

Persistence of Light



in a Japanese Prison Camp,
with an Elephant Crossing the Alps,
and then in Silicon Valley

John Hoyte

ADVENTUROUS MEMOIR

About the Book

John Hoyte led a British expedition with an elephant over the Alps in Hannibal's tracks. Hannibal, with his army of thirty thousand men and thirty-seven war elephants, crossed in 218 B.C. to do battle with the Roman Empire.

John's successful mission, with an elephant named Jumbo on loan from the Turin Zoo, became a media sensation, leading to international coverage and the centerfold of *Life* magazine. This started him off on a fifty-year career as an inventor and entrepreneur in Silicon Valley.

His fascinating story begins with a childhood in China, including nearly four years in a Japanese internment camp during World War II. With each surprising twist and turn of his journey, John has built a fulfilling life infused with purpose and creativity.

As Sir Richard Jolly notes in his Preface: "This book, like John's life, is an inspiration, full of fun, warm friendships, unexpected happenings, and serious achievement. A well-lived life, still on the move. I am sure Jumbo would agree."

About the Author

As one of six children of British medical missionaries in China, John Hoyte grew up in a life built on family and faith. During World War II, he and his siblings, separated from their parents, were interned for nearly four years by the Japanese military. Grit, determination, and imagination were the only way to survive—and these became the basis for the next seven decades. John's amazing exploits included leading an elephant over the Alps to follow Hannibal's tracks and perfecting an invention that launched a fifty-year career in Silicon Valley.

His earlier book, *Alpine Elephant*, is now available as an ebook and as a paperback through Amazon. He created the whimsical sketches and maps in both *Alpine Elephant* and *Persistence of Light*.

John lives in Bellingham, Washington, with his wife, the poet Luci Shaw. His hobbies are sailing, pen-and-ink sketching, landscape painting, and playing classical guitar.

His website is www.johnhoyte.com. Follow him on Twitter @johnhoyte1 and on Facebook.



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This is a story for my grandchildren but also for a wider readership, to show through my adventures the wonder and mystery of life. It is set to Isaac Newton's seven colors of the rainbow. They provide a framework for my life story. Each color is unique and beautiful. Together they make white light complete.

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CHAPTER 1

A Childhood in China

Red is the color, red for China, red for violence, red for the heart of a family torn apart. Its wavelength range is 620 to 740 nanometers.

EARLY MEMORIES

My father, Stanley Hoyte, went out to China in the fall of 1913. There he was at age twenty-eight, a young doctor, single, in a strange land and out of touch with the England he had left and the terrors of the impending First World War. But life in China was by no means easy. Just thirteen years earlier, in the Boxer Rebellion, 156 missionaries had been killed in the province of his destination. There were plagues, anti-British riots, and transportation by foot. At that time, he was the only Western-trained surgeon in a province of 5 million people. He had qualified as a surgeon at Middlesex Hospital in London. For his help with a plague prevention campaign, he had received a prestigious medal and decoration from the Chinese government. It is easy to forget the dangers he faced, working in plague-infested villages. He had volunteered to go to China as a medical missionary through a British nonprofit organization called the China Inland Mission. His mission was to bring the message of God's love through the gift of healing. His first stint in the field was hard and lonely. It was considered inappropriate for him to be seen in public talking to anyone of the opposite sex, as this could be considered as propositioning her.

On his way back to England at the end of that first term, he was asked to escort an ailing missionary to the U.S. and so went to Montclair, New Jersey, while in the country, to visit the Wilder family, whom he had met while a medical student in London. Grace, my mother, twenty-four at the time, opened the front door for him, and Dad, so he told us later, fell in love with her right there and then! Three years later, they were married in Beijing (then called Peking) and spent the summer in a mat-shed on a mountaintop west of the mission hospital. I can imagine their intimacy and love-making in those wild mountains of central China.

The hospital where my parents served was in the distant town of Linfen, Shanxi Province, southwest of Beijing, and in those days, it took eight weeks by oxcart and foot to reach it from the coast. I prefer the ancient name PingYang Fu, as it reminded me of old Imperial China. It



http://weihsien-paintings.org/KimSmith/PhotosSketches/China_LocalFolks/p_ChinaLocalFolks.htm

separation while we were in the Japanese prison camp.

Another early memory was of the huge beam in the main room of the mill and how my older brothers and sister were able to climb up onto it by rope ladder while I couldn't. I wanted to so badly! Having four older siblings—particularly Mary, the nearest in age who would be willing to climb anything no matter how seemingly dangerous, I was always trying to catch up.

I also remember finding a spent bullet in the garden. Dad had it made into a clasp for me, one I still keep as a memento of our summer home. How it survived the boarding school and Weihsien prison camp I do not know, but that bullet reminds me of two aspects of our childhood in China—

one, the love and caring my father had for me, that he should bother to make a discovery into a keepsake, and the other the constant threat of physical danger that we as a family and other foreigners faced. Our parents wisely protected us from the stark reality of this, and demonstrated undaunted courage when danger was near.

Years later, while taking an introductory class on journal keeping, I was asked to write a brief description of my father's face. In a flash the memory came back to me of kissing his rough, half-shaven cheek "Good night." That may well have been my first memory. Most things around me, as a two-year-old, were soft and cuddly, but here was my Dad, strong and, to me, all powerful. The roughness of his skin came as a wild and wonderful shock. The tactile nature of another world indicated a rough edge to things, an unexpected surprise and so an adventure.

The year before I was born, Dad bought an old Trojan car with a crank handle at the front to start it. Getting back and forth to the mill was quite an adventure. In 1933, for instance, Dad's diary notes, the heavy rains made roads impassible for the car. There were times when he would drive out of the ruts and across fields in order to get through.

THE TERRORIST ATTACK

I was two and a half when we moved back from a stay on the coast to Linfen, although the Chinese civil war was going on and the town was besieged by Communist forces. They were acting more like a militarized gang of terrorists, thugs or bandits than a regular army with central control. They destroyed villages, killing the landowners and imprisoning the women and children until their husbands could come up with ransom money. The year before, the "Reds" had murdered two young American missionaries, John and Betty Stam. Their three-year-old daughter, Helen, was saved

was there, in 1932, that I was born. Two years earlier, Dad had bought an old derelict mill up in the wooded hills some four hours away by horse-drawn droshky, renovated it, and built a round moon gate between the stables and the main living area, a paddling pool, prayer tower, and a little bridge over the stream. This became our cool, summer home. The temperature in Linfen could be well over a hundred degrees (38°C). Memories of the old mill in the cool hills above the hot and dusty town were to be for the rest of my life a source of peace and security, family love and playfulness.

One of my first memories is of light and love. The vividness of that experience has helped me make light the overarching theme for this memoir and reflected something of my mother's strong, all-encircling love. At first I was the youngest of five children, then became one of six when baby Elizabeth was born, and yet there seemed to be an almost infinite capacity for my mother to love each of us to the very depth of her being.

The moment is with me now. She is holding me over the mill stream. She is standing on the little bridge and my toes are just touching the flowing, crystal-clear water, making delicate and to me delightful ripples on the surface. Light on the water. It was magic! Perhaps this was my introduction to art, for my mother was a talented artist, and her sketches and little water colors decorated her letters during those lean, devastating years of



Robin, Eric, Rupert, Mary, me and Elizabeth.

only because a Chinese Christian offered his life for hers and was killed instead. The same brutal section of the Red army crossed the Yellow River and were pillaging our province and threatening to attack Linfen. Mom and Dad must have wondered if we children would be spared if they were killed. My three brothers were safe at Chefoo, but my parents had Mary age five, me, and one-year-old Elizabeth with them, and my mother's diary recounts the danger.

Was I afraid?

I was not afraid of actually dying at their hands. But I was afraid for the children. I should have liked to protect them from being scared or hurt. And yet as I faced this fear, I knew that if I set the right standard, they would be as brave as I wanted them to be. Children are heroes at heart, for all heroic stories appeal greatly to them. So I trusted God to give me courage and strength when the time came to show them how to be brave... .

Then came another question. What if we were killed and the children left? I had a talk with good old Mrs. Tang, our children's nurse, who said of course she would do her best for them in that case, and let me say here, what a help it is in such straits to face each question honestly and to talk it out with the person concerned. It is wonderful what strength God gives in our desperate situation.

