

Don & Mary Smith

*Son of Missionaries,
Curwin & Sheila Smith,
in Vietnam*

*Parents Served
1938 - 1965*

Interviewed by David Fitzstevens
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Interview with Don & Mary Smith

DF: (Tapes opens with Mary talking, but Dave interrupts to insert the introduction.) Now, I'll put a short introduction here.

MS: Okay.

DF: Today is December 8, 2004. I'm David Fitzstevens speaking behind the camera. I have the privilege of interviewing Don and Mary Smith. And we're in what town here?

MS: Kissimmee Florida.

DF: Kissimmee Florida. First of all, for the record, could you tell me your full name? In your case, your maiden name, and then your date of birth.

MS: My name before I married Don was Mary Evelyn Fricker. I was born Sept. 3, 1927.

DS: (Stammers some because of Parkinsons) My name is Donald Curwin Smith, born in Montreal, January 17, 1928.

DF: Thank you. Now, just as a way of introduction to make connection for Vietnam Church mission history. Don said his middle name was Curwin. Don, you're the son of...

MS: Harold Curwin Smith.

DS: My father's name was Harold. He didn't like that name so he used his second name.

DF: And his second name was Curwin Smith. (Mary nods) And your mom's name was...?

DS: Sheila Vernon Smith.

MS: Vernon, before she was married.

DF: Were they both from Canada?

MS: Yes.

DS: My mother was from Toronto. She was born in a Roman Catholic family. Raised strong Jesuits. She came to Montreal and met my father. He explained the Gospel

to her and she accepted Christ. She was good at languages. She liked working with languages and did a lot of work on the Sunday School lessons in Vietnamese. My father did a lot of colporteur work and church planting. First of all he was sent to South China. The Alliance wanted him there. In China at that time there were lots of gangs. People in groups of 15-20,000 formed their own armies. They'd march around taking people captive and sell them for ransom. My father was captured by one group. They tried to get rid of him for a price, but they said, "missionaries aren't worth much, so they finally let him go. (Mary and Dave chuckle) He was with this one group when he was a prisoner. At 12 noon they stopped fighting each other. It got too hot, and they played cards 'til 4 o'clock. Both sides.

DF: With each other?

DS: Yeah, with each other. At four o'clock a trumpet played, they got back to the line and started fighting again. Chang Kai Shek came from a group like that originally. And all over China there were different groups looking for power.

When my father left China, he worked in the area of Me Tho, in South Vietnam, That's where we were imprisoned by the Japanese during the war.

DF: Were you born in China? Oh, you were born in Montreal. I'm sorry. Was that before they went to the field or on one of their furloughs?

MS: One of their furloughs.

DF: Did you ever live in China?

DS: I went to school in north China.

MS: Cheefoo.

DS: CIM (China Inland Mission) School—one year and that was enough. (Mary chuckles)

DF: That was while your folks were in China?

MS: No, that was while they were in Vietnam. (Looking at Don) I don't know when your parents were in China. Before you were born, I think.

DS: Before I was born.

DF: So then they were working in North Vietnam?

DS: Up in Hanoi, Haiphong area. Later on the British Bible Society was looking for someone to... The man they had was an alcoholic. That wasn't a great witness for them. So my father took over their work. They had quite a bit of work going on. They had a very good Christian Vietnamese named Thuy. He was part Chinese and part Vietnamese. He was a Christian. Came from a very wealthy family. He did a lot of work for the Bible Society. During the war he took over all the titles to the property, and took good care of it himself. He made money renting it out during the war and gave the money all back to the Alliance. 5.34

MS: So it wouldn't be lost. Right?

DS: Very unusual for a Vietnamese to be that honest. The mission field in Tonkin was a harder work than down south. Down south they had two crops a year, more food, more money. Up north they had very few crops, much harder people. At Christmas time the natives would come and bring eggs and chickens. The eggs were so fresh you could smell them (smiles broadly), so old. When a chicken was going to hatch, the Chinese would eat the legs right off. They paid more for an egg that's going to hatch tomorrow morning. We brought their green oranges and had to eat them in front of them. My father ate one. Boy, that was good. They were so bitter... (Chuckles) But that's the way it was.

They did a lot of colporteur work on the river boats, giving out New Testaments and preaching.

We found, by the way, that when the Japanese came in all the Japanese soldiers that I met spoke perfect English. A lot of them had been to school in China—Bible School. My father walked in the town called Haizung, after we'd been in Hanoi and Haiphong, and they were singing. 200 Japanese troops, singing hymns in English with no hymn books. My father said to the officer in charge, "where'd you learn to sing?"

He said, "we went to Bible School. We're going to conquer the world." And even my father was wrong.(?) Do you want to preach? "I memorized the Bible. I'll preach you a sermon." So, he preached a good sermon.

My father said, "you forgot one thing."

"What's that?" "You didn't take up a collection." (Chuckles all around)

The pastor all over town was through the houses because of all the troops in there. They had 500,000 Japanese troops in Tonkin just before the war started. 8.09

The officer said to my father. "He's a good man. Our troops held church in his house. You can have him back again."

They used to drive up from Haiphong to Hanoi. They had these huge trucks. Most of their trucks were Chevrolets or Fords. You'd almost get by them, and they'd try to crash into you or race field. Some of the French fellows who were driving were impatient. The Japs wanted to get by. They'd smash your car and roll it over in the rice field. Wheels up in the air. My father put up with this for quite a while. Before I was two, maybe, we saw a kid in the car. The Japs were more friendly. The Japs liked kids. So, we had... ?

