

Evelyn Revelle

Missionary to Vietnam

1950 -1975

Interviewed by David Fitzstevens 12/2004
Transcribed by Winnie Kaetzel 12/2007

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Interview with Evelyn Revelle

DF: Today is December 2, 2004. This is David Fitzstevens speaking and interviewing Evelyn Revelle in her home here in Bradenton Florida. Just a couple things to start here, Evelyn, can you tell me your full name?

ER: Oh, Evelyn Revelle.

DF: Okay. Is that your middle name or your first name?

ER: That's my middle name.

DF: You don't tell anybody your first name?

ER: I don't tell anybody my first name. I told my mother one day when I was five years old, "I don't like that name." (Whispers) "That's an old maid's name." And I've been called by my middle name ever since. (Chuckles) Cheeky little brat. Huh?

DF: Five years old, huh? That's great. Well, I go by my middle name, too.

ER: Oh, do you?

DF: My first name's actually John.

ER: I didn't know that.

DF: We already have two other Johns in the family, so...

ER: Yeah. Right.

DF: The first thing I'd like to do is... This is the beginning segment II. I'm going to skip segment two for the record here. With our limited time I'm going to go on and do some other things here. Ah... Segment III is about your calling to ministry and your preparation. **When and how did you come to Christ?**

ER: When I was nine years old my friend passed away and I realized, "now she's gone to heaven. If I should die, would I go to heaven?" Of course I'd been brought up in the church all of my life. I had believed but I did not have any real assurance that I was saved. It wasn't until I was in a Daily Vacation Bible School that my teacher led me to the Lord from John 1:12.

DF: Tell me a little bit about your **family background**. What kind of situation were you in?

ER: My parents were very strict; strict Presbyterians from Ireland. I was the oldest of seven children. So, I learned early how to be pretty bossy. (Chuckle) And grew up in a small town. Four room schoolhouse. I had kind of an old fashioned up-bringing.

DF: And that was where?

ER: That was in Brookside New Jersey. North Jersey.

DF: Tell me about your **calling to Vietnam**. What factors led you to make that kind of a commitment?

ER: It was almost "strange," but not quite strange. It was God putting His hand on my shoulder and saying, "this is what you're going to do."

DF: How old were you at that time?

ER: About ten. We had a missionary. Actually it was Mr. Brabazon from India. He stayed in our home during missionary conference and I just felt that...

DF: Was this an Alliance Church?

ER: Yes. Morristown New Jersey.

DF: And you knew the Lord was calling you to missions?

ER: Yes, it wasn't that I wanted to do it so much as "this is what you're going to do."

DF: At what point in your life did you feel called specifically to Vietnam? When did Vietnam come into the picture?

ER: (Smiling) That's a really interesting story. Do you want me to tell you the truth?

DF: Umhuh.

ER: (Chuckles gently) When I graduated from Nyack I was immediately appointed to go to India as a secretary-bookkeeper. I got an application for my passport and all that and it didn't come through. The visa didn't come through, and it didn't come through. Headquarters kept asking about it, trying to find out what was going on,

and they said my application was lost. In the meantime I started going with Jack Revelle.

DF: Sorry, where was he and what was he doing at that point?

ER: He was in Nyack. He had taken the theology course. I took the missions course.

DF: You'd already finished and were getting ready to go. He was still a student? Right?

ER: Yes. So, headquarters then decided to send us both to Vietnam, which I'm very, very thankful that they did. 5.50

DF: So was he on his way to Vietnam when you met him?

ER: No, no, he wasn't. But he said he would wait until... A term in India at that point was seven years.

DF: He was going to wait a whole term for you to come back?

ER: That's what he said.

DF: Oh, wow!

ER: My mom and dad said, "oh yeah?" (Hearty chuckles) That's how it came about.

DF: So that delay was...

ER: Yeah, the fact that they lost that visa application and could never find it. For over a couple of years they tried to follow it up.

DF: So, you owe your relationship to Jack to the Embassy of India? In New York?

ER: Well, I think there was a higher power. (Chuckles)

DF: I mean, God used India to bring you two together? I mean, to give you the time to get together?

ER: Oh yes. And Vietnam was such an exciting field. I mean (puts hands on either side of her mouth as if to whisper) India wouldn't have held a candle. (Chuckles) Excuse me.

DF: So, when did you arrive in Vietnam?

ER: 1950. After a year in France, because Vietnam at that point was a French colony.

DF: So in '49 you went to France? And studied French there for a year?

ER: Yes. (Nods head) Right. We were required to get the certificate.

DF: **Who was the most influential person in your life?** It could be an author or a living person.

ER: (Pauses to think) I suppose in my very early life, my Sunday School teacher probably. She taught us the Bible like I think very few people today would know it from ordinary attendance at Sunday School and church.

DF: Sorry, do you remember your Sunday School teacher's name?

ER: Umhuh. Madeline Stegmeier. She was a school teacher. After I went into high school, she used to have me and another girl come to her room every morning for prayer before school began. When we got to the field, she wrote to us. She was a very big influence.

DF: How did she influence you? In what way did she influence you?

ER: (Pauses to ponder) Well, she made Christian experience relevant, and... I don't want to use the word, "fun." That's maybe not the right word, but something that was "okay. This was good. You could go with this." You see, my parents would give the atmosphere of "you can't do this, you can't do that, you can't do something else."

DF: She helped you find the other side. Right?

ER: Yes.

DF: Hmm. **How did your family feel about your call to missions?**

ER: Oh, they were very proud of it. My father wished all his children would have gone into the Lord's service. He felt that very strongly. So much so, that he influenced my brother to go to Nyack and my brother had no business being in Nyack. He left and joined the Army, then after the war got his Ph.D. from MIT. (Smiles broadly)

DF: **How did you first learn or hear about Vietnam?** Were you hearing a lot about it at Nyack?

ER: (Pauses to remember) No. It was too early. I suppose in France I heard more about it because of its being a French colony.

DF: But when you were assigned to Vietnam, you were obviously open to it, so they assigned you... At that point you didn't know much about...

ER: I didn't know. No. They said, "go," and you did what you were told, you know? It used to be. (Chuckles) I'd better be careful.

DF: **What obstacles or things did you have to overcome to get to the mission field?**

ER: (Pauses to remember) Well, I had two children in two years which...

DF: Before you went?

ER: Yeah. This was '48 and '49. Which I suppose really delayed our going a little bit because we felt they should be a little bit older. I think they were about three and four...

DF: What were you doing during that time?

ER: Jack was pastoring a church.

DF: Where was that?

ER: In Batavia New York.

DF: Was that part of the...

ER: The Northeastern (District)...

DF: Was that part of the assignment to work in a church before you go overseas?

ER: Home service.

DF: Home service. Yeah.

ER: Yeah, I suppose it was, 'cause that's the only church we served in.

DF: **How did you first go to the mission field?** By ship?

ER: Yeah, by ship. By freighter.

DF: Do you remember which one it was.

ER: Oh, the Steele. Always, the Steele boats. It was cheaper to go that way.

DF: Any interesting stories about your trip on the ship?