Then came another question. What about our three boys at boarding school on the coast? We faced it together. It would seem terrible to deprive them of a mother's and a father's loving sympathy and continued care. It was a great relief to write to Robin a long letter telling him of the facts and of what might happen to us, saying how brave we knew he and his brothers would have been if they were here and urging them to keep close to Jesus all their lives. I wonder if this letter ever reached him. Perhaps the Reds got it instead. Then we asked God to enlighten our minds to show us what we should do in order to be prepared for the worst.

My mother's report continues: Stan is feeling responsible for all the hospital staff. He was able to find places of escape from the hospital. As I was walking in the garden with him, we wondered where we as a family could hide. He mentioned the dry well, but it looks so deep and dark that I shuddered. I should not like to be shut up in it with three small children. Our best plan was to create a secret place in the house. We bricked up a doorway which led into two old storerooms in the corner of the courtyard. The only way of reaching them would then be by scrambling onto the kitchen roof over a small sloping roof and across the great main roof which was large and sloped quite sharply, so much so that a terrorist might well hesitate to walk on it. At the other end a ladder would be standing, down which we could climb to the walled in courtyard, the only access to our

secret. We furnished these two rooms with a bed, some mattresses, boxes for storing bedding and food, a stove and a chimney, a chair and stools, wash basin, pails, a candle and matches, and paper and pencils for the children. We also put in a store of coal, kindling and paper and a water barrel while a local bricklayer blocked off the entrance from the house.

We are a bit anxious about this as he is a talkative old Horn. It is impossible to do anything secretly in this country. The bricklayer thinks that we want to put our treasures there and so we do, for our children are our treasures. Mary is perfectly sweet about it all. She is the only child who can understand. Having heard all about Peter Pan and the Pirates, it seems to her as if she were living in an exciting book. She skips along over the roof climbs boldly down the ladder, and helps me put away all sorts of useful things. We practiced climbing over the roof with John, aged 2½, and Elizabeth as a baby in our arms.

The trouble was that to get to the secret rooms we had to climb over a roof that was visible from the city gates, so there was the danger of being seen by the terrorists or townsfolk friendly toward them. The city was closely shut up for two weeks, and there must have been real fear of mayhem. My father quietly prepared for the worst. I dimly remember the secret room and the idea of keeping it secret but was totally unaware of the fact that I could have been orphaned or killed at any time.

A remarkable coincidence occurred which we only discovered much later at a family reunion. My mother put in her diary that they had received a telegram from their friend Miss Deck, who wrote: *We go Kaifeng. Yuincheng evacuated.* This turned out to be Phyllis Deck, my wife Luci's aunt. She died while trying to escape the terrorists. Amazingly, our city was never attacked though enemy forces came within a mile of the gates. We were saved.

Whether it was because of continuing danger or other factors, the family finally left Linfen, where Dad had practiced medicine for twenty-one years. Certainly part of the reason was to keep our large family together in that very unstable era. We moved to Chefoo, the seaside town where my brothers had already been going to boarding school. It was a mission school, founded in 1881 and run on British "Public School" (which means private boarding school) lines, with cricket in the summer, soccer, rowing, and a mission-focused Christian faith. Academically, it was considered the best British school east of Suez. Thornton Wilder and Henry Luce, founder of Life magazine, had both attended it. The graduating exams were created and tested at Oxford. With Dad working at the city hospital, we were together at last as a family.

During a brief vacation Mom and Dad took down the coast, we were taken care of by Gladys Aylward, a remarkable and courageous missionary who was a close family friend and had stayed with us in Linfen. She

became a Chinese citizen to identify with the people, and rescued over a hundred orphan children from the Japanese advance by leading them over two mountain ranges and the Yellow River.

The next year, the Japanese army moved into town and life became more uncertain. But there was very little resistance in Chefoo, though there were nights with gunfire from pockets of local Chinese militia. As neutral British citizens, we were not affected much.

I was four when Mom and Dad were called to Tientsin to help after devastating flooding of the Yellow River left thousands of Chinese drowned or without homes. They took Elizabeth and me with them, and I well recall waiting at a railway station, guarding several pieces of luggage, with Elizabeth at one end and me at the other, while Mom and Dad tried to settle passport problems. I held my breath in apprehension and put up a simple child's prayer—perhaps my first remembered prayer.

Nothing was stolen while they were gone. We loaded the luggage into the train and were off. Arriving well after midnight, I was very pleased that I was wide awake and, in a sense, treated like an adult. Tientsin was in desperate need, with thousands of refugees and nowhere to provide them shelter from the bitter winter. We came upon a vast field of refugee huts, and Dad climbed down into them to inspect the miserable conditions. I went into one after him, wearing a mask. The smell was terrible. No heat, no sanitation, and imminent danger of typhus.

LOST IN SHANGHAI AT AGE FIVE

That summer we went for a holiday to Shanghai. There was great excitement, as we were going to the big city for the first time. One day as Dad was taking all of us kids to the park to play, he pointed out that my shoelace was undone. I knelt down to tie it, and when I looked up after struggling for a few minutes, everyone had disappeared. Probably Dad had assumed I'd fix the lace when we got to the park, and had gone on with the other kids. There I was in the middle of bustling Shanghai, completely lost. Little did I realize the danger, as I could easily have been kidnapped and held for ransom.

Fortunately, an apparently wealthy and, to me, stylish Chinese lady took my hand and paid a rickshaw coolie to take me to the police station. I was too scared to thank her, and sat, small and lonely, in the middle of the wide rickshaw seat, wondering where I was being sent. The rickshaw was old and rickety. The seat smelled of tobacco and grease. I watched the back of the runner's neck where little beads of sweat were appearing as he hurried along. I felt completely helpless. He could have kidnapped me or dumped me anywhere. I gripped the arms of the rickshaw and prayed. The police station seemed a long way off, but we eventually got there. He took my arm and hurried me through the swinging doors with a sigh of relief. It was as if he had been protecting me from some invisible terror out on the streets. Clearly

he felt responsible for me and handed me over to a British policeman.

I was relieved to hear English spoken and simply sobbed, "I want my mother." I was told to sit on a little stool in the main reception room. A policeman towered over me on a high stool asking questions and making notes in his pad. The smell of the cigar he was smoking coming down to me from on high. Being lost was a completely new experience. During what seemed an eternity of waiting, I wrestled with the idea. It was partly fear but also an adventure into the unknown. I couldn't put the two emotions together and began to cry.

Then, wonder of wonders, my mother came advancing toward me from across the room. When I saw her face, I realized I was found. Oh the magic of that moment. It was her face, her radiant face that transformed me. I will never, ever forget it. It seemed better to have been lost and then found than not to have been lost at all. After that first flush of joy, I thought more about the experience and have come to believe there was something unique about being lost. It is more a matter of relationship than of location. Life was wonderful and new again. In fact, I felt I was living a strangely new life. I had survived the abyss and was all the more certain of my mother's love. If I could be rescued from the streets of Shanghai, then I could be rescued from anywhere. This gave me a new sense of self-confidence. I wonder what my parents said to each other that evening!

While in Shanghai, we went to see the movie *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which gave me nightmares for some time afterward because of the images of the wicked queen. Then I remember the sensation of riding an escalator at a fancy, downtown shop and marveling at the upward movement. It was silent and so magical. Perhaps it would take me up to heaven.

FURLOUGH TO ENGLAND

That fall I had just turned five. Mom and Dad took Elizabeth and me on their furlough to England. It must have been hard for my other siblings to be left in boarding school while we enjoyed the luxury of a long boat trip and the adventure of being with grandparents. I discovered years later that my sister Mary, aged seven at the time, was particularly hurt by being left in boarding school. Why didn't Mom and Dad bring her along with us? It would seem obvious in today's world, but there must have been other factors beyond my knowledge.

On the ship, there was a fancy dress party for which Elizabeth dressed up as a primrose while I was a bluebell. There were also rich foods that I was not used to, seasickness in the Mediterranean, and visits to Egypt and Palestine which I cannot remember.

At Dad's mother's home in Nottingham, we were happy to settle into the big rambling house. Our bedroom was on the third floor, with the bathroom and Grandma's bedroom one floor below. On the wall outside the

bathroom was an Old Testament scene that terrified me: a man frantically knocking at the gates of a city he had fled to. In the distance, a crowd of wild figures wielding weapons was chasing him, but it looked as if he might be able to escape just in time. The picture scared the living daylight out of me, and whenever I went down to the bathroom, I would run past it with dread. Was I the man trying to escape to safety? Would the gates be opened in time?

