

HER NAME WAS INA

Ina C. Strain

Preface

What was it like in that long ago childhood, at the turn of the century, before there were cars, radios, television, computers, nintendo, man-made dinosaurs?

In that long ago childhood there was time to explore and discover the wonders of the world around me. Time to read, to think, to day-dream. Time to grow roots, deep and strong to withstand the storms and struggle of that thing called "life".

So find yourself a cozy spot, curl up and I'll tell you what it was like "once upon a time."

A LOVE LETTER
TO MY
GRANDDAUGHTERS
MICHELLE AND KRISTIN



Ghosts of a Silent Yesterday

*Ghosts of a silent yesterday,
when covered bridge and jingled sleigh
were common sights in every way.
If you could speak, what would you say?*

*A silver song borne on the breeze
came floating to me through the trees.*

*We are your sturdy pioneers,
who faithfully toiled in former age.
We braved the dangers, trusting God
to carve for you, your heritage.*

John A. Strain

1953

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PART I

A Siddy Leap Into Nostalgia



Long ago before there was an Ina, when as yet I was only a twinkle in my father's eye, the winds of change were blowing. This man, Wallace Winfield Case, who was one day to be my father, was an achiever — and a dreamer.

His dream, to be a minister, was shattered when in his junior year at Wheaton College he was forced to leave school to assume the care of his recently widowed mother, Sarah, and his younger sister, Lettie.

A year later he married a petite, shy eighteen-year-old girl named Jessie Crook, whom he had met in Chapman, Kansas while he was working on the railroad. He moved his family north to a fast growing city on the banks of the muddy Missouri River. The city was named after a Sioux tribe of Indians who had once roamed the land before the white man came. It was called Sioux City, in the state of Iowa.

He bought a home and settled his family down. Two years later a son, Walter, was born. Three and a half years after that a daughter, Ruth, was born.

It was about the time that the Homestead Act was also born. The far unoccupied lands of the west now became available to those who would dare “go west.” One could stake out a claim with the government, live on the land for five years, and thus possess it as their own.

The hue and cry of those days became, “Go west young man, go west.” Wallace Winfield Case caught the “FEVER.” He staked out a claim with the government near a little town named Van Meter, in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

He sold his home and most of his furnishings, bought a long-bodied wagon and a team of horses. He packed his wagon, covered it, and with his mother, his wife and his two small children he turned his face westward to follow his dream.

He found his claim. There it was, lying shimmering in the sun, bleak and bare. There was not a tree or a bush, only huge tumbling weeds breaking loose to tumble and roll across the wide expanse of the prairie, at the mercy of the winds.

There he built his two-room tar-papered shack and his barn. He fenced a portion of his land, bought his cattle and tilled his land. Their only companions were the snakes, the coyotes, the prairie dogs and the wolves.

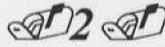
The first year was promising. But the second year the rains failed to come. The crops yielded little, the grasses of the prairie withered and died. The sun-baked earth cracked and turned to dust. What cattle didn't die, he sold. He kept only a few cows.

To support his family through the winter he found work away from home, leaving his shy little wife the task of caring for the homestead. She learned to kill rattlesnakes, mend the broken fences and wade through the snows of January, rounding up the cows and bringing them into the safety of the barn. She learned to shoot at the wolves when they came too near the barn or howled too near the windows of her home.

In the third summer of this desolation on the prairie, I was born in the little tarpaper shack, on the 8th of June, 1910. I was named Clara Ina Case. From the beginning I was just "Ina," clinging by a tiny thread of hope to life.

When I became strong enough to travel, my father packed up his little family and left. He left his dream to the tumbling weeds and to the ever-changing winds. The tarpapered shack he left to the snakes, the coyotes, the prairie dogs and the wolves.

The only comment my father ever made regarding those years was the fact that the only good that came out of that experience was his daughter, Ina.



We returned to Sioux City, Iowa to the very same neighborhood the family had left some three and a half years earlier.

My earliest recollections of those days were of a small apartment upstairs in a big white house on top of a hill. I was a happy child and a very much loved child. If my mother was too busy with the care of her family, there was always my grandmother's ever-welcome lap and her loving arms.

She was an old-fashioned grandmother, comfortably plump, with her hair parted in the middle and pulled back into a bun. Fancy side-combs held the stray wisps of hair in order. She always wore shirt-waist dresses with rows and rows of tiny tucks and buttons down the front. To this she added a tie-around-the-waist apron with lace on the bottom. In the pocket she kept round peppermint candies which she shared with us occasionally for good behavior.

We loved to count the buttons on her shirt waist: "Rich man, poor man, beggarman, thief, rich man, poor man —." I guess that is where we stopped, for we were poor! I never realized this until much later in life.

I rarely saw my father in those days for he was up and away before dawn and often I was in bed before he came home. He walked miles and miles through the heat of summer and the snows of winter to save a precious dime.

My only companions were my brother and sister. Saturdays were special days when my mother would make big round pancakes, cover them with sugar, wrap them up and we would hike over the hills to find a cozy spot to eat our lunch.

I remember the freshness of those early mornings, the whiteness of the morning glories against the fence and the sweet songs of the meadow-larks. We walked through fields of brightly colored spring flowers, hunting for the small blue Mayflowers to make bouquets for our mother and grandmother.

We had a swing with long ropes hanging from a high branch. At the edge of our yard there was a slope downward. I remember the exhilaration I felt as the swing climbed higher and higher into the air, out over the drop off — and then the horrible frightening moment when I would look down to what seemed to be *miles* to the bottom below!

I remember the story of the mad dog faintly, for repeated tellings by my family made it real to me. Rumors had floated around that there was a mad dog loose in the hills north of our home. I was terrified!

For days I played only on the large stone porch a short distance from the back door. I closely followed my brother and sister around like their shadow. Gradually the rumor died, as I hoped the mad dog had done.

It was August. The grasses on the hills had grown tall, turning brown. One day I was out by the swing. I looked up. The breeze had caused the tall grasses to sway. It was the mad dog lurking, creeping closer! Then the bush between me and the house swayed and rustled. My imagination went wild! I was sure it was the mad dog!

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There was a coal bin near the swing. It was a large piano-shaped box with a light-weight tin door. The lid swung up on hinges over the front side of the box, making it easy to lift and scoop out the coal.

I dashed for the coal bin, lifted the light-weight lid and rolled in, pulling the lid down over me. I was safe! My cries for help were finally answered. I was a mess! My tears were mingled with coal dust and my clothes blackened. I first needed consoling that there was no mad dog, but was also badly in need of a thorough washing and change of clothes.

My sister, Ruth, loves to tell another story, one of her favorites. I remember it in bits and pieces, but her telling of it has made it real to me also.

I was in kindergarten, Ruth in the fourth grade. She walked the six blocks to school with me every morning. One morning during opening exercises, my teacher noticed my tears. I couldn't tell her why, but as my tears continued to fall she took me to the principal. Still the tears flowed! Finally in desperation the principal sent for my sister.

I whispered in my sister's ear, "I forgot to kiss Mother goodbye!"

The principal must have had an understanding heart, for she gave us permission to go home. We went home. I gave my mother a big hug and a kiss, and then happily returned to school.

My brother and his chum worked through the summer months digging a cave. No girls allowed! But I remember the day when my sister and I sneaked in and found them trying to smoke rolled-up corn husks. We told our parents. I do not remember their punishment that followed, but my brother and I were at odds for sometime thereafter!

My brother Walter had a collection of rattlers taken from the tails of the rattlesnakes which they had killed in those prairie days. He kept them in a box and when he wanted to tease my sister and me, he would pick out a very long one and chase us around the yard, rattling all the way.

At the far end of our yard there was a chicken coop where a huge Rhode Island red rooster reigned supreme. Not far from the chicken coop was our outdoor toilet. The red rooster watched my comings and goings. He became my arch-enemy! It was a contest between us to see who could outrun each other. He made mad dashes at me, wings flapping, horrible squawks emitting from his long stretched out neck. He meant business, and that business was a nip here and a nip there on my bare legs. Oh, how I hated that red Rhode Island rooster!

I remember being awakened in the middle of the night, long before dawn one winter and being dressed in layers of my clothes. I was told that the chicken-coop was on fire. We were to be ready to leave our home should the sparks ignite our roof.

We scraped peep-holes in the frost on the window-pane to watch the blazing flames shoot high into the air. The chicken-coop burned itself out. I felt sad for the chickens who had died in the flames, but as for that red Rhode Island rooster, well, I felt he had gotten his just dues!

I thought I was an ugly duckling, all skin and bones. My mother tried desperately to fatten me up, which meant two heaping tablespoons of cod-liver oil each morning. In

the afternoon I had to drink a huge glass of sweetened condensed milk, with crackers. But all I did was grow taller.

My hair was as straight as a broomstick. Mother tried to remedy that by wrapping my wet hair around strips of cloth at night hoping, come morning, I would have curls. I did, funny corkscrew ones!

My grandmother made all our clothes. The dresses in those days were long-waisted, with a gathered skirt, always below the knee, and with a sash and a big bow in back. We wore high top-button shoes and cotton stockings. I remember I had a pair of white kid shoes with black patent leather tips on the toes and black patent leather cuffs with silk tassles on top.

We used a button-hook to laboriously fasten each button into an "eye." The button hooks had beautiful pearl handles, as did my mother's hat pins she wore.

When I was five years old my brother George was born. I cannot remember much about his early years. Perhaps this was my way of "blocking" him out, thus coping with my disrupted life. *He* was the baby now! He had usurped my throne and invaded my domain. No doubt I wished him back from whence he came.

Sometimes when my sister Ruth and I would sing, "We're Marching Through Georgia," he would cry. He didn't want anyone marching through *him*!

We loved to dress him up in girl's clothing, putting a ribboned and flowered hat on his head. We would parade him around the neighborhood as "our little sister, Georgia"!

He told Mother, "Rufe an' In's doin' *everzangs* an' *everzangs* to me!"

It's a wonder George grew up to be the manly-man he became!

Several years later my father bought a new house. We became part of a friendly compact neighborhood. Our home was at one end of Bluff Street. Several miles away at the other end of our street was a very steep, high hill called Prospect Peak. On the leveled off top of the hill was a memorial enclosed in a wrought iron fence. It bore the name of the first pioneer who touched this land and founded Sioux City, Iowa.

There was another fence that kept us from falling down the steep drop-off that sloped away to the shores of the muddy Missouri River. One could stand and look across the river to the green fields of Nebraska.

Sometimes on Sunday afternoons we climbed to the top of this hill and stood in awe at the world below. It was especially awesome in the early spring when the ice began to melt in the frozen river to the north of us. Great slabs of ice broke away and floated down the river like huge tankers. Often there would be massive ice jams, slab after slab of ice piling higher and higher, impeding the flow of the river, causing the land above to be flooded. Then it would be dynamited, sending the ice high into the air like a geyser.

There was also a little creek that flowed through the city, called Perry Creek. It was named after another pioneer who first discovered the land. It was a pleasant little stream, winding here and there, bubbling merrily over the rocks. However, in the spring when the heavy snows above us to the north began to melt, the little stream became a raging torrent, overflowing its banks and flooding our streets. Our neighborhood was on a knoll, so we had nothing to fear. It was an eerie feeling, though, to be surrounded by water. It was like being on an island.

At that time children were not only accountable to their parents, but to their neighbors also. Every misdeed that we made soon came to the ears of our parents, and certain retribution followed, as in the case of my younger brother, George.

We loved to roller-skate. We were not allowed to go into the street, so we skated on the sidewalk. There was a lady in our neighborhood named Mrs. West. She had come from that far away place called The Bronx, in the state of New York. She disliked all children, and children on skates she disliked with a passion. She was a character spelled with a capital "C"!

Often as we skated by she would dash out of her house, shaking the broom at us, and yelling words that we weren't allowed to hear. This, of course, made skating much more of an exciting adventure!

One day my five-year-old brother George shouted back at her, "Oh, go sit on a tack!"

Several days later she cornered our father and poured out her story. We were all called on the carpet and duly reprimanded. Punishment for George was meted out. He was to pick some flowers from my father's garden, take them down, walk up to her door, ring the doorbell and apologize. He did. Heroes are made, not born!

We had peddlers who went slowly through the neighborhoods calling out their wares. Our peddler had a rickety old wagon and an old horse. One day while my mother picked out her vegetables and bargained for the best price, I stood contemplating this old horse. I had read the book, *Black Beauty*, and had fallen in love with that horse. But this horse was no black beauty! His coat was unkept, his mane dull and tangled. A strand of hair had fallen down over his eyes. His head hung down in total despair. But the thing I remember about this horse was his funny misshaped sway-back. I was sure that in his youth someone much too heavy had ridden him. I always felt so sad as I watched him amble down the road.

We had lots of "hoboes" in those days. These were the men who "rode the rails" (that is, hitched rides on freight trains) from place to place. Occasionally they would knock on our door with the plea, "Lady, I'm hungry. Could you spare a bite?"

My mother always fed them, and once in a while on a cold day she would invite them to come in and eat at our kitchen table. We never felt any fear of these hoboes.

Out in our back yard we had a huge home-made canvas hammock. It was attached with ropes to huge hooks, one corner to the trunk of a tree, and the other corner fastened to side of the house.

We had been warned not to "rough-house" in the hammock! One day we forgot. We were busy giving each other new names. My brother Walter was to be "Watermelon." My sister Ruth became "Rutabaga." I was called "Skinny," and my brother George was to be "Succotash."

We were all in the hammock at once, when the whole, long siding on the house, hook and all, came away and **KERPLUNK!** — we were all on the ground! The bruises were nothing compared to the retribution of the powers-that-be!

The Christmas of the year my father bought the new house was very lean. The stockings we hung were filled with an orange in each toe, some uncracked walnuts, and several pieces of hard ribbon candy. And we each had one present.

seen another doll like it. I really loved that doll. It became one of my most precious possessions.

When I was about ten years old we discovered the movies. For a dime we could spend hours watching the flickering black and white silent screen showing the actors doing wild and exciting things. There was always a handsome hero, a beautiful heroine, and a black mustachod villain. The captions on the bottom of the screen told what was being said and done.

There was an organ hidden in the pit below the screen. The music accentuated what was happening on the screen, and played havoc with our emotions! The music could excite us so that we were sitting on the edge of our seats. It could make us laugh, or its mournful tones could wring tears out of our eyes.

The final episode always left the heroine in a most harrowing dilemma, such as being tied to a railroad track with a fast moving train approaching, or hanging over a cliff by a rope which was slowly unravelling. Then we had to wait and return the next Saturday to see how the hero rescued her.

Occasionally we would comb the neighborhood to find empty pop bottles, taking them to the grocery store to redeem them for two cents each. Usually we could earn enough to take in another episode at the next Saturday movie.

No summer was complete without the Ringling Brothers' Circus coming to town. Today's child with the flick of a finger can bring the mystery of the jungle with its wild and wonderful creatures right into his or her room. But to yesterday's child in that long ago time, it was the circus that sent the imagination soaring to those far away places.

We looked forward to that day with joyful expectations. We could not afford four tickets to the "Big-Top" performances, but we could save our pennies to ride the streetcar into town to watch the parade. I am sure we all prayed that there would be no rain on our parade!

We always left home early so we could "stake out" our front row seats on the curb. There we waited with anticipation mounting until we heard the first wild and wonderful notes of the calliope in the distance.

Then came the clowns with their big noses, painted faces and bright costumes of every kind and description; turning cartwheels, dancing, tripping and falling. One clown came over, patted my sister Ruth on the head and called her his "sweet petunia." That name remained with her long after the parade was gone.

Two beautiful horses, red plumes bobbing on their heads, pulled the wagon containing the calliope. On top of the gilded, ornate wagon sat several scantily clad young women, peeking out coyly from under their ruffled parasols.

The elephants followed. From where we sat they were enormous! On their heads sat their trainers, shirtless, with sparkling jeweled vests and glittering turbans. The elephants ambled along, ears flapping, long trunks swaying in rhythm with the music. Their huge feet "swish-swhished" on the pavement as they passed by, so close to us.

Following this came the long train of cages with lions, tigers, leopards, panthers, the laughing hyenas, and of course, the gorillas.

Camels, all humped and two-humped, groaned and grumbled along, spitting at each other or at the watching crowd.

For awhile our imagination soared to those “far away places” from whence they had come, and our horizon took on new dimensions.

No circus would be complete without the tall clown on stilts or the little monkey collecting pennies from the crowd.

The last wild and wonderful notes from the calliope faded away in the distance. We came slowly back to earth to await yet another summer.

And can I ever forget those after-supper games? We neighborhood children gathered on the corner by the lamp post to play Hide and Seek, Run My Good Sheep Run, and *Freeze!* The whole neighborhood was our playground. We hid under porches, behind fences and even up in trees waiting for that call, “Olie, Olie Oatsin free!” (I was thirteen years old when suddenly one day it dawned on me that those words were, “All the ones that’s out, is in free!”)

About this time I also discovered the joy of reading. We did not have a car, radio, telephone or TV. I learned through books that I could “go places and do things.” I read everything I could get my hands on.

The library was three miles away, but every two weeks I walked to and from the library with my arms filled with books. Then I would climb up in the big chair by the coal-burning stove, travel to far away places and do wild and exciting, wonderful things. It was always such a thrill to open a book and start a new paragraph.

We lived four blocks from the Baptist Church where we went to Sunday School. When I was about twelve years old a very beautiful lady came to our church to hold a week of children’s meetings. We loved her songs and stories about Jesus Christ, God’s Son. She told why Jesus had come and what He wanted to do in each of our lives. She told us that Jesus had a wonderful plan for our lives.

On the closing day she asked how many of us would like to receive Jesus Christ, God’s Son, as our Savior, ask Him to come into our hearts and live in our lives. If so, would we please stand up.

I stood up.

Then she asked us to kneel by our pew and pray a simple prayer, expressing our desire to do this. I prayed, and on that day I became a Christian — a child of God through Jesus Christ, my Savior.

The following week I was baptized. My life verses were Proverbs 3:5, 6:

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart;
and lean not to your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he shall direct your paths.*



And so my childhood passed, measured not by dates on a calendar, but by seasons, fragmented, ever-changing seasons. Like a kaleidoscope gently turning, colors, shapes, designs falling into patterns, never to be forgotten patterns, flashing word pictures through my memory.

Spring time. Melting snows, warm suns, sap flowing, trees budding, leaves unfolding, blossoming. Birds returning, meadowlarks singing, April showers, soft, misty, bringing May-flowers, lilies, violets, lilacs. Wild flowers blooming, rioting colors, orange poppies, lavender lupen, blue bonnets.

