In Tianjin, the Chinese inspectors only opened one box. I had everything very carefully listed. They opened one box and closed it up before we left, and we got out without any problem although there was uncertainty throughout as to whether there would be problems, blocks put in our way. They could have said, your physical exam shows such and such, we'll have to keep you here until you get over that, there were all kinds of excuses to keep us there. But they seemed to be at that particular point prepared and willing and maybe even happy to see us out.

Q: How did the timing work? Here you were in 1949 declared to be the capital of China. We'd had an embassy in Nanking. Then that fell to the communists. And then I think people moved to Shanghai, and then that went. What had happened at the time you were being expelled, what about our people in southern China?

SOLLENBERGER: I think the decision had been made back here in Washington at that point that we would withdraw, and that meant everybody. It was a matter of scheduling and timing in order to get everybody out of China. I don't know the details and never looked specifically into this in terms of the record as to what the Department's statement to the Chinese was. Judging from the results, it became perfectly clear to us in the field that we'd issued an ultimatum saying, if you take this step the chances of any relationships with you are being destroyed by you, and we'll pull out. At least that was the effect of the thing, and I presume that that's actually what

happened.

Q: What was the feeling that you were getting from the officers who were talking to, Clubb and others, about this policy? I mean, here was a sort of a new nation, and in the normal course of things, we'd say, okay, there's been a civil war and these guys have won, and with a little huff and puff, you'd say, okay, let's recognize it and get on with our business. Was there any feeling at that time, or were you so far removed that you didn't get it, about there were a lot of domestic politics within the United States, or was this just because the Chinese communists were being so beastly.

SOLLENBERGER: We knew that there was a political problem back home with regard to China. The fact that we were being accused of losing China, and not supporting Chiang Kai-shek. The feeling on the spot, as I best recall it, and in talking with Clubb about this, was that we couldn't really ignore...at that time they were still talking about five hundred, six hundred million people, and the government had taken control of that area, and we needed to have a listening base at least in China, and Beijing was the place to have it. We'd been left there with the prospects that this might happen and it had gone sour, we were pulling out. The communists were asking for recognition, but Clubb's position on this, and I think he was right on this, and as it turned out he was right, was that while we might go ahead and decide to recognize them, they might not be willing or able to reciprocate, and that would put us in a difficult position. The British seemed to be more inclined to go ahead and accept the fact that China had been taken over by the communists, and recognized the argument that, because we have to do business, we have to know what's going on. They did extend diplomatic recognition, and as Clubb had sort of predicted, the communists were very slow, with all sorts of obstacles in the way of recognition. I think the French were that way also, and the Dutch.

Q: You know, there was such a to-do later about France recognizing communist China. They didn't recognize until the '60s, I think, under de Gaulle. But the British didn't get anything out of it this the whole time, I mean, it was still ended up the United States versus China. I mean, this was the big game and the rest of them were were kind of there but almost invisible.

SOLLENBERGER: A trend that we began to pick up even before we left were some reports that all was not well between the communists and the Russians.

Q: That was then in the Soviet Union.

SOLLENBERGER: How serious that was, nobody quite knew. But it did become apparent from a geographic point of view, the way in which the Chinese Communists had been sort of short-changed in their takeover of Manchuria, and in the way in which the Russians had been dealing with the Chinese on this. That some of the old feelings of the Chinese, toward the northern barbarians, seemed to be emerging. How serious that would become nobody at that point quite knew.

Q: What about your young Turks, your students? How were they doing?

SOLLENBERGER: Well, presumably they were studying. [Laughter] One of the problems, after

the communist takeover of the city was that they weren't as free to move about, and certainly not to go out of the city. You had to get permission, and they were not likely to get permission to do that. The foreign community was sort of thrown in on itself, and there was a lot of social activity, invitations, etc., to the point where I had to send a letter out to the other official establishments and other countries out there, requesting them to please limit their invitations to our students to weekends. That they had homework to do, and it wasn't that they didn't want to be social, that they would probably rather do that than study. But please understand this, of course the students were not exactly pleased with that.

Q: So you played the role of the heavy hand.

SOLLENBERGER: They got along well. We could still go out and have Chinese meals together.

Q: Well, of course, if you've got to be trapped in a city, and Beijing is not the worst place to be trapped in. While we're still dealing with this period, were there other language schools? I'm thinking of the French, the Germans, the British had something there, were they using sharing of techniques, how did this work?

SOLLENBERGER: The British had their facilities in Hong Kong, so any training they were doing was confined there. We knew that, but there was really no contact. The question came up at one point about some Australian students maybe joining us. They later joined us in Taiwan at the school there. The College of Chinese Studies stayed open as long as they could, and there were some foreigners that were put in the College of Chinese Studies. The French, I don't know.

Q: Well, Howard, this might be a good place to stop. We've got you up to going back to Washington. You went to Washington in 1950?

SOLLENBERGER: There were no people going to China at that point, because our ties there had been cut off. There was a question as to whether we should continue the long term specialized training in China. As that turned out that became really one of the things that I probably fought the hardest for, and maybe had some influence on, in maintaining at least the minimal amount of training on the assumption that sooner or later we were going to have to deal with China, we couldn't ignore what was then considered 500 million people, regardless of who was in charge. And that if we ignored China, then we would be suffering the same sort of gap that they were complaining about because they hadn't given training during the war period, and found a gap of officers at appropriate grade levels. Of course, nobody knew when or how soon, and what the circumstances relations would be to re-establish. It wasn't clear at that time as to what the role of Taiwan was going play in this, although that became clear very shortly.

Q: Had you looked at the army language school at Monterey or any of the military places as far as a job goes?

SOLLENBERGER: No, I hadn't. My experience with the army training program as it was run in Beijing at the same time I was there indicated that's not a place I'd be very happy in.

Q: When you got to the State Department and you decided to sign on...this was about when?

SOLLENBERGER: May of '50.

Q: Because essentially against that on June 25, 1950 interests in the Far East began to heat up again. How did the advent of the Korean war...I mean, you didn't have time to almost find your way to the bathroom before the Korean war started. Did that have any affect on what you were doing?

SOLLENBERGER: Initially, not very much. It took a little time for it to sink in, and, of course, when the Chinese got into the conflict...

Q: We're talking about around November or December of 1950.

SOLLENBERGER: When the Chinese decided to come in, then there was some interest in training, and also utilizing the language officers who had already received training. They stationed them in the key positions around China: Japan, Southeast Asia, certainly in Hong Kong.

Q: At this time I've interviewed people who were language officers in Burma, Indonesia, Thailand, China-watching jobs. Would this pep up the program at all?

SOLLENBERGER: It would, except for the strictures within the Department itself of personnel system. The answer we were constantly getting was, if we don't have positions, assignments, there's no point in continuing training. Particularly when the Department, and particularly the Institute, was short of funds, personnel was short, the personnel system felt it was in a tight, tight situation. The Department generally would have been willing to let training slide for a while. I kept insisting that something had to be done, even though they didn't have immediate slots, there would be plenty of opportunity as things went on to utilize these people even in places like London, and different European capitals where there was some contact and interest in China, and what was going to happen in China.