While Mom and Dad went off for a short holiday with my grandmother in Wales, Elizabeth and I were left in a children's home in South London. We were miserable and missed our parents terribly. What is remarkable is that the home was run by two wonderful, loving ladies, Gwen Packer and Eileen Drake, who had felt called to care for missionary children that often were left with them at as early an age as two while their parents went overseas for long periods. We were the lucky one who only had two weeks' separation, while others ended up feeling closer to Packie and Drakins than to their own parents. After World War II, we were to get to know Packie and Drakins in a special way.

In London, I got to see the coronation of King George VI, as Dad put me on his shoulders to see the royal coach go by. Always the explorer willing to think outside the box, he somehow was able to get behind Buckingham Palace into the area where the coaches and horses were kept on the day before the coronation and take pictures of the coach being polished and spruced up. How proudly he showed us the photographs. Daddy's Leica was his constant joy, and our family has many negatives of pictures he took in China and elsewhere.

Grandpa Robert Wilder and Grandma Helene Olsson Wilder each had a claim to fame. My mother's parents had retired to Norway, where they lived in a big, rambling whitewashed house in a village near Lake Mjosa, north of Oslo. Grandpa Robert Wilder was American, a cousin to Almanzo Wilder whose wife, Laura Ingalls Wilder, wrote *Little House on the Prairie*. As a student at Princeton University, he had been co-founder of the Student Volunteer Movement, whose efforts led more than twenty thousand young people to serve overseas. I remember Grandpa as gentle and loving. He died later that year, 1937. Grandma Helene Olsson was motherly—like a big-bosomed thrush, as Dylan Thomas would put it—and welcomed us with open arms.

The magic of the family warmth and the Norwegian countryside is with me still when I recall our stay in a small garden guesthouse with a bright red door. My mother's aunt, Tanta Aagot, never married and became a famous painter. I still have her oil painting of the red door, surrounded by lush greenery. Grandma Helene's brother Willhelm was commander-in-chief of the Norwegian army during the 1905 war in which the country won independence from Sweden. How proud we were that we were related to him.

One evening, I was allowed to stay up late even though I was only five and go out with the farm workers to collect the hay. Just as it was getting to be dusk, I rode into town on the top of a huge cart piled fifteen feet high with hay and drawn by two magnificent horses. My joy was doubled as not only was I king of the road but in addition, my sister had been too young to be out on this adventure. Oh, the joy of feeling one up on a sibling!

THE HALCYON DAYS OF CHEFOO

We returned to Chefoo by Christmas, and it was glorious being a whole family again with big brothers and sister to look up to and try and keep up with. Those nearly three years, from Christmas 1937 until the autumn of 1940, were the happiest time of my childhood. Dad had various jobs as school doctor, at a sanitarium, or elsewhere, and was able to help out in emergencies around the country. He wrote after helping at Kaifeng that he was "rioted out of the town."

Meanwhile, my mother made a remarkable and wonderful home for us six, with Dad joining in as often as possible. In the winters, we played our favorite gramophone records, and she encouraged us to dance around the table to ballet music. Many locals were invited home and warmly welcomed as friends and equals. It was a very open-house affair, and we could invite our friends from school—poor, jealous boarders, alas—to come home with us for an overnight stay. At the Chinese New Year we could stay up late and watch a huge paper dragon weaving in and out among the crowd, and then the setting off hundreds of firecrackers.

Mom took us for walks onto the city wall, allowing us to climb "forbidden" lion statues. Mary, a year older than me, used to regularly climb a dangerously high tree in the garden. My brother Rupert, three years older than me, was allowed to catch scorpions in a glass tumbler and bring them into the house. Mom used to read us *The Jungle Book*, *Black Beauty*, and other classics. Right from those early days, she gave each of us one day of the week for our own when we could choose our favorite dessert. We often played sardines in the dark—or black beast, as it was sometimes called—which helped us lose our fear of the dark, and Mom and Dad would play right along with us. What else could they do with all the lights out? We'd end up in a giggling mass of hugging bodies. Each week we would have a "family night" in which each of us was encouraged to perform in front of the family, and Mom and Dad helped with costumes and makeup.

But even in the midst of joy, war loomed. One scary night, the Communists attacked the city. I recall the gunfire and flashing lights reflecting off the bedroom ceiling. It started after midnight with a couple of distant explosions. Then there were bursts of gunfire getting closer. Dad woke those of us kids who were still sleeping, and told us to get under our beds and away from the windows. It was a moment more of excitement than fear, and eventually I fell asleep, still under my bed,

without even a pillow.

After a brief spell of being boarders at the mission school when Mom and Dad were off on a rescue trip, we rented a much bigger house just outside the mission compound. It was opposite some special trees that we called the Seven Tree Pass. The good climbers could get from one end to the other without touching the ground, despite a really scary part in the middle. Though I longed to be up there, I never qualified.

About that time, we adopted a couple of cute puppies, with each of us trying to be the first down to wake them in the mornings and sniff their rich puppy smell. Rupert developed a passion for collecting butterflies, and Mom and Dad hired a local carpenter to make him a beautiful glass-topped box for his collection, all displayed with wings spread out. I can still smell that camphor wood; it uniquely brings me back to China. I watched him with fascination and even caught a few butterflies myself. Mom and Dad introduced us to gardening, and our cabbages and carrots attracted lots of white butterflies. All of us were encouraged to have our own part of the garden where we could grow our own vegetables and flowers. I was just a beginner but could see how well my elder brothers and sister did and tried to catch up.

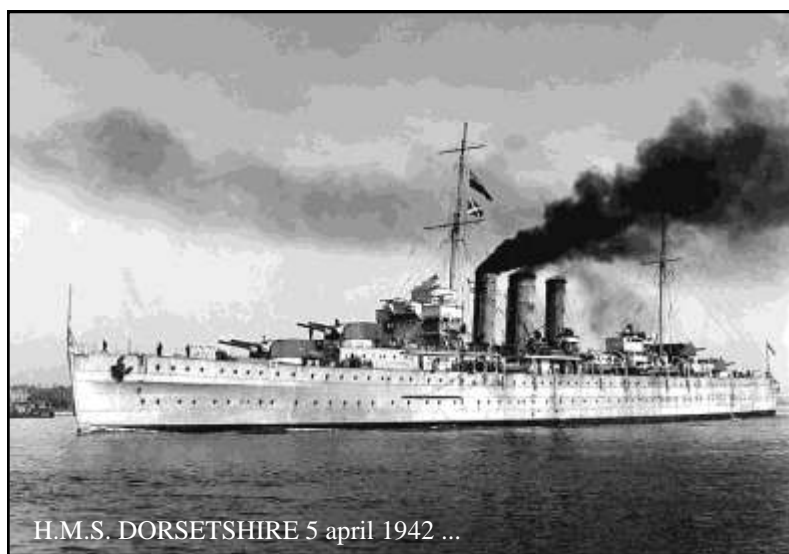
Our mother was enterprising and resourceful. While Dad was away on one of his medical trips, she introduced the family to Scouting. This was a brand-new idea for Chefoo families, and she pioneered it by making our family of six into a regular scout troop, calling us together with the call Pack, Pack, Pack. First, she wrote off to England for information on how to form a troop and lists of badges we could work for. She taught us semaphore which we used to signal each other from rocky knobs on our hilly walks up to the Ning Hi Gate and to Adam's Knob, the highest hill behind the town (which we called a mountain because it was a thousand feet above sea level). We had stalking games which she encouraged, and soon our friends wanted to join the troop. Mom got permission from the boarding school and started an official scout troop. Thus were sown the seeds of the Scout and Girl Guide troops which were such a success in the Weih sien prison camp. We were very proud that our mother had the imagination and enterprise to start the whole idea. Our father taught us first aid and bandaging, so that badge was easy to earn. For each of us, Mom went through the list of all the badges available and what we should work on first. Mary must have started being a Girl Guide by 1940, as Mom was sewing many badges onto her camelhair blanket by then. Our parents inspired us to dare and to be different, but they did it in an enthusiastic yet unobtrusive way.