Easter time. Resurrection. New life. Time for shedding winter-worn boots, long underwear, mittens, mufflers, stocking caps. Time for donning Easter bonnets, ribboned, flowered. New shoes, pinching toes, blistering heels.

Time for sitting under a flowering apple tree, day dreaming, watching petals falling like snow, whitening the greening grasses.

Summertime. Lazy do-nothing days. Lying in the hammock, watching white fluffy clouds moving slowly into new shapes and designs.

Barefoot days, feeling the softness of dew on new-mown grasses, hot pavements, sandburrs.

Creeping, crawling bugs, mosquito bumps, bee stings, chiggers. Summer storms, flashing lightening, roaring thunder. Wading pools. Rainbows.

Twilight pulling down the shades. Sitting on porch steps, counting the stars showing up in the sky. Catching lightening bugs to fill mason jars.

Porch swing swaying, girls giggling, telling secrets. Swinging chains squeaking in tune with katydids singing.

Six weeks until frost.

Fall time. School, lunch sacks, book bags. Coming home, mother waiting with slices of buttery hot bread, oven baked. Summer's harvest bubbling on a wood stove. Mason jars waiting to be filled. Wonderful smells.

Indian summer. Golden days. Leaves changing colors — dressing up for dying. Shuffling, ankle deep through brown leaves. Bonfires, fragrance of fall.

Thanksgiving. School plays, getting to be a "pilgrim." Family gatherings. Turkey and trimmings.

Frost on the window panes, painting patterns and designs. Cold winds, reddening noses, tingling fingers and toes. Promise of winter to come.

Wintertime. Blizzards swirling snow into deep drifts, closing out the world, piling snow-like frosting inches high on branches and fences.

Winds whistling and moaning around the corner of the house, rattling window-panes. Foot-long icicles, pointed, sharp, hanging from the eaves.

Winter games. Wading knee-deep in soft powdery snow, building forts, snow ball fights, playing Fox and Geese, making angels in the snow. Sledding down long steep hills, belly down on the sled. Wind whistling by, snow spraying faces.

Ice-skating on man-made lakes. Bumps on the heads, bruises on bottoms. Coming home to hot chocolate, drying out by a pot-bellied stove, telling jokes.

Christmas time. Christ's birthday.

Sunday school programs. Plays. Shepherds wearing bathrobes, kitchen towels draping heads. Wisemen wearing tinsel crowns, angels with flapping wings, wire-covered halos.

Christmas morning, surprises under the tree.

New Year's Eve. Bells ringing, pots banging. Firecrackers. Old Year out. New Year in!

Ground-hog day. Six weeks 'til Spring.



Then came the turbulent teens, but mine weren't so turbulent. The ugly duckling wasn't quite so ugly. My freckles had faded. I tamed my wiry, flyaway hair and learned how to cut, shape and curl it. The cod-liver oil and the sweetened condensed milk began to pay dividends. My skinniness turned to "thininess" and I even had some curves.

During the elementary grades my self-esteem suffered greatly. I hated sports. At the recreation period baseball was the number-one game. I hated baseball with a passion. When that ball came whizzing at me I quivered and crumbled. Nobody wanted me on their team. I was always the last one to be reluctantly chosen. But in my teens I learned to play tennis. I loved it, and did well. My self-esteem began to rise.

The summer before my sophomore year my grandmother taught me to sew and to fit patterns. I baby-sat that summer and earned enough to buy some lovely materials. I went into teen shops, went through the racks, found dresses I liked, mentally recorded how every seam was put together, went home and made the dresses.

So at the beginning of my sophomore year I had a different outfit for every day of the week. In those days there were no designer jeans, slacks, pants. No tee-shirts, no Reeboks.

We had one high school in our city, a huge stone building called the "Castle on the Hill." It was every inch a castle, right out of an English countryside. There were four turrets on each corner and a huge cannon on the south lawn. The school was a melting pot for young people from every country and culture.

Because Sioux City was a meat-packing center for Armour's and Swifts' it had huge slaughter-houses. It also had huge stockyards for shipping cattle there. They hired cheap labor which brought immigrants from many places in Europe and Asia. These were called *shennies*, *pollocks*, *bohunks*, *chinks*, *japs* and *dagos*. I am glad that these words are no longer in our vocabulary!

At the beginning of my sophomore year I was pleasantly surprised to discover that I was a "rushee" for the Erodolphian Sorority. I was "pinned," meaning that the members who approved of me gave me their pins to wear. I had quite a long row of them. Two weeks later I was voted in.

My sophomore year was the year of the FACE. I had a terrible crush on the FACE. I never knew his name, nor anything about him, except where his locker was, and where several of his classes were. No day was complete without a glimpse of the FACE.

This was the year I had my first *real* date. We were to attend the performance of the Drama Club's rendering of the "Tales of Hoffman." I had a new black *moire* dress trimmed in red, and a new pair of black patent-leather pumps with HEELS, my first high heels! I wore some perfume called *Ben Hur* and I felt very glamorous.

The boy friend had no car. We walked blocks, blocks, and more blocks to and from the High School. Oh, the agony of that first date! My toes were pinched and

screaming. My heels had big burning blisters. Even to this day the smell of *Ben Hur* makes my feet ache!

In those days if one wanted to be a teacher, — and I had always wanted to be a teacher, — one could enroll for the last few years of high school in a “Normal Course” program. When the course was completed and some student teaching done during the last quarter of the senior year, then a Secondary Elementary Teaching Credential was given at graduation. This was enough qualification to teach in a rural school.

The rural schools were usually painted red, with all grades in one large room. It was there during my student-teaching days that I learned to build fires in a pot-bellied stove, make out lesson plans for all eight grades, and be a teacher, counselor and friend to my students.

However, by a strange quirk of circumstances, I never applied for a rural school. One noon on the day after graduation a few of us were going out to lunch to celebrate our “freedom.” As we passed the Telephone Company one of the girls remarked, “Let’s go in and put in our application.”

We did, and a week later we were all hired! Along with several other girls we were enrolled in a training program on how to be a “Long Distance Operator.”

Of all the things that held me steady and helped me through the turbulent teens, the most important was the young people’s class led by a lady whom we all lovingly called “Ma Feldman.” She never minced words. She taught us the facts of life: what was right and what was wrong, what was good and what was evil. She taught us to pray on our knees about everything, big or little. She taught us to share.

I was no angel! I was stubborn and headstrong. Like a bird learning to fly, I flipped and flopped and often landed on my face. I had my average share of mistakes along the way, but none so serious as to leave scars.

I was no theologian but these things I did know: I had a Heavenly Father who loved me and cared for me, who always stood ready to forgive me for the asking, and whose loving-kindness and tender mercies were new every morning. He was as the poet said:

“Absolutely tender,
Absolutely true,
Understanding all things,
Understanding *you*.”



I loved my job, “going places” via the long-distance circuits. I sat on my high stool with the world before me. I loved to build up my circuits city by city. With the flip of my finger I could whirl out through space, over mountains, span rivers, cut through crowded cities, and with a speed faster than Superman’s I could reach my destination. New York, Texas, California, here I come!

When our party hung up we had a limited number of seconds to cut in, ring and clear our circuits. So when four parties hung up at once, it was magical scramble to try to beat the deadline. Never a dull moment!

But it was not all work and no play. I bought a not-so-new car. It was a blue Ford Run-About coupe. It had an old-fashioned rumble seat (grumble seat) in back where we put our trunks. It folded open the other way, with a padded back and seat that could hold three people, if they were thin. On the back of the car was a fold-out rack for luggage.

A friend of mine had a cabin in the woods on the shore of Crystal Lake, across the muddy Missouri River on the Nebraska side. It was a beautiful spot, moss-covered tall trees, ankle-high green Bracken ferns, and sandy beaches. On moonlight nights the lake glistened like polished glass. But when there was no moon, it was *black* and scary! The old owl kept calling “WHO” until we began to wonder if there really was a “who” outside!

I would fill my Run-About with my friends and *merrily* set off for a week-end at the cabin, until we came to the bridge. Ah, there’s the rub! This bridge was no masterpiece of technology. It had an open railing on the sides, exposing the muddy current swirling below. Clutching the wheel, gritting my teeth and with “tunnel vision” we would rattle and bang across to the other side, always with a “*Whee!*” of relief.

I worked for three years, saved my money, and bought AT&T stocks. Then, like the poem says:

“I had never been maid quiet
Sunning her russet hood,
For the voice that called up the lightning
Was calling through my blood.”

I made my decision. I asked for a leave of absence from the company, sold my AT&T stocks at an all-high price, and with my savings I enrolled in Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa. Later I left to attend the St. Paul Bible College in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Thus began my journey that would take me around the world to far-away places, and into harrowing, exciting and wonderful experiences.

So I left home. You might think I went out in a cloud of glory.

I didn’t!

Or you might think that this was a wonderful experience.

It wasn’t!

I had never been away from home or friends for an extended length of time. It was *hard!* I had a disease in the pit of my stomach, or was it my brain? It was called "homesickness."

When I was surrounded by family and friends I was a big frog in a little puddle. Now I was a little frog in a very big puddle. I think I was having a "delayed adolescence." All the things that were supposed to have happened to me in the turbulent teen years now seemed to rear their ugly heads and glare at me. I was discovering things about myself.

I was vulnerable and naive (I still am). I was shy and self-conscious. I compared myself with my peers and found I was "weighed in the balance and found wanting"! I had a lot to learn. As the trite phrase goes, "I was trying to find myself," and not doing a very good job of it.

There were good things about these years, and there were bad things. One of the "baddest" was having to be hostess at a table for ten. Everyone had to take a turn at being a host or hostess at one of the tables in the big dining room.

The hostess was to keep the conversation flowing, see that everyone was well fed, and on pie nights make sure that the fellows didn't "sweet-talk" the girls out of their pie.

With no radio available for news, no morning newspaper to scan, and with my head full of the study of the day such as "who begot who" — or "who fought what battle where," just how to keep the conversation flowing was always a mystery to me.

Long before Women's Lib was even a thought, the name of the game was CONFORM, DISCIPLINE, and RULES, all spelled with capital letters. There was a strict dress code, so my roommate and I hopped around the tennis court with our *long* skirts flipping in the breeze. We could rightly label those two years at St. Paul Bible College as "Boot Camp."

However, there were two courses of study that became solid, concrete building blocks in my life. One course was on the book of Psalms. It was an in-depth study of the life of David, learning of his experiences of joy and sorrow, the ecstasy of his successes and the agony of his defeats, as he poured out the depth of his feeling in the verses of the Psalms. We memorized long portions, verse after verse of many of the Psalms.

The other course was a study in Hymnology. We studied the biographies of many of the early contenders of the Christian faith who wrote the old hymns of the Christian church. These writers, who, passing through the fires of affliction, hidden away in dark dungeons, stretched on the rack till their joints were pulled asunder, kept the faith! We memorized verse after verse of these old hymns.

I have found that throughout my life, in my joy and sorrow, in times of trial, danger, or in times of need, *without* any conscious effort on my part, these psalms and hymns have sung themselves, verse after verse, into my mind, giving me confidence and courage. We are prone to stand in church on a Sunday morning and blithely sing:

"Faith of our fathers, living still
In spite of dungeon, fire and sword;
How sweet would be their children's fate
If they like them could die for thee!"

And I asked myself if I really had this kind of commitment? Do I?

So I graduated! No, I didn't get married and live happily ever after. Instead, I came home, went back to work at the telephone company and dreamed my dreams.



I worked a year and a half, saved my money, and received another leave of absence. On a beautiful golden September morning I boarded a non-stop bus to New York. My destination was Nyack College on the Hudson River some miles north of New York City. This time I could really say I went out with “the wind under my wings.”

It was a beautiful spot, built on the slope of a hill overlooking the little town of Nyack and the Hudson River. From my window I could watch the freighters plying up and down the river. Across the river was quaint little Tarrytown, the setting for the story of Rip Van Winkle.

I loved everything about Nyack College. Dr. Raymond Edmans, who later became president of Wheaton College, was my public-speaking teacher. He also was pastor of a large church in the heart of New York City. Four students, two young men and two young women were chosen from the school to go with him over the week-ends to help in the youth groups and Sunday School.

On Saturdays we visited the tenement houses around the church. This was an EXPERIENCE!! Up one flight of stairs after another, then down dark, smelly halls. We knocked on doors and invited people to the services. It was *safe* in *those* days. Imagine doing such a thing now!

I remember one little black lady inviting me in to pray with her. The little room was dark and dingy, battered old pots and pans were piled in the make-shift sink, roaches scampered here and there. As we knelt to pray by the battered old chair, with tears running down her cheeks she prayed that beautiful old hymn,

“Remember me, O Mighty One!”

On Sunday we helped in the church with the youth groups and the Sunday School, coming home in the late afternoon. I shall never forget the beauty of that drive. In the winter the piled-up drifts left the trees and bushes heavy with snow, making the landscape a winter wonderland. In the spring it bloomed with flowering trees, bushes and dogwood.

Along with the serious studies, the term papers and the exams, we had our fun times. I remember the fright we gave our night watchman, Jasper. He usually made the rounds of the building every hour. Our room was located near the door that opened into a large empty space, unoccupied, between the women’s dorm and the men’s dorm. This was a very dark area. He had to use his flashlight to cross over and unlock the door leading to the men’s dorm. We fashioned a dummy, complete with shoes, and left it sprawled out on the floor in the middle of this area.

Our room had an old-fashioned glass panel at the top of the door, called a transom. Standing on the desk, we could see out into the dimly lit hallway. And so we waited for Jasper! Quietly he came down the hall, opened the door, flashed his light, saw the sprawled out form, and froze!

Then he retreated, not so quietly, down the hall in search of help! We went out and removed the dummy, and waited for further action. It came, in the form of the Dean of Women, wrapped snugly in her robe.

The next day I was called to the Dean's office and severely reprimanded. Now how did she know it was I? And wasn't that a twinkle in her eye, and a smile at the corner of her mouth?

Another funny thing happened. It was Christmas vacation and I had been invited to spend the holiday with a friend's family in McKeesport, Pennsylvania. Several of the students were traveling in the same direction. It was a cold, icy day making traveling difficult. We had just come into a little town when the car swerved on the ice and side-swiped another car. No damage was done, but the other driver was furious! He was out to take our skin! It turned out that his brother was the sheriff of the little town., so he thought he had us "over a barrel."

Bob, the driver of our car, felt that no justice could be found here, so he jumped back into the car and headed for the next little town, contacted the sheriff and explained the circumstances.

The sheriff came out, looked us over, flashed his light into the back seat, saw me and said, "Yeah, and there's the blond trigger woman!"

With a chuckle he invited (?) us into the jail, where we sat around a pot-bellied stove and warmed our toes, waiting to hear the outcome. After an hour the sheriff patted us on the shoulders, and wishing us all a Merry Christmas, sent us on our way. That's how I got the title of "The Blond Trigger Woman."

That was the year I met Doug. There had been boyfriends now and then along the way, but Doug was special! Several weeks before graduation a friend asked me to come to Erie, Pennsylvania to help her with a series of summer Vacation Bible Schools she would be having. Doug lived near that area, so it seemed a good idea.

In figuring my financial situation I realized I was almost down to bare bones. Just how I was to get there was a big question. That was solved a few days later when another friend, who had been working as a governess for a very wealthy and well-known family in the town of Nyack, asked me if I would replace her for two weeks so that she could go on vacation. I was interviewed, accepted, and on the day after graduation from Nyack College I became the governess of three lovely children at a beautiful estate in Nyack.

I spent two wonderful weeks supervising music lessons and homework, playing baseball with Billy, tennis with the girls, and "cops and robbers" in the woods near their home. I was truly living in the lap of luxury! And, I now had my fare to Erie, Pennsylvania.

We had a great summer. At the close of our last school, the pastor of a large Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Erie offered me a job as secretary, youth director, and Sunday School coordinator for the church. My answer was YES.

The following year and a half was a dream come true. The work prospered and grew and grew! Then one day I received a letter from the New York Mission Board telling me of the need for a single person to organize youth groups and Sunday schools in the larger established churches in Indo-China (Vietnam). Later, I was to do translation work, preparing lesson materials for the youth groups and Sunday schools. A single person was needed because it would mean going from station to station around the coastal areas of

I am so glad I grew up loving to read, for all the things I had tucked away in my imagination now became reality. What a thrill!

Then on to Westminster Abbey where lies the history of England's kings and queens through the ages, and where the famous of England share the majesty of these hallowed halls. Here lies the body of Livingstone of Africa. It was mid-afternoon when I stood at his grave site. The afternoon sun shown through the stained-glass windows high above us. Multicolored sunbeams left a dancing array of beautiful patterns scattered across his tomb. Here too, was King Arthur's Round Table and the honored seats of his knights. Their unfurled banners above each seat bore the crest of their respective families.

Then we went on to the Houses of Parliament which cover 8 acres. They have the greatest volume of ornate stonework in the world. And what a thrill it was to stand under Big Ben and hear the striking of the hour!

St. Paul's Cathedral is the only church in England built with a dome. High in that dome is the famous "Whispering Gallery."

And there was so much more to see! Buckingham Palace, the Changing of the Guards, St. James' Place, the British Museum, Hyde Park, —

the country. There would be a year in Paris, France learning French before going to the field. Would I consider it? Would I!

For two weeks I considered it carefully. The Word confirmed it. My inner urge confirmed it, but would the circumstances confirm it? They did. In fifteen minutes my entire support, transportation and part of my outfit was confirmed! Now would my physical examination confirm it?

I passed my physical with flying colors. The door was wide open. I walked through. Yes, I would go!

Then began the rounds of goodbyes. Even the newspapers published articles of the Sioux City girl who was going overseas.

My father always stopped at the *Sioux City Tribune* to look at the front page, which was displayed in a frame glass box outside the building. To his surprise there was a picture of *his* daughter, and a long write-up on the FRONT PAGE. Mother said he cried all the way home.

Then I was back at Erie for my final farewell. There were about two hundred young people and friends at the station to see me off. They were laughing and singing and shouting their goodbyes.

As I boarded the train for New York and was walking down the aisle, two heavy-set men were putting their baggage up on the racks. One had a big cigar in his mouth. Rolling it around to the other side he said, "What is all that *blankety-blank* commotion about?"

The other man said, "Oh, some dumb dame is on her way to India."

He was right about one thing but wrong about the other! It wasn't India. It was Indo-China.

Then on November 30th I went to Nyack College for my final farewell in chapel. Doug played the piano for the special service.

On December 1, 1937, I boarded the Queen Mary at New York for the first lap of my journey overseas. There were flowers, candy, fruit and telegrams. A number of the students from Nyack were there to send me off.