Q: There's nothing worse in sort of the new boy on the block, and don't know anyone who may have had clout, prestige or anything to build on, and yet you hit at an extremely crucial time. How did you operate?

SOLLENBERGER: In September 1951, I was given the title of Assistant Professor of Chinese Studies, and was given an administrative job, sort of the executive officer of the language school. I think Dr. Smith seemed reasonably impressed with the way in which I had brought the facility, the school in Peking, and I must have some administrative skills to do that. So that was the job that was given to me. Also the job of looking after the overseas language programs which they were trying to the institute, to get people if they couldn't study the languages in Washington before they left, to study in the field, or if they did study here, to provide continuing training when they got to the post. And I was given responsibility for looking after that.

Q: There was, particularly at this point, the prestige of the Russian language officers, Bohlen and Kennan, and others. Did you try to use that as a model for saying this is what we have for

China...

SOLLENBERGER: We looked at a variety of different approaches for China. Eventually on the Chinese side we looked at Hong Kong as a possible place to train, there were facilities there, and some very successful models. The British were there training in Hong Kong. We looked at Singapore as a possibility, some place where the students might have a chance to utilize the language outside the classroom. First of all, the few students that were given to us, aside from the universities, get university training here...

Q: You were mentioning Yale had a good course.

SOLLENBERGER: Cornell had a training program also, and actually the person who had written the Army ASTP [Army Specialized Training Program] text on Chinese was at Cornell, so that was an option also.

Q: Was there any problem about using university training for Foreign Service Chinese studies...I've heard at other times and other languages the university programs were designed to train scholars to do research, and were not really very practical for Foreign Service. Was this a problem?

SOLLENBERGER: This was definitely a problem, and that's why we chose the Yale which is where the Air Force program had been set up which was based on the Army system, and Cornell. As I recall also we looked at some of the California schools, Berkeley principally as a possible place. I was interested particularly not only in giving language, but in giving a few officers a good solid background in area studies, the cultural, historical, economic, political dimensions of the Chinese culture which historically had been dynamic, and from my point of view I thought in the future was going to be and that we should have people who fully understood this as well as people who could speak the language.

Q: Was it a hard sell? I mean you were talking about the language, but also about what we would call area training. Again, I find the Department of State seems to be an historical organization.

SOLLENBERGER: It was difficult to sell that. We had a window of opportunity to get that started in the Department of State when the National Defense Education Act was established. Of course, that was tied to Sputnik, it came a little bit later.

Q: That was around '56, '57.

SOLLENBERGER: That's right, and there an interagency committee was set up to focus on different parts of the National Defense Education Act. Title IV was the one that we were the most interested in, or I was, because this was the part that dealt with language and area studies. And the effort to beef this up in universities, which we were all for, but also to see within the government what resources the country had, there was a survey that was required of all of the agencies of the government. They were supposed to identify the language skills and the area skills, background, of people who may within the various government agencies, particularly

those who had to do with foreign affairs. Of course, they had no standards for doing this. What sort of a standard would they use. If you used the university standards of A-B grade for second year, or third year, or fourth year, that didn't tell you what they could really do with the language. They certainly had nothing that was useful so far as identifying area expertise. That task fell to the Foreign Service Institute, and this is one of the things that was handed to me by Dr. Smith, who said, see what you can work out.

Q: This had to be the latter part of the '50s.

SOLLENBERGER: That came along a little bit later.

Q: Let's talk here about the language thing. Was there much support from what passed as the China desk, as far as language training?

SOLLENBERGER: Well, there was support, but at that time there was some strain, I think, between the operating bureaus who were constantly pressing Personnel for staff. And the question of releasing people, personnel would go to the bureaus and say, fine training, who are you going to release for training, because that's going to leave one less hand that you have on the job here, for assignment elsewhere. So there was tension there as well as between the Institute and the personnel system. But there was support because Clubb was there and he understood the necessity for this. Tony Freeman who had helped set up the program was around, and he supported it. And the students that we had trained in Beijing, some of them were being assigned to jobs on the desk and in the bureau at that particular time. So there was support, but there was no consistent pressure to continue training.

Q: How did you see Henry Lee Smith operating within the the Departmental environment?

SOLLENBERGER: He was an academic. He was frustrated. I think one of the reasons why he turned some of the administrative operations over to me was that he wanted to be free to do some of the research that he was interested in doing on language and culture. And they were working at that time, the professional linguists, on an analysis of language that they thought was a step up from the systems that they'd used before. In a way the Institute was leading the way in linguistic analysis at that particular time.

Not only was Dr. Henry Lee Smith there, but George Traeger, who is a well known linguist was also on the staff, and they brought in some anthropologists who were interested in the linguistic area studies side. Edward T. Hall, who later became famous for the best seller book that he wrote on silent language. Gerard, an anthropologist, Bert Whistle, the kinesologist who was interested in the way in which body language was used. This all was a part of an effort on the part of the Institute to find new ways, better ways of teaching. But also to keep in with the academic community.

Q: What was the state, as you sampled it at this early '50s, of the field of linguistics? Now it's a big business, but what was it like then?

SOLLENBERGER: It was rather small. It was rather difficult to find qualified linguists. They

hadn't been trained during the war. There were people who had learned the languages, but not done professional training in linguistics. The fact that Henry Lee Smith and George Traeger being at the Institute was an attractive thing. And their approach to recruitment I had to admire, that was that they were trying to hire linguists on the basis of coming for just a limited period of time to the Institute, but with the objective of returning to the academic community for two reasons. One, to build back into the academic community a more practical approach to their language instruction programs. And the other one was, that the government didn't offer that much future for linguists in terms of promotions in government employment, and that linguists would probably generally become frustrated with the bureaucratic problems. I remember Dr. Smith talking to me at one point, he said, your job here in terms of administration is to make it possible for professional people to do their work with limited interference from the bureaucratic system. So anyway you can relieve them of the pressures of the bureaucracy would be helpful. That's good advice up to a certain point, but anybody who works in the government sooner or later has to realize that the matter of getting the resources to do what you want to do, has to be taken into consideration. Otherwise, you can't do your job.

Q: What were you finding about your results? You were seeing the product of the American school system - elementary, high school, college, of people coming into the Foreign Service. And with the exception of those who happened to have lived overseas, and maybe acquired it with their parents or something, what was the language capability among the new Foreign Service officers?

SOLLENBERGER: From the point of view of practical use as required in foreign affairs business, it was hopeless, very poor. The recruitment of people from the army who had been through the army language training program, there were a few of those that were coming into the Foreign Service. There were a few from missionary background who had grown up overseas who came in with the language. But by and large the recruitment for the Foreign Service at that particular point did not place any premium on knowing a language, so they were not getting the people who were qualified. And the argument at that time was that if we recruited for language skills, we're going to get people who are basically not very well suited for the Foreign Service because the people that are specializing, majoring in foreign languages, are people that are focused on that one academic thing, and we need broader people, we need to get people who have a broad background in the Foreign Service. And it just wasn't bringing in people who had the skills.