ER: Oh, it was so dirty... (shakes head)

DF: All the stuff...? And two little children?

ER: Yes. Right.

DF: Was there anything that you took to the field that you found really useful? Or on the other hand something that you took that was not useful?

ER: Well, it was kind of... Yes, you might be interested to hear that. Jack had been pastoring a church in Brooklyn New York, and when we knew that we were going to Vietnam, we thought, "we probably ought to learn how to rough it a little bit." So we left Brooklyn and went down to the Ozark Mountains where we had no running water, no inside bathroom, no support, no money, no nothing.

DF: This wasn't an assignment? You just decided it was what you should do?

ER: No. No. We did it because... Which wasn't really true... We would have done better to have stayed in the city church and deal with the problems of a pastorate in a good sized church. It was not an experience that I regret. It was good for us.

DF: So where was that?

ER: In Limestone Arkansas. (Cups hands to shape a valley) It was down in a valley. We had no transportation.

DF: There was already a church there?

ER: There was a group that met there. They would meet according to if the sun was setting... When it got dark, it was time for church. (Gentle chuckle) It was a really unique experience, and much harder in some ways than anything we faced on the mission field.

DF: So you went from New York to Paris? France? How long did it take you to get from New York to France for language school, and then from there...? through the Suez Canal?

ER: Oh, yes, through the Suez Canal.

DF: How long did it take you to go from Paris to Vietnam?

ER: (Pauses to remember) About a month. It was hot. There was no air-conditioning, but there were fans in the cabins. But all the fans broke down. It was so hot. There were some nights when we slept on the floor in the bar. Everybody was doing it because you couldn't stay in the cabins. It was so hot.

DF: Was there air-conditioning there? Or there were fans in...?

ER: Well, I don't remember. All I knew that down on the floor was cooler than to be up in the bunks. (Smiles at memory) And they were taking horses to the King of Cambodia. They let us go first class on that ship, which was very nice of them. But down below us, on the deck below were these horses that they were taking to the King of Cambodia.

DF: From...?

ER: From France.

DF: Were these like Arabian horses or something?

ER: I don't know. I didn't get down that close to them.

DF: So, I'd just like to go over for segment four here, a **brief chronology**. You first arrived in Vietnam in '50. And you left in 1975. Right? And can you tell me by location and what years you were there?

ER: Oh.

DF: When you first arrived in Vietnam you went to...?

ER: We went to Danang, and we were there for five years in language study and then in the district work, because during that time there was a separation of the... what parallel is it now? Jack was the first missionary able to go out into the district and meet with churches that had been under VC control all of these years. They had no Bibles brought in, no contact with the outside world.

DF: Since World War II?

ER: Since the Japanese... The Japanese took over in 1940. Really. And then things got worse and worse, and then the Americans came.

DF: These were people who were cut off for...?

ER: Yes, right. That was the first contact they had with a missionary. 17.52

DF: This was north of Danang or...?

ER: In the surrounding area of Danang.

DF: So you were in Danang until...?

ER: For five years. Our first term.

DF: And then you must have been back around '55?

ER: '55.

DF: And where were you then?

ER: Second term? (Pauses to ponder) Second term was Can Tho, down in the delta.

DF: Were you there the whole term?

ER: No, we were there for one year and then Jack was elected chairman, or field director as they say now. So we moved to Saigon and were there for the rest of that term.

DF: Jack was chairman for the next three years?

ER: Yeah. Right

DF: And when you came back the next time, you were...?

ER: Let's see, we were in Nhatrang. Then he was elected chairman again but I'm not...

DF: In Nhatrang was he teaching?

ER: Yes, at the Bible School.

DF: For a year or two?

ER: Oh, it would have been almost a whole term, I believe.

DF: Okay.

ER: I was teaching music and he was teaching Bible subjects and homiletics, and that kind of thing.

DF: So you taught music?

ER: Yeah, on these little pump organs. (Smiles)

DF: Who were you teaching music to? All the students, or...?

ER: Anybody. Whoever wanted to learn.

DF: Was that something that the...? Did the men ever take piano, or...?

ER: Oh yes, I probably had more men students than women.

DF: And then that takes us up to about '65, I think, right? Around there somewhere.

ER: Yeah. I was trying to remember. I wish I had written this down at the time. Jack was pastor of the International Church in Saigon for a while, too.

DF: Was that while he was chairman?

ER: No. I think Mr. Jeffrey was probably chairman then. And so, that was just another thing, but I don't remember exactly how many years it was. (long pause) Between Danang, Nhatrang, Saigon, and Can Tho... Those are the places that we served.

DF: Was Jack chairman in 1975?

ER: Jack was chairman at the time... Well, oh no, we were at home for four years. Our youngest son, Stan, wasn't doing well at school. He just wasn't relating well to people. Ruth Wehr told us, "Stan's not going to be able to get into college if he doesn't do better." He just needed to be with his parents. The other two boys were self-starters. You never had to ask them, "is this done? Is that done?" But Stan needed the help of somebody saying, "is your math finished? Okay, let's start on

this." You know. "Let's get it finished." So we came home... We were home on furlough in '68. Then Jack candidated and took a pastorate in the Endicott New York church. We were there, and as soon as Stan had the security of his parents, he began to do very well in school. When he went into college he was on the Dean's list. It wasn't that he couldn't do it, it was just that he needed help at that stage in his life. We were very glad that we had done it.

DF: This wasn't necessarily war related at that time?

ER: No. No. It was parent related. In those days people weren't doing that kind of thing much. They do it much oftener now.

DF: What kind of price did you pay for that? Was there much misunderstanding about your staying home?

ER: (Pauses) No. Well, I don't think it would have made any difference. We felt that...

DF: Well, you have to do it, but did you feel like people questioned your calling?

ER: Oh yes, there would have been some, but that's alright. (Shrugs) That part doesn't really matter so much.

DF: I just wondered if anybody gave you a bad time about that?

ER: No. Well, actually, I suppose this is maybe off the record, but we'd paid a price earlier, because our oldest son somehow felt that the work was more important than he was. (Nods head and begins to tear up)

DF: So this is...?

ER: Jack. (Son)

DF: Jack. When you stayed home...?

ER: And when you stayed home, had he already graduated from high school? No, he and Ron both wanted to take their high school in the States, because they felt it would be better getting into college. So we stayed home for two years with them and then went back leaving them with a Christian family in Asbury Park, New Jersey.

DF: Sorry. Was this on a furlough or was it during that four year spell when you were in the States with Stan?

ER: With Stan? No. It was a LOA, it was a leave of absence.

DF: But, I mean when the older boys were making that...?

ER: Yes, because we felt that we'd made a mistake with the older boys and were very sorry because the family wasn't what we had really anticipated and we felt sorry. So we stayed home for the whole four years with Stan. Then when he went into college, we went back in '73.

DF: So during that four years, Jack and Ron were in college?

ER: Were in college. Yeah.

DF: Was that hard to send your kids to Dalat?

ER: Oh yes! Oh yes! I mean, you're an MK. You would ask that question?

DF: Well, I know it has to be, but did you ever resent having to do that? 'Cause that was the only option at the time.