Then came the three warning blasts for visitors to leave. Two more blasts, then the final blast, and the gangplank slowly came up. We were given bright rolls of colored streamers to throw to our friends on the pier below us. They caught the ends and held them. As the majestic Queen Mary slowly began to leave the wharf, the streamers grew taut — and finally broke.

"Goodbye, Doug.
Goodbye, New York.
Goodbye, America.
Goodbye, my lady with the lamp.
Hello world!"

I stood at the railing until the skyline of New York City had faded into the pink and golden sunset, and the lady with the lamp was lost in the twilight. Then I turned and faced the splendor of the majesty of a city afloat.

In those days, so long ago, the Queen Mary was every inch a queen. From the lusciousness of the thick red carpets to the highly polished wood-grained wall panels glistening like glass, to the shimmering crystal chandeliers shining like stars overhead, it

was beauty personified. Avenues of glamorous shops displayed beautiful fashions: furs, jewelry, and souvenirs from around the world. With a captain and a crew of 1200 we lacked nothing.

On board there was a quartet of young men from Asbury College going to Europe for a concert tour. They “adopted” me and together we explored the ship from bow to stern, from engine room to bridge. What a thrill it was to stand at the bow of the ship with nothing in view but the sky and the sea, to watch the ship cut a path through the white foaming waves, and to feel the salty spray against my face. Underneath it all was the steady rhythmic beat of the great motor.

Only once did it shudder and shake, missing a beat as the ship hit a stormy sea, sending high waves over the deck. But it picked up the beat and plowed safely through the gale. This, of course, sent everyone who had not acquired “sea legs” to their cabins, where they lay flat on their backs. Everything that was not fastened down went rolling here, there and yonder.

One Englishman sitting across from me at dinner said, “Ang on to your soup, lady. This ‘ere’s my last pair of trousers.”

Four and a half days later we docked at Cherbough and took the train to the Gard de Lyons in the heart of Paris. This was my first encounter with French culture. Each car was divided into closed compartments, with benches like seats on each side of the door, facing each other. A portly gentleman and myself were the only ones in my compartment. He proceeded to remove his overcoat, stretched out on the bench, covered himself up and went snoringly to sleep.

I sat on the corner of the other bench, prim and proper, only a yard away from him, and dozed off in spite of his snores.

☞ PART II ☞

"Hello World"



So this is Paris! It is 1938, and here I am! Often as we drove through the city down narrow, crowded, cobblestone streets or wide beautiful tree-lined boulevards, I thought, “Am I dreaming, or am I really here?!”

Centuries-old buildings, beautiful in their old age, history tucked away within their walls. No green rolling lawns here! Every building or home was sheltered behind iron grilled or concrete walls.

I enrolled at the American Dormitory on the campus of the *Sorbonne*, the oldest university in Europe. It was founded in the 12th century as a theological college. Later, in the 17th century, Cardinal Richelieu undertook to restore it. Classes were in Latin, and those attending the *Sorbonne* spoke Latin and settled in on the Left Bank of the *Seine* River. It became the Latin Quarter and continues so, as a retreat for actors, artists and musicians.

The university buildings spread out around the beautiful church, the *Eglise de la Sorbonne*. Inside is the marble tomb of Cardinal Richelieu. The sprawling buildings left little room for a campus. Early in the 19th century a most unique campus was built on the outskirts of the city. It was called the *Cité Universitaire*.

Each country has its own dormitory built in the style and fashion of the country. The American dormitory is typically “United States.” The Japanese dormitory has bamboo sliding doors, niches for beautiful floral arrangements, tea tables, and beautiful sunken gardens outside. The Chinese dormitory has a pagoda roof with a huge red and gold dragon across the top. Inside are red and gold lacquered furnishings and beautiful banners covering the walls.

On and on the campus goes, with beautiful terraces, flowers, fountains and life-sized statues.

The first week I was taken to classes by friends. The subway or the *metro*, as they call it, is also quite unique. It covers 35 miles of underground tracks going out in all directions, with *Donfort Rochereau* like a hub in the center of the wheel. It was the transfer point for all who were going and coming.

I quickly learned how to get to *Donfort Rochereau* and make my transfer to the train that would take me to the *Cité*. With great confidence I assured my friend that now I could manage well on my own. All I needed to do was count the stations as they stopped, and get off when the train stopped at the fifth station.

All went well until I boarded my train at *Donfort Rochereau*. I made my transfer and settled down on the train, ready to count the stations as they went by. But lo and behold, the train never stopped! Bewildered, I turned to the person sitting next to me and said, “Do you speak English?”

“*Non, non, non,*” she said.

I turned to those around me and said, “Does anyone here speak English?” They only greeted me with puzzled stares.

After about twenty minutes with no stops, the train surfaced, and I found we were now out in open country. Little box-shaped red-roof houses nestled in green fields. Here and there was a cemetery surrounding a quaint little steepled church. I hadn't the faintest idea where I was nor how I was to get back to where I belonged!

After another forty minutes the train slowed down and stopped. Everyone picked up bundles and filed out. I followed.

A uniformed official stood at a gate collecting tickets as each passenger filed by. I followed. When I handed him my ticket, he went off into a long discussion of which I understood *nothing*. I got out my French-English dictionary and looked up the words, "I am lost." (*Je suis perdue.*)

I handed him my student ID card. He pushed back his hat, scratched his head, and shaking his finger under my nose said, "*Express, non, non, non! Omnibus, oui, oui, oui.*"

He gave me another ticket, pointed to another gate on the *quai* and, wagging his finger he repeated, "*Omnibus, oui, oui, oui!*"

Along came the train. It seemed to be going in the right direction. I stepped on, settled down, and discovered it was an *Express* that never stopped! By this time I was resigned to my fate, but took courage in that it was at least going in the right direction. It finally stopped, the door opened and I found myself back at *Donfort Rochereau*. At least I was back where I had started from! I would try again.

My guardian angel must have been with me, for when I transferred this time, the train made its stops. Five stops, and I was home! Whee, thus I learned my French!

Students were given reduced rates to all points of interest in Paris, and I availed myself of the opportunities to explore as much as possible. I mastered the *metro* and learned how to use the buses. The buses stopped for only a fraction of a second. One had to catch a pole, swing on, or be left sprawling in the street.

My first trip was to the Eiffel Tower, Paris' well known landmark. It was built for the World Exhibition in 1889, the centennial of the French Revolution. It was built of 7,000 tons of steel and so well built that even in the strongest winds the tower never sways more than 4 1/2 inches.

After the Exhibition was over the tower was to have been dismantled, but no one knew what to do with 7,000 tons of scrap-metal. Since it was so well built, it's potential use as a radio station saved it.

There were many things I wanted to see and do, so I made a list of the places and on my Saturdays and days off I toured the city.

I remember the beautiful, sunny, crisp February day when I first saw the *Champs Elyseé*, the most famous and beautiful street in the city. Along this street are the famous dress salons, the furriers, the plush hotels and a number of famous restaurants. At one end of the *Champs Elyseé* is the *Arc de Triomphe*. This landmark was planned by Napoleon to celebrate his military successes. When it was required for the triumphal entry of his new empress, Mariá Louise into Paris, the *Arc* was only a few feet high. So a dummy was finally built of canvas, painted and put up for the occasion. The *Arc* was finally finished in 1836.

To get to the base of the *Arc* requires a death-defying dash through the chaotic traffic of six circling streets. Here at the *Arc de Triomphe* is the tomb of the Unknown

Soldier. A changing of the guards and re-lighting the flame occurs each evening at 6:30 p.m.

The opera was one of my top priorities. The opportunity finally came when an American student in our dorm invited me to go one evening. I was thrilled, especially as the opera that evening was "Faust."

The opera building is beautiful but it is so crowded in with other buildings close by that it loses some of its splendor. This could not be said for the interior! When I walked into that magnificent foyer, I was spellbound. It was as if I were watching a well-rehearsed play. The glistening lights, the massive white marble staircase, the carvings, were all a background for the beautiful gowned and jeweled ladies and for the men in their black and white tuxedos.

This was a gala night and we were a part of it, except that our student tickets only gave us a small space up in "peanut-heaven." At least from where we sat we could look down on all the splendor.

We missed our last train home at the transfer station and had to walk what seemed *miles*. My shoes hurt me, and when I took them off to rest my feet, I couldn't get them back on! So I walked the rest of the way in my stocking-feet. It was very late, (or early!) when we decided to stop at a little French café for omelets and French bread. It was such a fun night. But all I can remember about my friend is that his name was Jerry!

There were many other beautiful places such as the *Louvre*, the *Bastille*, the *Catacomb*, and on and on.

Nor can I forget the cathedral of *Notré Dame*. I first saw it from the Left Bank, across the *Seine* River; this most endearing symbol of Paris. I crossed the bridge over the *Seine* River and came to the *Place du Parvis*, in front of the Cathedral. It was breath-taking. I think I stood in awe at the antiquity of it all — to think of the centuries that have rolled by, the winds, the storms, the seasons coming and going, the wars that have battered at the walls. And still it stands, so beautiful, with all the magnificent carvings and the intriguing sculptures.

It was built in 1163 on the site of an old Roman temple. Some of it was ravished during the French Revolution, but later restored. If one climbed the 587 steps to the top of the towers one would have a magnificent view of the city.

I sat in the last pew and gazed up at the massive dome above me, feeling like a speck of dust amid all the splendor around me. I thought of the millions who through the centuries may have sat there too. Along with my high and holy thoughts I found myself thinking, "How in the world do they keep all this dusted?"

I am of the earth, earthy, eh?

What could be lovelier than April in Paris! The sights and smells of spring were everywhere. The boulevards were lined with budding trees. Tubs of bright flowers were here and there, reminding everyone that spring was here. I loved to walk in the rain, — a gentle, misty, soft rain, — like walking through a cloud.

It was along *Montparnasse Boulevard* that I discovered a typical French café. Low flower-boxes marked off the outside table and chairs. Such wonderful smells emitted from inside! And there I found beautiful little cakes, cream-buttered frostings, and those delicious squares of milk chocolate filled with hazel-nuts. Perhaps one could say I became addicted!

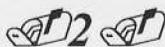
Then came the Saturday morning I had been looking forward to for weeks. We toured *Fontainebleau* and *Versailles*. Both places had once been hunting lodges for the wealthy royalty. *Fontainebleau* was glorified by Napoleon and became his royal dwelling. *Versailles* was a hunting lodge, and during the reign of Louis XIV it was converted into a palace. It housed 20,000 royalty and families and their servants. Louis XV added to its beauty. During the reign of Louis XVI it was redone at the fabulous cost of vast amounts of money and the lives of many of the peasants as they labored on the Canal.

The 250 acres surrounding the palace are covered with forests, well trimmed shrubs, flower gardens, statues and bubbling fountains. Beauty beyond description!

As I stood in the court of the palace, I imagined what it must have been like when hundreds of screaming peasants pushed and shoved their way through the great gridded-iron gates and filled the court, demanding the lives of Louis XVI and his Queen, Marie Antoinette.

With their ramrods, the angry crowd battered down the massive doors to the palace. Rushing in, they filled the hall of mirrors and overflowed to all the rooms, in search of the royal family, only to find that they — dressed as ragged peasants — had fled through a back entrance.

Thus began the terrible explosion known as the French Revolution. The royal family was later apprehended and died on the *guillotine*, along with hundreds of the other rich and famous. Paris was plundered and ravished. Much of her priceless antiquity was destroyed.



Two other girls had joined me at the *Cité*, both on their way to French West Africa. At the Easter holiday break from classes, we counted our pennies and planned a trip to England.

We traveled north through Normandy to *Dieppe*, crossing the English Channel to Newhaven, then on to Victoria Station. We were able to get “bed and breakfast” rooms at Courtwright House, directly across from the British Museum. Tours of London were out of the question money-wise, so we made up our own tours. Taking the double-decker buses and asking questions as to the “where and how” from the tall fur-headed “bobbies” we were able to crowd our days full.

Our first stop was at the Tower of London, the centuries-old ancient fortress built to protect the island from the invading army from Rome.

I had read extensively and passionately much of the history of England, of Richard III’s horrible death, the beheading of Charles I, Henry VIII and all his wives, the tales of King Arthur, and on and on, down to the present time. Here at the Tower, all that I had read came alive for me!

We visited the White Tower, the place where all the instruments of torture were displayed, depicting some of the most ghastly moments in the history of England.

As we passed through the Traitor’s Gate, we saw the dungeons of those who had climbed the ladder of fame and fortune, only to lose their heads on the guillotine. Coming on some of the names carved in the walls and tracing my fingers over the carvings, in my imagination I could feel their anguish as they pondered their fate while awaiting their deaths on the guillotine.

So on to the Jewel House, where the crown jewels were kept. Here we met the Beefeaters in their costumes of red and gold, standing guard over the fabulous display of jewels. Here the Imperial State Crown is kept, worn for the coronations. It is studded with 3,000 jewels, mostly diamonds. The Royal Sceptre is also kept here, which bears the 530-carat Star of Africa.

We came “home” at night and fell exhausted into bed, only to be up early the next morning and on our way again.

One of my favorite spots was Windsor Castle. It was a perfect story-book castle, ages old, having been built in 1070. Here too, was the rich history of the majesty of England. Here too, were the tombs of the famous: Henry VIII and his third wife, Jane Seymour, along with kings and queens of past history.

It was here that we were fortunate to see King George and his two little princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret, as they rode horse-back through the grounds that surrounded Windsor Castle.

We also visited Eton, the famous boys’ school, and discovered the beauty of England’s rural areas.



On my return from England I decided to leave the American dorm where everyone spoke English and move into a French home where no one knew a word of English. It was a sort of “sink or swim” project, but proved to be most helpful.

There was a widowed mother and her two teen-age daughters, and three others from Holland. It was great fun. My room was on the third floor with a sloping ceiling and I soon learned to roll out of bed before I sat up! There was a tiny closet bathroom with an old-fashioned commode, the kind with a tank high on the wall which had long chains to pull on, to “flush.” The wash-stand had no running water, just a pitcher and bowl. One had to carry the needed water each evening when going up the stairs to bed.

The meager meals were far from French *cuisine*. A *croissant* and a cup of hot chocolate for breakfast; for “tea” a slice of French bread, no butter, and a square of chocolate. Dinner was a watery soup with a piece of cabbage floating around, a casserole, salad, cheese and fruit. I lost weight, but I gained a good vocabulary. The girls took me to market where I learned to bargain, count my change carefully, and get to know the people.

There were Sunday *fetés*, picnics, and long walks in the woods. I still continued with my daily classes, kept in touch with friends at the *Cité* and took my tours around Paris. Life was good!

Then came the dark clouds of war on the horizon. Hitler’s power came into full bloom. The world stood by and watched him take Czechoslovakia. Paris trembled as he began massing his troops along the Rhine River across the border from France. Then came the black-outs. The lights of Paris no longer lit up the skies.

Because of the severity of the situation, I moved back to the American dormitory at the *Cité*. Then word went out that this was the night when Paris would be bombed. Paris wept!

It was in my early morning class that the announcement came for all American students to leave Paris within 24 hours. Confusion reigned!

I dashed back to the dormitory, assembled all my bags, baggage and trunks, got in touch with the four other members of our group and waited for available transportation to the train station. That was a PROBLEM, since the taxis and trucks were confiscated to transport soldiers to the front lines. How we did it is rather a confused blur in my memory.

I do remember, however, that four of us crowded into a rickety old taxi which we were fortunate enough to find at an exorbitant price. The other two found a battered old truck in which to haul our baggage and trunks.

We had just started out when we discovered our driver was a bit drunk and half crazy with fear. He kept turning around and shouting at us, “Yes, you run. We stay and die like dogs!”

But we did get to the station in time for our evening train to Marseilles, a sea port, in the south of France.

Every available space on the train was filled. The aisles were packed. We traveled in a completely blacked-out train through blacked-out cities all night, arriving in early morning at Marseilles. We found hotel rooms, registered at the American Embassy and waited for further instructions. And we waited!

That was the time when Chamberlain with his bowler hat and black umbrella went to Munich for a conference with Hitler. After a week they reached a truce. Hitler promised never to do another naughty thing! Things went from the boiling point to simmer.

Instead of returning to Paris to finish the term, we were advised by the New York board to go directly on to Indo-China. We obtained passage on a beautiful ship, the *André Lebon*, which we learned was a "slow boat to China" —! Besides other passengers, there were about two hundred French military personnel returning to the colony.

I was so glad to shake the war-dust of Europe off my feet and to look forward to this far away place, free of war! Ha! When I first went to French Indo-China few knew where that was, nor did they know much about the people there. Four years later, the whole world knew!

We floated, as it were, on a sea of glass, so calm and beautiful was the Mediterranean Sea. And then came Cairo, the gateway to the east. How true! Europe and its ways were left behind. Now came the sandals, the flowing robes, the turbans, the open markets, the narrow, cobbled streets, the camel-trains, the beggars, and the strange babble of voices. We spent three days sight-seeing while the boat was unloaded and loaded again.

We learned that the camels could be very mean, bite and spit on one, and heard the story of one man who learned to treat his camel in a very strange way. When the camel became angry, refusing to obey, the man took off his outer coat and put it down in front of the camel, whereupon the camel began stomping and mauling the coat, grumbling all the while. Finally, when all the camel's frustration was gone, the man picked up his coat, brushed it off, and the two of them went peacefully on their way!

The ship waited its turn to go through the Suez Canal. Toward evening we began that breathtaking, beautiful trip through the locks of the Canal. As the sun went down it turned the sands to lavender, gold and pink.

As the moon came up like a white ball in the sky the whole scene was drenched in white moonlight. We could see the camel markets along the shore and hear the voices mingled with the grunts and groans of the camels. It was too beautiful to go below or even think of sleep! I stood at the rail and watched this beautiful fairy tale unfold.

We arrived in the morning, and when I saw the ragged loin-cloth-dressed natives who came out in their boats to get us, I quickly decided to remain on board and watch safely by the rail!

Then we crossed the Indian Ocean, a long three-week trip. A funny thing happened, but at the time it was frightening. Behind our deck was a partition separating us from the crew, with an open space of about ten inches at the bottom.

One day while relaxing in my deck chair, one of the crew put his face down to the open space and began to say obscene things to me. There was a coolie near by, scrubbing down our deck. Ha! In a twinkle of an eye I went over, picked up the dirty pail of water and dashed it right into the crewman's face. A roar went up! I dropped the pail by the startled coolie and fled to my cabin, sure now that I would be killed!

However, quite the reverse. From that time on I was treated with great respect. In fact, the stewards practically folded into the walls when I went by!

We made three stops in India, at Madras, Bombay and *Pontecherré*. We stayed three days in each port. I was able to get a brief glimpse of the style and ways of the people. What I saw would fill another chapter!