On Sundays, we walked as a family all the way along the beachfront to the community church on Temple Hill, but we would leave much earlier than needed so that there would be time to go rock scrambling along the beach on the way. We kids would walk in front with Mom and Dad behind so that Dad's voice would carry as

he told us tales of Greek legends and his travels. After church, over Sunday lunch, we would discuss the sermon. I remember insisting at lunch once that the preacher for the day had been wearing glasses, while my siblings all insisted that he hadn't. I was so adamant that I took on a bet and would not budge. A couple weeks later as we walked along the beach, we saw the preacher coming our way wearing his glasses! My sense of triumph stayed with me for quite a long time, and you can be sure I collected the money I had won!

To encourage us kids to have fun and meet people in the wider community outside the mission station, Mom and Dad paid the expensive subscription to join the Lido beach club where we could buy soft drinks, lounge around, and paddle on the bay in a canoe a boatman would take down to the beach. I was too young to really appreciate this, but the older boys lived it up to the hilt. One scary afternoon, an offshore breeze that turned into a powerful wind made Eric and Rupert struggle to keep from being blown clear across the bay to the Bluff five miles away.

Our friends at the boarding school were jealous of the "Hoyte Tribe" because of our enterprising adventures such as visiting a British warship anchored in the bay and camping out on the Lighthouse Islands.



The cruiser HMS Dorsetshire looked resplendent in the morning light that day when Mom and Dad spontaneously threw out the suggestion that we should visit it. We had no permission, and there was no direct communication between people in town and the captain. But the eight of us set out in a rowboat toward the magnificent ship half a mile away. I vividly remember my mother's wonderful mix of spontaneity and modesty. She was in a swimsuit when we set off but changed into blouse and skirt on the way, to be more properly attired for the occasion, and we all laughed. There was magic in that family laughter and the expectancy that this was going to be a real adventure.

When we drew near the enormous side of the cruiser, which seemed as high as a five-story building, we called up asking if we could visit. After a few minutes'

hesitation, a long sloping ladder of steps was lowered, and the smiling face of the chief petty officer, in impeccably smart white uniform, greeted us as we clambered up onto the ship in our bare feet. We were treated like royalty, piped aboard, and shown all around the ship—the engine room, the bridge, and finally the captain's cabin. One sailor was assigned to scrub our soles clean of tar that had crept up between the slats of the deck before we entered the captain's quarters. He talked with Mom and Dad about adult things, life at Chefoo, and what the Japanese were doing in China.

I was more interested in what stood on the sideboard, a perfect model of the original HMS Dorsetshire, one of the ships Sir Francis Drake had commanded in defeating the Spanish Armada in 1588. It was made of pure silver, with silver sails billowing. How could I ever forget it! As a bonus, we were towed back to shore by the ship's motor launch, at twenty knots. The sheer luxury of not having to row on top of the royal treatment onboard ship was indescribable. Such is grace—undeserved, unmerited, and given freely. We discussed the event that evening over supper and concluded that the sailors, from captain to able seamen, were all delighted to welcome a British family, especially one with children, so far from their own homes back in England and after months at sea. It became the talk of the school: The Hoytes had done it again!

THE ULTIMATE HOLIDAY

Dad persuaded the school administrator to lend us a four-oar rowboat and to have the weekly lighthouse supply launch tow us out to the mysterious Lighthouse Islands seven miles off the coast. None of us younger kids had ever been there. All they had been were tiny silhouettes on the horizon to the east. Dad had taken the three older boys there the summer before, but now it was our turn as a complete family to camp on the beach of one of the islands for a whole two weeks. How did our parents manage to pack all the equipment into an open rowboat?

That was the last summer together before Mom and Dad left us at the boarding school, so it was especially memorable. Mom did the cooking over charcoal on two earthenware braziers. We survived two storms during the fortnight, and I remember Dad and the older boys swimming out to the anchored boat to bring it back to shore when a heavy swell threatened. There were also blissful days of bright sunshine, swimming, and exploring the caves around the headland. We discovered an elephant rock on the other side of the island that the sea had carved a tunnel through, and navigated the boat through it to explore the rocky coast beyond. Dad had built a two-foot wooden box with a glass bottom so we could watch brilliantly colored fish underwater from the boat. Mom introduced us to watercolors there. I still have a beautiful watercolor of a breathtaking sunset that she painted as I sat beside her watching, helping me

remember her as a spontaneous artist.

Our two weeks were over all too soon, and we were towed back to Chefoo with memories to last a lifetime. Back at school, my classmates asked me about the camp out, and I remember feeling totally inadequate to describe the closeness of the family and the excitement of our adventure together. I knew then that we were a special family and was proud of my parents. I was seven, about to turn eight.

On the island, Dad told us stories of his early adventures at Linfen. Late one night he was called to the hospital on an emergency. A madman, seemingly possessed by a demon, was being held down by four strong men in the reception hall. Dad went to the pharmacy to get an injection needle and medicine to put him to sleep. By the time he came back, the man had gotten loose and, with superhuman strength, had broken off the top of the large potbellied stove in the center of the room. He was kneeling and about to put his face right into the red hot embers when Dad gently pulled him away. The man fought with him fiercely. Though Dad was no match for such a man, he strongly believed that the power of God was with him, and he was able to hold the man down. Somehow Dad was able to subdue and sedate him. Such was the life of a medical missionary, and we children were proud that we were part of his courageous family. We began to see his life as one of considerable danger.

My chief hobby was collecting keys, of all shapes and sizes. They would hang from a ring on my waist, and whenever I found a locked door or a discarded padlock I would set to work to see if I had a key that would fit it. Wherever I went there would be a jingling sound. My siblings found this amusing, and my nickname became "John Klink." I still sign my family emails that way.

Only they know why! This tendency of wanting to know "what is behind that door" became a very strong instinct which has been both a blessing and a curse. It has gotten me into trouble several times but also has led to positive risk-taking and growth in wisdom.

THE COMING DARKNESS

Maybe you have to know the darkness before you appreciate the light.

—Madeleine L'Engle

In September of 1940, when I was just eight years old and still carrying my many keys around, Mom and Dad were asked to set out from Chefoo to Lanchow, over thirteen hundred miles away in the northwestern province of Kansu, to aid with a mission hospital crisis. They reluctantly accepted the challenge. For them, the journey would cover more like fifteen hundred miles, crossing over three flooded parts of the Yellow River as well as the no-man's-land between the Japanese and Chinese armies.

Much of this was by foot, cart, wheelbarrow, and boat, putting them in danger from bandits, guerrillas, drug smugglers, snipers, and military red tape. After three months, they reached their destination, and later published a booklet describing their adventures, with sketches my mother made along the way. Perhaps that is what inspired me to always carry a little sketchbook when on vacation and to maintain a sketching journal.

With six children at the school, our parents had asked the mission leaders if they could remain at Chefoo, but Dad was badly needed to be superintendent of the hospital at Lanchow. Looking back, how we wished that he had said "no" and insisted on either staying at Chefoo or, if that did not work out for the mission, taking us all back to England for our education. Hindsight is easy, but at the time, missionaries seldom questioned the decisions of their mission board. Also, little did we know of the coming attack on **Pearl Harbor**, and there were certainly expectations that we would be together for another Chefoo holiday in the foreseeable future. Our mother hated to show us children how much she felt the parting. She did not want to add to our distress, so spoke brightly of the holidays we would have together in the future. Yet as she left Elizabeth, her youngest, she completely broke down in the headmistress's room after saying goodbye. It took great courage to compose herself and face the future.

So it was that we were orphaned for five years, for instead of seeing Mom and Dad the next summer as anticipated, we faced a Japanese internment camp. My brother Rupert later wrote about his sadness when told that we would be taking up boarding again at school. The devotion that our parents had to their missionary calling had always seemed to him so totally genuine and of overriding importance that he thought he could honestly say he never really resented it. In this, he considered himself most fortunate, knowing that many children of missionaries have continued through life with much resentment. That was Rupert's response.

However, each of us six responded differently, and we have all had to struggle over the separation—a full five years from our father and forever from our mother, or at least for this lifetime.