Q: I took the Foreign Service exam in '53 which was pretty much the recruiting thing then. You took the exam, and you took the language exam in one of five different languages, but you didn't have to pass it. That was just something they'd say well, you've got to get yourself qualified once you're in. You couldn't get promoted. But basically I could see what they were after.

SOLLENBERGER: Even in getting promoted, it wasn't an important factor at that particular time. What the Department wanted, I think, by giving that exam was to try to find a few people who had the language and could be assigned to the then important posts where it would be useful. Training became the subject of a study of the Department's personnel system towards a stronger Foreign Service...

Q: You're showing me a booklet, it was published when?

SOLLENBERGER: This was published in May of '54. It was the so-called Wriston Report. This is the report really that began to turn things around for the Institute. But part of the problem, as it developed that required something to be done on this, came a little before that. This was the beginning of the problem of McCarthy.

Q: We're talking about the Senator.

SOLLENBERGER: Senator Joseph McCarthy and his looking for card-carrying communists in the Department of State. And, of course, this had an effect on the Chinese program also because people were increasingly reluctant - officers - to get into a field if they were going to become targets of an investigation. For the Institute this was probably the most trying period in its history. It came very close, I would say, to putting the Institute out of business. That's because when they started investigating the Department of State, the first team that they sent in was sent to the Foreign Service Institute. I think they suspected they would find the long-hairs there and they seemed particularly suspicious of the anthropologists, people dealing with the behavior of foreign peoples. But it reached the point in the Foreign Service Institute...I can't really remember whether there were 9 or 13 investigators, and the Institute wasn't that large at that point, that took up residence and were at the Institute for the better part of three months.

Q: Good God!

SOLLENBERGER: Just an illustration if I can give this, I think it would give you bit of the atmosphere that we went through at that time. I got a long distance call in my office, a call that my secretary should not have put through to me, but she did, so I answered it. I later saw the person, he said, "What was wrong? You didn't sound very communicative during the call that I made to you." I said, "Here's the situation." There were three investigators in my office at that time. One of them was going through the files in the bathroom where I had the Chinese material that had been sent back from Beijing, much of it in Chinese. And, of course, he was very curious about what these things were. You're welcome to have somebody translate them for you if you want them. And I went there and went through them, identified what the different files were, etc. The other person was going through the books in the bookcase that I had, and these were books on China, and linguistics, language training, etc. And he was picking up the books by the covers and shaking them to see if there was anything hidden in the pages of the book. And the third one was sitting at my desk here. While I was trying to take care of these three people, he was also interrogating me on my experience in China, and particularly on the contacts that I had had with the communists back in 1938-'39-'40, and about Mr. Clubb. That was the situation.

Q: How many investigators were there at one time?

SOLLENBERGER: Nine or thirteen. They had an office, they were set up there, they were interrogating all the staff.

Q: To whom were they reporting? This was not the House... the Congress...

SOLLENBERGER: They sent someone to the Department who...

Q: This was part of Truman's Loyalty Board. Scott McLeod came in a little later. Scott McLeod was charged with consular and security affairs, so it may have been that.

SOLLENBERGER: They were also very suspicious of the instructors who were foreigners, not even American citizens many of them. At one point they started to call the tutors over to the Department of State for interrogation. And it was never clear as to whether they were using lie detector tests on them, or whether they were simply recording, but they were at least recording the interviews that they had. They started off at the beginning of the alphabet, and Burmese came up pretty early in that. When the Burmese instructor was called over, who was a well known Burmese in his own country, and his wife worked at the Burmese embassy in Washington, a quiet but very independent person. When they started to interrogate him and ask him, according to his report back to us, how much he had paid Dr. Smith, or me, for the job that he had there. A number of questions of that sort that didn't seem appropriate at all. He got up and walked out, and they didn't know what to do about that. They weren't expecting this. He came back and of course reported to us on what had taken place, and said that if this is continuing, I'm quitting. Well, this was a crisis for us because there were other instructors that were lined up to go over. We were able, through Dr. Smith, to get in touch with Walter Bedell Smith...

Q: Rooney was one of the institutional memories of the Foreign Service. People having to testify before him, he was always noted for cutting them out of representational allowance, which he called the Whiskey Fund. It was maybe grandstanding, but there was a whole school of people who were trained how to stroke Mr. Rooney. How did you get along with him? Were you appointed a stroker, I mean a stroker trainer?

SOLLENBERGER: I wasn't appointed as a stroker but I learned fairly early on, being present when Harold Hoskins was testifying, that one of the things that Rooney wanted to do was to make a speech. This was not made for me, it was made for his constituents, and I should not respond to it. So he'd make a speech, we would let it stand, not try to argue with him. Once you started arguing with him, then he would lead you on into a ridiculous situation that would be difficult to get out of. Also, at the time, I got the administration budget office to have personnel respond to the utilization question which came up quite frequently. And it came up with regard to Chinese.

Q: Oh, yes. A very famous case.

SOLLENBERGER: Where the director of personnel was talking about the Chinese language officer in London, I believe.

Q: It was London. Could you give the background to that?

SOLLENBERGER: Well, the background to that was that there was a language officer in London because this was one of the possible places of informal contact because of the British having recognized China, and we thought we ought to have someone in London who had some background in Chinese. But, of course, the response that was given by the Office of Personnel

was, when he was asked about opportunities to utilize his Chinese, I guess he couldn't expose our real interests. He said, I guess there are Chinese restaurants and places like that that he could use it. And Rooney had a hay day with that.

I very nearly got caught up in a problem of that sort when Nixon went to China.

Q: This was 1972.

SOLLENBERGER: 1972, yes. I was asked by Rooney whether we had provided any training for Richard Nixon before he went to China. Of course, we hadn't, and I tried to explain about that we had trained people who went with him, and that these people were utilized, and it was fortunate that we had some people who knew Chinese who accompany the President at that particular point. Then he got off of that, and said, "Did you watch that program that showed the President sitting at the table with Zhou En-lai eating? Did you train the President to use chopsticks?" He was trying to provoke something going along that way. But I guess I squirmed out of that one all right. I didn't make the headlines anyhow.

Q: Did you find as the Wriston report was implemented, a change in attitude towards training? I'm talking about the State Department personnel, Foreign Service. Not just at the top, but within the ranks.

We almost did during the Kennedy administration. We would do Mongolia, if the Soviets would do something else.

SOLLENBERGER: There were efforts on that sort of thing. But the question was, why do we need to waste the time of an officer, and he wastes his time learning Mongolian when the chances of utilizing it are very slim. My approach on that, both with bureaus and with Personnel, was let's take somebody with Russian background and language and let's add Mongolian to that so that he'll have plenty of posts to use it in in Russia. But he can be the person who focuses on Mongolia. Let's take someone from Japan and give him Mongolian. Let's take someone from China and give him Mongolian. So we actually got several people who eventually were utilized, but it took a long time and I was afraid...

Q: Did you have a problem? Here we are, particularly during this period, with a policy of strong support, mainly for domestic reasons, of Israel, at the same time we're dealing with a big Arab world which detested this policy. And you would invite lecturers who wanted Foreign Service officers both to understand the policy, but also to understand the Arab world. I can see this would be so sensitive that it would be almost impossible to deal with.