Then on to Ceylon, stopping at Colombo. While there, we visited the Kandy Mountains, the gem capital of the east.

Singapore was the dirtiest of all the ports. Total confusion reigned on the piers. I was glad to leave it behind, and face, at last, toward French Indo-China.



As we traveled up the winding river to Saigon, I hung by the rail to catch a glimpse of this, my new country. The shores were lined with luscious green foliage, coconut palms, linden trees, banana bushes—some over twenty feet high, and flowers blooming in a riot of bright colors. In the open spaces we could see the wide expanse of the beautiful emerald green rice fields.

Here and there in a clearing were villages of eight or nine huts nestled together, built of bamboo poles interlaced with banana leaves. The overhanging thatched conical-shaped roofs matched the conical-shaped hats everyone wore. Along the shore the little children, wearing nothing but their light brown skins, waved a greeting to us.

And then at last, after 28 days, we docked at Saigon. I had arrived!

It was high noon, and it was **HOT**. The pier was alive with a mass of officials, military men, business men, Chinese merchants, and even the geisha girls, wearing their bright tunics and a flower over their right ear which meant, "I am available." The rickshaw coolies, pushing, yelling, all were vying for customers.

It was **HOT!** We stood for hours in a sweltering building waiting to go through customs. To make matters worse, a box of tacks in my trunk had come loose, and when the customs officer plunged his hands down into my things, his hands came up dripping tacks! Perhaps it's best I couldn't understand all he said. He was *angry!*

The rickshaw ride from the docks to the mission station was one harrowing experience, not to be soon forgotten. As we entered the wide boulevard we were suddenly a part of a surging crowd of busy bicycles and wooden carts of every kind and description pulled and pushed by coolies. All the carts were overloaded beyond their capacity. Even the bicycles were loaded until all one could see were the hands on the handle bars and the feet turning the pedals. Honks, yells, whistles, bells all added to the confusion. No traffic laws here! It was every man for himself.

The boulevard was wide and lined with beautiful trees that arched over it. There were linden trees, coconut trees, palm trees, and always the vivid bright bougainvillea vines with flowers blooming in profusion. I caught glimpses of magnificent buildings, colonial mansions, and ornate temples with pagoda roofs. They were sheltered behind walls with massive iron-grilled grates. All this passed by me like flicks on a movie screen and really didn't seem to register since I was so occupied watching the back of my rickshaw coolie. I kept thinking that if he fell down, I would go over backwards and be at the mercy of this surging crowd!

A slow, misty rain was falling when we reached the mission compound. The high wall around it was bright with red bougainvillea vines which even splashed up over the verandah, covering the tiles. Beautiful!

But inside was a different story. The rooms were dark and gloomy, damp, and smelled of mold. Little lizards chased each other from picture to picture. No glass in the

☞ PART III ☞

French Indo-China (Vietnam)

Here as in Saigon there was no glass in the windows, just iron bars and louvered shutters that could be closed. The shutters were crudely made, leaving much to be desired. Creepy, crawly things found their way along with the rain through the cracks in the shutters. Lizards, spiders, scorpions, all fell prey to my club, which I learned to wield without a shudder!

Tourane (*Da Nang*) was as different from Saigon as the day is from the night. No beautiful boulevards here, no fancy shops, no beauty parlors, no restaurants, no blazing lights, for this was the land of the peasants, the rice farmers. It was a rural area, made up of small villages of reed and grass huts nestled here and there around the rice fields. Built up mounds of dirt made dikes that surrounded the flooded fields. These were called "bunds," the top being leveled off so that a bicycle, a cart, or even a rickshaw could travel from one rice field to another.

As I traveled along these "bunds" I could see long rows of peasants, perhaps as many as fifty to a row, bent over, knee-deep in the water, planting the stocks of rice by hand, one stock at a time. About all I could see of them was the long line of the conical hats they wore.

I had not been in Tourane long when I sensed that all was not well on the compound. When I approached the subject, I discovered that I had landed right in the midst of a PROBLEM! Had I come half-way around the world to learn that I was NOT WANTED?

It seemed that the missionaries on the field were divided among themselves as to whether a single young woman could work with the natives. Also, they did not think it was possible to have youth groups and Sunday School classes in the organized churches, because of the cultural differences. (We were still in the stage where the men sat on one side of the room, and the women on the other.)

Some said yes, the time had come for such work to be organized. There was also a great need for materials to be translated to meet the need of these younger Christians.

Others said no, the native cultures would not accept a single young woman. Nor would the French in the colony understand a single young woman traveling alone on the field. (Remember, this was *ages* before "Women's Lib.") The natives outside the church circle, so they said, would assume that the missionary-man had taken a second wife.

None of this had been explained to me when I had accepted the assignment to French Indo-China. And to make matters worse, I had been assigned to an older couple who had repeatedly opposed my coming! I felt the sharp edge of rejection!

Should I stay? Should I go home? But what could I tell the church and the young people who had so sacrificially given to send me?

I spent hours wrestling with the question, I would ride for hours on my bike along the hard-packed sand of the beach, fighting my "dragon."

Finally I made my decision. I took all the bits and pieces of the puzzle and swept them: "under the rug." I would stay, even if it killed me! And it just about did that!

Many years later my daughter said to me, "Mother, if you had known all that you would be facing on the field, would you have gone?"

My answer, "Yes, a thousand times yes!"

I gave God my life. He took it, and from all the bits and pieces, all the experiences, good and bad, He made something beautiful out of my life.

windows—just iron bars. My room was small. It had a single bed, a chair, and in a small adjoining room, a covered pail—my commode!

Later that evening I stood by my pane-less window, looking out through the iron bars. I watched two huge rats scurrying in and out of the open kitchen door, some ten feet from my room. I was *so* glad to crawl under the mosquito net on my bed. Exhausted, I lay listening to the sounds of the night around me. Angry voices in a sing-song language, a baby crying, the *ka-ka* lizard in the bush by my window calling to his mate, a street peddler calling out his wares—unmindful of the rain, the tinkling of the temple bells, the measured reverberating beat of a temple gong, the drip, drip, dripping of the rain in the blackness of the night. Home seemed a million miles away!

The next day we took a walking tour along the boulevard, stopping to peek through the iron-grilled gates of those majestic “palaces,” where we saw beautiful gardens, fountains and statues typical of the French gardens in Paris. There were many shops, tea houses, restaurants, and yes, even the side-walk cafes with their bright umbrellas, tubs of bright flowers, and wonderful smells.

The young girls we met on the boulevard were lovely. They wore the *ao dai*, ~~the costume of both men and women~~. The tunic has long sleeves, a stand-up collar, and closes on the left side down under the arm to the waist. The tunic was slit on both sides up to the waist to reveal wide-legged white trousers. It was a costume perfect for their slender little figures. And as always, they wore the conical reed and grass hats.

Men wore much the same costume, but some wore the black *kuhn* on their heads. It was a sort of turban. Others wore just the black trousers and a white, long-sleeved, button-down-the-front shirt.

Along the curb were the “walking restaurants.” A vendor with a long pole over his shoulder with a box hanging on each end, stood waiting to serve his meals of rice and tea and fruit. One box held the teacups and the teapots, the other held the rice, fruit, bowls and chopsticks. When a customer finished his bowl of rice the vendor just wiped off the chopsticks, and with the same not-so-clean towel wiped out the bowl. He was now ready for the next customer.

The beauty of this ^{Saigon} “pearl of the east” was soon lost when we walked a few blocks “off the beaten track.” There we saw the poverty and the horrible conditions some of the people lived in, make-shift huts fashioned out of scraps of wood, bits and pieces of tin, and discarded shipping crates. It was not a pleasant sight, nor a pleasant smell.

I had three days to become acclimated to the sights, sounds and smells of Saigon, and then was back on the *Andre Lebon* to finish the last of my journey. We traveled around the tip of Cochin China and up the coast to Tourane (later renamed *Da Nang*) where I was to be stationed for language study.

I arrived in the midst of the monsoon season. Added to the monsoons were the typhoons. Together they ripped and tore everything in their path.

Tourane was a beautiful harbor but the shore line was so shallow that the larger ships could not dock, so I was brought to dock by a launch. We passed the small junks being tossed and bounced around in the wind and the rain.

When I arrived at the mission station I was a sorry mess, wet and dripping—soaked to the skin, far from a pleasing first impression.



Life on the compound was always exciting. With the large native church, the Bible School of 125 students, plus their children, and a much-in-demand dispensary, there were very few dull moments.

For instance, the night the tiger came to visit. I was startled awake by the beating of pots and pans, the clanging of the gongs, and the chanting of the natives next to the compound in the village of *Anh Hai*. Someone had seen a tiger prowling near the outskirts of the village. Occasionally, during the hottest season, a strange tiger would leave the hills to come down in search of water. The frenzied attempts to frighten him away continued throughout the night until dawn.

One of the first things I bought after arriving in Tourane (*Da Nang*) was a bicycle. I loved to go exploring around the villages. The Bay of Tourane was about five minutes from our compound. I could ride my bike on the hard-packed surface of the beach and watch the fishing boats and the *sampans*. These *sampans* were the only home for many families of the fishermen.

I never felt any fear of the natives. They were always polite, staring at me with open-mouth curiosity. The children followed me as if I were a pied-piper!

One morning I was merrily pedaling down the road. Looking up, I saw a herd of huge water buffalo, their black eyes bulging and long horns curling back, coming directly at me. I was terrified! I dropped my bike by the roadside and ran to hide behind the biggest tree I could find. Imagine my chagrin, as they went ambling by, to see a small boy about 10 years old, sitting astride the back of the last water buffalo. He had a branch in his hand which he used to tap the rump of the buffalo in front of him, prodding him to keep moving.

I scrambled out of hiding, hoping that no one had witnessed my humiliation.

Part of what I feared most were the scrawny, emaciated, mangy dogs that scrounged around the outskirts of the villages. They would suddenly appear, barking, baring their teeth and coming up to “smell” me. I was told that if I remained perfectly still they would not hurt me. But with knees shaking, and heart racing, this was rather hard to do.

We had a lovable old dog on our compound who would greet every ragged beggar with a tail-wagging *welcome!* But he barked at the official Frenchmen, bared his teeth and kept them at bay. When I questioned this, my teacher told me it was because the French ate dog meat, and our dog could “smell” it! True? or False?

There was *Anh Cung*, our night watchman, who made his trips around the compound at night. The klop, klop of his wooden sandals was such a comforting sound. But there were times when he sorely tried my patience! He loved to curl up on my back verandah and go to sleep. His snores often wakened me. I would go out, shake him awake and send him on his rounds. He would bow, and bow, and beg my forgiveness, promising never to do it again. Ha!

One hot night one of the missionaries in search of a breath of air decided to move her bed, plus mosquito net, out onto the verandah. During the night a coolie slipped over the wall and began to remove her mosquito net. She wakened and screamed, "Help! Help!" so loudly that the whole compound, students and all were awakened. We looked around for *Anh Cung*, the night watchman. We found him stretched out on a table in the students dining room, fast asleep!

Or one might be walking through the pantry just in time to see *Anh Thanh*, the houseboy, scooping a wiggling lizard out of the soup tureen. The lizard had fallen from the ceiling into the hot soup. I did not eat any soup that day!

Most of the day I spent in language study, except for a few hours several days a week, when I helped in the dispensary. Now *there* was drama! ←

Another event on each ~~day's calendar~~ ^{for patients,} was the time spent in the dispensary. At four o'clock in the afternoon the bell was rung, but already there was a line at the gate needing attention.

We were only allowed to give out medication that we call "over the counter" medication. We could give aspirin for pain, medication for worms, ointment and clean bandages for cuts and burns, and argyrol for infected eyes. What bothered me most were the mothers who brought their babies with infected eyes, yet they did nothing to brush away the many flies that rimmed the festering eyes.

Many were the charms and tricks of the witch doctors, who often used herbs and roots for cures along with their magics. One of the rarest of all cures was the one made of the bones of the tiger. These bones were cut up in small pieces, covered with rice alcohol and left to ferment for several weeks until it formed a jelly. Then it was wrapped in leaves and buried for several more weeks. When it hardened, small chips were given the patient to cure whatever seemed to be wrong.

I never tasted it, but one missionary did and he said, "Whee, I feel like jumping over the moon!"

There was a saying among the natives that if you went to the hospital for help you would die. This was probably true, for after every charm, fetish and cure of the witch doctor had failed and the patient was dying, then as a last resort he was taken to the hospital too late for anything to help.

We tried to teach the students good hygiene, but we were often surprised at some of the "cures" they still practiced.

One afternoon a first year student hurried to us crying, "My wife is dying! My wife is dying!"

When we went out to the students' dormitory we found her unconscious in a pool of blood. He had used the old heathen custom of cutting off the tips of the fingers to bleed the patient, letting out the evil spirit causing the pain.

Fortunately, the man's wife did not die.

And then there was my teacher, *Thai Ky*. He was a feisty young student who spoke French with a very bad native accent. I spoke French with a very bad American accent. We must have done something right, however, for I passed my language exams with grades in the high nineties.

It was a difficult language. Although the words were mostly two or three letters, yet it was a tonal language. Where one places the tone determined the word's meaning.

It was through the efforts of the first Catholic missionaries that the tones were reduced to writing, using the Roman letters as a medium to represent the sounds that they heard.

This was called *Guoc Ngu*. It was used by the Christian missionaries later on who translated the New Testament. Accent signs were added to the words to identify the tone such as: *ba, bá, bà, bã, bq*.

So the word *ba* had five meanings. It could mean "three, grandmothers, poison, hug, dregs," according to where one placed the tone, and in writing, where one placed the accent marks.

When I did not get my tones correctly placed, *Thai Ky*, instead of wringing his hands in despair, would crack his knuckles. Crunch, crackle, crunch! He often hung his head in shame saying he couldn't begin to tell me what horrible things I was saying. The women would put their hands over their mouth out of politeness, to hide their smiles at my mistakes. It was the children who became my very best teachers, for they never hesitated to correct me!

I learned a great deal more from *Thai Ky* than the language. He taught me much of the past history of his country and of their struggles as a nation to maintain their own identity. I came to realize that this was a nation that had suffered cruelty without justice.

To understand the natives better one needed to live through a New Year's celebration with them. It was called "Tet-time." For a week everyone, rich or poor, joined in the festivities wholeheartedly.

The first day of *Tet* was family day. The ancestral altar was laden with bowls of candy, fruit or flowers and lots of false paper money. The fragrance of burning *jah* sticks was everywhere. Relatives came to visit bringing small gifts.

The next day was given to caring for the graves of the ancestors, cutting, trimming, leaving special offerings on the graves to appease any spirit who might want to haunt the dead.

The rest of the week was fun-time. It was the only time of the year when they could have "open season" to gamble. They gambled on cockfights, on cards, on races.

This was the time when the old, fat kitchen god paid his visit to the Great God of heaven. All year that old god, high on a shelf, had watched the family, recording the bad things they had done. Now at *Tet*-time he would pay his annual visit to the God of heaven and leave the record.

So what did the family do? On the eve of *Tet*-time a huge bowl of very sticky candy was left in front of him. They reasoned that the kitchen god would eat the sticky candy. His teeth would be all stuck together! He couldn't say a single word, not a thing could he tell the Great God of heaven. They were safe! Ha!

Tet-time was also the time when neighbors and friends came to visit, sharing their hot tea and ginger candies. Often they exchanged small gifts. The most elaborate gift in these earlier years could be the gift of a bird nest. This was a rare commodity. These bird nests were made by sort of a sand-piper bird whose saliva wove the nests together. They built their nests in the cracks and crevices of the mountains near Tourane (*Da Nang*). During a certain time of the year they were harvested by the natives who were brave enough to scale the difficult high places in search of them. In the very early years, these

bird nests were sold at a great price to the Chinese, who made the famous "bird nest soup."

The outstanding event of *Tet* was the celebration called *Nam Giao*. It was a religious ceremony held every three years at *Tet*-time. The emperor, *Bao Dai*, served as high priest, officiating at the sacred altar.

The ceremony was held in a special temple outside the city of *Hue*, which at that time was the capital of *Annam*, a province in the central region of French Indo-China. It was sacred ground. Only the emperor and his chosen mandarins were allowed on those sacred grounds. The emperor and his chief mandarins spent three days in isolation being purified for the ceremony.

We were able to travel to *Hue*, making the trip over the mountains and through the jungles. Elephants once roamed these jungles, but few are left due to the ivory trade with the Chinese in those earlier years.

We were not allowed to enter the sacred grounds but we could watch the fabulous preparations being made. The parade from the city to the sacred grounds was beautiful. Elephants ambled along first, draped in gorgeous embroidered satin thrown over their backs and with jeweled harnesses sparkling and shining in the sun. Then followed the mandarins in formation, dressed in beautifully embroidered satin coats. On their heads they wore the traditional *huken*, a turban draped with jewels.

Amidst the clanging of the gongs and the beating of the drums, the procession crossed over the moat onto the sacred grounds.

A water buffalo was slain and placed on the altar of Heaven, Earth and the ancestors. Its blood was sprinkled to the four winds. Its hair and hide were buried. The sacrifice was made to the Great God of Heaven, and to their ancestors, as a plea for forgiveness for the sins of the nation.

Hue was an overpopulated city, without the glamour of Saigon. The Perfumed River was there, so-called because of the profusion of flowers blooming along its banks, dropping petals into the water. The breeze from the south brought the fragrance upstream.

Here too, were the famous tombs of the ancient kings. Life-sized statues surrounded the area. The antiquity of the nation could be seen in the ancient architectural structures of the pagoda-roofed temples and shrines.

After I was able to use the language a bit, with the help of my teacher and a Bible woman, I started morning classes for the children of the Bible students, and for the children of the village next to us.

We were well into the classes for about six months, when the Bible woman stopped coming. I was concerned, so I went to see her. Over a cup of hot tea and some ginger candy, she told me she was not feeling well. When I left her, I gave her a quick hug and dropped a kiss on her forehead.

That afternoon at tea time on the compound I mentioned that I had been to see *Bà Luang*, my Bible woman. There was a dead silence. Then, out of the silence someone said, "*Bà Luang* has leprosy! She is a leper!"

Well, put a big mark on the wall for me. I had kissed a leper!

I wish that it might have been your privilege to have met another Bible woman, a little old lady named *Bà Thi Hoa*. Little *Bà Thi Hoa* was the third wife of a mandarin. In Indo-China a man could have as many wives as he could afford to buy. ↗

They would buy one wife and put her in the home, buy another wife and put her in the rice field, and another would put in the market place.