ER: No. That was the only option at the time, and we felt that it was better for them than anything else that we could have done at the time. I don't feel all that enthused about home schooling. I think maybe it's better now, and there's more material, but the first year that Jack was going to school. He would have been in first grade. They wrote to us and said, "he's the only child in first grade. We're not teaching first grade this year."

DF: So, you home schooled?

ER: Yeah, I did. Calvert. Calvert course.

DF: How did your children feel about having to go to boarding school?

ER: I think they had pretty much (hesitantly), you do what you have to do. They knew what was expected. They got along well. Sports were very important at Dalat. Ron was more into sports. Jack probably read every book in the library. He said at Dalat once.

DF: Both of 'em? (Jesting) No. They did have a pretty good library, I think.

ER: Yeah, but it was a difference in kids.

DF: Right.

ER: Which, when you're in a limited environment, it's harder to compensate for that kind of thing.

DF: When you arrived in Danang, **who was your senior missionary?** 28.48

ER: Ah ha! Mr. & Mrs. Olson. Mostly Mrs. Olson. (Chuckle) Mrs. Olson would have told you where to hang your drapes and how and what time you should eat your supper, and if you should let your servants have Sunday off or not. So we know what senior missionaries are like. That's between you and me.

DF: (Chuckle)

ER: That's why when your parents came and lived in that house next door, I was so glad to have somebody young there.

DF: At that time, they must have already been quite elderly weren't they? I mean, how old were they?

ER: Oh yeah, of course they were. Oh, I don't know how old Mr. Olson was when he died. Oh yeah, very old, and they never had any children.

DF: Hmm. What were they like?

ER: They were very well meaning. He was a linguist and a very good one, but was in a (ponders her words carefully) kind of straightened... I'm trying to think of the word to do him justice. Definitely old school that felt he was there to tell the younger missionaries what they should do. Well, by that time there were several of these younger... young Turks (Chuckle) that didn't always feel that... For instance, you were never supposed to have a Vietnamese worker sleeping in your house. You didn't open your home for somebody to stay overnight. They made other arrangements. This kind of thing. (Shakes head) Well, of course, in our eyes, we considered them our equals and we would have had them stay in our house.

DF: Where did that (attitude) come from?

ER: Colonial. (Nods head)

DF: Did they pick that behavior up from the French.

ER: Well, it was the colonial...

DF: The French didn't treat the Vietnamese as equals. Is that why they did that?

ER: I don't know if that's why they did it, but I think that was the feeling. I think they tended to imitate the French and their repertoire and their dealings... But on the other hand, the first year that we came to Vietnam, they had a Vietnamese Dean in the Bible School, and that was a real, real switch. I mean, Africa was years and years behind Vietnam in that kind of sense.

DF: Do you know who that was?

ER: The dean? Oh, Mr. Nguyen. (Smiles fondly at the memory) He was a wonderful person.

DF: Can you tell me about him? What kind of man was he?

ER: (Hearty chuckle) He was a little short man. And our son, Stan is tall. He's always been tall for his age. Well, he had outgrown this Sunday suit, because in Dalat you wore a suit for Sunday. He had outgrown this Sunday suit, so we found a way to very tactfully offer this suit to Mr. Nguyen, and it was just right. (Chuckle)

DF: And how old was Stan? He probably wasn't...

ER: I don't think he was quite twelve. (Hearty chuckles) But he got such a kick out of a man of Mr. Nguyen's caliber wearing his Sunday suit. He got such a bang out of that.

But Mr. Nguyen was a scholar, and he understood the things that missionaries needed to know and nobody was telling them.

DF: So was he a... (cultural guide)?

ER: Yes, you could go to him, and we did. And it got us into trouble. (Smiles sheepishly) I shouldn't be telling you these things.

DF: It's alright. No, it's good. (Both chuckle) That's the kind of stuff I want.

ER: Anyway... Well, it's human relations.

DF: Yeah.

ER: And I think it's very different on most fields now. There isn't this feeling, I don't suppose, but we would go to Mr. Nguyen and ask him this or that.

DF: You got in trouble for going to him?

ER: Oh yes. We should have asked the senior missionary on the station.

DF: Do you remember what kind of thing you were going to ask him about?

ER: Well, (hesitantly) sometimes we wanted to give money to some good cause. We would ask him about it because, you know, giving money is one of the hardest things you do on the mission field from the standpoint of knowing where true need is, and where it does harm or where it does good. So, we would talk to Mr. Nguyen about something like that if we wanted to help. Somebody was needy—that kind of thing.

DF: Now, at that time the Bible School was in Danang. Right?

ER: Yes.

DF: So during that term in Danang were you both teaching at the School? No, you were involved in district work, you said. Sorry. I forgot

ER: Yes. Right.

DF: So was Mr. Nguyen a bit of a cultural guide to you?

ER: Oh yes. Yes. Oh, I would have taken his word on anything.

DF: You folks had a good relationship with him?

ER: Oh. Very. Very good relationship with him. All of our years in Vietnam. I think... I wouldn't want you to quote this because I'm not sure about the year, but, I think he was ordained the year I was born. 'Cause he had been... for a long, long time, and he was very revered among his peers, and by the church in Vietnam. Both he and his wife were wonderful, wonderful people. Actually, he just died, not too many years ago. And until he did, they used to help him up—bring him up and sit him in a chair. He would still preach when he could barely see.

DF: Shortly after I arrived back in Vietnam—one of my first trips in the south, I visited a church. His hearing was going and they'd bring him up and he'd pray at that point. Was he blind? I think he was blind at that stage.

ER: Probably was.

DF: They would guide him up and he would pray at the church there.

ER: There's no pastor in the United States that I would revere more. (Shakes head)

DF: It sounds like he had an impact on your life.

ER: Oh yes, because we trusted his judgment... (Shrugs as if speechless) He was. Yes. He was an extraordinary man.

DF: You mentioned "young Turks" a few minutes ago. Who were some of the other "young Turks?" Do you put yourself and Jack in that category?

ER: (Hearty laugh) Well, yeah... That was a factor of this post-colonial error-era... Error, (chuckles) Freudian slip.

Jack wasn't really a person for change for changes sake. He was very reasoned, and I don't know that he should be considered among the "young Turks."

DF: Who were the "young Turks?"

ER: Well, you put me on the spot there.

DF: Yeah.

ER: Maybe like Charlie Long...

DF: He was there about the time you folks arrived, too?

ER: Well, a little bit later, but you see there were three patriarchs: the Stebbins, Irwins, and Olsons. Then there was a time lapse before they got anybody else that those three were kind of put on a pedestal. Their word was law and you didn't question it. But then they started getting more people, and when you have more people you have more ideas, so their dictum wasn't as accepted as...

DF: Suggestion, not the law. (Chuckle)

ER: Yes. (Ponders) Well, maybe we could do it this way... (gentle chuckles for both) And then Jack was elected chairman. He was the first of the new lump of

missionaries. They had only ever had Mr. Irwin or Mr. Jeffrey. Mr. Stebbins was never elected chairman.

DF: We had a north and a south...