I was still at the prep school and felt particularly lonely and sad that first Christmas after Mom and Dad left. The teachers did their best to comfort Elizabeth and me, but we needed the family comfort that no boarding school could supply. Our siblings were separated from us in the upper grades, and the boys' and girls' schools were in different buildings. One huge encouragement for me was that Miss Stark, who taught art and literature, praised my drawing abilities and encouraged me to draw and color a Christmas card for my parents. Her enthusiasm was infectious. I suddenly experienced a new sense of self-worth in

spite of the loss of Mom and Dad and our close-knit family unit. This made a huge difference to me at this crucial time in my life.

Most of my experiences in the prep school were with other boys and girls my age, and I do not recall spending time with my older brothers and sister. This was one of the problems of boarding school life. Siblings tended to be separated by grade and so lose family cohesion. We used to explore the hills behind Chefoo, and at one point, three of us found a low, narrow tunnel in the foothills. Smaller friends managed to get through, but I became stuck at a very narrow point and panicked. The experience of lying there in complete darkness unable to move forward or backward was terrifying. Praying calmed me down, and inch by inch I worked my way backward and out again with just a few scratches. The experience fits so well into my theme of light and its corollary darkness. The dark, coupled with total immobility, became synonymous, a kind of paralysis. That fit my mental state.

There were times when we prelates were quite rebellious, and once, a group of us sat in the school's central courtyard refusing to move or obey any of our teachers' requests. I do not recall what the outward reason for the revolt was, and on the whole, the teachers were loving and patient with us. But they were not our

parents, and so for all this time, we had a deep ache inside. Now I understand it as a sign of the shades of darkness and separation we all were experiencing.

THE STORM STRIKES

*Forget your perfect offering.
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.*

—Leonard Cohen

It was December of 1941, and I was walking along the beach with some friends. Out to sea a huge storm was



Family portrait just before Mom and Dad left for Lanchow. How sad we looked! We never saw Mom again.

gathering with dark and sinister clouds. A stiff salt wind was springing up, and I suddenly felt chilled. The storm was moving quickly in our direction, and we began to look for cover. An older boy ran up to us shouting:

"Have you heard? The Japs have attacked the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, and we are at war with Japan."

How does a nine-year-old boy react to such news? I immediately connected it with the storm at sea and felt a simultaneous sensation of dread and excitement. A huge storm was coming, and we would be caught up in it. I felt dread at what the Japanese might do to us and excitement at the possibility of adventure in this new, unpredictable world. Danger thrummed through my being as my friends and I scurried for cover.

A few days later, we had another surprise. Along the main road into town came several hundred Japanese cavalry in double file. At first, we just heard the clip-clop of hooves, and then turned wide-eyed to the improbable scene.

It was vivid: The harnesses jingled, horses whinnied, the smell of horse manure wafted on the air. The leader shouted strange commands in Japanese, and each rider wore a long curved sword.

It seemed like a war movie projecting me back into World War I. But it was real. I now realized that indeed, we were enemy aliens. The United States and Britain both had declared war on Japan, and life under Japanese control would be quite different from now on. Our headmaster Mr. Bruce, was taken into custody for a month, and our ability to travel out of the mission compound was restricted. We had to wear armbands wherever we went. The teachers began to prepare us for the tough time ahead. At that moment, I wished Morn and Dad were not so far away but right here with us at Chefoo. I was an orphan placed twice into jeopardy. It was dark. The storm had hit.

TEMPLE HILL INTERNMENT

Eventually, the Japanese military took over the whole school compound, and the two hundred students and teachers were forced to move to Temple Hill on the other side of town, into three houses built to each house a family of six. We managed to squeeze into them and every square inch was precious. After we had been marched out of our old school buildings and had a chance to look around, it was discovered that all the light bulbs had been stolen from our new confinement. My oldest brother, Robin, had the presence of mind to somehow sneak back into the school and fill an old suitcase with as many light bulbs as he could find. When the Japanese guard challenged him as he left the compound, he just replied with a nonchalant *beerdee dungshee*, meaning

that he had *some things*. Amazingly, he was not searched, and we enjoyed the benefits of his courage for many months to come. How proud I was of my big brother! During those sardine months on Temple Hill, food became very scarce not only in our camp but also in town. The Japanese commandant was a Christian and could give us more food than was available to the townsfolk, including German and Italian missionaries who, of course, were not imprisoned.

This raised an interesting question: How did we as proudly British missionaries and "mishkids" relate to missionaries from enemy countries? I am thankful to say that generally, we treated each other with goodwill and respect. However, I do recall that before Mom and Dad left, a German missionary family living next door repeatedly sang nationalistic German songs. We were duly distressed but kept this to ourselves like good Christians. Our thoughts were not so holy!

Since the walls around our makeshift camp were only six feet high, it would have been easy to escape. But as conditions were worse outside than inside, we naturally didn't. In fact, the reverse took place. Chinese thieves would climb in and take what they could. This led to my first attempt at writing a brief memoir, complete with sketches of the camp compound and a thief climbing down from a veranda:

THIEVES

There are a number of Chinese people who live in some houses just behind our camp, and they can see very well onto our verandahs. They watched where we kept things, and they knew that on the front and side verandahs, there were rows of boxes. They decided that they would come and steal a lot of things. June 15. In the early morning of Foundation Day the big boys were sleeping in the garden when a thief crept up to our verandah. Costerus heard him and called out, first in English and then in Chinese. Then he sent Theo Bazire to tell Mr. Bazire that there was a thief. Costerus himself went to the kitchen to get a mop. The thief heard some noises, so he thought he would go down the stairs. But luckily Mr. Bazire was at the bottom, so he went back onto the verandah and climbed down a pillar and ran. The boys saw him and gave chase. The man tripped up and was taken to the boys' room as a captive. They tied him up and took him to the laundry room. They gave him a mattress and drink. Mr. Bazire sat outside, guarding him in a deck chair, and at 5:30 AM, he went to light the kitchen fire. Before he went, he loosened the man's hands "to make him feel more comfortable." Then he left a boy to keep guard on the thief. The thief slipped his hands out of the loops where his wrists were tied and moved a tub to get out of the window. When he was out, he climbed over a wall, so he escaped after all. All the grownups were very relieved for they thought he would be hurt by the Japanese if we handed him over.

Such is the situation when a compassionate missionary captures a thief under an authoritarian dictatorship! I cannot remember if the Japanese commandant was a Christian at this stage or not.

WEIHSIEN INTERNMENT CAMP



Gate to Freedom: The Japanese Prison Camp at Weihsien.

The news came through that we were to be moved to a much bigger prison camp at Weihsien, a hundred fifty miles inland. The journey there involved two stages, first to Tsingtao by steamer and then by rail. The Japanese officials did not provide any food for the two-day journey but allowed us to order bread. This was to be the mainstay of the voyage, since we would be completely out of other food. The baker who delivered bread to the camp agreed to deliver it directly to the Japanese ship. However, our hearts sank as the boat left the dock before the baker arrived. By God's grace, the boat had to drop anchor out in the bay for a few minutes, letting the baker secure a rowboat and deliver the bread just in time!

There were three hundred of us crowded into the hundred-fifty foot steamer. With no cabins and only bare decks, the school staff and children were allotted the hold for sleeping quarters. We lay head to tail like sardines, or shoulder to shoulder, on the flat boarding, with not an inch to spare. No toilet facilities were provided. By the second day, the smell became horrendous. The hatches were battened down at night, and no one was allowed on deck.

There wasn't much sleeping, and on the second night, I managed to slip out through a carelessly unlocked hatch to the blissful coolness of the deck. It must have been about midnight. I was restless and hungry but elated at having escaped the "dungeon." Moving forward to the prow of the ship, all alone, I sat with my feet dangling over the edge, my legs on either side of the steel cable

that stretched up from the bow to the top of the foremast. With a full moon above and a moonlit path rippling to the deep blue horizon, I seemed to be looking out into infinity. Gone was the hunger. Gone was the fear, even though we were going through mine-infested waters. Gone was the sense of being deserted by my parents. I felt surrounded by a sense of complete love and peace. The writer C.S. Lewis has described moments in his life of inexplicable wonder, of longing, of beauty and awe.

This was my moment. The experience was a mountain peak in my life's journey. I was loved, and the rippled moonlight seemed a pathway to peace.

Dawn of the second day brought us to Tsingtao, and we spent a long, hot, waterless day on the train to Weihsien. Many lost their luggage on the way, and boxes and suitcases were broken open and rifled. Finally, tired and disheveled, we piled onto flatbed trucks and were brought the final two miles to the camp at what had been a Presbyterian mission compound. Before we arrived, though, the school, seminary, church, and hospital had been completely trashed, wrecked by several garrisons of Chinese and Japanese soldiers.