And so little *Bà Thi Hoa* was the third wife. Often as she came by the chapel, she came to the window and listened to the songs, sometimes staying to hear a story, or to listen to the Scripture verses from the Bible.

One day her heart was strangely stirred. At the close of the class she came to the teacher and wanted to know if the Lord Jesus loved her, a woman. She listened as again the plan of salvation was made clear to her. She knelt by the bench in the back of the chapel and accepted the Lord Jesus, asking him to come into her heart and life.

She went home, but when she told her husband the story, chaos broke loose! He said to her, "You cannot bring that Jesus' story into my home. You stop talking about this Jesus!"

When *Bà Thi Hoa* continued to talk about Jesus, her husband finally told her to leave. Now for a woman in Indo-China to be thrown out of her home was a horrible thing. She came to the mission station and they took her in. She became a sewing woman at the compound, for many years.

This little old lady had no education, for women in those days were not given an education, so she was unable to read her Bible. But day after day she would take her Bible, put it down on the bench, kneel and bury her head in the pages. She would pray for understanding.

In the days that followed, in the months that followed, and in the years that followed, little *Bà Thi Hoa* kept persistently at work over the Scriptures, persistently at the missionaries, until she was able to grasp a bit of the truth for herself.

It wasn't an easy task, for she had been raised in heathen darkness with no chance to learn, and beaten by her husband like most of the women in Indo-China. Yet through her persistence, longing and effort, she learned to read the Bible. She loved to "gossip the Gospel" to other women.

Speaking of sewing makes me think of another story about our native tailor. When he was still an apprentice at the trade and just getting used to making clothes for "the foreigner," he was given a dress by one of the missionaries to copy. The dress had suffered a great deal of wear. It had a patch on the collar. The missionary gave him the dress and asked him if he could make another one exactly like it. His answer was *duoc*, which meant, "can do."

When the dress was returned he had followed instructions perfectly. The dress was exactly like the old one, even to the patch in the collar!

And how could I ever forget the trips to the market. There were usually one or two rickshaw coolies in the area. A click of the gate brought them running. My favorite coolie was the one who chanted to himself, keeping in tune to the pad-pad of his feet on the dusty road.

There was another coolie with quite a sense of humor. The streets and roads were always filled with people, dogs, pigs or chickens. This coolie loved to quietly sneak up on a crowd and then give an ear-splitting yell. Startled people went flying in all directions, chickens squawked, and dogs barked. Confusion reigned.

The gray Gibbon monkeys joined in the excitement, swinging from tree to tree as they followed, scolding and chattering all the way to market.

Women joined the “to market we go” with long poles swung over their shoulders, having a basket swinging from each end of the poles. Usually one basket contained a screaming baby, while the other was filled with several squawking chickens.

The natives chewed the betel nut, which in turn stained their mouths blood-red. They loved to chew and spit, chew and spit, leaving great splotches of blood-red on the cobble stones of the road. It was enough to make one think murder had been committed there.

The sights and sounds of the market place could fill another chapter! Open stalls faced each other on the narrow road. Chickens hung squawking by their feet. Skinned pigs hung on hooks covered by a multitude of flies. Fish glared with their bugging eyes. There were many kinds of fruits, as well as rice, soy beans, candied ginger, pineapple and dates.

There were other shops with beautiful materials from India, carved ivory from China, jewels inlaid with gold and silver, beautifully woven and embroidered linens. I never liked to bargain, but anyone who didn't bargain was labeled “stupid.” The rickshaw coolie would follow from stall to stall, collecting my parcels and keeping the beggars from overwhelming me.

So many beggars! It was the policy of the mission not to feed them or give them money at the compound gate. Otherwise we would have been besieged. But one morning I heard this pitiful wailing. Looking out, I saw a tiny, dirty, unkempt little girl shuffling through the dust of the road. Amid her wails she told me that she had lost her *sou* (penny). Her mother would beat her!

I gave her several *sous*. She looked up at me, gave me a sly grin, turned and skipped off the road. Somehow I had the feeling that I had been “taken.”

Sure enough. The next morning at about the same time, I heard this pitiful wailing. I looked out. Now there were two of them wailing and shuffling through the dust for their lost *sous*!

No, I didn't succumb. I thought afterwards though, that these two should have been rewarded for a most excellent performance!

Often peddlers would come by the compound, rattling the gate and crying, “*Bà Dum*, come and see!”

Occasionally I would open the gate and invite them to come in. Finding a place in the shade of the verandah they would spread out their wares. They would stay, squatting on their heels for hours, never taking no for an answer.

Their woven and embroidered linens were beautiful, and some were really breathtaking. There were times in my life when I have wished I were rich, and this was one of them. How I wished I could send some of these beautiful pieces home to family and friends.

My house girl, *Luang*, stood by me while I bargained, and by the lift of her eyebrows I knew when to stop bargaining and buy.

Joy and peace were two commodities rarely found in the lives of the natives. Guilt, and fear of the evil spirits and of the Great God of Heaven, held them in bondage. Death was a very present reality in their lives. If they had not had such fear of that “after-death journey,” many of the peasants working from sun-up to sun-down in the hot tropical sun might have welcomed death.

I found as I visited in their homes that the only article in their house was a coffin. There were mats on the floor and on the coffin for sleeping.

Since the law of the land was that the dead must be buried before sundown, at least the man of the family could be buried with dignity.

By the roadside, skirting the villages and the rice paddies, were these piled up mounds of dirt with a bowl of false paper money and some fruit rotting in the hot sun, or candy covered with a multitude of crawling bugs. These offerings were for the evil spirits, lest they haunt the dead's journey into the unknown.

However, if one were a rich man, the burial became a gala affair, a parade. First came the men wearing huge, ugly face masks, with eyes bulging, teeth long and pointed. They were flashing gleaming swords here, there and yonder, to frighten and kill any evil spirit in the way of their parade. Next came men tossing out false paper money, so that if there were any evil spirits left, they would become so engrossed in collecting the money, that they would not have to time to haunt the dead.

Then the coffin, draped in red and gold cloth, would be carried on the shoulders of the men in the family. Next came the women and children, all dressed in torn and tattered white robes, weeping and wailing. Following them would be the paid mourners. The louder they wept and wailed, the more they were paid.

All of this was to the beat of the gongs, and the steady wailing chant of the orange-robed, shaven-headed priests who were paid to follow the procession.

I quickly came to realize how great was the darkness in which these people lived! It was a country with a great *without* written all over it. There was poverty *without* relief. There was sickness *without* skill or care. There was sorrow *without* sympathy. There was sin *without* a remedy, death *without* hope. All this was wrapped up in the words, *without* Christ.

Someone once portrayed the heathen world when he painted a picture of a starless sky, draped in deeper and yet deeper shades of darkness, filling the awful darkness with sad-faced men and sorrow-stricken women and children. This was the heathen world I found around me.



My first Christmas in Indo-China was HOT! No white Christmas here! *Omg Bà Nhu'o'ng* had invited a few of us to his village of *Bien Hoa* to attend the wedding feast of his eldest son. It was several kilometers up the river by boat.

Anh Thanh, our house-boy, wore many hats. He wore a black turban for the work around the house and to serve our meals. He wore a banana leaf conical hat to help in the yard. He wore a chauffer's hat, which he loved with a passion, to drive the car.

By the time he had helped us pack for our trip to the wedding, the sun was a ball of heat in the sky. Its hot rays shimmered off the red tiles of the roof and made shining mirages on the hard packed road.

Roads in Indo-China were made for people to live in! They were always filled with people. *Anh Thanh* had a streak of humor much like my favorite rickshaw coolie. He loved to drive the car as slowly and quietly as possible up behind an unsuspecting crowd, then stop and give a horrible blast of the horn! People — men, women and children, dogs, pigs, chickens, baskets and food products flew in all directions. Panic reigned! He had been reprimanded for this, but often the temptation overcame him.

When we reached the river we left *Anh Thanh* with the car and took a *sampan*, which is a small boat propelled by a single pole over the stern. Another coolie with a very long pole actually *pushed* us up the river.

We had one rather plump person with us. When she stepped in I held my breath, sure that we would immediately sink to the bottom of the river. She was also very "pokable." The native children loved to slip up behind her and poke her arms. Rarely did one ever see a plump native!

As we neared the village, we could hear the commotion. The shore was alive with little children with nothing on but their little brown skins. We were greeted by the elders of the village and welcomed. Since we were special guests, fire-crackers were hung in the trees and lit. So, amid the yelling of the children, the barking of the dogs, the squawking of the chickens, and the popping of firecrackers, we made our way to the home of *Omg Bà Nhu'o'ng*.

Rough boards for table and benches were set up in the well-swept yard. The ceremony began. After much bowing, with a "*Choa*" here and a "*Choa*" there, long speeches were read.

Then came the seating according to importance. The natives have a strict protocol. I was a problem! Could I, a single woman, be seated above a native man? Yet, I was a special guest, so protocol was broken.

There were no native women at the table except one little old gray-haired, toothless grandmother, the *Bomah*, probably the matriarch of the family. She sat directly across from me. She must have thought I wasn't getting enough to eat, so she licked her chopsticks (she had been chewing betel nut and her mouth was stained blood red) and

found me a “blob” of something. She put it on my plate! It looked like a the eye of a fish. I said to one of the older missionaries sitting by me, “I can’t eat this!”

She said, “You have to!”

With a chill and a shudder, I ate it!

The wedding ceremony was a gala affair. The groom’s parents were hosted and toasted. The gifts we brought to the bride were all given to the mother-in-law. We never saw the bride until she came out from the kitchen to stand with eyes downcast by the groom’s side as they were pronounced “husband and wife.” Then she disappeared back into the kitchen to help with her mother-in-law’s work.

During the afternoon the men of the village held a meeting with the missionary-man, while we, the women, went visiting in the homes of their wives. I noticed that some of the huts had bamboo screens built several feet out from the doorway. I was told that this screen was put up to confuse the evil spirits and keep them from finding their way into the huts. Inside the hut, sometimes the only thing to sit on was the coffin, an ever-present reminder of death.

We sipped our hot tea and ate our gingerized candy, “gossiping the Gospel.” The women were shy, gracious, and beautiful.

It was sundown when we were again ushered to the waiting boat. The sun in the tropics has a way of slipping suddenly behind the mountains, leaving the sky streaked with gold, lavender and pink for a time. Twilight comes fast.

Then out came this beautiful, bright, full moon, turning everything to a silvery-white wonderland. The fragrance of the white temple flowers — night blooming, mingled with the fragrance of eucalyptus. The only sound around us was the lapping of the waves against our boat. Beautiful!

We met *Anh Thanh* at the village where we had left him with the car. Tired and hot, we arrived home safely.

That night as I tucked in my mosquito net, I felt that no Christmas, past or future, could ever be more beautiful!



The Japanese had already moved into Indo-China, when, near the end of 1940 I had a severe bout with Dengue Fever ("break-bone" fever). I also had several different kinds of persistent parasites. I was not strong physically, so went to *Dalat*, our station in the hill country, where it was cool.

Dalat was a beautiful place, high on a mountain-top. It was the summer playground of the wealthy French in the colony. In fact, the summer palace of the Emperor was adjacent to our mission station. The little prince was often lifted up to gaze over the wall at our children playing.

I remember one evening standing at my window looking out at the peaks of the mountains around me, some of them cloud covered. I thought of the hundreds and hundreds of tribes' people living in the jungles and forests of these mountains. There were the *Bil*, the *Radai*, the *Moi*, the *Mèo*, the *Nhu'o'ng* and many, many more.

Mountains of Mystery's
By white feet untrod,
Hiding strange faces
Known only to God.

Of all the many tribes, the *Mèo* tribe intrigued me the most. These were the "Aristocrats of Asia," having a history which they had passed down from generation to generations. They claimed to have wandered north of the region of China after the Tower of Babel. Finding the Chinese too barbaric, they wandered south, settling in the deep mountains of Indo-China (Vietnam).

They are the tribe of the "deep blue hands." They grow their own materials, spin, weave and dye their cloth, finding the dye in the forest around them. They use a rich, dark blue dye for their clothing. Most of the women and girls have their hands perpetually stained a deep, dark blue.

This tribe is monotheistic, worshipping the God of Heaven. They have a strict moral code. Infidelity is punished by death.

While at Dalat, one of the older missionaries asked me to speak to the tribes' people down in the long-house. He would be my interpreter. It was a never-to-be-forgotten experience.

A long-house had been built by the mission down on the mountainside away from the compound. Here the tribes' people could have a sheltered place to stay as they came and went to market. These *Moi* tribesmen were wild looking, with long, bushy hair rolled up into a bun and held together by a bone. Huge round bones were in the stretched-out lobes of their ears. Their teeth had been filed to points, and blackened. They wore no clothes except for a G-string and a little loin cloth. Woven baskets were slung over their shoulders which held their blow-guns and arrows. They could neither read nor write. In fact, they had no written language.

So there they were, sitting cross-legged on the matted floor, eyes glistening in the flickering light of the lantern. Their woven baskets with their blow guns were hidden in the shadows behind them.

These tribes-people believed that there was a Great God of Heaven who knew all about their evil ways. Along with their worship of demons, devils, ancestors and many other gods of various kinds and descriptions, they also believed in and feared the Great God of Heaven.

Each year they held a ceremony, offering up the blood of a sacrificial water-buffalo as a peace offering to appease the wrath of the Great God of Heaven. The buffalo was tied to the earth, tortured and killed. The blood was caught in a bowl and offered up as a sacrifice to the Great God of Heaven to atone for their evil ways of the past year.

So what does one tell the first-time listener? No need for homiletics or splitting hairs over doctrinal issues! Only the simplest words were needed to tell the story of John 3:16.

“You believe that there is a Great God of Heaven? Did you know that the Great God of Heaven had a son named Jesus, who lived in heaven with him? He was God’s only son. The Great God of heaven loved his son very much.

“Did you know that the Great God of Heaven has always loved you, but your evil ways have made you afraid of him? Because of your evil ways, you are guilty and fear his wrath.

“So you make a water-buffalo sacrifice, thinking that the blood of that sacrifice will wash away your guilt. But that blood is not a perfect sacrifice. God saw your need for a perfect sacrifice, so he sent his son down to the earth to be that perfect sacrifice, for you and for me.

“Like your buffalo-sacrifice, Jesus, God’s son, was tortured, nailed to a cross, and gave his blood as a peace offering. The Great God of Heaven had power to raise Jesus up. Jesus went back to heaven and gave his perfect, sacrificial blood to the Great God of Heaven. It was so perfect, so well-pleasing to the Great God of Heaven, that no one needed to make another water-buffalo-sacrifice again.

“Jesus did that for you. Remember that the name of God’s son is *Jesus*. When you believe this story, tell the Great God of Heaven you are sorry for all your evil ways. Ask him to forgive you, and ask the Spirit of Jesus to come into your life and wash you clean. He will forgive you and take away your guilt and fear. He will help you to no longer walk in your evil ways. You will come to know that the Great God of Heaven loves you very much.”

So the story of the Good News was told, the seed sown, watered with our prayers. The Holy Spirit quickens and enlightens. The tribesman believes. Another “child” is born again into the kingdom of the Great God of Heaven.

There was a young native Vietnamese who had learned the *Radai* language. He held classes daily in the long house for the tribesman who stayed overnight as they came

to and from the market. He taught them more of the story, as much as they were able to comprehend.

To the reader who may doubt the reality of the new birth, may I present *Sau*, a native tribesman who walked in the jungles in total despair. His ways were evil, his load of guilt heavy, his fear a gnawing sickness within.

Yet one day *Sau* heard the story of the redeeming love of Jesus. He believed. He stepped out of a black darkness into light. The load of guilt and the fear of the wrath of the Great God of Heaven was lifted. The chains of fear of the evil spirits, demons and devils that had bound him were broken. *Sau* became a new man. He came to know the length, and breadth, the depth and height of the love of God. I rest my case!

Later I went to Saigon where there was a very large congregation of native Christians, and lots of young people and children. They were building a beautiful new church. This was to have been my field of service.

But before the building was finished I was gone. One very hot, humid morning the starch went out of my backbone and my legs turned to jelly.

I collapsed!

The French doctor said "heart attack," but later exams showed no damage to the heart, but did show scarred-over lesions in the right lung.

I was in the hospital for two weeks. Then they thought it advisable to move me to Mathilda Hospital in Hong Kong. The governor-general gave the nurse and me permission to leave the colony with the stipulation that the nurse would return.

A little tramp steamer came into port. I was put on a stretcher, covered with a sheet, and taken aboard. There were about 200 Chinese deck-passengers fleeing from the Japanese. I think there was also a cargo of buffalo on board.

There was one cabin, the Captain's. He gave it to us. My bunk was directly under the porthole. The cabin was small and hot, without a breath of air. I begged the nurse to open the porthole, and kept on begging until she did. Suddenly a huge wave splashed in, completely drenching me. She closed the porthole and said, "There. Now are you satisfied?" Such was the morning and the evening of the first day of our trip.

On the second day, the nurse broke out with a fiery red rash. She spent most of the day lying on her back. Such was the morning and the evening of the second day.

On the third day, the nurse returned from lunch with the detailed account of a funeral up on the deck. One of the Chinese deck passengers had died. They had wrapped him in his coat, put him on a plank, chanted, wept and wailed over him. Then they lifted one end of the plank and slid him into a watery grave. Such was the morning and evening of the third day.

On the fourth day the boat intercepted a storm. I bounced around like a balloon in the wind. We clung to our bunks, as they say, "by the skin of our teeth." Such was the morning and evening of the fourth day.

On the fifth and sixth days we tried to fill our empty stomachs and regain our equilibrium. And we tried to get ourselves clean and in shape for landing. Such was the morning and evening of the fifth and sixth days.

On the seventh day we landed at Macau. I was lowered out of the boat with all the dignity of a sack of potatoes. I was still in my robe, the worse for wear.

I was taken to the Mathilda Hospital, high up on a hill overlooking the Bay of Kowloon.

It was COOL! I swallowed great gulps of COOL fresh air and ate fresh vegetables. (In Indo-China *all* vegetables had to be cooked.) I drank fresh milk, swallowed pills and enjoyed loving care. I lay in the sun! (In Indo-China it was always HOT. There were three seasons: the hot season, the hotter season, and the hottest season. It was really enervating!) Here the sun was mild, warm and invigorating.

When I was stronger, I came home under the supervision of an older missionary doctor retiring from service in China. Kobe, Yokohama, Honolulu, San Francisco, Los Angeles. Home! Full circle, home again!

As we neared the end of our journey word had gone out that we were now in American waters. The boat was alive with excited passengers rushing to and fro, getting the last minute details ready before the boat docked. How excited we were, knowing that in a few hours our feet would again be upon American soil!