ER: Yeah, but it was one field. Really, one field. Oh, when Mr. Jackson came down to visit. I'll never forget that. Will you turn that thing off? (Hearty chuckle)

DF: Aw, come on.

ER: He came...

DF: Was this Herbert or...?

ER: Not Herb, no. R. M. He came down because he was on the committee—they were doing a revision of the Bible and a revision of the hymn book. He was on the committee from the north because there was a difference in the language. So he came down for this committee meeting. He arrived at noon, about one o'clock. We didn't take siestas, but Olsons always did. So, he came knocking at our door. We brought him in, sat him down, and had food for him. We were having a good time with him (Smiles sheepishly) and Mr. Olson came over. He was really, really angry that he should have come to the junior missionary on the station.

DF: During... and interrupt his nap? I mean is that what he was asking? He was supposed to wait outside his house until his nap was finished?

ER: I don't know what he thought, but anyway, but what he said was, "we were not the ones to entertain people on that station." I mean, this is how colonial it could be.

DF: So, protocol, he should have...

ER: Protocol, yeah. 42.19

DF: So Jacksons were the same age group? Or a little bit younger?

ER: Oh, they were younger than Olsons. Ask Dick Taylor about 'em, because Dick Taylor was in the north and R. M. Jacksons were Dick Taylor's senior missionaries.

DF: Oh. Good.

ER: They were not so hard and fast, I don't think, as the Olsons. Olsons went home on furlough eventually and Carlsons came and the Carlsons we loved. We just

thoroughly enjoyed the Carlsons. It was the difference of night and day. But this can happen to young missionaries, and it's... I wouldn't say it's common necessarily, but...

DF: So that sounds like an interesting relationship to have—a patriarch like that as a senior missionary and yet... Looking back, was there some good that came out of that relationship? What did you learn from them? Can you look back and say, “well, I think I learned this lesson from those folks?”

ER: (We) learned respect to do a good job on the language. Learned a few things like, if you lend somebody something don't ever expect to get it back. That is a hard lesson for a new missionary. If they ask to borrow something and you lend it to them, you will never get it back. Well, Mr. Olson taught me that. He said, “you won't, and if you ask for it, it's a faux pas.”

DF: So did you learn that the hard way?

ER: I did learn that the hard way.

DF: He told you but you still had to get burned?

ER: Yeah. (Shrugging) I forget what it was. It was some kind of music that I had loaned. Oh yes, and how never, never, ever, to cause somebody to lose face. You must cover up for them to make it as face-saving as possible.

DF: Did he do that well?

ER: He was never in the position... (chuckles)

DF: Sounds like he was a pretty direct kind of guy.

ER: Oh, he was! Yeah, he was.

DF: So, he'd tell you, “now don't do anything to make 'em lose face, but then...?”

ER: Well, he wouldn't have deliberately... He would have tried to avoid making someone lose face. Oh at all costs in the Orient...

DF: But was he very direct, though?

ER: He knew how to be indirect. I suspect he was more indirect with the Vietnamese than he was with us. He was very direct with us. (Smiles broadly)

DF: (Gentle chuckle) Do you remember what **your first impression of Vietnam** was when you arrived—of the people?

ER: Well, (my) first impression was, I was so glad to see land. We had been... we went through the canal the first time...

DF: The Suez?

ER: We went through the Suez when we came from France. Right. We left from Marseilles, then through the canal, and it seemed so long. It's a beautiful country—that was the first impression. Then I remember when we arrived in the Saigon Home and the person who was the hostess was talking kind of pigeon French, part English, like "be be sit here. Be be do this. Be be do that." Having come from Parisian French, I was horrified. I thought, "how come they sent us to spend a year in Paris learning French and then have somebody doing this?" (Hearty chuckle) I guess you get kind of proud of Parisian French.

DF: It's contagious, isn't it?

ER: Well, you have to work at it, but it's worth working at.

DF: You already talked about how the missionaries related to the nationals.

ER: Not all missionaries.

DF: So, it wasn't just that era... Did I say it right that time?

ER: (Hearty chuckle) Yeah.

DF: So each one had their own way of doing...?

ER: Well, their own personality entered into it.

DF: Sure.

ER: Yeah. Because, I hear them talk about Mr. Ferry with a great deal of respect, but they say he couldn't speak Vietnamese for anything.

DF: Huh?

ER: But he traveled all through the south and had an influence in churches. 48.37

DF: Where was he from?

ER: I don't know. He was gone before... I heard them talk of Cadman, and Ferry and Pruitt, but I know nothing of any of those men.

DF: Do you know what they said about any of those folks that you just mentioned?

ER: They thought very highly of Cadman. He was in the north and he did printing. I don't know whether he wrote books, authored books, but at least he printed books. I sensed quite a respect for him.

DF: He did a Bible dictionary I think, didn't he?

ER: Yes, I think he did. Right.

DF: How about Olson. Oh sorry, you just talked about him.

ER: Olson was a scholar, alright. He was a good scholar and a hard worker—very hard worker.

DF: Thank you. 49.31 **What did you do to identify with the local culture?**

ER: I tried to talk as they talked—for which I got my hands well slapped. Because, you see, for instance when you talk to a lady, if it's an older lady there's one word for it. If it's a younger lady it's another word. If it's an upper class lady, that's a third word still. So, I heard these people in the market and they were calling each other "che." So, I was walking with Mrs. Olson one day, and met one of these ladies and I greeted her and called her "chi," which is the word for older sister. I mean there's nothing derogatory about it at all. But Mrs. Olson told me, "you don't ever use that word, "chi." (Smiles) So you can't win. You know? But I tend to imitate what I saw.

DF: **How did you maintain your own culture and identity?**

ER: Kind of the truth is, I didn't. I was half Vietnamese. There wasn't really any way to maintain your own culture, and do a good job of what you were there to do? I didn't...

DF: What's an example of how you became quite Vietnamese in your approach?

ER: (Smiling broadly) I was walking through the market one day... I used to go to the market. Mrs. Olson didn't want me to go to the market, but I wanted to know what

was in the market and how much it cost. I learned how to ride a bicycle in Vietnam which my father had let me do when I was a kid. So I used to ride bicycle and go down to the market. One day walking through the market, some lady had a child there that was part Vietnamese and part American child. She said (to the child), “there’s your mother.” “There’s your mother” to this half Vietnamese child. She knew I could speak Vietnamese. If you can speak Vietnamese and do it accurately, you gain a great deal of respect.

DF: **How did your kids enhance or complicate** (your ministry)?

ER: (Laughing out loud) Well, I suppose... as soon as we got there we started Vietnamese study. We were finished with French study. We never used French—only if Jack had to go to help a Christian who’d been imprisoned or something. He’d go and see what he did and talk with the French officials. So, we never used French. We were immediately in Vietnamese study. Our kids who were three and four at the time would say to us, “mom, you don’t say it like that. Say it like this.” They heard the tones and they were...

DF: Correcting you?