Later on I went to **Cheefoo School** which is very English. You were given a number for Smith from one to fourteen—that's your first name. They treated you as if you were ignorant little broiders. Very poor attitude. Matter of fact, the whole education there reminded me of a boys training school in Rhode Island.

We had good teachers there. In fact, one teacher, Miss Yetgood was a marvelous Christian. She witnessed to me. She said, "do you want to become a Christian?"

I said, "I don't want to do it right away. I'll do it later on."

There was a caste system there. If you weren't CIM, you weren't up to much. And in the situation when God spoke to Moses and said, "Who sent you?" Say, "I am" sent you. Well, it came to mean CIM. "See, I am." (Chuckles all around) It was a caste system.

Sunday, you had an hour sermon with \$75 words and half hour of prayer. Then you went home, had lunch and went to your bedroom. All you could read was the Bible. Can you imagine kids, seven, six, eight, or ten, just reading the Bible? So, we had a spy system where we spied on the teachers. So we played games. When the teachers came we put them away. 11.09 Very strict! Some teachers carried a bamboo cane around like a rifle. Anything you did wrong, they'd smack you over the back with it.

DF: How long were you at Cheefoo?

MS: One year.

DS: One year was enough.

DF: How old were you then?

DS: I turned six.

DF: First grade?

DS: Yeah.

DF: Wow!

DS: I had a very bad problem because I was premature. I had a lot of...

MS: Congestion.

DS: No.

MS: Heart?

DS: Lung problem. Hard to breathe. (Looks to Mary for the word)

MS: Congestion.

DS: By the way, the first day there, they told us to line up there. So, prep school lined up over there, middle school over here, and high school over there. As three big boys came by, they said, "let's beat this kid up." So, I had the tar beaten out of me. I upchucked all over the place—stinking mess.

Finally some other boys in my school came along. They took me over to the teacher. She said, "learn to fight better." That's all she said. I felt kind of alone at that time.

MS: He was about five when he first went there.

DS: I did learn to fight better. It was very good advice. Another boy named Timothy Eden and I were the two youngest. We were always picked on. We learned how to fight better, and every school I went to after that, you're always bullied if you're a newcomer. I learned how to take care of myself.

When we were in internment camp. We used to do exercises with Japanese troops and 13.05 a Frenchman, a Dutchman, and a friend of mine who is Italian. He was a very good boxer. I learned how to box, wrestle, and judo jujitsu. The American engineer came over and said, "you learn all you can, because when you get in a fight in Canada, when they learn you're a minister's son they'll beat the tar out of you."

While I was in Canada, I went to one school and I stood up to give my paper to the teacher and she said, "sit down." Just then the principal came in. I didn't know that he was a very insecure man. His wife ran the private school and she pushed him around. Well he was there and he grabbed hold of me by the neck...

MS: He had told everyone to stand up.

(Principal): "How come you didn't stand up?"

I said, "I was just told to sit down." I broke his grip with a judo blow. I grabbed hold of him by the belt at his waist. "Mr." I said, "I'm not going to be touched in my throat again." So I was playing defensive. It's a professional trick. "If I have to defend myself, I will. You aren't going to shove me around."

Well, he looked kind of startled. He ran over to the desk and grabbed my papers and found out I was a POW. He was kind of shook up, but he never bothered me again.

DF: This was the principal?

MS: Yeah. Principal in the high school.

DS: After three weeks in the school, the kids found out my father was a missionary. So three big guys, all about 5' 8", 160 lbs., started punching me in the hall. They'd go by, slap me in the face or hit me. So I warned 'em. I said, "if I were you I wouldn't do that too often." Of course, I was smaller by quite a bit, and they thought I was an easy target. Well one day at recess, I bumped their heads against each other real hard. I said, "I want your attention." Then I knocked 'em out—all three.

The teacher comes running up. "You can't do that."

I said, "why can't I? I'll kill 'em before I'll bury 'em."

The teacher said, "you can't do that."

I said, "I will look after myself. You've watched 'em hit me and you haven't done a single thing about it." I don't know what the teacher thought. After that there was no more fighting. It was an unusual experience.

DF: Hmm! Now...

DS: Then I went to **Dalat** which is a Christian School. In Cheefoo it was the caste system. If you and I saw something go wrong, and the teacher asked what you saw, "we didn't see anything." We had what is called catechism. In other words, if you did something wrong I would never squeal on you. Even though I hated you, the teachers were hated more than you. That was it—called Put them in Coventry. (?)

We had one principal. I've forgotten her name. She was a very solid individual. Had the structure of a sumo wrestler. She'd go around with a bamboo cane. Smack you. When I was sick in the infirmary, one teacher came by with a bamboo cane. She sat down and said, "now we're going to stop this coughing."

I said to her, "if you start hitting me, kill me, because I don't enjoy this." I could hardly breathe as it was. So I said, "if you hit me, kill me. I'll be better off dead." It was so bad. After a half hour she gave up. She got scared. Doctor told me not to go back in there again. They said ? ***

I got down to Dalat. It was a much better atmosphere. They were real Christians there, and I had a lot of good friends there. I enjoyed Dalat.

DF: You didn't get beat up there?

DS: No, I didn't. I was able to take care of myself.

DF: Did they try to beat you up?