There were a number of refugees returning from the war-torn areas of China. Some had been away five years, others ten years. Some of them had lived under the dark clouds of war, had seen the skies black with planes and had seen the terrible devastation of a shell-rocked city.

Now, on that morning, our faces were turned toward home. As the first rays of the morning sun fringed the horizon, the SS President Coolidge made its way through the Golden Gate and came into the sheltering waters of the San Francisco Bay. It was as if the arms of the Golden Gate reached out to receive us back home again.

We gathered on the deck of the SS President Coolidge and turned our eyes on the skyline of San Francisco. It was with joy beyond words that we entered the harbor.

Someone in the crowd began to sing, "God Bless America." Feelings ran high as we all joined in the chorus. No one seemed ashamed of their tears. This was the land that, while we loved it, we had left, that we might bring the light of the gospel of the Lord Jesus into the darkened regions of the world. And now we were home, not by choice, for our hearts were still in the land of our adoption.

We were in San Francisco for three days and then journeyed on to Los Angeles. I was met by friends and taken to the home of Mother Suppes, a dear friend of missionaries, where I stayed until my parents could make arrangements to come for me.

The following year was the blackest year of my life. Up until now I had gone out to meet life with joy, "the wind at my back." It was as if I had been climbing a ladder, each rung up just another exciting adventure. I had reached my goal! But somehow, the rung on the ladder had broken. Here I was, home again, having come full circle. I was badly bruised and broken, misplaced, lost. I felt a great sense of failure. The future was bleak. My hands were empty.

The doors to Indo-China were closing. The political situation under the Japanese there had worsened. The younger couples, their children and the nurse were transferred to the Philippine Islands. They arrived just before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and were put into concentration camps, where they remained for four years.

They had been *captured*. I had *escaped*. Somehow, for that I felt guilty! It was a black year. I could empathize with Job, dressed in his sackcloth, sitting in ashes, scraping his wounds. Move over, Job — I'll join you!

But I could also say with David the words found in Psalms 27:13:

*I had fainted, unless I had believed to see
the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.*

The political situation in French Indo-China had worsened. World War II in Europe had escalated. France had capitulated. The Vichy government had taken over the control of France. The Colony of French Indo-China had been given over to their allies, the Japanese. The French in the Colony had been ordered to offer no resistance.

I was in Tourane (*Da Nang*) in 1940 when the Japanese moved into French Indo-China. What the natives had suffered under the French they now suffered many times over by the oppression of the Japanese.

As early as 1925 there was a liberation movement growing under the leadership of a native named *Ho Chi Minh*. He hated the French with a passion. His goal was to free his nation from the French. He was often beaten and imprisoned for his outspoken criticism of the French. At this point of time in the history of French Indo-China only a very small percentage of the population knew of the connection with the communists. They thought of him as someone in whom they could pin their hopes for freedom, and for a better tomorrow. In fact, some of the natives even called him "Uncle Ho."

However, in 1930 Ho Chi Minh created a national front known as the ICP, the Indochinese Communist Party. It was during the Japanese invasion that the Party went underground. Ho Chi Minh made a trip to Russia and to China.

And now I must leap ahead of my own story for a time to try and explain what happened later on. In 1945 Japan was defeated in the Philippine Islands by the United States. According to the Peace Treaty of 1945, Japan was expelled from French Indo-China.

It was at that time that the *Viet Minh* declared their independence from France. Under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh a Declaration of Independence was drawn up. Strangely and surprisingly so, this Declaration of Independence was very similar to our own. It held little of the communist ideology. Indo-China was given a new name, *Vietnam*, "the land of the free."

But their freedom was short lived, for in 1946 French gun boats fired into a crowd at the *Haiphong* quay. Thus began the hostilities of the war with France.

The various factions within the country that had been struggling to gain power now joined forces in a coalition under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh to reclaim their land from the French. The devastation of Vietnam continued for eight long years. Then in 1954 at the battle of *Dien Bien Phu* the tide turned. The French faced defeat.

The French had maneuvered to gain control of a small village called *Dien Bien Phu* in the north on the Ho Chi Minh trail. They hoped to cut off the supplies coming to the Viet Minh from Russia and from China, thus ending the war.

The French were confident that the Viet Minh could not possibly transport their heavy war equipment over the mountains. Such a task would be utterly impossible.

But the French underestimated the tenacity of the Viet Minh, who made the impossible, possible. They dug tunnels hoarding food supplies and ammunition. They

struggled through the night hours, under cover of darkness bringing their equipment into position surrounding the French camp.

It was one of the bloodiest battles of the war, wiping out the cream of France's best military forces. When the captain of the camp saw they were defeated, he placed a grenade over his heart and pulled the pin.

At the Geneva Peace Conference at the close of the war, through the instigation of the "powers that be," Vietnam was divided in half between the north and the south. Ho Chi Minh and his forces were banished to the north of the line and labeled *Viet Cong*. Those to the south of the line were the *Viet Minh*.

Through the instigation of the United States, a native named *Ngo Dinh Diem*, who had received some of his education in the United States, was made Prime Minister of South Vietnam. He was not liked by most of the population. Several years later he and his brother were assassinated. Trouble erupted. The internal struggle for power within the country was chaotic. Besides all this, the Viet Cong refused to be confined to the north of the line. Civil war broke out.

In the midst of the civil war in 1965 the United States stepped in, sending U.S. Marines to land near *Da Nang*. As one reporter stated at that time, "All hell broke loose!"

The war in Vietnam was very difficult for me to accept. I thought of the many thousands of native peasants both in the North and in the South, who could neither read nor write. Nor could the many thousands of tribal people living in the hills and forests. They had no comprehension of the meaning of the words, *Viet Cong*. They had no way of knowing who was fighting whom, nor the why or wherefore of all that was happening. These were the innocent victims caught in the middle of a power struggle.

That for me, was the heart-break of the Vietnam war. For a space in time, Vietnam had been my home and those people had been my friends.

Now the blood of Americans mingled with the blood of the Vietnamese, soaking the soil of the land. To the 600,000 tons of bombs dropped, and to the 125,000 American forces already there, more were added. The war escalated. The *Tet* Offensive in 1968 ripped and tore the country from north to south. In a matter of a few hours or days, the beautiful antiquity of the ages past was blown to bits, buried beneath the rubble.

Through the centuries this land had known devastation from their invaders, but never had they known such complete devastation as they now faced.

Bombs laid waste their cities. The lush beauty of the flora and fauna of the land turned brown in the ashes of huge craters. Napalm sprayed in their villages made them flaming infernos. Agent Orange sprayed on their emerald green rice fields and on their forests turned them brown, to wither and die.

How could one small strip of land sustain such a bombing? How could one tiny nation, just a dot in the map of the world, hope to defeat America, who had never known defeat?

Yet the war continued on for five more years. In 1970-72 America faced defeat, a most humiliating defeat. In 1973 the last of American troops were withdrawn, leaving behind them thousands and thousands of dead and maimed, the land completely devastated, and to our great shame, thousands of Amerasian children, unwanted and uncared for.

The war was over for America, but for the Viet Minh the struggle continued. In 1975 Saigon fell into the hands of the Viet Cong. It was renamed *Ho Chi Minh* city.

However, the story is not yet over. If history repeats itself, then Vietnam will once again be a free nation. This small strip of land on the southeastern tip of Asia has had a long history of struggles to retain its own identity and keep its land free.

As early as 111 B.C. the records show that Indo-China, so named because of its location between India and China, was the land of the Viets. They suffered greatly at that time by an invasion from the *Han* dynasty.

But they struggled free, only later to be invaded by numerous Chinese dynasties over the centuries. The Viets continued their struggles against their invaders each time, refusing to be swallowed up by the customs or cultures of their invaders.

In 1874 France colonized *Cochin* China, a province on the most southern tip of Indo-China. Later they annexed *Annam*, a province in the central region, and *Tonkin*, a province in the north. The name was then changed to French Indo-China.

The Viet Minh, as they were now called, fought and won their independence from France in 1954.

Now they are in another struggle, an internal struggle to win their freedom from the Viet Cong, who at this moment in time seem to have gained control of the power. Once again Vietnam is struggling to retain its own identity and free its country from the invader within.

I trust that peace will come to this land, and that once again Vietnam will be able to take its place among the free nations of the world.

☞PART IV☞

To Live Again (A Love Story)



I lived through that black year. I mended. Then I did what my father had done a generation before me. I picked up the pieces of my life and started over.

I went to Lincoln, Nebraska to help in the publication of a missionary newsletter. Since Indo-China was just coming into the world news, I had a full schedule of speaking engagements. But along with my full schedule, I organized a Bible class for boys and girls, in an unchurched area of the city.

Not long after that I met a young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Brumfield, members on the staff of Dr. Epp's Back to the Bible broadcast. They had a tremendous desire and dream of starting a broadcast for children to reach the unchurched boys and girls with the gospel story. It was to be a Christian broadcast, by children for children, and was to be geared to their level.

It was *my* class that they trained for the broadcast. (This was long before television came on the scene.) Then one Saturday morning on prime time, their dream became a reality. Radio Kid's Bible Club was born. It was an instant success and spread like wildfire from station to station, reaching as far away as the San Joaquin Valley in California.

It caught the attention of a man named John Strain in Fresno, California. This man, John Strain, was a Christian entrepreneur. He was a most beloved teacher, and later vice-principal of the Reedley High School. He loved young people and felt their needs. In the mid-thirties he had started a Bible club in the high school which met one noon a week. He named it the 3:16 Club, named for Malachi 3:16, *Then they that feared the Lord spake often with one another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.*

Soon he began another Bible club, in the junior college adjoining the high school. This he named the CLOC Club, "Christian Living on the Campus." Each spring he held week-end spiritual life conferences for young people not only from these two clubs but also from some of the churches in the area, where he was often invited to minister to the youth groups. These spring conferences for young people were held at one of the YMCA campsites at Lake Sequoia in the Sierra Nevada mountains.

When John Strain's two children were raised (their mother had died), feeling the need for a Christian literature center in the San Joaquin Valley, he resigned from teaching, sold his home and invested the money to start a Bible bookstore. The Fresno Bible House was born! It was set up as a non-profit organization, the profits going into mission work. Later on, four of his former students each put a thousand dollars into the store. It grew!

A group of Christian businessmen from various churches met on Saturday mornings in the basement of the Bible House to pray for revival in the San Joaquin Valley. Many of these business men were former students of John Strain, had been in his CLOC Club and had attended his week-end conferences at Sequoia Lake.

There was also a new radio program he helped start. John was the speaker, with four young men he knew forming the Emmanuel Male Quartet to provide the music for the program. He became known throughout the valley as "Uncle Johnnie."

So when he heard the Radio Kids Bible Club for the first time, he knew that it was needed in the valley. Soon after, he wrote a letter to the Brumfields, inviting the broadcast to come, "all expenses paid," to Fresno, California, to be a part of this on-going outreach in the San Joaquin Valley.

The question came up. If they moved headquarters to Fresno, California, would I join the staff? *Would I?* Yes, I would!

So on a cold, snowy morning in February I took a leap of faith. I joined the caravan to California. It was quite a thrill to cross over the snow-capped mountains and drop down into a sunny, flower-blooming Fresno.

We set up "shop" in one of the office buildings in downtown Fresno, wrote our scripts, collected a group of boys and girls, trained them, rehearsed our sound effects, and went "live" on station KNXT in Fresno. It was always a breathless moment as we waited for the red "on the air" signal! Since it was "live," we had no margin for error.

The following are some of the scripts I wrote for the Radio Kids Bible Club program, based on some of my experiences in Indo-China.

Van Lien and the "Devil-Box"

Van Lien was tired. Somehow the road to the village of *Anh Hy* seemed unusually long this morning. Angry coolies crowded the road, pushing and bickering over their few pennies. The old market woman screamed out her wares, "*Ah mu'a bánh Khômng*," and then, almost in the same breath, turned and scolded the dirty-faced witch doctor squatted in the dust of the road working magic with his charms. A tiny leper boy, wrapped in his bright colored rags, stumbled along, hands outstretched, begging for a *Xu*.... All these seemed to add to the heavy burden that made *Van Lien's* little feet drag over the long, dusty road to the village!

Early this morning, at the first cry of the *Tu Lu* bird, *Van Lien* had rubbed his sleepy black eyes open, gazed out the cracks in the thatched bamboo hut. Seeing the tousled head of the kitchen girl, he remembered — remembered that this was the day when he must pay the debt to the old fat kitchen god.

Last night around the flickering, smoking candle, the honorable grandfather had glared through the space at *Van Lien* and growled, "Two bowls of rice, sweet honey-candy, and six incense sticks! Tomorrow before sundown the offering must be placed on the shelf by the kitchen god, lest he learn of the sin you have done, and we all suffer."

"But Honorable Grandfather, the kitchen god will never know!"

"Hush, little one! The kitchen god will hear you!"

"But Honorable Grandfather, the kitchen god has ears, but he can't hear. And he has eyes, but he can't see. How does he know I stole Wang's pig?"

"Hush, stupid son of a slave! Hush I say, lest the evil ones hear you and bring death and destruction to our house. Tomorrow you must pay." Snuffing out the flickering candle, the old grandfather eased himself down on the hard bamboo bed.

Van Lien lay in the corner on his grass mat, and thought of all his grandfather had said. Of demons and devils and idols of stone — and of the great god of heaven, the chief of the skies — and death! In the darkness of the hut fear swept over him, leaving him shivering in the hot tropical night.

And so this morning *Van Lien* must walk the long road to the village of *Anh Hy*, for did not the Honorable Grandfather say, "Sweet honeyed-candy?" And where could one buy better candy than in the market of *Anh Hy*?

Rounding the last turn in the road, *Van Lien* spied a group of excited, chattering little boys standing in front of the foreigner's house. Several of them were dancing around in excitement on their little wooden *guoc*, and one little boy, braver than the rest, had left the group and pressed up to the gate of the house. There he stood swinging on the iron frame, his little face pressed close against the bars.

With quickened pace, *Van Lien* joined them. "*Choa*, brothers, tell me why you are so excited."

"*Choa*, brother, listen. Did you ever hear such sounds before?"

Van Lien listened, and above the chattering of the boys, he heard the strangest sound. Deep, like the roaring of the wind, hollow like the echo in the cave, yet it was a voice! And the voice came from the house. Fear rose in his heart, yet his curiosity grew. It grew so great that he walked right up to the gate, pushed it open, and walked up to the open window.

Looking around the room, he sought to find the source of the strange sound, but no one was in the room! The white foreigner who owned the house was out. Then suddenly his eyes fell upon the box in the corner. A strange looking box, square, with funny knobs, and from this box came the strangest voice! What was it?

Van Lien knew! The white foreigner had caught a devil and put it in a box! Swinging around on his little brown heels, he ran back to his friends and cried, "*A cha, thi co do co mau qui a trong dai hoc, Toi sua lam, phia di!*" ("The Honorable Teacher has a devil in a box. I'm afraid! I'm going to run!")

And run he did, just as fast as his little brown legs would take him! Coming to the open market, *Van Lien* quickly found the stall where they sold the sweet honey-candy, and in the excitement of bargaining, he forgot for a few moments the strange thing he had seen.

Van Lien loved the market place. There was a stall of the bright paper coats and shoes and trousers. For a few pennies one could buy a whole outfit. Burning them before the family altar could cloth the spirits of the dead! There was the stall with the temple flowers, sweet-smelling fragrances to tempt the vilest of the gods. And here was the stall with the bright red and yellow sticks of incense. One penny was enough to buy ten bright sticks — enough to last all month!

Reluctantly, *Van Lien* left the market and started back to his home. As he again neared the house of the foreigner, he remembered with fear the strange thing that had happened. He saw a group gathered as before, only this time they were quiet.

Standing in the open gateway was the white teacher, and right beside her was the box! Haltingly she spoke their language. Fascinated, *Van Lien* listened. The box was *not* to be feared! Turning it over, he saw the strange wires and funny little balls. There was no devil in that box! The teacher said it was a wonderful box that picked up music and voices right out of the air. Yet it was not magic, nor did the evil spirits or devils have anything to do with it!

Then with a smile the teacher said, "Boys, you know about the great God of heaven, don't you?"

"Oh, Honorable Teacher, yes."

"You know that He made our world — and that he made man?"

"Yes, of course."

"But boys, did you know that the great God of heaven, the chief of the skies, loves you? He does, but because of the sin in your heart and life, you are afraid of Him, aren't you? Well, did you know that the great God of heaven has a son? He does, and His name is Jesus, which means, 'He shall save His people from their sins.'"

"And did you know that God, the great chief of the skies, 'so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life'? Jesus came down from His home in heaven and lived on this earth. And one day Jesus, God's son, was taken and made to be a sacrifice on the cross."

The blood of Jesus was shed, just like the blood of the water buffalo is shed when you have your sacrifice.

"God said that the blood of His son Jesus would from that time forth wash away sin, so that whoever trusted in that blood and believed on the name of Jesus would be saved! Boys, did you know that Jesus wants to wash away your sins and cleanse your heart right now? If you will come into our class this morning, we will tell you more about it."

Eagerly the oldest and the boldest of the group pushed forward and followed the teacher into the yard and around the house to the little bamboo-thatched school room. *Van Lien* forgot his fear and crowded along with the others. The teacher took the book she called "God's Word," and began to read: "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

Carefully *Van Lien* listened. Could God take away his sins? Could God take away his fear? Could He free him from the old, fat kitchen god, from the demons and the devils? Could Jesus, the son of the great God of heaven love *him*, and would He help him? *Van Lien's* heart said, "Wonderful!" His head said, "How?"

Desire overwhelmed him! "Honorable teacher," he asked, "please, my heart is full of sin. Will Jesus make it clean?"

"Yes, little one. Jesus will make it clean. Shall we talk to God about it?"

There on the straw-covered floor they knelt, and for the first time in all his twelve years, *Van Lien* talked to the great God of heaven. He talked to Him, and called Him "Father."

Van Lien and the "Devil Box"

Episode 2

(Put into script for performance on the Radio Kids' Bible Club broadcast)

Reader. The gladness in *Van Lien's* little heart sent his feet flying along the dusty road, and occasionally he stopped to whisper, —

Van Lien. "Jesus, Jesus!"

SOUND EFFECT. Wild birds.

Reader. A merry little red bird, fluttering through the trees, halted a moment on a bough, cocked his saucy head and chirped, "What tis — what tis?" The sweet honey-candy grew sticky in his *Van Lien's* hot little fingers, but he felt no fear. What difference did it make now whether it pleased the old fat kitchen god? Did not the honorable teacher say, —

END SOUND EFFECT. Birds

Teacher. (Mute) No more sacrifices. No more need to bow down to the idols of wood and stone. No more dread of the demons and the devils. No more fear, not even of the great God of heaven — for Jesus had come! Jesus, the son of the great God of heaven had been made a sacrifice for one and all. The debt of sin was all paid — paid for with His blood. "For whosoever would believe —"

Van Lien. "And that means me!"