SOLLENBERGER: Well, it was sensitive but by putting it into a broader perspective, we were able to diffuse most of the problems, not all of them. For example, on China one of the things that disturbed me greatly, almost to the point of resigning from the Foreign Service, was that the Department of State wanted the Institute to clear all of its speakers that it invited before the invitations were extended. I'll use a name here. When it came to John Fairbanks, the preeminent China scholar, we were told no, you can't hire him because he's on McCarthy's list. That was the sort of thing that I had difficulty dealing with on a personal basis, having high respect for

Fairbanks and knowing that he was not what McCarthy had intimidated. These were the sort of things that we had to go through.

CHARLES T. CROSS
Childhood
Beijing (1922-1940)

Ambassador Charles T. Cross was born in China in 1922. He attended Carleton College and Yale University and served as a lieutenant overseas in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1942-1946. His assignments abroad included Taipei, Jakarta, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Alexandria, Nicosia, London and Danang, with an ambassadorship to Singapore. Ambassador Cross was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: Let us start at the beginning. Where and when were you born?

CROSS: I was born in Peking, now called Beijing by foreigners also, which is the name that the Chinese used all along. I was born in 1922. I stayed in China - except for a couple of years spent in the U.S. - until I was 18. I spent those two years in Auburndale (Massachusetts) and Oberlin, (Ohio) - a year in each place. Much of the material in this oral history can also be found in my book, Born a Foreigner: a Memoir of the American Presence in Asia - Rowman and Littlefield 1999/2000.

Q: Tell us a little about your parents and life in Beijing in your teens.

CROSS: My parents were missionaries, essentially in the education field. My mother went to China first in 1915; she was a music teacher and a professional kindergarten teacher in Beijing. She organized some of the first kindergarten teacher training schools in China. She also established a number of kindergartens in the city.

My father came to China in 1917. His first job, after a couple of years of language training, was at Peking National University (Beida) - then and now China's foremost university. It was an interesting time for him to be there because it was a time of seething intellectual activity in China. Mao Zedong was at the University; Chen Duxiu, one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party, led some of the discussions that had been organized by my father. So he was very much part of the surging intellectual activity which was part of the May 4th Movement. That movement was one of the great forces in Chinese intellectual history. A lot of things happened at about the same time. For example, the Chinese characters, which were used in ordinary talk, were substituted for traditional, classical-style characters. That made it possible for many, many more Chinese to be literate. The communists and the nationalists, as well as non-political forces, took advantage of this change since they could then reach much wider audiences.

My father later became the General Secretary of the American Board Mission in North China. That board was part of the Congregational ministry. Both of my parents were Congregationalists.

In 1931, we returned to the States for a couple of years, as I mentioned. We returned to China in 1933; we took up residence in what is now a suburb of Beijing - about 14 miles outside the city walls. In that suburb was an American boarding school which I attended.

I attended that boarding school for seven years. During that time, the most important event in my life was the Japanese invasion of North China in 1937, starting on July 7. There was a considerable amount of fighting in our neighborhood; there were sizeable massacres first perpetrated by the Chinese and then by the Japanese. So my last three years in high school were under Japanese rule although we had extra-territorial privileges and therefore did not suffer the hardships that were rained on the Chinese.

Q: I have been reading an interview of John Stewart Service, who was also an off-spring of missionary parents. He said that his parents kept him away from Chinese kids which resulted in his Chinese not being very good. What was your experience?

CROSS: I don't think my parents kept me away from Chinese playmates. When I lived in Beijing, I had as many Chinese playmates as American. It is true that our Chinese language skills were not advanced sufficiently. We learned Chinese in school, but we didn't go very far because it was just another academic subject. We also had to learn French and Latin, for example. So I never progressed very far in the written aspects of the language. My accent in conversations has a Beijing flavor and that is an asset.

Q: Did you, in high school, manage to feel the ferment that was going on - the Kuomintang, which was then relatively new and rather progressive. Then of course came the Japanese.

CROSS: The Kuomintang had just barely finished the formal unification of China in 1937. In 1931, the Japanese took all of Manchuria. From there, they began to infiltrate south of the Great Wall into the Beijing area. Starting in 1933 and for the next couple of years, they marched inexorably south. The Kuomintang was the national resistance. In December 1936, Chiang Kai-shek was kidnaped by General Jang Xueliang, who had been a young marshal in Manchuria where he had been defeated by the Japanese. He stayed in North-West China where he kidnaped Chiang Kai-shek. The latter had come to attack the communists, who at the end of the Long March had reached Yanan. Chiang's release was contingent on his declaration of nationalist solidarity.

I remember that on Christmas night - or Eve - Chiang was released. Immediately, in the area where our home was, the Chinese students from near by schools paraded past our house and the Japanese sentries were stationed on the city walls. They shouted slogans such as "defeat the Japanese" or "long live the Kuomintang," sung to the tune of *Frère Jacques*.

My father noted at the time that this demonstration and those throughout China would remind the Japanese that China was united, which should have been a warning to them. The Japanese read it as a threat and decided to complete the conquest of China, which they started in July 1937.

As high school students, we visited the battlefields and had some contacts with Chinese students. A classmate of mine and I took some money, wrapped in some old clothes, and traveled from

Beijing all the way out to Fenzhou in Shanxi province - that is the area from which Art Hummel, later an ambassador to China, came. Carrying that money was illegal under Japanese rule. The train tracks had been blown at a couple of spots, which made the trip quite exciting.

Q: Did your schoolmates support the Chinese rather than the Japanese?

CROSS: Oh, yes. We were fanatically anti-Japanese. I was a strong anti-Japan proponent. That is not surprising; they were brutal.

Q: Did the Japanese occupy Beijing while you were there?

CROSS: They did indeed in 1937. I graduated from high school in 1940, so that I spent three years watching the Japanese from a close vantage point. The foreigners were not mistreated, but our lives were certainly restricted.

Q: Do you have any impressions of how the Japanese were acting?

CROSS: I think they were somewhat less belligerent in Beijing than there were in the rest of China. I remember one time, in the winter, seeing a burning village. During the train trip I mentioned earlier, we noticed the communist forces being very active. In fact, the Kuomintang forces were defeated by the Japanese and had to retreat. That left a vacuum which was rapidly filled by the communists.

Q: Did your fellow students have any views about the communist resistance?

CROSS: The communist resistance was all there was opposing the Japanese. So a lot of the foreigners had contacts with them. They were all very tightly organized. Inside Beijing, they had many agents. But if you went to some of the rural areas which had mission stations - some that were less than fifty miles from Beijing - you could meet the communists quite openly. In fact, Chinese students were heading towards "Free China" - the nationalist area where Chongqing is located. They would head that way by foot transiting areas run by the communists, who would help them reach "Free China."

Q: Did any of your Chinese friends make this journey?

CROSS: Several of them did. They went to Chongqing. I don't remember any of them joining the communists, but obviously many Chinese did, including some from Yanjing University about whom I learned later.

Q: How did your parents do their work under Japanese occupation?