Fortunately for us, an earlier band of prisoners from Beijing and Tientsin had worked on improving matters, cleaning out the toilets (which were inches thick in human waste), and establishing two working kitchens. Our new home was about two hundred by a hundred fifty yards, and housed up to two thousand prisoners at its maximum. There were rows and rows of tiny rooms which had been designated for Chinese students, each with a narrow door and window at the front and a small window at the rear, but now were crammed with prisoner families. With no running water or heat, the new inmates had to become very adaptable.

Six months earlier, the first batch had been brought in, followed by group after group of enemy nationals, as the Japanese called us, from many parts of northern China. Before our three hundred arrived, there were about sixteen hundred prisoners. It was a crowd of many nationalities, the very last arrivals being Italians brought in after their country's capitulation. Together, they all formed a mixed bag of personalities, rich and poor, missionary and secular, young and old, generous and miserly, healthy and sick. Mr. Watham, for example, was a millionaire, the president of a huge coal mining operation, while Barbey was a drug addict picked up off the streets of Beijing. We all had to learn to live within the same primitive conditions.

We climbed off the trucks at the main gate and



staggered up Main Street, carrying or lugging our boxes and suitcases. The dusty, unpaved road was later called Montgomery's Ride, with the unlikely British hope that some day, General Montgomery of El Alamein would ride into camp to set us free. The internees already there were crowding the walls, the gates, and the alleys to welcome us. Pity, interest, curiosity, and perhaps a little disgust at the thought of more mouths to feed were all evident on their faces. Their clothes looked rumpled and torn, covered with dust and dirt, but there were women and children as well as men.

We kids were excited at the prospect of more space to run around in after being cramped for so long in the three houses in Chefoo. The housing committee found space for us in the education building. We had to make do with what bedding we had, as our mattresses did not arrive for another two weeks. We unpacked and settled down on the floor. Apprehension and excitement kept me awake for some time. Next morning, we explored our new environment. High walls surrounded the camp, with guard towers at each strategic corner, and high voltage wires, mounted on insulators, warning us against any attempt to escape. There also were searchlights and guard dogs, and we wisely respected the security that surrounded us.

Slowly we began to understand how things were run. The Japanese had told the first prisoners that they would be left to themselves and would have to organize the camp without Japanese supervision. Our guards would provide the basics for survival: food, heat in the winter (mostly coal dust), electricity, and waste removal. Committees were elected so that the camp became a democracy within the larger totalitarian governance. There was a housing committee to find a home for every new prisoner, an employment committee to give everyone a job, and a discipline committee to keep order and prevent the Japanese guards getting involved.

My first experience with the discipline committee came when my friend Theo and I were reported to the committee for throwing stones at the insulators on top of the outside walls. It was a thoughtless thing to do, for the insulators were the foundational building blocks of the security system. If the Japanese guards had caught us, we might have been severely punished. Luckily, our punishment was relatively benign, writing out several hundred times I must not throw stones at the wall-top insulators. As we were desperately short of paper, I cannot recall how we found the means to do this, but I am grateful that we were not punished more severely.

Langdon Gilkey, later the author of *Shantung Compound*, the most definitive book on our camp, was a member of the housing committee. He wrote about the problem of cramming two thousand people into our limited space. The spacious homes of the directors and

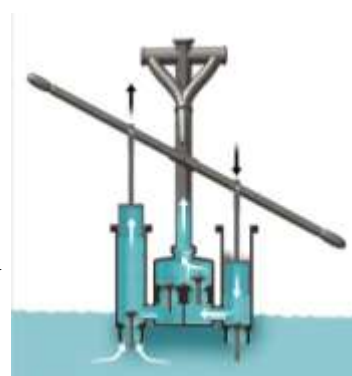
staff of the original Presbyterian school had been taken over by our captors, while we were crammed into the tight little rooms designed for students. Every time our captors summoned the housing committee and blithely announced that another batch of prisoners was coming to the camp, it was up to the committee and not the guards to find space for them. Guards can command and

threaten. Fellow internees can only ask, cajole and persuade.

JOBS AND WATER

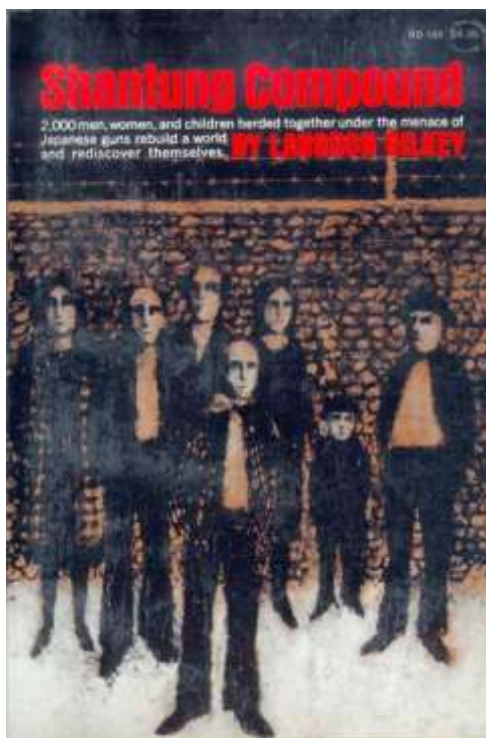
Everyone had a job—even the slackers, and there always were some, who tried their best to get away with as little work as possible. We kids watched the adults laboring away in the kitchens and janitorial services, making shelving and stovepipes, and providing many other services, and wondered how we could contribute. Eventually, we were given our own jobs. Mine, as an

eleven-year-old, was to work the manual water pump for an hour at a time. All the water for the camp was pumped up by hand from two deep wells into two thirty-foot water towers. Fortunately we never ran out of water. Our pump was a long-levered, double-handled type, made of cast iron and creaking loudly as we operators moved the handles up and down. For a whole hour we would work at it, with short breaks or taking it in turns. The book lovers would be able to place a book beside the mechanism and read it while pumping. I tried to read *The Scarlet Pimpernel* this way. It worked for a while but my eyes would get tired refocusing all the time.



We climbed up the metal ladder fastened to the side of the water tower and gaze longingly at the cool liquid glory up there, in the sweltering heat of summer. Oh for a dip! This was, of course, strictly forbidden. I cannot remember the punishment but it must have been severe as not once did our little gang of eleven-and-twelve-year-olds go in. The wells were contaminated with giardia, so all drinking water had to be boiled. On long, hot summer days we would drink and drink and drink, mainly from old wine bottles, though the water was always lukewarm. All the refrigerators that were in the compound had been taken by the Japanese.

My ten-year-old sister, Elizabeth, had the job of



hanging out laundry to dry. During the summer this was fine, but in the bitter cold winters, her fingers turned black and blue. It was particularly painful gathering in the sheets that turned into solid expanses of ice on the clotheslines. Cleanliness was a constant challenge, as soap was desperately short in supply. We were supposed to receive one small bar per person per month, but delivery was unreliable, the quality of soap was bad, and it had to cover all laundry personal toilet, and cleaning facilities. Eventually whites took on a permanent grayness. After a few months, linens, socks, and other clothing became worn and torn, making repairing them a major project for the women and girls. I was quite expert at darning my own socks, a practice I had learned from my mother. Everything was recycled. Everything was hand-me-down. We were growing out of the clothes we had at the beginning of the war. I became well acquainted with my brothers' things.

Leather was scarce and shoes precious. We went barefoot as much of the year as possible, definitely all summer and as much of the spring and fall as we could. The camp shoe repair shop was much appreciated when leather started to fall apart.

ENCOUNTERS WITH DEATH

Although our camp was very different from those run by the Japanese military in the south, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the Philippines, where prisoners were treated worse than animals, the presence of death and the vulnerability of life was always with us. My first encounter with a dead human was soon after we had arrived at Weihsien.

Theo and I were exploring the nooks and crannies of our new prison home when we saw the door ajar on a little, windowless hut tucked away on the far side of the hospital. Not knowing what to expect, we ventured in and found the body of a woman, clearly a beautiful, young nun, lying on a central, raised dais, dressed in her full habit with hands together in a position of prayer. Theo and I stood in silence, breathless and awestruck. I asked myself, What is this state of being called death? My parents had taught me that when we die, we go to be with Jesus. This nun then must be with Jesus but had left behind her silent, alabaster body. Her face, so young and beautiful, made it all the more difficult to understand how death could affect youth so quickly.