Reader. — sang *Van Lien.*

Van Lien. "And that means me!"

Reader. His little wooden shoes clicked out the song, "And that means me, and that means me!"

BEGIN SOUND EFFECT. Frogs.

Reader. A lazy old tree toad, poking his way across the road, turned his ugly, horned head around, watched the flying heels, and then made for a place of safety on the broad side of a banana leaf —

UP SOUND EFFECT. Frogs.

Reader. — where he sat panting out his indignation.

SLOWLY FADE OUT SOUND EFFECT.

Reader. The hot, tropical sun had already blazed its way across the heavens when *Van Lien* finally joined the last straggling group of coolies going home for the night.

SOUND EFFECT. Native crowd.

Reader. The weary, half-naked coolies probed and pushed their ambling water buffaloes along the path through the rice field. One little boy, too weary and tired to care, rolled and tossed on the broad back of his mud-splattered buffalo. His wide-brimmed bamboo hat had slipped from his head, and the bamboo cords had fastened themselves around the long horns of the buffalo, pulling the hat down over the right eye of the ugly beast. The weary coolies were too tired even to smile at the grotesque picture it made, but as they neared the village, a group of boys spied the animal with the hat perched so jauntily on his head. They called out —

First boy. “Look at the new witch doctor! Look brother, here comes the new witch doctor!”

Reader. *Van Lien* drew along beside them. He could hardly wait to tell them the wonderful new story.

END SOUND EFFECT. Crowd.

Reader. Shyly he watched them, and then as *Thay Luong* joined the group, *Van Lien* hesitated.

BEGIN SOUND EFFECT. Surf (night).

Reader. *Thay Luong* knew such wonderful stories. Many times when the village lay sleeping under its cover of soft, white moonlight, *Thay Luong* had gathered the village boys around him down on the hot sandy beach and had woven strange, wonderful tales. Tales of the giants who had ruled their land, and of the deeds of the wise old Chinese, of Confucius, and of Buddha who, he said, had opened the way to eternal bliss. Buddha, who was supposed to have given them their tea bushes!

DOWN SOUND EFFECT.

Reader. Whenever *Van Lien* sipped his hot bowl of tea, he remembered that old fable. It seemed to be the favorite of the village boys, and *Thay Luong* loved to tell it.

UP SOUND EFFECT.

Thay Luong. Buddha, on his long pilgrimage to find the secret of eternal bliss, came, spent and worn, to rest beside the bank of a cool spring. Lured by the soft waters and the cool shade, he dozed. Then he shook himself awake. He mustn't sleep! He must finish writing, writing all the things he had learned about life and death. Again his eyelids drooped. Finally, in despair he took his knife and cut off his eyelids. Flinging them down on the ground, he continued to write. Soon two green bushes sprung up in the spot where his eyelids had fallen. He reached over and plucked the leaves, nibbled them, and found they were good. Suddenly his drowsiness left him! He finished writing his great doctrines of eternal bliss.

END SOUND EFFECT

Reader. Every little Annamese boy and girl knew this story and half believed it! Now *Van Lien* wanted to tell them *his* story — the story that was *true* because it had *worked* in his own life and heart.

Van Lien. “Brothers, wait, have you ever heard the story of Jesus, the Son of the great God of heaven?”

Second boy. “Ho, *Van Lien* has a story. Let's hear it!”

Reader. Squatting down on their little brown heels, they listened while *Van Lien* told them the story of redeeming love brought down to earth by Jesus, the Son of the great God of heaven.

First boy. “Wonderful story, but you don't believe it, do you?”

Second boy. “White foreigner's story. That's not for us!”

Van Lien. “But it is. It's for ‘whosoever believeth —’ and I believe. And in my heart I know it's true. I'm not afraid of the old fat kitchen god anymore.”

Thay Luong. "Ho, brother, you may not be afraid of the kitchen god anymore, but just you wait until your honorable Grandfather hears you! That reminds me, he's been watching the road for you all afternoon. You'd better forget your story-telling and hurry home!"

LAUGHTER. All boys.

Reader. Some of the boys laughed. One or two of the older boys turned and walked off down the road, a strange seriousness on their faces. *Van Lien* murmured —

Van Lien. "But it's true. No matter what they say, I *know* it's true!"

Reader. The bright incense sticks were already burning in the notches on the gate post when *Van Lien* finally reached his home.

SOUNDEFFECT. Brass Gong.

Reader. The outer court around the bamboo house was empty this evening. *Van Lien* heard the steady beating of the brass gong and, following the sound, came to the side of the house where his Honorable Grandfather was standing. There on the shelf was the kitchen god, and before it stood two bowls of rice. The Honorable Grandfather was waving a stick of incense before the idol and chanting —

Grandfather. "*Choung toi cung — ! Choung toi cung — !*"

Reader. His strange words meant, "We worship. We worship!"

Van Lien. "*Chao, Honorable Grandfather, you will be happy to —* "

END SOUNDEFFECT. Gong.

Reader. *Van Lien* had no time to finish his sentence. The Honorable Grandfather whirled around, grabbed *Van Lien* by the shoulders, and cried —

Grandfather. "Oh, stupid son of a slave, why are you so late? The sun had already taken its long journey over the mountains, and you have not sacrificed. I fear, greatly fear, what shall happen to us now!"

Van Lien. "No, Honorable Grandfather, do not fear so. The kitchen god cannot hear us now."

Grandfather. "Cannot hear us? How you talk!"

Reader. With a resounding slap —

SOUNDEFFECT. Slap.

Reader. — and a rough push, the Honorable Grandfather ordered the sweet honey-candy to be placed on the altar. *Van Lien* didn't move.

Van Lien. "Honorable Grandfather, listen to me, please! I've something to tell you that will fill you full of gladness. It will take away your fear. It's something you have been searching for a long time. Listen, Honorable Grandfather, did you know that the great God loves you? He has always loved you, but the sin in your heart has made you afraid. Honorable Grandfather, the great God of heaven sent His son Jesus down from the skies, to be made a sacrifice, — you know, Grandfather, just like the water buffalo they sacrificed the last time the moon was round and full. And, most Honorable Grandfather, His blood will wash away *your* sins, and take away your fear. The great God of heaven will hear you when you talk to Him. And if you tell Him you are ashamed and sorry for your sins, and ask Him to wash your heart clean for Jesus' sake, He will do it. He will do it, Honorable Grandfather. He will do it! You do not need to worship these stones or the demons or the evil spirits any more. You can worship God and Jesus, His son. The honorable teacher told me!"

Grandfather. "Who told you? Who told you this story?"

Van Lien. "The honorable teacher. The one from across the water told me the story, and she said, —"

Reader. The story was never finished. For with a bellow of rage, the Honorable Grandfather struck *Van Lien* a cruel blow —

SOUNDEFFECT. Blow with fists.

Reader. — on his little head, and screamed, —

Grandfather. “Lies, lies! The white foreigner lies! If you ever mention that name again, I will, — I will — I will *kill* you!”

SOUND EFFECT. Organ playing, “What can wash away my sin —” (Up loud — slowly softer — continue softly through the following.)

Reader. Days slipped into weeks, and weeks into months. *Van Lien's* little back and shoulders bore the marks of constant cruel beatings. On his forehead just above his eyes were long, angry looking scars. The tips of his fingers were raw and bleeding. Everyone in the village knew what had happened. Some taunted him, openly scorning him. Others quietly watched, hardly knowing what to say.

First boy. (Whisper.) “He believes in Jesus.”

Second boy. “He talks to God.”

BEGIN SOUND EFFECT. Surf.

Reader. In the stillness of the night, when *Van Lien's* shoulders burned and ached so that he could not sleep, he would leave his little grass bed and slip out to walk alone through the village to the sandy beach. No angry fighting voices broke the quietness, no screaming, crying children. Even the half-starved village dogs had ceased their incessant barking. Out under the starry canopy of the night *Van Lien* often sobbed out his hurt and his pain to the great God of heaven —

Van Lien. “Jesus, I know you are real. You have taken away all my fear. I love you, Jesus! Please help me! And help Grandfather to find you too.”

END SOUND EFFECT. (Surf)

Reader. Sleep came slowly to the old grandfather these days.

SOUND EFFECT. Squeaking.

Reader. He tossed and turned on the hard, squeaking bamboo bed, and strange new thoughts filled his head. He couldn't understand the quiet, set determination of his grandson since the day he had returned from the village of *Anh Hy* with the strange new story of a God who loved, and of the son of God who had given His body — His life — His blood to wash away sin. He murmured to himself —

Grandfather. “White man's lies! Stories for the white man, but not for me. No, not for me.”

Reader. And yet he reasoned — it *might* be true. *Van Lien* said it was, and all through the months he has remained quiet and sure. The old grandfather groaned and tossed, —

Grandfather. “I wish I knew. I wish I knew — which way is right, which way is true!”

Reader. All his life he had worshipped and feared as did his father, and his father's father. What if they were wrong? No, the gods would punish him for such thoughts! But still, what if they were wrong?

Grandfather. “Oh, to be free — to be free from this dread and fear!”

Reader. In the early sleepless hours one morning, the old grandfather, driven almost to despair by his thoughts, rose from his hard bamboo bed, pulled his long black hair back into a pug, reached for his black silk coat, and with trembling hands found the buttons. He searched until he found his best black *khan*, carefully adjusted it on his head —

SOUND EFFECT. Dog whining. (Twice. Up once, and cut.)

Reader. — and stumbled out over the sleeping dogs to the outer court. Where was he going? The first rays of the early morning sun found him well on his way to the village of *Anh Hy*. Passing through the winding streets of the village, he stood at last in front of the white foreigner's house. He hesitated. Then, with determination he tried the iron lock.

SOUND EFFECT. Gate.

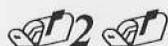
Reader. It opened to his touch. Fearlessly, he made his way up to the door, and with loud bangs announced his arrival.

SOUND EFFECT. Knocking.

Reader. What is he here for? Has his tortured mind at last yielded to the years of hatred that have smoldered in his heart? Is he here for revenge? Will he harm the missionary,

or does he want to hear more of the story about Jesus? You will surely want to hear the rest of this story next week.

Letters poured in. Station after station was added. Sometimes we had to scrape the bottom of our financial barrel. Many times we had to wait until the very last moment to meet our obligations. But meet them we did.



I did not meet Mr. Strain until a month and a half after we had relocated in Fresno. I had heard tales of what he had done, and what he was doing. My mind conjured up an image of a slightly bald, gray-haired, flamboyant business man.

One day the door opened. Coming up to my desk was this trim, well-groomed black-haired (lots of it), nice-looking, youngish 43-year-old man. He smiled down at me and said, "I'm John Strain. You must be Ina."

Out the window flew my imagined image of a slightly bald, gray-haired flamboyant business man!

Enter John Strain. *Whee!*

Our paths crossed briefly over the next few months. I lived with a lovely Christian family. Rhea, the mother, loved giving dinner parties. Every guest speaker, missionary, or dignitary who passed through the doors of our church ended up with at least one dinner party at Rhea's. I began to notice that John Strain's name was on the list more often now.

Then he started coming into the office. He would come in. I would announce him, and show him into Mr. Brumfield's office. He would stay for a few minutes, then get up and leave. Mr. Brumfield would say, "I can't figure out what that man wants! He comes in, stays a few minutes, and is gone!"

Then one day I was scheduled to speak at a women's retreat in Bakersfield, California. Since the ticket office was near the Fresno Bible House, Mr. Brumfield asked John to pick up my ticket. What I didn't know was that John Strain had also bought a ticket for himself! The next day when I boarded the train, there he was, saving a seat for me. We had two-and-a-half hours, sharing bits and pieces of our lives. That was my first "date" with John Strain.

During our times of sharing I learned some interesting things about John Strain's background. John Albert Strain was born in 1899 in Jamestown, Kansas. He was the only son of John Oswald and Margaret Ann (Wherry) Strain. He had three sisters, Elsie, Helen and Marjory. He came from a background of school teachers, missionaries, ministers, and even a state senator. (His grandfather, James Strain, had been a state senator in Ohio.)

John Oswald Strain, his father, was the mayor of Jamestown, Kansas for a number of years. One year the town elected his wife, Margaret Ann, to be mayor, and elected an all-woman council to serve with her. She was the 7th woman mayor in the United States, but was the first who also had an elected all-woman council. (This was "women's lib," long before "women's lib" was ever heard of!)

John Strain graduated from the College of Emporia, Kansas and had one year at the Union Theological Seminary in New York City, New York. He did his graduate work at the University of Southern California. Teaching was his vocation, but he was continually active in ministry as well.

Later on, as John kept coming around to see me, we were home alone one evening in Rhea's home. I mentioned in our sharing that I was not physically strong.

Mr. Strain replied, "If you were an invalid, I would take care of you for the rest of your life."

Now, was that a proposal? Yes? No? I quickly changed the subject.

The next week, John was scheduled to go to Lake Sequoia to host the 3-week summer conferences that had developed out of his week-end conferences of earlier years. These were also held at the YMCA campsites there. Near the end of the week John telephoned the assistant manager of the Fresno Bible House, instructing him to bring up some fresh supplies. Then he added, "And be sure to bring Ina up, too."

That evening, after the camp supper, John took me for a boat ride. He rowed out to the middle of the lake. I have loved to tease John through the years and remind him that he said to me, "Say yes, or I'll turn the boat over!"

I couldn't swim!

We returned safely to shore on that beautiful twilight evening. We had made definite plans to be married on August 30th, 1945.

We were married in Los Angeles, California, at the home of Dr. & Mrs. Dick Hillis, who were dearly loved missionary friends of ours.



It was a beautiful year. John was the manager of the Fresno Bible House. We organized a "Pacific Missionary Fellowship," the funds going to pay for Christian books which we sent out to the missionaries on various mission fields. It was my job to pick out the books, especially new editions. If there were children, we sent books according to their ages. Our days were organized, scheduled and peaceful. Just what the doctor ordered!

But one never knows what a day will bring forth! Nor do we always know when a tornado might cross our path. Such was our experience. Our peaceful, orderly world went "topsy-turvy."

John had dreamed and prayed for years for a conference ground for young people so that the conferences could run all summer long. (The YMCA camps at Sequoia Lake could only be leased a week at a time.) One day he and several other men, former students of his, went on a scouting trip in the Sierras hoping to find a piece of land they could lease from the government on which to build such a Christian campground. Coming down from the high Sierras they came to Hume Lake. Here on the shores of the lake was a liquor resort owned by Hume Larsen. It was the only privately owned property in that part of the high Sierras. It had been an old logging camp. The logs were cut down, and with the water from the lake, the logs were floated by way of a flume down to the valley below. But the logging camp was long gone. Now it was a liquor resort. There was a hotel, a house, and seven small cabins on 320 acres of forest.

John jokingly said to the others, "Let's see if he wants to sell."

They went in, talked to Hume Larsen, and discovered he might want to sell. The price would be \$200,000. In those days that was an *exorbitant* amount!

John, not to be outdone, said, "Well, our group couldn't pay more than \$85,000."

The whole group together couldn't come within a stone's throw of even that amount! So they went down the hill chuckling.

Several weeks later a letter came from Hume Larsen that he would sell at the price of \$140,000! *Whee! Whee!*

After much contemplation and prayer, a board of 17 men was organized. These were mostly businessmen. They went into escrow with 60 days in which to raise the down payment.

Gone were our orderly, scheduled, peaceful days! It seemed as if John barely took time to eat or sleep. But the checks began to pour in. Opening the morning mail was an exciting adventure. John raised nearly 90% of the down payment.

At the end of the sixty days, just two hours before closing time, the whole amount was in, with a few extra dollars over, just enough to cover the recording fees. Escrow closed!

So John's dream became a reality, at least until the next payment came due. We had crossed the "Red Sea," but now the journey into the "Promised Land" began. And just

where was this Promised Land called Hume Lake? It was in the high Sierras, a beautiful blue lake nestled in a valley of mountain peaks, surrounded by tree-covered hills and mountains. Above the mountains were the snow-capped, rugged, raw granite peaks of the King's River Canyon.

One could stand on the top of Sunshine Mountain, just above our camp site, and look up at the rugged peaks and spires, or one could look down at the deep crevices and caverns below. Far, far below was the rushing King's River, a tiny thread from where we stood.

To get to Hume Lake it was necessary to go on a road winding around the side of a mountain. On the other side of the road was a sheer drop-off into King's Canyon. The trip in and out of Hume Lake always left me with an awesome stretched-out feeling. My soul was not big enough to take in all the majesty and splendor of the panorama around me.

Walter Warkentin, a former student of John's and a graduate of Biola College, was appointed camp director. It was a very wise choice, as Frances, his wife, was a wonderful, efficient organizer. She took charge of the staff and of all the accommodations. She did a beautiful job for many years.

John was the executive director in charge of raising the money, along with a dozen other jobs. John, with the help of a surveyor and a crew of several college students, laid out and named the roads. That part of land which had not been set aside for future conference grounds was divided into lots to be sold. He and his crew cut through the virgin forest to make way for the bulldozer. There were some bears in those hills, coyotes, mountain lions, and rattlesnakes.

In the winter months John went throughout the Valley, selling lots and promoting the Conference. Many were the problems of that first year! Some of the men on his board, when things seemed to go wrong, panicked, dragging their heels, sure that the project would fail. They criticized John for having gotten them into it. Then when things went well, they jumped on the bandwagon and said, "See what great things we have done!"

John took it all patiently, unruffled, peacefully. But not me! I wanted to jump in and tear them limb from limb! However, being John's wife, I learned not to make waves.

We had our home in Fresno, California, but we spent our summers at Hume Lake. We lived in a small cabin, two tiny rooms, no running water, no bathroom plumbing. We ate our meals with the conference staff, took our showers and did our washing at the hotel. But we were happy. The conference was growing.

During the first years at Hume Lake the roads were not open in the winter. No way in. No way out! After the first snow, usually by the middle of September, the conference grounds were closed, buildings boarded up, telephone, lights and water turned off. It was left to "hibernate" under blankets of snow until around May.

It was on a late September morning, when all things had been put in order and all the remaining crew had left. We were to have gone with them, but John had eaten some frozen grapes and didn't feel good. We decided to wait a few more hours until he felt better!

A few tiny flakes of snow warned us to be on our way. We jumped into the jeep and turned the key. It wouldn't start! We tried again. It wouldn't start!