CROSS: They had certain restrictions on their work. Americans had the right to run certain schools; they were not interfered with by the Japanese themselves, but some of their puppets tried to place some limits on activities. But the schools and the missionaries were handled quite delicately, until Pearl Harbor. My father's travels in China were somewhat curtailed. [Note: See [Born a Foreigner](#) for more on the Japanese in China]

JAMES M. WILSON JR.
Childhood
Shanghai (1925-1935)

James M. Wilson, Jr. was born in China to American parents in 1918. He received a BA from Swarthmore College in 1939, graduated from the Geneva School of International Studies in 1939, the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1940, and Harvard Law School in 1948. He also served as a lieutenant colonel overseas in the US Army from 1941-44. Mr. Wilson has served abroad in Paris, Madrid, Bangkok and Manila. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: Today is the 31st of March, 1999. This is an interview with James M. Wilson, Jr. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. Do they call you Jim?

WILSON: Yes indeed.

Q: Jim could you tell me something about when and where you were born and something about your family?

WILSON: I'm a China brat. I was born there of American missionary parents and grew up there.

Q: Where were you born and when?

WILSON: I was born in a mountain resort outside of Hangchow in 1918.

Q: What type of missionary were your parents?

WILSON: My father was an architect/engineer who went out to China in 1911 to build various things for the American mission boards. He built hospitals, schools, houses, and churches all over China. As a matter of fact, the book on the coffee table right in front of you that I just got from the Old China Press has a piece in it on my father.

Q: It sounds like they were moving you all around quite a bit?

WILSON: We lived first in Hangchow, where my father also taught engineering and math at Hangchow College. Then we moved to Shanghai.

Q: How old were you then?

WILSON: Let's see, we were in Shanghai from 1925 to mid-1926 and then came back to the States while there was some political unpleasantness in China.

Q: In '26, what was this? Was this the Kuomintang?

WILSON: Yes, it was the Kuomintang forces, coming up from Canton and taking over - rather turbulent years.

Q: It is often a period forgotten I think when people look at China. The Kuomintang was also revolutionary.

WILSON: Very much so. This was in the days before the great split between Mao and Chiang Kai-shek.

Q: Do you recall those first years? How did you live?

WILSON: We lived very well on a college campus - in many respects, as you might on a college campus anywhere else around the world. When we moved to Shanghai, my father went into partnership with a fellow American architect and they planned to take over a lot of the construction that had previously been done by his engineering office in Hangchow.

Q: What was your mother's background and your father's, too?

WILSON: He was a graduate engineer from the University of Kentucky and then got a masters in architecture. She was a Phi Beta Kappa from Wellesley, also from Kentucky. During the time that Father was building things, she was usually teaching - first in Hangchow and later on at St. John's University there in Shanghai.

Q: What was she teaching?

WILSON: English literature.

Q: Do you recall sort of life at home? Did you have any brothers or sisters?

WILSON: Yes, I had three sisters; two older and one much younger. We had quite a number of friends and acquaintances. Many of my pals ended up in the Foreign Service later on.

Q: When you left Shanghai in '26, you had already gone to school for a year or two hadn't you?

WILSON: Oh, yes, both in Hangchow and in Shanghai - at American schools which were in both places in those days.

Q: How long were you back in the United States?

WILSON: Almost four years.

Q: Where did you go to school? Where did you live?

WILSON: In Kentucky, that's where the family is from.

Q: Did you find that Kentucky was quite a change from China?

WILSON: It's hard to try to quantify that or qualify that either way. I was rather young, something like eight years old when we came back and 11 when we departed.

Q: You went back to China?

WILSON: Yes.

Q: This would have been 1930?

WILSON: 1930, yes that is right.

Q: Where did you go?

WILSON: Back to Shanghai. My father had gone back to China a couple of times during the period when the family was in Kentucky. Interestingly enough, one of his assignments was with Curtis Wright Aviation, where he had a major hand in building what is now the Hangzhou Airport in Shanghai. When we went back in 1930, the Episcopal Mission Board had asked him to build a major new replacement for St. Luke's Hospital in Shanghai, along the lines of St. Luke's Hospital in Tokyo. That he tried to do manfully for quite a number of years; but as you know, there were many trials and tribulations in Shanghai in the 1930s, including Japanese occupations in 1932 and 1937. This caused all sorts of difficulties.

Q: You were about high school age when you got there in 1930.

WILSON: Yes. I went to SAS, the Shanghai American School.

Q: What was the American School in Shanghai like?

WILSON: It was very much (and deliberately so) like a private school here. SAS was conceived as a preparatory school for American children going back to college in the States. It has now come back to life, enrolling many more nationalities than just the children of Americans, as it did in my day.

Q: Were there any Chinese going there?

WILSON: Very few. They were almost all Chinese-American.

Q: Did you feel as though you were living a somewhat separate existence in those days?

WILSON: Of course. This was in the days when so-called extra-territoriality was flourishing. The "white man's burden" mentality was still very evident.

Q: What about the presence of the Japanese when they came in, how did that catch you?

WILSON: As far as family was concerned, it didn't bother our living arrangements especially; but in terms of my father's duties it was catastrophic, because the area which had been chosen for his hospital was right in the line of fire for the Japanese troops. It was finally decided to move the entire operation out of the Japanese zone of occupation and start from scratch.

Q: When did you leave Shanghai?

WILSON: In 1935 to come back to college. We came back via the Trans-Siberia Railroad and Europe.

Q: At the American School, what were your favorite subjects or most interesting subjects?

WILSON: I guess English and history.

Q: Was there much Chinese history or was it more the European-oriented history?

WILSON: Mostly European, but I took a couple of courses in Chinese history. They also had courses in Chinese language which, I regret to state, I did not take.

Q: It wasn't really pushed at that time, was it?

WILSON: Not really. The name of the game in those days was to teach the Chinese how to speak English.

Q: What were the various communities called, cantons?

WILSON: Settlements.

Q: Did you get involved with the French or the British?

WILSON: Not really. There were two different governments in our day in Shanghai, in the settlements that is. There was an international settlement which was made up of what had been the British, American and German concessions, and then there was the French settlement or concession. The French ran theirs, and an international municipal council ran the international settlement. In 1932, when the Japanese came in, however, they took over a large part of what had been the old American settlement. It was called Hongkew. The Japanese relinquished it only very, very slowly. When they came back in 1937 they made that area their headquarters. Surrounding all of this, of course, was the Chinese city, which was under Chinese jurisdiction. It was a strange and wonderful complex in those days.

Q: Can one go out and go up the Yangtze or do things like that?

WILSON: Oh, yes, in the days when there was not a war going on.

Q: You left in what year?

WILSON: 1935.

JOHN STUART SERVICE

Childhood

Shanghai (1925-1933)

Clerk

Yannanfu, Shanghai (1933-1941)

Language Officer

Chungking (1941-1942)

Visit to China (1971)

Visit to China (1973)

John Stuart Service was born in China of American parents. He attended school in China and graduated from Oberlin College. He was appointed as a clerk in Yunnanfu in 1933. He was the acting U.S. political advisor to the Supreme Commander, Allied Forces in 1945. In addition to posts in China, Mr. Service served in New Zealand, India and the United Kingdom. Mr. Service was interviewed in 1977 by Rosemary Levenson, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.