ER: Yeah. Yes, and this is so funny. You won’t use this, but this is funny for me to tell you as an MK. Our third son—because there were six years difference between him and his older brothers. Stan knew how to speak Vietnamese very, very well. He started imitating the people that would go down the street selling bun mi.¹ He knew Vietnamese very well. One day there was something wrong with his bicycle. Well, the man down at the end of the street used to fix bicycles, so I said to Anh Tu, “take him down and get the bicycle fixed. So they went down and the man said, “can’t fix that bicycle. That’s not worth fixing.” Stan, of course, understood everything he said, and he didn’t appreciate the fact that he wouldn’t fix his bicycle. So he started saying the things he heard other people say when they get mad, and he didn’t know what he was saying.

DF: Cussing ‘em out, huh?

ER: Yeah. So Anh Thu came back to me and said, “Ba, you must tell Stanley not to say that word.” I didn’t know what the word meant, so, I went to look it up in the dictionary. (Hearty laugh) Stan had been cursing his ancestors saying they came from turtles which is the worst possible insult that you can give a Vietnamese. But he didn’t know what he was saying, he just said what people say when they get

¹Bun mi = a steamed bun with meat and vegetables inside often sold by vendors on the streets of Vietnamese cities.

mad. But, you know, after he went to Dalat, he wouldn't talk Vietnamese any more. I always felt sorry about that.

DF: Was Vietnamese Stan's first language? Well, probably his first and second language all at the same time.

ER: Oh yeah. Yeah.

DF: So he was born in...?

ER: He was born in Dalat.

DF: Now, you mentioned that Jack had to go to the prison sometimes to relate to a Christian being in prison. Could you tell me about that?

ER: Well, let's see, I don't know how much you know about the Vietnamese war. The countryside by day belonged to the government, by night it belonged to the VC which was the underlying principle of how it worked. So if you would do something by night to help them— if they come to your house and want rice and you give it to them. Then if somebody finds out about it and tells the government, government people will come to you and put you in jail because you were aiding and abetting the enemy. If a Christian was put in jail, they would come sometimes to the missionary, or the pastor would come for the missionary—tell 'em the story and ask him to go and talk to the man in charge. The man in charge was always a Frenchman in those days. So that's the only time you would use your French. After we got to Vietnam, we never used our French.

DF: Thank you for that (explanation). **How do you think the Vietnamese perceived you?** You and your husband? Your family?

ER: I think we had a very good repore with them. There were some people—like the VC among them... Of course, they knew who we were and didn't like what we did. I have heard people say in the market—and there is a word that they use for Americans that they don't like. They would say, "kong chaw," (with a rising tone). We were aware that it was there, but it didn't bother us. I mean we had friends. We always had friends.

DF: Now, was that what they called the French, too, or did they just make it up for foreigners? A derogatory term for a foreigner?

ER: Yeah.

DF: Now, back to a follow-up question there. I didn't think to ask it earlier. Did Jack have to bail out many people like that from prison?

ER: Not a lot, no, but it did happen. Because the French tortured. They used electric prods and all kinds of things.

DF: They wanted to get 'em out quickly.

ER: Yeah. (Nods) We understood very well why there was so much feeling against them. See, they didn't educate people to gradually take their place. If they had done that they could have held on for a lot longer. But they didn't do it.

(Camera begins to close down)

ER: I'm a good friend of your mom's.

DF: I appreciate you being open with me. This good relationship, transparency in transferring some of that trust to me.

This is **Tape Two** of an Interview with Evelyn Revelle on December 2, 2004. Ah... Just to continue here about your ministry experience. 1.00.24

DF: **What sustained you through the hard times?** What special Scripture promise or passage did you hold on to?

ER: (Ponders) Well, there was one night when I thought the VC were really coming up toward us. We were living at Nhatrang which is on the seacoast, and there was a village down below us. The missionaries' houses were up above. All of a sudden the village below us came alive with people knocking on doors and wanting to be admitted.

DF: You could hear all this?.

ER: Yes. You could hear all this very very...(clearly). There was a big crowd of people... Having gone through Banmethuot, of course, and realizing that people could come in by sea without any problem at all, I was afraid. I got up and went to the windows. I looked. I could see lights coming on in the village down below us. I woke Jack up. Jack is not a worrier. He got up, looked and said, "oh, I don't think it's anything," and he went back to bed. I couldn't go back to bed. And one small phrase of a hymn came to me and sustained me. "*For God is round about me, and I shall not be afraid.*" (Evelyn chokes up with the memory) And I went back to bed and I went to sleep. We found out afterward that it was a part of some unit of the army that was

being deployed to go somewhere, and they had sent them in there for R&R a little bit. But we didn't know what it was.

DF: Calling 'em up. Um! My goodness!

ER: Well, and there was another time when two men came to our door and banged on the door in the middle of the night and wanted Jack to go. They said, "There's an American who..." You see, Nhatrang is set off by two bridges. We were outside the city. Supposedly this American wanted Jack to go and get him out of some kind of trouble. And Jack would have gone, but I said to him, "how do you know that what they're saying is true? I don't think you should go." And I said, "No, don't go." And he didn't go, and the two men went away. But we never knew.

DF: Could have been a set-up, huh?

ER: Yeah. (Nods head)

DF: Do you remember when Dr. Vietti, Dan Gerber, and Archie Mitchell were taken, where were you when that happened? **(Tet 1962)**

ER: (Nods head as she remembers then ponders) Actually... No, that was before Tet. I don't remember where we were.

DF: Did that change the way you looked at living in Vietnam and the possibility of danger being there with your family?

ER: No. No. You knew it was there... And you knew that they were tossing grenades into a restaurant, but you just didn't... you do what you have to do, and we were young. I would feel a lot more reluctant about it probably now, but in Vietnam, we lived with what people are having in Baghdad now for years and years. Nobody thought anything of it.

DF: It's amazing how you get used to it. It becomes normal. And your sense of normal adjusts itself constantly.

ER: Yes. Exactly. That's true. When we were down in the delta, there was one time when I did pack a suitcase. They told us all the time, "you'd ought to have a suitcase packed and be ready just in case..."

DF: In case you need to evacuate?

ER: Yes. Right. And I never did it until a time in '72 when we were down in the delta. There was one road to Saigon. Only one way (Holds up forefinger for emphasis) to get there, and you had to cross the bac, the big wide river besides. I did pack a suitcase that time, but we never had to use it.

DF: What do you think happened to the three missionaries?

ER: Well, I think they probably died from malnutrition... could be malaria...

DF: Soon afterwards? Or over a longer period of time?

ER: Probably long. They knew how to sustain themselves. You know. I don't know.

DF: Let's move on to another dramatic time, **Tet Offensive of '68**.

ER: Oh we were home on furlough. I remember sitting in the dining room when the telephone call from New York came and they told us about that. Yeah.

DF: Did that make it harder to go back after that?

ER: Well, see that was the four years that we stayed home with Stan, and went back in '72. Yes, I guess... if we had not been on furlough... I don't know... We didn't scare easily but I don't think we would have been foolish either. And you have to think of your children, too.

DF: So when you went back in '72, it was just you and Jack then?

ER: Umhuh.

DF: So you weren't having to think about children. That made it a little bit easier?