When children look on a human death, they instinctively know the terrible difference between this and that of a favorite pet. Some children would have wanted to get out of the morgue as soon as possible. I wanted to stay. I carefully touched the hem of the nun's habit as an act of reaching out to the mystery, to the unknown, though I did not know where it would lead. Here was a mystery, and I was on the shore of a vast unknown ocean. Little did I know that—twelve months in the future and thirteen hundred miles away—my own mother's body would lie like this, with my dad watching

over her, his life torn apart in grief. Theo and I left in silence, not saying a word. We had ventured out of our depth.

My second encounter with death happened six months later. Twice a day, the Japanese guards took a roll call of all prisoners to ensure that there were no escapees. We were each allocated a number in Japanese. Mine was twenty-two, ni-joo-ni, and after we had formed into a long line, I would shout out my number when my turn came. The sequential callout of numbers is still firmly embedded in my brain, with the different pitches of boys', girls', and adult voices making a rhythmic tune.

A power line to the searchlight in a corner watchtower crossed diagonally across the parade ground. For some reason, its anchoring had slipped so that its sagging center was about seven feet from the ground. As we were assembling, a boy reached up, touched the uninsulated wire and exclaimed on getting an electric shock, Wow! That's hot! Inexplicably, his schoolmate, Brian, a friend of mine, grabbed the wire and was immediately electrocuted. As with all of us in the summer, he was barefoot and so had no insulation from the damp ground.

I was about twenty feet away and did not see what was happening but sensed the panic and fear radiating outward. Someone held back Brian's horrified mother from running forward and holding him. No one could touch Brian or detach his hand from the wire for fear of death, but at last, someone used an umbrella to release him from the power line. He was taken immediately to the hospital, but nothing could save him because of the time it had taken to free him—about thirty seconds which seemed like hours. Our close proximity to the tragedy, both physically and through friendship, had turned the experience into a communal death. I had been brought into the very act of a friend's dying. It was hard to talk about afterward, though our teachers did their best, and we were left with a wound that festered for months.

The third brush with death was when another friend, Ronny Masters, age eighteen, fell forty feet from a tree when a branch gave way. Several bones were broken, and we who were living on the attic floor of the hospital could hear his cries of agony all night long. No pain relief medicines were available, and he died the next morning. What hit us so hard about Ronny's passing is that he was one of our heroes—strong, virile, a superb specimen of physical beauty—and now he was gone. I still have a sketch of his profile in my sketchbook, a reminder to me that sketching is remembering.

The fourth death hit us hardest of all. Eric Liddell had won a gold medal for Britain in the 1924 Olympics by winning the 40 meter run although he had trained for another race, which he did not want to run on a Sunday as it was the Lord's day to be kept holy. He was extremely modest about his gold medal. Now he was a missionary in China and had already shown courage before ever entering Weihsien. The Japanese had left a poor Chinese man dying after trying to behead him in a

deserted temple in no-man's-land during Sino-Japanese fighting. Eric got a Chinese friend to go with him, found a wheelbarrow, and crossed the dangerous fighting lines to bring the man back to a hospital and save his life. Afterward, Eric found that he was a brilliant artist and kept one of his paintings, a pink and white peony, over his bed in the camp. He was as close to being a saint as one could imagine. Overflowing with good humor and love of life, Eric devoted his time to us young people. He organized games, particularly field hockey, planned square dances, chess tournaments, and debates, and was tireless in living out the life of Christ for others.

My eldest brother. Robin slept in the same dormitory as Eric. He pointed out the painting during one of my visits and introduced me to Eric. He was forty-two, with a spring in his step and a friendly smile. I was eleven and feeling quite insignificant. Eric spoke to me with such ease and informality that I suddenly felt joy. That was his nature, for he loved kids and would do anything he could to give us orphans, separated from our parents, a sense of self-worth in spite of the misery of the camp. If we were without Mom and Dad, he was without his wife and daughters, who were now in Canada, so he understood our longings. It became apparent that for him, the three and a half years of confinement were the very opposite of being wasted. There was no difference between the secular and the sacred. We called him Uncle Eric.

Quite suddenly, he developed extreme headaches, and died of a brain tumor within four days. Everyone loved him, particularly us kids, and the shock to the whole camp was extreme. I remember the gray, winter day of his burial. I was a member of the boys honor guard at the gravesite just outside the camp walls. The bleak treeless landscape fit the sadness of the occasion. The award-winning movie *Chariots of Fire* was made about his life. When I saw it, I compared that primitive burial with the grand memorial service in St. Paul's Cathedral for the other runner in the film. Of course, older folk were dying all the time as the war continued, conditions deteriorated, food became scarcer, and medicines less available, but those four deaths were close to the bone for me.

SKETCHING, FOOD, AND FUEL

With a lot of time on my hands, I began to sketch, and found that there was quite an artists' colony in camp to encourage us beginners. Tommy Knott had been a professional cartoonist before the war. My brother Rupert was taking lessons from him. I benefited greatly as Tommy's clever techniques were passed on to me. I also began filling a small sketchbook with drawings of camp buildings, portraits of friends, and, for want of a more-interesting subject, innumerable drawings of my left hand. Seventy years later, I still have my little sketchbook, faded, manhandled, and torn but still intact.

Camp life revolved around food and fuel, food to keep us going and fuel to keep us warm. Both were the cause of much turmoil and anguish, and lack of them the cause

of much suffering. The food in the camp was prepared, cooked, and distributed in two kitchens. We children went to Kitchen #1 which fed up to a thousand prisoners. The staple and generally unappetizing diet was a coarse, peasant grain called kaoliang. There was kaoliang soup, kaoliang porridge, kaoliang stew, and kaoliang curry, and not much else.

The meat we had was from horses or mules, and so tough it needed a lot of cooking. Because there was no refrigeration, meat had to be cooked as soon as possible, and, of course, there was never enough to go around, particularly for us growing boys. Since ten pounds of meat would have to feed a thousand internees, the cooks would make it into a thin but at least slightly meaty stew. Such things as milk, eggs, and sugar were considered luxuries and kept for expectant mothers or the very ill. Near the end of the war, food became harder and harder to get, strongly tempting the workers who handled it to steal. When you are putting the ten pounds of meat into the huge cooking pot for your thousand impersonal campers while your own, close family is starving, it would be easy to cut off a half pound slice and slip it into a pocket. This raised the whole question of personal morality in a situation where everything of value was scarce.

I would like to say that the Christians, and in particular the missionaries, were the most honest. However, it was not always so. I think of the famous couplet by Berthold Brecht:

For even saintly folk will act like sinners Unless they have their customary dinners.

For us kids, the daily eating procedure was boringly routine. Every morning, after Japanese roll call, we would race down to Kitchen #1 grasping our camp-fabricated tin mugs and plates. It made no sense that we hurried, as the fare was pretty much the same each morning, and the waiting line was just as long. This is what we were served:

- Breakfast: kaoliang porridge, black tea, and bread.
- Lunch: Curry or stew (kaoliang with any meat available), black tea, and bread.
- Supper: Soup, black tea, bread, and cake if we were lucky.

The evening's soup nearly always turned out to be the leftover stew watered down to make it go further. The more enterprising cooks occasionally baked what we liked to call cake, made of local saltana raisins, flour, and peanut oil.

We were desperately short of green vegetables, and there was an attempt to grow a vegetable garden at the back of the camp. But space was so limited that it did not amount to much. To help our bones grow, so ran the theory, we children were required to eat a daily teaspoon

of powdered egg shells to make up for the milk we were not getting. How we loathed the flat, dry, choking taste. We never found out where the shells came from as we did not see many eggs in our diet. Fruit was nonexistent. Norman Cliff, a close friend of my brother Robin, was invited to play chess with one of the Japanese officers. As they played, in the relatively luxurious Officers' Quarters, the officer handed him an apple, an inch and a half across. Norman devoured it, small though it was. It was the only fruit he had tasted during his years in the camp. He was also suffering from amoebic dysentery and backaches, attributed to the lack of hygiene and hard labor at the camp.