DS: Yes, the first day somebody came in. I was washing my hands in the sink. This guy was bigger, but I was older than he was. He kept bothering me. I said, "I wouldn't do that too much if I were you." He kept following me. I think his name was Bob Vole. I was trying to get away. Suddenly his head hit the medicine cabinet. I turned around and punched his face twice. He left crying. After that, I was never bothered by anybody.

MS: (chuckles)

DF: You had a tough go there.

MS: No, it wasn't easy. He had hard times.

DF: Now, in World War II you went to an **internment camp**. How long after the war started before your family was interned?

DS: Well, the war started in 1940. The British Consulate wanted our families to stay together up in Haiphong, because they said if something happens we might have to take you out suddenly. So I didn't go to Dalat any more after that. The Jap troops came in and I was glad I was alive at that time because I thought, this is ideal, I'm seeing what happens. We'd ride our bicycles out and see them drive their trucks down the highway. They might go on the sidewalks and knock the natives over. They left 'em with their arm flapping in the air. (Waves as in goodbye) They killed quite a few of them just by being careless. 18.22

I went across the big village green, huge one, for my violin lessons. The Japanese had said, "if you cross this field, you'll be shot." I crossed the field, and they said, "Boy, what this sign say?" (Speaks some French words) It was the only French I knew. I couldn't speak English. (Chuckles all around) They thought I could only speak French so they let me go. I would count the tanks and planes and tell my father and he'd tell the British Consulate.

It was a funny thing to see the Beijing machine gunners. You'd crawl around the ground. Shoot machine gun bullets over the guys heads. If you got your head up, that's your tough luck. Well, they'd do that. I'd watch.

They had soldiers with trees tied to their bodies and they'd be on sentry duty. Suddenly this tree was there (points to a certain place). I swear that was there before, but it's over here now (points in another direction). They used that to get their measure line and...?. They tied themselves to a tree.

MS: Camouflage.

DS: Yeah. They had bicycle troops. The bicycles looked like English Rally bicycles. Those troops went on the paths in Malaysia and the back row was a flank of British troops. We were in Saigon once, and saw British and Australian prisoners of war giving the Japs a tough time.

DF: Now, how old were you when you went to internment camp?

DS: I was age thirteen, or twelve. I had a dental problem. Any medical problem, you're the enemy. No supplies. And I remember Rev. Grubb. I forget what Rev. Grubb's name was. He was an engineer. He taught me math. He said, "make one mistake, you get a hundred more problems." I didn't have too many mistakes. He taught me, and when I went back to Canada, I was the head of my class. You see, I lost a lot of schooling because of the war.

DF: So you had a little school there in the camp?

MS: (answering Don's query because he didn't understand the question) So you had some schooling in the camp, honey?

DS: Yeah, I had a Catholic brother (tries to remember his name). There were two Catholic brothers. We had two Catholic priests from the Padolas in the camp. The one's name was Wiggle Ears, and the other's name was Campbell Ears. They both came from the village, you see. That was their name. It sounded just like that.

They said to my mother, "you're a Catholic."

My mother said, "I belong to the Holy Catholic Church, not the Roman Catholic Church." They knew she was Catholic. A lot of missionaries didn't know that. They're very good at infiltrating. They had their own militia and if they happen to catch any of your Alliance Christians, they may shoot them.

DF: Do you have any memories of what it was like in the internment camp?

MS: Memories in the internment camp, honey?

DS: Well, we were playing hide and go seek or prisoner's base. I was running across this huge field. Suddenly I disappeared up to my neck—in a cesspool. The Japs thought it was hilarious. They threw a rope over me and pulled me in. Well, in the building we were staying in which was the French military barracks. On the corner of each floor was a shower. Right next to the shower was a Jewish fellow named Blitz. He was very friendly until I started taking a shower (chuckles heartily), then he started swearing in English and French and German and Yiddish because the smell was terrible.

MS: He'd just come out of the cesspool.

DF: Oh. (Chuckles all around)

DS: He wasn't too happy. We had an odd shaped toilet bowl. It was shaped like an oval. You had to squat on each side and hope you were accurate. Well, some of the women couldn't stand that. I never saw any like that before. I've found if it's French, it's odd. The French make everything different.

So when we were exchanged, we got on a Jap ship...

MS: Have you any more memories of the internment camp before we go on?

DS: Well, we were challenged. Each day they'd flag you. Three priests and three Japanese officers always got drunk. The priests would come back and upchuck. The Jap soldiers were so drunk they'd stagger all over the place. (Pointing as if to prisoners cued up) Seventy-two. Five. Ninety-five. One. They'd count us off.

DF: They were just doing their job. Right?

MS: Yeah. (Chuckles all around)

DS: And we'd play hide and go see. We got underneath the building and one guy tried to catch us. It was near supper time. Well, he got stuck. He had a big fat belly. Had a big halter on. He got hung-up on the foundation. He was swearing away in English and Yiddish. They started shooting. A friend of mine said, "just stay real low until it's all over." They didn't shoot 'em. He was very annoyed. Well, finally, he had to take his pants off and they pulled him out.

Then a few days later on we were surprised that a Jap military truck pulled up with about thirty soldiers with bayonets. They lined up all the boys from age ten to adults and marched us off. We thought they were going to bayonet us. Quite often the Japs had taken people and bayoneted 'em. They did that in Hong Kong. So they marched us off, and finally a motorcycle rider came by. He had a message from our commander who was a Christian. He turned to 'em. He was a strange guy. He was 6'4" and wore a grey suit, like my dressing gown (turning to Mary), that grey color.