ER: When we left in '75, that was a headquarters decision, because of what had happened in Danang and fighting in the streets, and looting, and just a very bad scene. (Screws up nose at the horror of it all) They didn't want to take the chance of that happening in Saigon, so it was a headquarters decision to bring the women and children out. Jack was left because he was chairman, and Bob McNeel, and Rex Rexillius, the three men. I didn't want to go. There was no reason I couldn't stay. We had no small children. But Jack said, "if something happens to me, I want them to have one parent." (Chokes up) It was something you had to look at.

DF: That must have been a hard decision.

ER: It was something you had to look at.

DF: That was at what stage? In '75?

ER: Oh, that was April. We left the 7th and it fell the 30th.

DF: And you left by plane to Bangkok?

ER: To Bangkok. And you know how wives are...

DF: How was that saying "good-bye" to Jack at the airport? Leaving him behind?

ER: (Deep sigh and shrug) You do what you have to do. That wasn't the hard part. The hard part was when... 'Cause I could talk to him by phone for the first couple weeks. But then communication with Saigon was broken. Then I didn't know if he was staying or going. You know how wives are... If I'm here, he's going to come here. Ho. Ho. Ho. (Gentle chuckle) But he had no way of getting there. For several days, I didn't know where he was. He had taken one of the last Red Cross planes. They took 'em as far as Guam and then said, "okay, you're on your own now."

DF: Then you found out...? Then he was able to call you from Guam?

ER: Then he got to New York. They had given him a credit card. He didn't go to New York. He went to California. Our son Ron was in California. He went to Ron's and from there talked to New York. They sent word to me in Bangkok that Jack was in California.

DF: So you had how many days without knowing where he was? 'Cause you were watching the news... You're seeing things that are happening...

ER: Oh yes. Right. (Nods head in agreement) That was hard. That was hard.

DF: How many days went by before you knew?

ER: (Ponders) Oh, I suppose at least three or four.

DF: Wow!

ER: Yes, that was hard. But then they got me a ticket and I flew immediately to California. We were there one night. The next... (chokes up) And this was really hard. The next morning he left and went down to Camp Pendleton to **work with the**

refugees, and that was probably the hardest thing we ever did. (Speaks through pent up tears) That was hard. But it was probably the best thing we ever did.

DF: Did you go, too?

ER: Oh yeah, I went the next day. I stayed overnight one more night and went the next day. We were there, I don't know how many months we were there, and then they opened up another camp at Indian Town Gap in Pennsylvania. And they asked us to go over and start all over again there.

DF: When you say that was one of the hardest things you had to do, do you mean to go into that kind of work, or to deal with those kinds of situations?

ER: Well, you're dealing with people who had maybe three children and lost one of 'em on this corner and never saw them again. (Chokes up) And they were in America.

DF: All the heartbreak.

ER: And they can't talk to anybody, and they don't have anything, and they've lost everything. (With much emotion) I mean, Americans can't possibly ever, understand what those people went through. Of course, your folks worked with 'em. The same thing in Hong Kong, I'm sure.

DF: Yeah. I've dealt with a lot of them up in Montreal as well, during the Operation Heartbeat time.

ER: Yeah. Right. That's what it was.

DF: Then in the camps in Thailand, as well. I understand what you're saying. How did you...? I mean, what sustained you through all these heart-wrenching situations?

ER: Because you were doing everything you could do to help.

DF: It must have been long days.

ER: (still choked up) It was long days. And (chuckling) I never thought I would come to the place where I didn't want to see restaurant food. We hardly ever ate out in restaurants, but of course, living in a motel, you have to eat out in a restaurant every meal; breakfast, noon, and night. And it all tasted the same. (Shakes head) It was worth doing and there were churches that were born out of that work. It's good!

DF: Did you see many come to Christ during that time there?

ER: Oh yes. A lot. A lot. (Shakes head)

DF: Can you tell me about **some people that you invested yourself in?**

ER: (Smiles at memory) They had never had Vacation Bible Schools in Vietnam. I started that. Doris Irwin and I got the handwork stuff and prepared all the curriculum by hand, and held the school in the big Saigon church. They caught on. They liked it, so we were asked to do it several places.

It was during a Bible School like that, that there was a little twelve year old girl. I didn't know this until years afterward. But her father had just died close to that time. She was feeling the loss, and she accepted the Lord, and really came to a knowledge of Christ. So we were sent down to Can Tho. Now Can Tho has a very big unit of the State Colleges there. This girl came to me and wanted to know if they could have a meeting in my house—like an Inter-Varsity kind of meeting. She was by that time a professor of economics. She was this little twelve year old that had accepted the Lord in a Vacation Bible School.

DF: Do you remember her name?

ER: Oh yeah. Huang. It means perfume. Anyway, I saw her in a Vietnamese Camp meeting in Maryland, where all of a sudden I saw this couple come in. I looked at them. They had just come out of Vietnam. They had been eight years under the Communists. They had just come out. (Smiles as she remembers) I don't know how much to tell you. Anyway, they wanted to go to Bible School, and appealed to the Alliance...

DF: This is in the States, now...?

ER: This is in the States. Yeah. And the Alliance said, "we'll let him study first, and you work and support him, and then after he gets through, then he'll work and support you." And they felt it would have been so long a period of time to do it that way. So they didn't take that offer. Instead they went to the Mennonites. She was teaching Hebrew, had gotten her Ph. D., and wrote her dissertation on the book of Lamentations. She sent me a copy of it. (Chuckles)

DF: Wow! Did he go on (to study)...?

ER: Yeah. Yes, he pastored a church there...

DF: Is this in Philadelphia?

ER: No, no. Outside of Washington (D.C.). I went to see them and stayed with them in their home. They cooked soie for me, and pounded the sesame seeds (gestures pounding). Oh, that is so good. I love that.

DF: This is...?

ER: Huang, and her husband's name is Kan. Oh, the Alliance wouldn't have found a couple like that in fifty years.

DF: That's unfortunate.

ER: (Whispers) I was so, so upset! They really missed it on that.

DF: Is she teaching now?

ER: I don't know if she's teaching now... They moved to Alabama and I need to write to them at their new address. I don't know, but I usually (keep up with them) just at Christmas time. But... *despise not the day of small things*. You know? (Shakes head)

DF: Well, I'm glad they were able to go on somehow.

ER: Yeah.

DF: That's unfortunate when that happens, but...

ER: Oh yeah. (Shakes head with disbelief)

DF: Anybody else that comes to mind? That's a great story. Thank you for that.

ER: (Ponders) Yeah, she's a...

DF: Twelve year old.

ER: Yeah, yeah. Well, when you work with students you don't see it right away but you do have influence. And Jack did. I have heard Dr. Fu say that maybe he influenced more students than anybody. The quality of his life... He was a very quiet person. I doubt... You probably don't remember Jack at all.

DF: I have some childhood impressions. Can you tell me more about him?

ER: What do you want to know?

DF: I don't know if that's difficult to do. You were starting there... you said he was quiet..