Background of the YMCA in China: The Principle of Local Chinese Control

SERVICE: I've got a list here, of things that was put out at one time--Oh, here it is. When my father went to China the YMCA here at Berkeley, of which he had been president in his senior year, used to put on an annual Roy Service campaign to help support his work in China. (He was always known as Roy in his family and at Berkeley. But my mother didn't like Roy and called him Bob. So all of his China friends called him Bob, and his early friends called him Roy.)

Anyway, this has got a lot of information about him.

Q: This is very interesting. [reading] "The University of California's furthest extension work, giving instruction in Bible Study, Sanitation, Engineering, Social Hygiene, and Physical Training--a practical religion."

SERVICE: Well, that's the old YMCA--it was a practical religion, a contrast to the old-line churches and missions in China. The Y was something quite new and very attractive to a lot of Chinese. The Chinese were not exactly flocking to the gospel, but there were a lot of things about the YMCA that did attract young Chinese students particularly.

At this time the government was just starting the new schools, the new universities. They had just stopped, or were just about to stop, the old Confucian examinations. The new universities were set up in the cities. In the old days if you were studying for your exams you could do it at home or in your own village or town. But now the students going to the universities had to come to the cities. So you had a new group of university students, middle school students, growing up in these new, modern schools. The YMCA catered especially to them. It ran schools. It did a great deal of work in popularizing science, basic science, which the Chinese were tremendously interested in. The solar system, and how a steam engine works, all sorts of things. The YMCA used to set up exhibits. They had basic science museums and ran lectures. They had specialists for this.

They started the idea of public health in China, swat fly campaigns, things like that. Then they had a lot of education, free education schools, night schools, for children, for all ages. Teaching English--a lot of people wanted to learn English. The businesses needed people who spoke English, the post office, customs, these sorts of services.

In education, physical fitness was just becoming popular. The Chinese realized that in order to compete with the West they had to be strong. I mean not only as a nation, but also strong in their own personal physiques. That's the basis of an army after all. So, the whole idea of athletics was just starting in, physical fitness and so on, gymnasiums, even ping pong.

Q: [chuckle] Foreshadowing ping pong diplomacy.

SERVICE: Yes. Yes. But we don't need to do a history of the Y in this memoir!

Q: No, but in context I imagine that for your father to have been sent out to Sichuan, which was way, way out, there must have been a pretty good YMCA base in the Treaty Ports.

SERVICE: Not really. It was all pretty new, because the Y had really only started in China in 1896. So, he was there less than ten years after it first started. They were still quite small even in the cities. They started first in Tientsin, I think. The Y was relatively small.

The Y was unique among Christian mission organizations in China because it always insisted from the very beginning that it had to have local Chinese support and control. The international Y loaned or provided the services of some foreigners, Americans or a few others, but mostly Americans. It sometimes loaned or had donations of money for buildings and so on. But, in each city the first step was to find a group of Chinese Christians who were willing to sponsor it and lead it, act as directors. So the foreigners were always working for Chinese and the Y depended on local support. You had to get memberships and so on, and it had to be locally self-supporting.

Q: Do you know what sort of invitation was arranged? How did they know the Y would be welcome in Chengdu?

SERVICE: The Friends' Mission [Quaker] had someone there named Hodgkin, an Englishman. I forget his initials but he became quite well known later on and eventually came back to England

and headed up the English Friends missionary organization. But, Dr. Hodgkin was in Chengdu and he knew about the Y.

Not all missions were keen about the Y. Some missions regarded the Y as being a rival, as not being truly religious because they didn't put the emphasis on proselytizing. Some missionaries felt that their only job was to save souls for Christ, and therefore the thing to do was to preach.

But Hodgkin had been working in Chengdu for the English Friends, and apparently he thought the Y would be a good idea because there was a big Chinese university, a government university, just being established in Chengdu. The missions were also talking about combining their various activities into a West China Union University. Chengdu was becoming an educational, student center. I think Hodgkin was the one that first encouraged the Y, or got in touch with the Y to see if they wouldn't consider starting a YMCA in Chengdu. So, there was a friendly welcome in that sense. Hodgkin was still there when my father arrived and helped him. He had mission contacts, but he also had some student contacts and Chinese contacts, so that he was able to help my father.

A Six Month Journey from Shanghai to Chengdu, 1905-1906

Q: In 1905, six years before the fall of the Ch'ing dynasty, did your father comment at all on the sort of turmoil that was going on in various parts of China? How was it in Sichuan?

SERVICE: My parents didn't get to Sichuan till 1906, because it was a long trip up the Yangtze in those days. I don't know whether Caroline mentioned it or not, but they lost their baby going through the [Yangtze] Gorges, twenty-one days by houseboat with no doctor.

Q: No.

SERVICE: Well, traveling was a long, slow business. They got into Shanghai actually while there were riots going on, what were called the Mixed Court riots. So, the first night my father was in China, actually was spent on guard duty, because they were staying in a house that was outside the concession. They didn't know what might happen. Actually, nothing did happen. But, there was a lot of anti-foreign, anti-American feeling.

They had to equip themselves, and then they went up the river by stages. They went by one steamer to Hangzhou, and then another steamer to Ichang. Then, there was no way to go except by Chinese junk, houseboat. Speaking no Chinese, they could not travel by themselves. They found a man who worked for the Bible Society. I think he was taking supplies to the Bible Society, and they traveled with him. Mr. Davey, I think his name was.

They had a small daughter, Virginia, who was born in 1905 before they left for China. She was one of the first children born in Alta Bates hospital. [Berkeley, California] Her picture used to be in the lobby of Alta Bates as one of the first babies born there.

Anyway, the baby got sick--with dysentery, I suppose--and died, I think, five or six days before they got to Chungking.

Then, my father came down with malaria, which he had very badly and continued to have recurrent attacks of. So, they had to stay in Chungking for a long time.

The final stage of the trip was a ten day overland journey by sedan chair. It's about 250 miles from Chungking to Chengdu. They left San Francisco in November, 1905. It was May, 1906, before they finally got to Chengdu.

But, this is a diversion from your question--which was what? Do you remember?

Q: Yes. [laughter] We're--what--five years before the fall of the Ch'ing dynasty?

SERVICE: Oh, yes. I think that things were fairly peaceful under the dynasty as far as Sichuan was concerned. My parents went away every summer to various places, to Omei Mountain. One year they made a trip to Tatsienlu, on the Tibet border. I don't think there was much internal disturbance. There were problems of banditry--but that was always there apparently--and poverty.

Perhaps in 1910, but certainly in 1911, there was a great uproar in Sichuan about railways. There was talk of building a railway from the east into Sichuan province. The Sichuan gentry were extremely desirous, extremely anxious, that this not be given over to foreigners to build. So they raised some money to build a railway themselves.

In 1911, Sheng Hsuan-Huai signed an agreement for foreigners to build the railway. This caused a tremendous uproar, riots and so on, locally. This actually preceded the outbreak in Hangzhou and Wuchang on October 10. Some weeks earlier in Chengdu there were riots, and all the foreigners were called into a large compound that was owned by the Canadian Methodist mission. We all lived for some weeks in the new hospital that was just finished.