MS: Umhuh. 25.45

DS: (?)... Evening came... This is what he said. He seemed to be a commander. I went down to a Jap secret police one day because each one of us had a badge when we were in camp, and the Frenchman was taking them all away—the French officer in charge. He was taking them away. So I went down at night to the Japanese secret police. Well, they were shocked that I turned up because everybody was afraid of the Japs. I walked in and said, "I want to see the commanding officer."

So he comes over and ask, "what can I do for you?"

I told him what was happening. "Sure enough," he said, "I'll get those tickets for you."

So the next day the Frenchman comes over and said, "I want the tickets."

I said, "you can't have 'em."

"I said I wanted those tickets."

"You can't have 'em."

So the Frenchman opened his door and tried to get his revolver. The Jap closed the drawer on his hand. So I had to use this for a while. He didn't give me the tickets. Finally gave him the tickets. So the French guy... I felt sorry for him. He called me a sheean, a dog, so I called him a "cong cho", which is a Vietnamese dog.

He used to come in the entrance. He had a Vietnamese lady as his girlfriend. She could ride right in, but the rest of us had to walk quite a distance. I rode my bicycle in. He said, "you can't do that."

I said, "I'm sorry, but I'm going to do it." Japs say it's okay. Well, he hated that, but that was the way it was.

DF: Now, sorry, just to clarify something... this Frenchman was...?

MS: He was trying to stop you from doing all of this. Right? But the Japanese were in favor of it. (Don looks on a bit bewildered as Mary clarifies Dave's question. His Parkinsons lets him skip some details which make his story coherent.) 27.36

DS: You see, there was a very strong controversy. The French colony taken by the Japs. The Japs didn't conquer them, yet they could tell 'em what to do. And the French were very proud. They resented that. It didn't bother me. I wasn't French.

MS: He was young enough to get away with a lot of things that other people couldn't.

DS: I knew a little bit of French, but the French guy never heard me speak French.

DF: Did you pick up some Japanese along the way there, too?

MS: Did you pick up any Japanese language?

DS: No. Only one Chinese swear word. (Chuckles all around) 28.15

DF: Now, I'd like to pick up on something you mentioned. There were Christians among the Japanese. Is that right?

DS: Right. There were **Japanese Christians** in the armed forces.

MS: The one that was kind of the head over your internment camp was a Christian.

DF: Head over the Me Tho Camp was a Christian?

MS: Yeah, he was a Christian. The one that was the head over the Me Tho Camp.

DS: Yeah.

MS: Right. Which was helpful

DF: Wow, that must have made quite a difference in the way you folks were treated.

DS: Yeah, we were well off. He came to my father after we'd play games of chess or checkers. I was going to talk to my father. The Japs had a very strong anti-American feeling. Well, the day war was declared, the Japanese colonel came to our gate and talked to my father. He said, "you're prisoners of the Japanese army, you'll be protected." He said, "we've been watching you for twenty-two years, spying on you for 22 years. We find that you're only interested in missionary work."

MS: They knew he wasn't a spy. They had been watching him.

DF: This was up north? When this happened? When he came...?

MS: They were watching your father from the time he was up north?

DS: Oh yeah. I'll tell you a few things more. Jap planes used to leave Saigon for Hanoi airport and bomb Yunan Fu, China.

I want to go back to Cheefoo. While I was there the Japanese planes flew over one day and dropped leaflets saying, "we've come to bring peace, co-prosperity. Asia and the Asiatics. They dropped the pamphlets. The next thing we know, they came over and machine gunned the school there. Lucky we were all inside.

DF: So that happened while you were at Cheefoo?

DS: It happened when I was there.

DS: That was even before the war. Right?

MS: That was before the war. Right?

DS: Yeah. It was when the Japs were at war with China.

By the way. I've always been interested in excitement, so I had a friend named Paul Amos. We wanted to escape from Cheefoo School. We hated the place so much. So, one day I noticed that the brick wall was kind of low and the earth around it kind of high. Anything could climb over it. So, we had Wednesday and Saturday afternoons off, One Wednesday afternoon we climbed over. Didn't tell anybody else. We crawled over. Trees were there. We climbed down around the bushes. Suddenly there were a lot of army trucks. Civilian trucks with captured Chinese. Carrying dead bodies and they were burying them over to the right. I said to my friend, "I think we'd better get back over on the other side of the wall." Even at that age I realized that if they caught us, they would kill us.

DF: My goodness!

DS: Body parts. Legs. Kids. Ladies. Men. I saw those.

DF: These were Japanese soldiers? And the people they were burying were...?

DS: I never told my parents.

DF: You didn't?

MS: Who was driving the trucks, Don?

DS: Jap soldiers.

MS: Jap soldiers. And the people that were killed were Chinese people?

DS: Chinese.

DF: My goodness! So, **your father...** at some point he **worked with the British and Foreign Bible Society?** Didn't he?

MS: Yeah, British and Foreign Bible Society.

MS: Yeah. Well, he made sure they got translation works. Made sure the right supplies came in. There was always a demand for Bibles.

DF: He was still associated with the Alliance but he was on loan to the British and Foreign Bible Society?

DS: But the Alliance knew that it would help them if they got into that area, it would help the Alliance a lot more. He was interested in the Alliance. He was Alliance. He was Bible Society. This way, they both benefitted greatly.