ER: He studied homiletics his WHOLE life. Actually he was teaching homiletics in Canberra, in Australia. He taught... the last thing he did the day he went into the hospital. He taught his class in the morning. He was a scholar. He had a heart for God. (Nodding and smiling) He was a great person.

DF: I have a couple sentences. If you would complete these sentences for me, please.
What gave me the most joy in my ministry in Vietnam was...

ER: (Ponders) Probably teaching in the Bible School. Although, I liked everything I did. I did a lot of children's work. Any Christian that would open up their home, I'd go and teach a class there every week. And of course, here's this big nosed foreigner coming in, so people would come and stand around outside the fence...

DF: Like a DVBS, you mean?

ER: No, no. I'd do some series on the Bible stories, one kind or another. We didn't do crafts or anything like that, but singing and a story, flannel graph, and stuff. Somebody counted 65 people standing around the outside. (Chuckles) I used to do a lot of that and women's Bible studies in the churches wherever I was, in Can Tho...

And something that they had never seen before... Started by.... It's the same idea as Christian Women's Association. You have some kind of a feature: cake decorating or one thing or another. You can't come unless you bring one non-Christian lady with you. You'd fill up as many people as you could get in their house. They had never seen that kind of thing as outreach.

DF: Did that take off?

ER: Yes. That did very well in Can Tho. Then we were moved back up to Saigon, and I never was able to do it there because the churches were so much bigger and the neighborhoods were different. But it was an interesting thing to do.

DF: Who's the pastor in Can Tho?

ER: (ponders momentarily) Hinh. (Chuckles) When we first went there, he definitely had a little attitude about missionaries. That existed, and we knew that.

DF: Sorry, could you say just a little bit more about that? I mean, the kind of attitude that missionaries...?

ER: Well, when he came to see us—just to make a visit... We didn't have fancy furniture. We had rattan chairs, but they weren't like this (motions to the furniture in her apartment), they were just kind of like these barrel (gestures)... We didn't have a lot of money, so we had what we could afford. He told us that he thought that they deserved to have better furniture than that when they came to see us. He really did. That was the kind of attitude he had. He was influenced by VC thought and attitude. (Nodding with emphasis) But, by the time we left Can Tho, we didn't have a better friend anywhere. After we moved to Saigon, every time he would come to Saigon, he would come to see us.

DF: Sounds like you broke the stereotype that he had in his mind.

ER: Yes. Yes. But (shrugging) you do what you have to do.

DF: What ever happened to him?

ER: Oh, he didn't get out, I don't think. I never did hear. I don't know. You wonder what happened to a lot of people. I had very good friends.

DF: I have a... Duan Trang Tien, you know him?

ER: Oh yes.

DF: He puts out a directory every year and it's got everybody in there. I'll have to look that up.

ER: Oh yeah? He was just in the States. Did he contact you?

DF: Ahh... if he comes through Bangkok he contacts me. I just arrived Tuesday night and I'm leaving again next week, so he wouldn't know I'm here.

ER: No, but I was wondering... He called me up. He has a son, I believe, in Texas.

DF: Right.

ER: Alright, that couple has just had a baby, so Grandfather came to the States to see this first grandchild.

DF: Oh yeah. He went to Toccoa, if I remember right.

ER: I don't know. I wasn't aware of this at all. But he told me on the phone...

DF: That's nice. I'm glad he called you.

ER: Yes, oh, he talked for a long time. Stan Lemon knows him, and he talked to Stan for a long time, too. A LONG time.

DF: That's great! He's a good friend.

ER: He's a good man, and he has suffered a lot for the Gospel's sake. He really has.

DF: Yeah. He really gets things done up there especially with the ethnic minorities.

ER: Does he? But it troubled me. I wondered how come... how can he get money to come... why does the government give him a visa for this kind of thing? I wondered.

DF: Ah, Vietnamese pastors, for a long time, couldn't get any kind of passport or anything. That loosened up a little bit. There's only a few that really can't get their papers and get their passport. Once they have a passport, they can go anywhere they want to. It's not like before when they had to apply to leave.

ER: Oh, they don't have to... Ah, okay, because he's been in prison.

DF: Oh yeah. I was just at a meeting upcountry in Thailand, in Udorn and there were twenty pastors from Vietnam at that meeting.

ER: Ah... Okay...

DF: A Philippine friend put it on and invited me to come up, and I don't want to take up time with this story... Well, it doesn't matter. I met this young man from Dalat. He's a pastor of a Baptist General Conference house church in Dalat. I played small world with him, and said, "oh, do you know my friend, brother E?" Then asked him about somebody else, and he said, "oh yeah, that's my cousin." I said, "if he's your cousin," (this is Prong's son) "then your father must be An Tue." He goes, "yeah." (Both chuckle) He's quite a bit younger than I am, so we never really knew each other, but I had met him once, I think at the co-op when we used to do the wood-burning pictures when I first went back in the Saigon area. I went up to Dalat in about '85. But, anyway that was quite an emotional encounter... Because An Tue and Chi Tue took care of me when I was little, down there in Can Tho, I guess it was.

ER: At Ben Tre...

DF: At Ben Tre. And then of course, Dalat, and our families go way back to Bep and...

ER: Right.

DF: Our grandparents knew each other. You know?

ER: Right. It's quite a heritage.

DF: Yeah, it is.

ER: And it does something for you. (Emphatically) We can learn so much from the Orient. They've got things that we don't. Anyway. I'm taking too much of your time. (Looks at watch)

DF: No. No, you're not. I've got two more questions for you. **What's the best practical joke that you pulled or that you know was ever pulled in Vietnam?** Can you think of any? Missionaries doing stuff on each other?

ER: (looks away to ponder) Vietnam? Oh, we used to do stuff at Dalat. At Conference time, you know.

DF: What kind of stuff did you do? Or you just probably watched...

ER: I just probably watched. Yeah. I did that kind of stuff at Youth Conference before I got to Vietnam.

DF: You didn't do any of that stuff...? I guess if your husband's the chairman, you couldn't do any... You had to at least look serious. Right?

ER: Oh, no. No, no. I was more serious than I am now, though.

DF: Really?

ER: Yeah, yeah. Jack taught me how to not take myself so seriously.

DF: But can you think of any good practical jokes people did on each other at Dalat? At Conference time?

ER: (ponders) Oh, they short-sheeted each other, and stuff like that. That's kind of... (wrinkles up nose) Yeah, that's nothing... There was one time when Downs was in charge of the game night. He's Australian.

DF: Bruce Downs.

ER: Bruce. (Nodding) and Joan. They were in charge. And they kept those missionaries running all evening. One thing after another. We had never had a conference like that. (Hearty chuckles at the memory)

DF: Was that fun?

ER: Yeah, it was fun. Everybody was so tired out...

DF: What? The whole conference?

ER: The whole conference. Yeah, they had party nights, you know. Bruce was in charge of it, so he had games that kept everybody moving; running and running. That was the closest thing to a practical joke, I guess.

DF: (chuckles) **If I could do one thing over again, I wish I could...**

ER: Yeah, I would start all over again. (Smiles)

DF: Or, **knowing what I do today, I would rather have spent less time doing...? or more time doing...?**

ER: No, I would have spent more time with my family. With my boys.