Then, finally things got so out of hand that there was fighting between various groups. The foreign consuls decided to evacuate everyone. [1911] They all came down river, and eventually my parents ended up in Shanghai. My father was soon sent to Nanking. So he was in Nanking in 1912 for a few months when Sun Yat-Sen was setting up the Republic.

The Y was very much in the center of things because many of the people who were active in the YMCA became leaders in the new government, C.T. Wang and people like that. A lot of the people who were American-trained or active in the YMCA were prominent in the early days of the government. After Yuan Shih-Kai took over, some of them had to take a back seat.

The Far West of China: A Pioneer Life

SERVICE: When my father went to Chengdu, where there had been no Y at all, he had to really start from scratch. At the same time he had to learn Chinese, which he did at home.

He got a teacher who came in every day in the morning. He sat down at a table and read Confucius, the classics, or whatever the textbooks were. The teacher, of course, knew no English and one sort of fumbled or stumbled along.

My father learned to speak extremely well. He was absolutely superb in his spoken Chinese.

Almost at once he was forced to begin speaking. He had to start dealing with workmen remodeling his house, trying to get acquainted with students, trying to widen his circle of acquaintances, trying to call on gentry and leaders in the community because he had to have their support. He had to get people of substance to act as directors and so on. So eventually he became a marvelous speaker of Chinese--local Sichuanese dialect, pure and perfect Sichuanese.

The Chinese used to love to hear him because he was so good and could joke and all the rest of it. My father actually never learned to read and write very well, which puzzles me a little bit because I don't know how he conducted Bible classes. I don't think that he could read enough to read the Bible. How he got along--some way or another. Maybe he had someone else read the texts.

But my mother didn't become very fluent. She could speak to get along socially and with the cook. She had to teach the servants everything they knew. She started with raw country boys from the village, shall we say, who had never seen a foreigner, most of them. She taught them how to cook and make bread. My father loved baking powder biscuits and this and that. So, obviously she could manage. But she never learned to read and write, never really spoke very well.

Q: Did you eat the nearest approximation to Western food that the servants could manage, or did you ever eat Chinese food?

SERVICE: [chuckle] We lived Western. Once a week we had Chinese food. It was a big event. Saturday noon we had Chinese food. We all liked it. Later on when I got a little older, every Saturday noon we boys would go over to my father's office at the Y and then go out with him and have Chinese lunch, usually with some of his Chinese colleagues, secretaries in the YMCA. This was always a big day of the week.

We loved Chinese food, but the rest of the time we ate foreign. My mother taught each cook. We had several cooks. Finally we got this one man--Liu P'ei-Yun, who stayed with my parents then for many years--who became a very good cook.

Everything had to be done. It was like living in a pioneer settlement in a way. The local salt was coarse and very black, gray, so that we used to purify the salt. The sugar was coarse and brown. I don't know how we did it, but we actually refined the sugar. I don't know how my mother ever got it crystallized. The salt I think we just beat up with a mortar.

We bought Chinese flour, but we made our own laundry soap from lye and ash and fats. We bought, or saved pork fat.

Of course, there were no electric lights. We used kerosene lamps. There was no running water. There were no telephones. If you went out, you usually went by sedan chair which meant that we kept our own chair carriers.

We even kept our own cow for many years because there was no way of getting milk which was dependable. Apparently, we even took the cows to the mountains in the summer sometimes.

But, you lived a very self-sufficient kind of life that required a lot of work and supervision. If you wanted to communicate with anyone else you sent a coolie with what we called a chit, a note, around town.

We had our own well. But all water had to be boiled. The well wasn't very deep. The water table was maybe ten or twelve feet down. All sorts of unsanitary things were going on around, of course. There were no sewers or anything like that in town. So all water that was to be drunk had to be boiled. You ate nothing that was raw, uncooked.

The "Y" as Window to the West

SERVICE: It took my father several years of preliminary work before the Y really got going.

First my parents started by having classes at home. Chinese students came to their home for classes in English and, if they could get them interested, Bible studies. Most Chinese students wanted just to learn about the West. The West was a subject of great interest to this new generation, this modernizing generation.

They had a steady series of visitors, callers, people who just wanted to see foreigners, or get acquainted with foreigners. Mother had a group of Chinese ladies who used to come in. But all this required a lot of tea, refreshments, that sort of thing.

But I think my parents felt that it was desirable for them to try to live in a foreign, Western way. Earlier missionaries had tried to merge in a Chinese community, had dressed in Chinese clothes, worn queues and so on. This was partly because of intense anti-foreignism. They didn't want to be conspicuous.

But, by the time that my parents came along, the great attraction of the YMCA was that it represented new things. It represented the West, and there was a great interest in the West. A lot of these people that came to the house would have been hurt if they had just received some Chinese refreshments. They wanted to see Western things. They wanted to learn about the West.

The foreign community did some relief work during the war (World War I), ran bazaars. One very popular thing they did one time was to run a coffee and doughnut shop, or coffee and hot biscuits I think. Tremendously popular. Chinese would come in, and some people came every day while the thing was running, because coffee, foreign refreshments, and cakes were something that was new and strange and exotic and exciting.

I'm not sure that my parents were conscious of this. They may not have thought of it. But, certainly they were exemplars of the West and of Western ideas and Western ways of living. So, I don't think my parents felt any guilt about living in a Western way, because this was what they represented and what the Chinese wanted.

Some Chinese came to them and asked them to have a club which used to meet at the house occasionally. A club of men and women together, young men and young women, who were coping with all the problems of getting rid of Confucian ideas of arranged marriages and so on and who simply wanted to meet with some foreigners, my parents in this case, and learn about how man-woman relations, relations between the sexes, were handled in the West, what Western society was like, learning new ways, getting rid of the Confucian ways.

Q: Was there any opposition that you recall to this amongst the more conservative Chinese families?

SERVICE: I suppose there must have been. I'm sure that these people themselves were subject to criticism from their elders, yes. There was a lot of generational conflict going on all through that period certainly.

These people, of course, were talking about such things as making their own marriages. Mrs. Chao here in Berkeley is one of the pioneers. She made up her own mind that she was going to marry Y.R. [Chao]. Of course, he apparently agreed too. But, it was quite a famous early case of revolt against the old Confucian family idea, arranged marriages. It was about the time that we're talking about in China. I'm not sure when Y.R. and Buwei got married, but it was probably about this time.

Q: 1921.

SERVICE: 1921. Well, we're talking about a little bit earlier than that.

Q: Both of them had arranged marriages, had engagements that they had to break.

SERVICE: Yes, yes, that's right. But, I don't remember any criticism that was overt or violent or that involved my parents, at least not that I know of.

Q: It's an interesting concept when you think of what has been going on at the Y in the 60's and 70's--

SERVICE: Yes.

Q: --the encounter groups and so on, that already in the context of its period, back in the 1910's, the Y was facilitating relations between the sexes.

SERVICE: Oh, yes. That's right. That's right.

Q: Do you remember seeing Westerners dressed in Chinese style?

SERVICE: Oh, yes. There were some of the older people, particularly in small outstations, who still wore Chinese clothes. The China Inland Mission, and some of the more conservative groups, still went on that idea.