DF: Yeah.

DS: We had a lot of visitors come to Haiphong from all over. Haiphong was a main seaport and they went from Haiphong up to Yunan. Well, we had a doctor (tries to remember his name). He had a Dodge truck or two and just before the war started panic started to settle in. I'd go over to the truck at all times of the night with our police dog. It was fierce. I would patrol. Make sure nothing got stolen or anything.

We had people turning up at 12 o'clock or 2 o'clock in the morning. They wanted to see my father. I told them "get lost. My father's going to sleep some. He's worked eighteen hours." They were annoyed but, I said, "sorry, I'm looking after my father. You don't worry about it."

Finally there was a Pentecostal guy who said, "I speak in tongues."

I said, "God bless you, you're just the guy we need. Go down and get your paper."

"I don't speak French."

"Well, you speak in tongues? That's what you say." (Mary chuckles)

We had doctors and people of the world who wanted my father. French Canadian French is not the same as Parisian French. And the French officers in the visa department would say, "it's beautiful French. We don't understand it." So my father would have to go down and translate.

We had a Christian officer on board a British ship. We were at Butterfield and Swire. It was possibly the biggest British liner, the biggest shipping line in Asia. They had black funnels on their ships. They always had to be ready for pirates. We went to school. They had, what do you call those rails? Like a scroll goes round and round, (gestures) spins around. The Chinese pirates couldn't climb over and see over the top of the ship. Well, we had two guards, each of 'em were six feet tall with a rifle and a bayonet. All the time, they were on duty.

The Chinese pirates would have a ship go through a narrow channel. They'd have a junk here (points to one side of the imaginary ship) and a junk here (points to the other side) with a huge steel cable. When the motor of the ship hit that cable, naturally it would pull these junks closer together and the pirates would get on

board.

Well, the British had aircraft carriers around. Once in a while a plane would fly over. They were always watching. We were fortunate, when we were on the ship it didn't happen. Pirates...

MS: But some of the kids from Cheefoo did run into it.

DS: Yeah, I read in the paper the other day, they still have pirates operating out of Singapore. The world hasn't changed.

MS: No.

DF: Yeah, down in the Straits of Malacca, they still have problems today with pirates. That's right.

MS: Amazing!

DS: The Japs would come along our street. We had our sister under house arrest. We didn't want her to be attacked. The whole Japanese army. Well, these guys had on a blue uniform. I don't know what they're thinking was. They used the ditches as a latrine on main street. French called 'em, savages. I saw a street... 35.50

I gotta tell you another story. (Leans forward to draw a map on the table with his finger) Main street guy. There was main street here. They had a Chinese motel that the Japs took over. They'd line up and have like three church pews (Stands with effort to illustrate) with soldiers in 'em, with rifles and bayonets. An ordinary officer, somebody in...? they said (makes loud scary noise and sits down), push out their bayonet and scare the tar out of everybody. So, I used to like watching that.

One day, a soldier came out of there and bayoneted a Vietnamese in the leg. Why? I don't know. But he was bleeding some so I went over and put my arm around him. I couldn't speak to him, but he understood what I meant. It's very unusual for a white person to put their arm around a Vietnamese. Then I rode my bicycle further up and yelled out in English, "you're a brave bunch of soldiers. You're bayoneting civilians. Shame on you." Of course, they didn't have a chance to shoot me. I moved out of their way. They were terrible.

Then one day, we had rice alcohol to run our car on. Gasoline was rationed. So, my father wanted me to suck some gas, or alcohol out of the gas tank while he poured gas in the carburetor. Well, I ended up with a mouth full. So I had to swallow the stuff. He said, "don't spill it on the floor, or a native will come along with a match

and blow the car up.” So, I had to drink some. Finally I called for help. I was drunk. I staggered over there from drinking that rice alcohol.

DF: This is drinking rice alcohol? (Chuckles all around)

MS: Yeah, rice alcohol. He didn’t know how to stop drinking it.

DS: I went into the rose bushes. The police thought it was lisofeeds—having fun. All the Japs were looking down with binoculars from the wall, yelling, “missy son drunk. Missy son drunk.” (Hearty chuckles all around) It was funny! 38.06

DF: So they actually ran the car on this rice alcohol?

DS: We ran it on rice alcohol, or we had what they called gasoshed which is cold. They have a bag of cold, and somehow the fire burns the gas. It’s has a terrible smell. They spin the...?

DF: Can you tell me any more about **your parents’ ministry in the north**? You say your dad did a lot of passing out of literature and...?

DS: Well, if we traveled anywhere, we had to have a special privilege from the French police. Where are you going? What will you be doing? You see the problem in the church in Vietnam. There were four different independence groups. You had Ho Chi Mien, and there were others that were fighting with each other to amalgamate or kill each other off. And my father had to be careful because the French might think he was on somebody’s side.

Like my father went one night, and the guy said, “praise the Lord. I had to bribe the coffer with fifty dollars. Last week it was a hundred.”

My father said, “you’re not bribing anybody.”

But you see the Asiatics think nothing of that. Like when I was in Dalat School at Tourane or Danang visiting with the Irwins, one guy said to the other Vietnamese. “You’re a Christian now, you can only steal ten percent.” 39.39

DF: Only steal ten percent?

MS: (chuckling) ‘Cause he was a Christian.