DF: Do they have any resentment today?

ER: I think Jack does. (Repeats) I think Jack does. And, I'm sorry (holds back emotion). There was one... They never complained. Ever, ever, ever, about anything. But, when we asked them one Christmas time, "how should we celebrate Christmas?" They said, "it would be nice to celebrate it on Christmas day." We never could celebrate (on Christmas day). We always went somewhere before, and Christmas day, and after.

DF: All the Church celebrations?

ER: Yes, and that's the closest thing to complaining that they ever said. I think I would have tried to do something on Christmas day if I had it to do over again. (Shrugs and smiles resignedly)

DF: **Looking back over my years in Vietnam, the thing I'm most pleased about is...**

ER: That I had the privilege of it. Oh, oh, yeah. To think I might have been sent to India to do secretarial work. (Hearty laugh. Points at camera) I keep forgetting that... Sorry.

DF: That's alright. **In times of doubt or question about whether my years invested in Vietnam were worthwhile, I am encouraged when I remember _____.**

ER: The people. (Shakes head in amazement) The people that could teach us what Christianity is all about.

DF: Especially because they had to pay the price after '75.

ER: Yes. Yes. Oh, the friends that I have and what I saw in their Christian character... (shaking head) It humbles me.

DF: We can stop there.

ER: Okay.

Camera was turned off, but the conversation continues.

ER: In Nhatrang, a new doctor had come and they had a reception for him. A new missionary was there. She went up to the doctor and what she meant to say was, "I'm so glad to see you." But she said, (says a sentence in Vietnamese first the right way and then the wrong way) "really I'm glad to pick you up with my chopsticks." (With one tone kep means to pick up with chop sticks, with the other it means to meet or see.)

DF: Did you ever make any language faux pas? That you know about?

ER: Oh yes. I remember telling the girl to bring the clothes in because I was going to throw up, and I meant to say (says the phrases in Vietnamese) it's going to rain. You know, but Americans don't even hear those tonal differences.

DF: Any other stories? Jack ever do any of those things?

ER: Oh yeah, I'm sure he did. Jack had more... what is it? Left brain, right brain...? He could do math. I count on my fingers. He could do math and logic and reasoning and that kind of thing, but he wasn't as good at languages as I was. And that very often is true and very unfortunate. 'Cause a wife should never be better than her husband. (Smiles broadly and shrugs shoulders) You know that. (Both chuckle gently)

DF: How about any cultural mistakes...? Did you every have a most embarrassing moment story in Vietnam? A funny situation that you found yourself in?

ER: (Chuckles) I had an embarrassing situation when I came home, because in Vietnam this is an obscene gesture (beckons toward self with upraised hand as Americans call another person toward themselves). In Vietnam you call somebody like this (waves hand toward herself facing downward). Here I'm calling my children by waving my hand like this (Vietnamese way) and everybody wonders what's wrong with her? And still today I cannot call somebody like an American does. I can't do it.

DF: Thank you. Just some reflective questions here. **Did the Vietnamese somehow make a mental connection between you, your message and colonialism?** And if so, how did you overcome that?

ER: (Seriously ponders) I think in the very early days they may have, but again that's why I said I watched and imitated.

DF: Did Vietnamese respond more to your message or to love? I mean, verbal vs ...?

ER: They responded to the message, but you were very much aware that you could cancel out the message by doing or saying the wrong thing in the wrong kind of attitude.

DF: Did you find anyone or numbers of people who had any idea of the one true God? They didn't necessarily know about Jesus, but they had a sense of the one true God.

ER: Oh yes. Oh yes, definitely. Umtri.

DF: But that's kind of a...?

ER: Well, but that's a supreme being.

DF: Did that open the way for them to respond to the Gospel?

ER: It would open the initial explanation, not maybe true explanation, but a point of contact so that you could go on from there to somewhere else.

DF: Did you find people who had a different paradigm than their upbringing—say of Buddhists or Confucianists, or Tao Dai or whatever that made them more open to the Gospel? Because they looked at life differently?

ER: No, what made them more open to the Gospel was the suffering that they were going through. The times that they were living in.

DF: Were there any patterns or terms, or types of people who responded to the Gospel that fell away like seed that fell on rocky soil? Were there people who initially responded and then kind of fell away? If you were to kind of...?

ER: Well, if they responded because they were going to get maybe canned goods or some kind of relief... If that's the reason that they responded, then it could have meant that they would eventually just fall away when there was no more relief goods.

DF: Did you find that there were people who initially came with that one motivation, yet somehow came to Christ and really were sincere? But that was the initial...?

ER: Well, see, we did not have anything to do with giving out relief. We left that to the Vietnamese feeling they understood their own people. We didn't do relief work, per se.

DF: Did people respond more readily to outreaches to meet their physical, social, or other needs?

ER: Oh yes, because they felt valued.

DF: Can you think of anything in particular that comes to mind? An example? Or a situation?

ER: Well, Jack used to do clinic work. At a certain time. That's when we were still first term in Danang. He took a course before he left for the field. It was out of New York and had everything from child birth to everything... minor kind of stuff. He did clinic work a lot. And they appreciated that. But, I heard one woman say one time, how did she say it? Like, if you show disgust when you're washing somebody's really dirty foot, they sense that. You have to be very careful about that kind of thing. Because they see that as against the person, not as against the dirt. They don't think I have value because my foot is dirty like that. And of course, that's not true. But your expression is important. You need to learn to be deadpan.

DF: Did any missionaries develop relationships that they would call mutual friendships that were reciprocal with the Vietnamese? I think you described some that were.

ER: Oh yes. (Speaks positively) I certainly felt that I did. I had very dear friends. And their family now is in the States, and their brother is starting a church in Massachusetts.

Do you know the Vietnamese Church is having a BIG conference next year?

DF: Yeah. I heard about that.

ER: And they want all the missionaries to go. I'm really hoping to do that. I went to the one in Orlando a couple of years ago. The Gibbs were here. They went with me. And he said, "the best part of going to that conference was seeing you meet all these people." Oh, yeah, it was really something.

DF: Must have been fun. How did the Vietnamese Christian's lives change generally from their pre-conversion time?

ER: Well, you have to understand how much spirit worship was part of their life. I think it delivered them from fear of spirits. Now whether it would do anything for the weights and measures of people selling in the market, I'm not sure. (Gentle chuckle) I hope so.

DF: How did families react to conversions of someone in their family?

ER: Oh, sometimes very badly. If a young person would be saved older family members are afraid that nobody is going to pray for their spirit after they die. That causes real concern. That's one thing that definitely does affect when people are saved. We had one young boy who's parents were so angry with him that his life was almost in danger.

DF: Wow! Can you give some examples of times when people in the church began reaching out in physical and social and spiritual ways that came spontaneously from the Spirit working in them rather than some teaching? They just felt compelled...

ER: I'm not sure if this will answer your question or not, but every church had what they called their witnessing band. These people would go visiting house to house and feel very constrained to do it so people would hear the Gospel. Then on Sunday morning in church there would be a report from these folk about people who were saved, and this happened, and this happened.