But in a place like Chengdu, which was a metropolis, I don't think any foreigners wore Chinese clothes by this time.

There were no hotels, of course, in a place like Chengdu. It was the end of the line, so many foreign visitors stayed with us. In a place like Hangzhou or Ichang, which were transit points, the missions would set up a sort of a hostel, a missionary home, or something like that. But, in Chengdu there was nothing like this. People would come to Chengdu for missionary conferences or meetings, or an occasional tourist--but they had to be pretty determined tourists. There was a man named Harry Frank who walked around China and wrote some books about it. A man named Geil visited all the capitals of China and wrote a book about it and also a book about the Great Wall. There was a professor named E.A. Ross from Wisconsin, a sociologist, who wrote a book about China. He stayed there. A lot of people in Sichuan came to Chengdu because they needed dental work or medical care.

Q: It seems that your mother and your father entertained a most extraordinary number of guests throughout the year, the teas for students--

SERVICE: Yes, well, this was an important part of their work, particularly in the early phase of getting acquainted. I think it tapered off a good deal as children came along and she became more busy at home. But certainly before the Y was set up, formally set up and they had buildings, a lot of Y activity was getting acquainted with students, university students, and university teachers. A lot of this was done at the house.

Always, of course, Chinese called on formal occasions, such as New Year's time. My father's fortieth birthday was a tremendous affair because in China traditionally when you reach forty, you enter on old age, you become venerable. By forty, one should have grandchildren. So, when my father reached forty there was an all-day-long procession of people that came to congratulate him and fire off firecrackers and so on, and they all had to be fed.

One thing I just remembered. In the early days when I was seven or eight, like most missionaries, we had morning prayers with the servants all expected to come and join in. Then, somehow this practice just stopped. I don't remember when or why, but eventually we didn't have prayers in the morning.

I think that it was somewhat artificial. Most of the missionaries expected their servants to become Christians. My father may have felt that it was a little unfair to put this pressure on them. It did seem a bit uncomfortable and formal.

We had a wonderful old gardener. He may have been a Christian, a real Christian. Some of the others may have gone through the motions. But, I think that the old gardener probably was the only real Christian.

Eventually my father got separate premises for the Y and it gradually grew until it had fifteen hundred members or so and quite an active program of schools and classes of all kinds. The Y was dependent largely on the goodwill of officials, but also on local support. When they finally built a permanent Y the government actually donated the land. It was quite a large site near the center of Chengdu.

Local warlords usually contributed, helped the Y, were friendly to the Y, attended the Y.

Even before the Republic, before the Revolution, the viceroy came to the opening of the YMCA in Chengdu, which was a noteworthy honor in those days. The provincial viceroy actually attended the opening ceremonies in 1910.

Q: Would you say that was a tribute to your father's particular skills?

SERVICE: Well, I don't want to blow the horn excessively. I suppose you can say that it was partly because of my father's skill in making friends with Chinese. But the viceroy's acceptance of the invitation was not based on a personal relationship between the viceroy and my father. It reflected the fact that my father had won support of influential members of the local gentry.

Strains and Hardships in Grace Service's Life

Q: You mentioned your sister's death. Was this felt in any way to be China's "fault?" Was your mother bitter?

SERVICE: I don't think my mother felt that it was China's fault, but it certainly contributed to her very, very strong concern about sanitation and health. Reading things like Golden Inches, the long, unpublished autobiography she wrote in the 1930's, I realize now, much more than I did then, how repelled she was by the lack of sanitation, the conditions of the inns, the pigsty next to where you were sleeping, and all the dirt and filth, the general living conditions.

I think that it contributed to her--alienation is too strong a word. But, she dropped out more and more--partly because she got more interested in other things--from my father's work. She became, I think, disappointed. Embittered is too strong a word. After the revolution [1911], for instance, they should have gone back on furlough to the United States. But the YMCA had not succeeded in getting anyone else to go to West China on a permanent basis. There had been a couple of people who for one reason or another couldn't stay. My father had had to evacuate. [1911] He didn't want to come out, but he had been ordered out. He felt he had to go back to Sichuan. The Y wanted him to go back to Sichuan to get things started again, make sure everything was all right. So, he went back, you see, and it wasn't until 1915, ten years after they went out to China, that he had his first furlough.

He always put the Y first. This is a pattern that was repeated time after time. My mother felt that the family was second, and that he did much more for the Y and gave himself to the Y more than he needed to and neglected the family. It's a pattern that, shall we say, repeated itself later on, in my case I think.

Q: Did your father become involved with Chinese politics?

SERVICE: He actively supported the students in the 1920's when the Kuomintang was coming to power, the period of the May 30th incident in Shanghai and all the rest of 1926, '27. He was in favor of the foreigners giving up extraterritoriality and the imperialist apparatus that annoyed, that infuriated, the Chinese so much.

Q: Did this make him very unpopular with the so-called European community?

SERVICE: I'm not sure because I was out of China then. But, I don't believe it did. I think most of the missionaries that they were close to tended to agree with him.

Most of the time we were way up west in Sichuan province, hundreds of miles from any guns or any gunboat. We were at the end of the line. Going up and down through the Yangtze Gorges, if soldiers or bandits were firing from the banks at the boat, they would go up and sit behind the armor plate in the bridge, things like that. But, I don't think there was any conflict between my father and other missionaries.

There were some old-line missionaries, I think, that were less inclined to see the merit of the students' arguments because, the students wanted to take over control of the foreign schools and universities. They thought that the Chinese government should set the curriculum and really have effective control of the mission institutions. I think that probably some of the missionaries opposed that. The Chinese weren't ready yet, was the general theme.

But my father didn't have very much contact with the business people--certainly not in Chengdu. It wasn't a Treaty Port. There wasn't any foreign business community there really.

Q: Did the recurrent violence in China affect your daily lives?

SERVICE: Well, you see, what happened in Sichuan was that after the Revolution, 1911-12 Revolution, things really fell apart. Sichuan was fought over by a lot of Sichuanese, but also became a hunting ground for people from other provinces, especially Guizhou and Yunnan.

When Yuan Shih-Kai tried to become emperor, the revolt actually started in Yunnan, and the leader Tsai led an army from Yunnan into Sichuan province in 1916 to give battle to the local commander, who had bet on Yuan Shih-Kai. The Yunnan army stayed on and on in Sichuan. Almost every year, in these years we're talking about, there was fighting going on--this was a part of the life. Some of it was very bloody, some of it not so bad; but almost always with looting, first by the defeated or evacuating army and then, of course, by the victorious army. Each side grabbed what it could.

Sometimes they would persuade the chambers of commerce, the leading businessmen to pay them--a ransom, in other words. But, if the ransom wasn't paid, or even if the ransom was paid, there would still be looting and burning.

Q: Did this affect your day-to-day life?

SERVICE: Oh, sometimes. There was one period when we all moved down into the ground floor of the house because the compound had mud walls. We moved into the ground floor and lived and slept in my father's library because, in addition to the mud walls, we were surrounded by bookcases. We put mattresses against the windows. There was artillery fire going across the city from one side to the other, from one camp to the other, passing over our area.

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