DS: The honor is different. Mr. Irwin, a missionary in Danang wanted to have fresh cow’s milk so he went and bought a female water buffalo. We had iron gates on the

garage. We tied different lengths to different posts (gestures) and tried to build the thing. Well, the old horns went down, and one of the natives shot through the air. Another got kicked in the stomach and fell back. I think he might have gotten two teaspoons full. He used the calf as the primer. Well, this went on. He wanted his milk. Finally, they decided there were too many Vietnamese Bible School students getting hurt by this animal bunting 'em, so they got a special field for him, which happened to be owned by the guy who sold 'em the cow. So, he charged them so much for rent. Well it was cheaper to buy the field. So he bought the field, but he had to build a shed to protect the boy on the back of the cow which kept the calf from taking the milk because he got hot. He couldn't be out in the sun all the time, so they had to make a shelter for him. Then tigers were around so it had to be strong so the tigers couldn't break in. It was a real racket. Finally, Mr. Irwin said, "I think we've had enough." It was funny. 41.19

MS: Anything else that your dad did, honey? Or your mom? (Mary tries to steer him back to the subject).

DS: My father traveled to the churches. I didn't go. It was war time. I restricted my travel.

DF: Was he planting churches, too?

DS: We were in south Vietnam, in the town of Me Tho seven years before they went to Tonkin. There they met Christians from the south that they knew twenty years ago. They were in camp and some came to prison camp to see them.

Oh, I'm trying to think of the missionary doctor. It almost came to me. He got his start up in Yunan. Held a Christian Hospital up there. He was captured and went over to the Philippines. He knew the Taylors. Small world.

MS: Was it your father that went up into the tribes and found a church started...?

DS: Oh, Mr. Irwin, my father and another missionary went up to Laos. There was a the war with the Spanish. They were trying to impose... Well... Go back a ways.

At the Vietnamese Church in Saigon, we had a business man who always came to church and slept. He was an alcoholic, and he'd sleep during service. This went on for years, and finally I said to my father, "what do you think will happen to that guy?"

"Oh," he said, "he's a Christian. He's a wonderful business man." He knew three or four languages. He stole a Bible every time he came to church. He stole a hymn book, too.

His wife was an alcoholic also. He was going to Hanoi-Haiphong, and she started looking at the books that he stole and started reading the Bible. She said, "this is what I need." She found Christ through that. So she became a Christian. He came home about a week later and said, "I don't know what's wrong with you, but surely I need a little of what you've got." So, he read the Bible and became a Christian, too. He started preaching, and read the Bible and hymn books which he sold for the church there.

When my father was there he was shocked to see a church established in a part of Laos where no missionary had been. No missionary had been there.

MS: No missionary had been there. But this woman had read these Bibles that her husband had stolen. She became a Christian. He saw such a difference in her, and said, "I need that." So, he became a Christian, and they started the church.

DF: Do you know where in Laos this was?

MS: Where was it in Laos? Do you know, honey?

DS: I've forgotten now.

DF: So your father was part of that survey team that went up to Laos?

MS: Must have been.

DF: Along with... Who else was in that?

MS: Mr. Irwin went, too, didn't he? (Looks to Don who seems weary at this point)

DF: I read about that. But I didn't know who was on that.

DS: They have a fantastic... A lot of villages have a supply of water by bamboo pipes. They have huge water wheels made of bamboo in Tonkin which make the water go (gestures) around and around to create electricity.

Mrs. Dutton, a missionary. She's a very... Did you ever meet Mrs. Dutton?

DF: Agnes? Dutton? Yes, I remember her very well.

MS: Was it Agnes?

DS: Agnes. Yes. She's a very plump person. She's very good natured, a jovial person. When she laughs she shakes like jelly. One day she was coming down the path from the Voth's cottage. I was taking a bath in a big wooden tub filled with water. I said, "how you doin', Mrs. Dutton?"

"Fine. Donald."

"Mrs. Dutton, did you know there's an elephant behind you?"

"Like fun."

"Mrs. Dutton, there's an elephant behind you."

She said, "I'm going to tell your mother about the lies you tell."

"I don't care if you tell my mother, my father or anyone else. There are two elephants behind you behind you right now."

"You're crazy."

"I'm sorry, there are three. No, there are four."

The lead elephant got up to her, reached his trunk around her head and blew in her neck. She looked around, screamed and took off like a cannon ball. That was funny.

DF: Where was this?

DS: This was in Dalat.

DF: So, were they in charge of the school when you were there?

MS: Were the Duttons in charge of the school, honey? No.

DS: We went camping once. The Lord was good to me. I shouldn't be alive. I was always sort of a risk-taker. I don't know, just part of my disposition. We went camping. David Jeffrey was alive still at that time. We realized that a snake had been following us. It was a poisonous snake. We were getting into a denser part of the jungle and we knew it would go up above us, attack and come down. I said, "my theory is, kill him first before he kills you." So, we picked up two solid sticks. I said, "I'll put my stick in front of him, and he'll attack it. When he backs up I'm going to hit him with the stick in my left hand and knock his rhythm and balance off. Then you

clobber him good, too.” So, we did that. We killed the snake. We were talking to a Moi tribesman. He said, “that was a poisonous snake.”