John, being John, remained calm. I, being Ina, imagined us dead and buried under tons of snow!

We let out the brake and together pushed the jeep down the road to a drop away knoll. I scrambled in and turned the key. John gave the jeep a final push. It started to roll, sputtered, coughed, and "Oh, glory be!" it started!

Neither John nor I have ever found fame or fortune because of our singing voices, but sing we did! All around and over the mountain, we sang our way back to civilization.

In the spring of the second year, the government decided to drain the lake, dredge it, and restock it with trout. They opened the dam, lowering the water. That was a muddy, smelly, difficult summer!

New buildings went up. Two new camps were opened: Meadow Ranch for junior highers, and Wagon Train for 4th to 8th graders. Hume Lake became a name on the map of California. It continued to grow until now there are over 40,000 people each year, with conferences year-round.

Then the fourth year the wells went dry. It was a horrendous experience — no water, no conference. Panic reigned! Again came the doubts. What now? After numerous and expensive attempts, water was struck, never again to fail.

Then, four years after we were married we took a giant leap of faith, and had a baby. Somehow from the very first, I knew it would be a girl and that her name would be JoAnn Elaine Strain. On April 10, 1949, in the little town in Selma, California, on a beautiful, sunny Palm Sunday morning, she was born. The church bells were ringing a welcome. She was, and is, very beautiful.

At the close of the fifth summer, John resigned as executive director of Hume Lake. The conference was in good, capable hands, financially secure and well established. John resigned to go into partnership with two other Christian businessmen to form an organization called Palestine Products. It was a non-profit organization, the funds to be used for missions.

Since John was gone a great deal of the time, promoting Palestine Products in Christian bookstores across the United States, we made our headquarters in Long Beach, California. Those were very difficult days for me. We lived in a duplex, across the street from my brother Walter, and his family.

We spent many happy evenings with them, often staying after dark. I hated to go into an empty, dark house alone, so Walter always came along with JoAnn and me. In order not to alarm her (she was only two years old), we made up a game called, "Let's find the butterflies." She would hurry in, roaming from room to room eager to find a butterfly. We always looked behind the doors in each room, under the beds, etc. She would come out and triumphantly say, "No butterflies tonight!"

We were there at the time of the famous earthquake that shook all of southern California. Although the epicenter was 40 or 50 miles away in the Tehachapi mountains, it felt like it was right in the center of Long Beach! I was sitting in the living room when it hit. I tried to walk down the hall to JoAnn's bedroom. The hall was weaving and rolling. Pictures were falling, dishes breaking. I clung to JoAnn's crib, terrified. JoAnn slept through it all!

We were in Long Beach for three years. Then the company decided to add ceramics to their merchandise. They set up a ceramic factory in Beaumont, California, a *small* town on the backside of the desert. Ugh! Again I say, Ugh!

JoAnn was now in second grade. She had always dreamed of being a "Brownie." But there was no Brownie troop there! So I bought a Brownie Manual, formed a Brownie troop, the likes of which there never was! The Brownie Manual said there should *only* be 12 in a troop. We had 21 in our troop! We bought Brownie uniforms and followed the Manual as closely as possible. Imagine what my house looked like on the days the Brownie troop made cookies or muffins!

We lived in the parsonage of the Baptist Church in the center of town. There were several huge trees in the yard, ideal for climbing. I would go outside, hear voices, look up and find the trees full of little faces. They had certain branches designated as "living room," "bedroom," and "kitchen." Imagine my surprise when I was told that JoAnn had fallen out of the "living room." She was badly shaken up, but no bones were broken. Those years at Beaumont are among JoAnn's happiest memories.



It was during that fifth summer in southern California that John made the decision to return to teaching. The Lowell Joint School District was one of the best in southern California. John applied and was accepted.

We moved to La Habra, California and bought a home in the suburbs, 1810 Laguna Drive. I loved that house with a passion!

Together John and I built a deck and added a room. Every crack and corner of that house we made beautiful. We filled it with memories, some good, some bad.

John had a Sunday School class of about 35 young married couples at the Calvary Baptist Church. He had also worked out a series on "Science and the Bible," using slides, laser beams, and black light. He held seminars for young peoples' groups. We spent many of our summer vacations at Hume Lake, with John helping out with the conferences, and teaching classes.

JoAnn was older now and was in her father's school district. She could go and come with him. I felt free now to work outside the home. I found a beautiful job with the Whittier Christian High School. I was office manager, taught several classes, and was in general just "mom" to the student body. I loved that job!

I had three wonderful, rewarding years. We were just starting into the fourth year, which looked very promising.

Then one day I noticed that the lump which I had first felt at Hume Lake during the summer, was getting larger. In those days we were not so cancer-conscious. Cancer was something that happened to a stranger in another town!

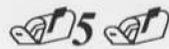
On October 14th, after school, we went to a cancer specialist. He gave me one day to get my affairs in order. On the following day I went into surgery. It was a horrendous radical mastectomy on the right side. They stripped my arm, cut away everything from under my collar bone to my stomach, leaving only the skin and bone! They cut through the rib carriage and removed the lymph nodes. They left me with an arm that wouldn't function, and three floating ribs.

My anchor held!

John willed me to live. His faith, his care and concern, his courage, knew no limits. Several weeks later I had to return for skin grafting. I had to wear a "bird cage" for six weeks. This impeded therapy on my arm.

When I mended, John fashioned a pulley on the hall door on which he could add weights. I stood by the door and cried!! He stood by me, always encouraging me to try just a "smidge" more. "No pain, no gain!" I regained full and complete use of my arm.

Outwardly, I mended, but inwardly I *hurt!* My faith was badly shaken. The age-old questions of Why? Why me? haunted me. Where was God while all this was happening? Did he really know and care how awful I felt?



During John's teaching days at Lowell Joint School District, he was offered a position to plan, set up and carry out a program for the mentally retarded. Nothing like that had ever been done before. John's program was a success. Several officials from the State Board of Education in Sacramento, California came to inspect it and evaluate it. They approved it.

Three years later John received a letter asking him to come to New Zealand and set up a program there in various places. John felt that it was not advisable at this time in our lives.

That was a wise decision. Several months later I was again back in surgery for a second mastectomy, this time on the left side. The surgery this time around was not so horrendous EXCEPT that when they removed the faulty drainage-tube under my arm, it took all the skin with it! I had a gaping hole under my arm about the size of a dollar. It had to be showered, medicated, and dressed every morning and every evening. It took four months to grow together! I was the cleanest person in all of La Habra.

John was again there with his loving care and concern. Again, out came the pulley, and the tears. Again, it was "no pain, no gain." I mended. I was really getting to be a "pro" at this business of mending. I came through with my arm completely usable.

John retired from the Lowell School District in 1973. He was immediately offered a position with the Whittier College to serve as a "Master Teacher" in their education department. His job was to teach aspiring young teachers to teach.

He taught there for several years, and again he retired. Now we were ready for a well-earned vacation. Such a vacation was handed to us on a silver platter!

The Lockman Foundation Press was near us in La Habra. When Mr. Lockman heard that John was free, he asked John if he would like to be the field representative to promote the *New American Standard Bible*, which had just come off the press.

So, at our leisure we traveled up and down, in and out of California, and into southern Arizona, meeting with the owners of the Bible bookstores in various places, and introducing them to the *New American Standard Bible*. It was a wonderful vacation, all expenses, plus, paid.

John was in his eighties when his memory began to fail. I had been aware of this for some time, but it was difficult for me to believe and even more difficult for me to accept.

However, it was at the time of the earthquake in 1986 that I had to fully face up to the fact that something needed to be done.

John had just put a cup of milk into the microwave oven to warm. Just as he touched the button to turn it on, the earthquake hit. Walls were swaying, pictures falling, lamps breaking, dishes cracking.

John and I had taken the 91st Psalm as our "family Psalm." We had it framed. It had hung in our home for years. The verse, "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling," taunted me.

Someone once said that God had breathed into the human spirit the ability to hope, even in the worst of circumstances. I did hope, that someday I would understand it!

I know that God had given me the will to choose. I had two choices. I could moan and groan, fold my hands and quit. Or, I could accept it, learn from it and grow. I chose the latter.

The following are the verses I marked and dated in my Bible, after my horrendous bout with cancer.

MY SONGS OF PRAISE

I will sing unto the Lord

a new song.

I will sing praises unto thee

O Thou Most High

For thou has shown me the path

of life.

In thy presence there is fullness

of joy.

At thy right hand there are pleasures

forevermore.

I love the Lord because he has

heard my voice.

Therefore will I call upon him

as long as I shall live.

Because thy loving kindness

is better than life

My lips shall praise thee.

For thou has brought me up

out of a horrible pit

out of the miry clay

And set my feet upon a rock

Therefore will I bless thy name.

For thou has delivered my soul

*from death
Mine eyes from tears and my feet
from falling.
I shall not die, but live and
declare the works of the Lord.
I will walk before the Lord
in the land of the living.*

—The Psalms

I knew that I was outwardly and inwardly mended when I was able to volunteer as a “pink lady” at the Presbyterian Hospital in Whittier, California. It was my job to visit the other patients who had cancer, to prove to them that there was “life after cancer.” It was a rewarding experience!

My chief concern when I learned that I had cancer was for my daughter, JoAnn. Would I live to see her through high school?

I did!

The year JoAnn graduated from high school, the Fresno Bible House was sold. What a wonderful provision that was! We were able to send JoAnn through four years of college, and for a term at the University of Mexico.

Into the first week of her college, she decided that she wanted to be secretary of the student body. She came home over the week-end and she and her dad worked around the clock, making signs for her campaign. It really was clever, a hobo with a stick over his shoulder on which was attached a red bandanna and knap-sack. The sign read, **Vo Fo Jo!** Down in the corner it said, “JoAnn Strain, that is.” They finished the signs late at night. Midnight found them pounding signs down, here, there and yonder around the college campus. Needless to say, she won the election! She continued to remain secretary of the student body for all of her four years.

Our JoAnn Elaine was married to Douglas Bloomquist Speer of Colorado Springs, Colorado on January 19, 1972. Doug Speer was a young man she met in her senior year at college.

On August 13, 1982, Douglas and JoAnn presented us with a beautiful blond granddaughter, Michelle Marie Speer.

On August 2, 1984 they again presented us with a beautiful, brown-haired granddaughter, Kristin Elaine Speer.

I thought these were the most beautiful grandbabies in all the world!

I ran down the hall to the kitchen. John was standing in the kitchen doorway completely bewildered and perplexed, very confused. All he could say was, "I just touched the button!"

We tried to explain to him that it was an earthquake, and that he had done no wrong. To all our efforts to reassure him that it was not his fault, he continued to say, "I just touched the button!"

I know it sounds laughable, and it has become a family joke. Whenever anything goes wrong now, we laugh and say, "I just touched the button."

I am sure that if John fully comprehended the situation, he too, would be laughing with us.

John's son, Albert, and his wife, Betty, lived on a four-acre site in Oakhurst, California, west of the San Joaquin Valley near Yosemite National Park. I thought it might be wise to get nearer the family.

My head said that was a wise move. My heart said *no!* How could I, at this stage in our lives, pull up all our roots and start over again? Within the walls of our little home in La Habra, I was safe and secure.

I remember one night when the turmoil overcame me. I walked up and down our long hall, very troubled. I literally cried out loud, "I can't do it! I just can't do it! Lord, help me!"

Something happened. I can't label it, nor are there words adequate to define it. I just know something happened. I would never be the same again. There was a calmness, a peace, a joy. I felt loved, wrapped around in love, like a warm blanket feels on a cold day.

The next day I put the house up for sale. It went on the market at 1 p.m. I sold the house in fifteen minutes, to the first customer who came. Real estate was at an all-time high. I sold the house for ten times what we paid for it!

We went into escrow for sixty days, during which I sold or gave away many of the cherished furnishings. The last to go was my piano! Yet there were no regrets, no heartaches. My peace held.

On December 10, 1987, I turned the keys over to the new owner, but I took with me the memories. So we went out over the mountains, not knowing what the future held. We crossed over Deadwood Mountain, and there below us was the little town of Oakhurst nestled in a green valley, surrounded by tree-covered hills, encircled by snow-capped mountains. Beautiful!

When we didn't find anything that would fit John's need, Betty, our daughter-in-law, suggested that we make over the little guest house on their acreage. A perfect solution for all of us!

We found a contractor and laid out our plans, fitting the windows and doors to harmonize with our furniture. They tore the little guest-house down to the bare bones, and rebuilt it. It took four months, but when we moved in, it was perfect — a cozy, happy little doll house. It fit our every need. John loved the "compound," and so did I.

In John's confused thinking, he thought this place was one of his "organizations." So he called "board meetings." He appointed Albert, his son, as head of this "organization."

Several months later John came to me and very confidentially said, "You know. I have been thinking. You are a wonderful person, and I think you should be head of this organization!"

Later when I saw Albert, I told him he had been "dethroned"! I had now been appointed the new head of the organization.

Fortunately, John did not realize that he was confused. He was like a loving, happy, contented, and very peaceful child. To meet him, was to love him.

Occasionally he would come up to me, and when I questioned him as to what he needed he would answer, "I just wanted to tell you that I love you!"

John did not have an ache or a pain. Physically he was very well. He took on the job of raking the leaves around our homes. I counted 39 oak trees around our little house, so he never ran out of a job. He was always up early, out working. He did his job faithfully and well, keeping our "compound" beautiful.

He had to be watched carefully, for often when he tired, he would just lie down on the ground wherever he was and go to sleep. Someone had to go out and help him up.

The last few years were difficult. John did not know who we were. He just knew that he was lovingly being taken care of.

One day he picked up my Bible. He read, "Ina C. Strain. Now who is that?"

When I explained that it was I, and that I was his wife, he looked perplexed and asked, "Are we legally married?"

He no longer knew that Albert was his son, or remembered his name. When he saw Albert working on his 4 acres in his old clothes and a slouch hat, he referred to him as the "old man" who lived in "the big house up there."

The last year was really very difficult. I chose to care for John in the home. It was a case of "child proofing" the house. I made covers for the water faucets, covered the thermostat, turned off the switch on the electric stove, and fixed the locks on the screen doors so that he couldn't wander out at night. I hid the matches. (He loved to build fires in the fireplace, except that now he forgot and added too many logs.) We had to hide the tools, for we never knew when he might take a fancy to cut down a prized bush or a tree.

One night he wakened and slipped into the kitchen at about three in the morning. He fixed himself a breakfast! It had dry cereal, topped with uncooked oatmeal, peanut butter, jelly, Kitchen Bouquet, soy sauce, and chocolate-mix powder. He topped it with kernels of unpopped popcorn. Fortunately, I awakened in time to save the day! I learned to tape the refrigerator shut and hide the popcorn.

Someone once said that happiness is learning to live with the consequences of our choices. I refused to become frustrated. I learned to accept things with humor. John was still my comfort and strength.

One day a friend and I were sorting through some things of John's. We found his filing cabinet which he had made for his 2" by 3" cards on which he had written Scripture verses. There were about 239 of them, many of which he had memorized. The friend said to me, "Isn't it sad that these verses have all faded from John's memory?"

My reply? "Yes, it is sad, but on the other hand they are not 'faded away' for these Scriptures are all woven into the 'warp and woof' of John's being, and have made him the man he is."

John was a unique man. He was a man in whom there was no guile, nor did he have any deceit in him. Along with his successes he had his failures and his disappointments, like the rest of us, but in old age he still lived in quiet dignity, always calm, controlled and peaceful. To meet him was a blessing.

He weakened physically but he still didn't have an ache or a pain. He was still ambulatory, but needed to be cared for like a child.

One day he went out and picked five orange poppies and brought them to me. He said, "You are an angel!"

John's 93rd birthday was to be on May 31st, 1992. We had planned a family celebration. On May 16th, he awakened early. He said he had a pain in his shoulder. I helped him up and into his robe and slippers. I had him in my arms, helping him to sit down. He laid his head against me, and was *gone!* Without a sigh, or a moan, he was just *gone!* In a fraction of a second, he was safely *home*. The coroner's report stated that death was immediate, due to a cardiopulmonary arrest.

I was alone. Albert and Betty were gone for the day. JoAnn, Doug and family were enroute to Colorado Springs, Colorado, to attend the funeral of Doug's father, who had just died. I was able to reach them in Chicago. We thought it best for both of them to continue on to Colorado Springs for Doug's father's funeral on Tuesday. Then they flew here on Wednesday, to attend JoAnn's father's funeral on Thursday. John's daughter Helen and her husband flew in from another state for the funeral.

The memorial ceremony for John was beautiful! Dr. Dick Hillis, our beloved missionary friend, gave the eulogy. It was God's final blessing on a life well-lived.

So much of me seemed to have died with John. I had to struggle to find my own identity again. My hands which had been so full of John's care were now empty. The days which had never seemed long enough were now empty hours.

There were jobs of pain around every corner. The empty house, the empty chair, the empty place at the table, the empty shoes, all of them had their own pain. Going through John's papers, seeing his very characteristic "John A. Strain" signature, or opening a drawer, seeing his favorite cuff links, or his prized silver dollar—coined the year of his birth, brought new twinges of pain.

I remember the day I wrote the word "widow" on a document. It brought into focus the reality of the emptiness. I determined then and there I would not let the meaning of that word "widow" be for me, one of empty hands and empty hours. I would find a way to fill them both.

But being 82 years old and not physically strong, the "going places and doing things" was slightly limited. My mirror told me I was old, but my spirit told me I was about 60, well, maybe 61. I was not ready yet to sit in a chair rocking away the hours!

So I joined two different classes, which I hadn't had time for before, got involved in the life of my community, and found a new love! Writing!

Since books had always been my good friends, I decided that I, too, would write a book of my own! So with yellow pad, pen in hand, I started on a new journey. It was great fun! I fell completely in love with my new project.

What a pleasant surprise it was to find that the articles which I wrote about the bits and pieces of my life were accepted and published.

Just the other day I had a call from New York telling me that the McCall's Magazine had accepted an article I had written. It was to be published in the December issue. The check was in the mail! Ha! Who said that life was over at 83?

I am fully aware that there may still be some rugged mountains for me to climb. Perhaps there will be a valley or two still to pass through. But I am not afraid of tomorrow, for I have seen God's goodness in my yesterdays, and I love today!

So joyously, "I raise my Ebenezer, for hitherto has the Lord helped me." Life is good. It is richly rewarding because of all of you whom I love.

Now I am the matriarch of the family. It is my joy and privilege to pass the blessing on to the next generation. So I pray,

*May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May the Lord make his face to shine upon you
and be gracious unto you.
May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you
and give you peace.*

So be it!
Love you,
INA.