Well, we were going along, and we camped that night near some water. Put our tents up. We had a lot of good firewood. There were deer around. There were tigers, too. Some deer could bark like a dog. Then you hear a tiger imitating that. Well, I was the tent nearest the jungle, so I got up at 2 o'clock. I heard tigers. They were getting closer. So, I said I wasn't going to be eaten by one, so I went outside and said, “Kamgap” and threw it on the fire and made it explode like a bomb. The two tribesmen got their bows and arrows out with poison ready to shoot. Nothing happened.

Well, the next day I took a flashlight. Decided to see what was up the creek. I didn't know this until I read it last year in National Geographic, but tigers like to sleep in river beds. I was going along shining my flashlight on cobblestones. The water was making a nice bubbling noise. Soon my flashlight hit a tiger sleeping right about where you are. I was surprised. I turned around and walked quietly back.

MS: (chuckles)

DF: Let me just clarify something here. Where was this?

MS: Where were you, honey, when you did this?

DS: I was in Dalat.

DF: In Dalat area... So on this camping trip, you and...?

DS: Franklin Irwin. Paul Jeffrey. Merle Jackson. David Jeffrey.

David Jeffrey, by the way, died later from meningitis. He picked it up from the Japanese troops in Saigon. The Japs used germ warfare in China. 49.08 Quite a few Jap soldiers got meningitis germs from used artillery shells. When they exploded Japanese soldiers were killed by it.

DF: They brought it down to China...?

DS: And some of 'em got it in Saigon.

DF: Well, I heard recently that when David Jeffrey died there were over 1000 French kids that died in that same time period. I didn't realize it was meningitis. I thought it was... I didn't realize where it came from or how...

DS: By the way, the Japanese did more with germ warfare than Iraq ever did. They also had planes (shakes head). Not planes, paper balloons. They flew over from Japan with germs. They landed on the Pacific Coast in the United States. One landed here some place in... (pauses to remember name)

MS: Out west? Wasn't it, honey?

DS: A western state there.

MS: Yeah.

DS: And one of our missionaries touched it and was killed by it.

DF: That was an explosion. It wasn't germs. But Archie Mitchell's first wife passed away that way.

MS: (Helping Don understand) Archie Mitchell's wife?

DS: Yeah, Mitchell.

DF: Then he married that lady's sister, Betty. Then they came to the field.

MS: Oh! (Shakes head) That was an explosion then. It wasn't germs, honey, it was an explosion.

DF: It was the only one that actually went off in the States. Many were sent, but they didn't make it. The idea was to start forest fires.

MS: Oh! (With understanding)

DS: Mrs. Dutton liked farm animals; chickens, ducks. She said, "Donald, why don't you raise ducks?"

I said, "they've got a leaking transmission. I don't want to raise them." (Chuckles all around) I **raised turkeys and chickens.**

Well, I met a tribesman. My mother said, "why did you get a rooster? Roosters don't lay eggs?"

I said, "the guy guaranteed me success." (Looks to Mary and asks her to get a picture. She leaves the room.) Well this guy came to me and wanted a biscuit box.

The biscuit box was about this wide and this high (demonstrates with hands). He wanted to put his rice in it in the jungle so bugs couldn't get in it. Well, he had a pink umbrella. He wanted \$1.50 and as many of those cans as I could get. He guaranteed that I'd get a chicken and have success. I waited for quite a while. (Mary hands him the framed picture of a chicken.)

MS: This is like the rooster that Don had. It's a picture that he took of a picture in California. He wanted you to see it.

DF: I see.

DS: I put the rooster in a big wicker basket. The guy said, when you get him in your cage, cover your face. He'll attack you because you smell different. Well, that's true. The thing attacked me several times. Finally, I let him out and he climbed up the highest tree possible. My mother said, "chickens don't fly, but this fella sure does." He got up there. After two days I had two eggs. She said, "this is crazy. You've got one rooster and two eggs. I said the number of my eggs increased when my rooster went off into the king's palace. So killing this rooster brought these hands down to earth... I was. (Chuckles all around)

DF: In Dalat?

DS: In Dalat.

DF: That summer palace of Bao Di's place...?

DS: (Shakes head yes) Yeah. So, I had some success selling eggs to missionaries. (Mary chuckles unbelievably)

DF: Now, you were a student at this time?

DS: Yeah.

DF: You were quite the entrepreneur, selling eggs to the missionaries?

MS: (Chuckling) You were selling eggs to missionaries?

DS: Yeah. Keep 'em healthy. One day I ran around after six. You had to be a little bit careful because tigers were roaming around. I was up in the tree trying to catch my crazy rooster. I fell out of the tree with two chickens in my hands. To the ground. Poor native thought I was a tiger. He ran down the path, (saying) "kamgap. Kamgap. Kamgap!"

Finally the social environment got healthy. Too many people complaining about their roosters being killed. My guy was doing a good job. Finally the cook came out. His name was Nuay. He said, "Donald's rooster is too good. I gotta kill 'em." So my father agreed, so they put up a nest to leave for several days. The first day when he saw the nest he was suspicious. I had to leave it up a couple days so he wouldn't be suspicious.

MS: Finally caught him...

DS: Yeah. They finally caught him. Boiled him three days and couldn't eat him. Too tough!

MS: He was a tough old bird. (Chuckles all around)

DS: I raised turkeys, also.

DF: Now, how old were you when you left Vietnam?

DS: I was fifteen.

DF: And after Vietnam, you went to the States?

MS: To Canada.

DF: To Canada, excuse me. Back to Montreal, or...?

DS: Montreal.

DF: Montreal. Did your parents go back to Vietnam after that?

DS: Say that again.

MS: Your parents went back to Vietnam after that.

DS: Yeah.

DF: So, when did they finally leave Vietnam?

DS: (Looking to Don) Do you remember what year? I think around 1964. But I'm not sure. I don't know.

DS: They retired up in Montreal and then moved up to Toronto. To the big Alliance Church there.

We got on the Jap ship. The food was terrible. The guy on the gang plank said, "how many in family?"

We said, "five."

He said, "twenty-five rolls of toilet paper." It was a big bag.

My father said, "Donald, you can carry that." So I carried that, but the food was terrible. The supper bell rang. We went down. Here was the food. You could see something crawling in it. You didn't know what it was. After eating the meal, you had diarrhea or upchucked in about a half an hour. They had a cheap Japanese ginger ale. It smelled like perfume. Tasted terrible. The place you slept was a huge room. Bigger than this with shelves and loads of straw mattresses with fleas in 'em. There wasn't any air conditioning.

DF: My goodness! What year was this?

MS: (Pauses to remember) It must have been 1943? '43. This was repatriation after internment..

DF: Oh, I see, this was after internment. You were on some kind of prisoner exchange program or something like that?

MS: That's right. Yeah.

DF: So then you went by Japanese ship to...?

MS: Where did you (looking to Don) finally meet up with the Gripsholm?

DS: We met the Gripsholm in Portugese Goa. We got there and there was some mistake in the arrangements. We couldn't get the numbers agreed upon.

The Parisians were throwing apples and oranges and everything overboard. They'd float down the river in covered boxes on ropes to pull 'em up. There was no fruit on the Jap ship. In the front of the Jap ship was at least a 1000 pounds of rotten cabbage. When we started out it was fresh, but rotted and they didn't throw it overboard. Stunk to high heaven.

DF: They weren't making kimshi either were they? : 57.31 They *** Drive them
Sometime I'll tell you about that.

When we got to Goa... My mother had her gall bladder out years ago. She couldn't eat, so finally this Portugese guy with his hat and glasses and clipboard got on board the Gripsholm. I loaded my pockets with food. I came back. I looked very business like. Got back on board our ship and went to our cabin.

My mother said, "where'd you get this stuff?"

I said, "only the Lord and I know where it came from. And I'm surely not telling you."
(Chuckles all around) It was good food.

DF: So you went and acquired food for her?

MS: You acquired the food in your own way. (Helps Don understand Dave's question)
For your mom.

DS: On the Swedish ship there was free cigarettes and liquor and everything. I went for a noon meal, and my mother said, "don't eat too much." I said, "I won't eat too much."

MS: This is on the Gripsholm now?

DS: This is on the Gripsholm. Swedes are good cooks. So, I ate from about 1:30 until 5 o'clock. I got in the lunch line and went right into the supper line.

MS: He got into the lunch line and continued on into the supper line. Kept eating.
(Chuckle)

DF: You hadn't had a good meal in a long time, had you?

MS: No, that's right.

DS: I think I gained about twenty pounds.

DF: Don, did you ever go back to Vietnam?

DS: No.

DF: Did you ever have any desire to?

MS: (Helps him understand the question) Did you ever have a desire to?

DS: I would, but I think it's changed so much. Like I was amazed. I met some Vietnamese who learned English in Australia. Their accent was perfect.

DF: You had how many siblings?

MS: A brother six years older and a sister a year and a half older. Bob and Marjorie. I'll show you a picture of 'em.

DF: Did any of them ever go back to Vietnam?

DS & MS: No. They didn't. No.

DS: My father came from a non-Christian family. They were all Church of England. (Corrects himself) I mean, the United Church of Canada. They were made up of Presbyterian...

MS: (Showing picture) Mom and Dad. This is the whole family.

DF: Oh wow!

MS: Don, Bob, his brother. Marjorie, his sister.

DF: Yeah. I recognize 'em now.

MS: Do you?

DF: Yeah. I'm going to stick this in front of the camera here. See if I can do this right?

DS: (Asks Mary) Congregational United Church. The United Presbyterian, and what else?

MS: Episcopalian? Or Anglican? Are you trying to think of denominations?

DS: Three that make up the United Church.

MS: Oh, the United Church. Methodist?

DS: Methodist.

DF: Sorry, again, from left to right. (Showing family picture)

MS: Marjorie, his sister. His father, Curwin. Sheila, his mother. Her name actually is Bernadette, but she didn't like Bernadette, so they called her Sheila. Don, and his brother, Bob.

DF: Okay, thank you.

DS: I was in the jungle and I climbed a tree, showing my sister how to climb a tree. I got to the top of the tree and came down. A branch broke off and ripped my leg open. I landed on the ground. I had my leg there showing the muscles and the bone and everything. It didn't bleed at all. Amazing! We had a Jewish nurse who was at our place. I've forgotten her name. A member of our mission field. She bound it up with tape, and was amazed. No bleeding at all.

MS: No infection set in either.

DS: Then we played a game called prisoner's base. We had one mountain top where three sides went up together. One side was bare face, over 200 feet down. No trees. No nothing. Well, I happened to come into base. Captured the flag. I was running. My friend said, "let's go on this way." I said, no, we're going to go this way. So long" and I jumped. Oh, (shakes head) it was a long jump. I landed there and didn't hurt myself at all. Landed on my feet. Kept my balance. Ran a little way and brought out the flag.

DF: Now that was capture the flag up at... (tape stops)