Six months before the end of the war, yeast became unobtainable, so the bakery was unable to produce bread. Considering how important it was to our limited diet, this meant we were near the starvation point. Day after day, the diary of my youngest sister, Elizabeth, read: *Still no bread*. Red Cross parcels came in the nick of time and helped us survive.

It amazes me still that, after years in confinement, we six siblings were relatively healthy when we were set free. However, we were thin, with my ribs quite visible. None of us had rickets or other effects of malnutrition, and our teeth were in excellent shape. Our U.K. dental checkup found not one cavity! Nevertheless, my lingering memory is of constantly feeling hungry after meals and trying to make up for it by drinking lots of water—lukewarm, of course, because it had to be boiled.

The longer the war lasted, the more selfish people became. The idea of all starting off on an even basis, with everyone sharing equally, or at least according to their need, faded along with the sense of community. The needs of the family unit or, ultimately, the individual person, took its place, so that everyone outside that personal circle inevitably suffered.

This was dramatically illustrated by an incident near the end of the war when food supplies were being drastically cut. A wonderful gift to the camp came in the form of two thousand Red Cross parcels from the U.S. made available through the Swiss consulate. They contained all the delicious foods we longed for: cheeses, raisins, chocolates, jam, coffee, milk powder, a can of peaches, and even chewing gum but clearly in limited quantities. The Japanese commandant announced the great day of distribution—*One parcel for every prisoner*—and as there were just eighteen hundred of us, the extra two hundred parcels would go to the two hundred Americans.

We Brits did not object until we learned that the Yanks had gone to the commandant claiming that according to western private property laws, all two thousand parcels belonged to them, receiving ten parcels each. Langdon Gilkey, an American on the housing committee, took a poll of the two hundred and found that most would not agree with the reasoning of sharing more equally. Even some missionaries rationalized that their needs were too great to think otherwise. Also, they argued, once they

received their ten parcels each, they could show some charity in sharing with other prisoners.

The commandant, trying to understand this reasoning, sent off to the High Command in Tokyo for advice. Immediately, the Americans were *persona non grata* and scorned by the rest of us. They appeared to be selfish, gluttonous, and nationalistic. But they saw themselves as simply exercising their perfectly justifiable rights. Eventually, everyone got one parcel and the extra two hundred were sent to other prison camps. We Brits laughed at the Americans, but the hunger in the camp was so great that I now believe we would have behaved just as selfishly if in their shoes.

Winters in northern China can get well below freezing, and we faced the problem of keeping warm for what seemed like interminably long winters to us kids. Our fuel was coal dust, with a few chunks of solid coal occasionally thrown in. The Japanese provided the fuel while we had to design and operate the means of converting it into warmth. This was not easy, as coal dust burned sluggishly and the quality was poor. After a learning period, primitive stoves of bricks and metal were designed and installed in every living quarter, small or large. To get the smoke out, the Japanese set up a stovepipe manufacturing shop in the basement of the education building, and good, reliable, leakproof stovepipes were much in demand. My involvement in uncovering a black market operation in smuggled stovepipes is one of the highlight memories of my thirteenth year.

To prepare the coal dust to burn, we had to make it into balls or bricks by mixing the dust with soil and water and drying the black slurry in the sun. Unfortunately, this did not work very well on overcast winter days. If you walked around the camp on a sunny day, you would find coal balls drying outside most huts. We had a potbellied stove in the middle of our dormitory, and on winter mornings, a kind teacher from our school would light it before we got up. What a treat to get out of bed to some, if only a little, heat. It was not so comfortable at the end of the day. Getting into a cold bed in a subfreezing dorm was a nightly struggle. Each winter, I used to get chilblains on my fingers and toes. They would swell up, constantly itch, and sometimes bleed. It was a particular frustration as I was more prone to this than my peers.

TWELVE-YEAR-OLD DETECTIVES

Jimmy and I were best friends, and our personal spaces, eight feet by four feet, were next to each other in the dormitory. We each had a mattress on the floor, with all our personal possessions at its head. And the room was also our classroom.

The year was 1944. It got dark early on winter evenings, and we liked to run around in the gloaming to get warm and play games of hide-and-seek and make-believe adventure. On a late November night, we knew

we were out past the time we should be, for evening prayers had started a few minutes earlier. The others would be singing a hymn and thinking of faraway parents.

Suddenly, passing nearby was a dark, crouching, and, to us, sinister figure, with a bulky bag over his shoulder. We followed as quietly as possible, and as our quarry was clearly in a hurry, we sensed that he did not know we were there. It became so dark that we thought we had lost him, but a flash of light ahead gave us direction. This is where twelve-year-old imagination fuses with reality. *He's a pirate looking for a place to bury his treasure. But no. Wait! We are Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson, and here is Professor Moriarty planting a trap for Scotland Yard.*

All of this was in sharp contrast to the tedium of real life, our prison life. Nothing exciting seemed to happen, and we faced the daily grind of school, our job pumping water, and the twice-daily roll calls by the guards. The days dragged on, but here, out of the blue, was real adventure.

Danger! Stay quiet. Don't even whisper, I thought. The figure cleared some bricks from a hole in a wall. What wall was it? Who lived in the hut on the other side of the wall? Such questions flooded in. The man started removing strange-looking things from his bag and pushed them through the hole. Suddenly, we recognized the shapes. They were stovepipes! Oh, how twelve-year-old boys love discovery, and to know and keep secrets. This was indeed our secret. Breathlessly and silently, we ran back to evening prayers, quietly slipped in, looked at each other in the faint candlelight, and smiled with a smile that wrapped itself right around our being. It was hard to get to sleep knowing something secret, and perhaps really important in the grownup world!

Next morning during midmorning break from class—keeping our secret close to the bone—we located the wall and the hole, which by now had been bricked up. It looked so innocent in the light of day, but we knew that behind it was a dark secret. Only we knew that. There were never enough stovepipes to go around, and the result was that a number of prisoners were without effective heat in their huts. No wonder there was illegal smuggling!

It was almost too good to be true for us boys to have stumbled across the stovepipe scheme. What secret knowledge we held! There was power in that. After a time, however, we reluctantly surrendered it, for the knowledge was also a burden, and we reported our secret to the discipline committee. This was an elected board designed to maintain order and protect wrongdoers from more-serious punishments such as flogging, solitary confinement, or possibly even death by the Japanese guards. I cannot remember how the affair ended but know that the thieves were punished but not exposed to Japanese wrath.

Our reward was a can of beans which we secretly cooked on a campfire in one of the more remote corners of the camp.

Everything depended on moral authority. Our camp community had given the committee the moral authority to act on our behalf, but it could go only so far without the ability to enforce its decisions. Above all, it did not want to appeal to the higher authority: our enemy, the Japanese. Such are the difficulties of a struggling democracy within a totalitarian regime. In our open society, we cannot legislate above our own moral values. How fragile that can be in today's world.

RAT CATCHERS

When the problem of a growing infestation of rats in the camp became serious toward the end of the war, the commandant organized a rat-catching competition. This was taken up very seriously by us boys. The irony was that though we were the captives and the Japanese the captors, we were being asked to take their role in the rat kingdom! There would be prizes for the teams that caught the three largest rats by April 1. My best friend, Jimmy, and I took much delight in modifying an old defunct trap we had found on the scrap heap and getting it to work with a powerful spring action. This was my first engineering project.

Then we had to decide where to put it in order to catch our prize. This turned out to be more complicated than we had at first thought, as various rat-catching teams were staking out areas for their exclusive use. Quite how this worked I cannot remember, but I know we did not have a good location, so stealthily and late at night when all were asleep, we placed our trap in a dark attic area which my brother Rupert and his team had claimed for their own. So far, we had caught nothing, and the April 1 date was getting very close. Next morning I was groping for the trap on my hands and knees in the filth and darkness. Suddenly I felt the stiff pelt of a dead rat. Instead of being repelled, I called out in delight and dragged the stiffening carcass into the daylight by its tail. We had caught a monster, eighteen inches from nose to tail!

The teams brought their trophy rats to the commandant's office for measurement and final judging. The big question was, Would ours earn a prize? Rupert's team complained that we had been in their area, but they were fortunately overruled since the trap itself was ours. We received second prize, which, once again, was a can of beans. To the two of us, in our state of perpetual hunger, the reward was highly prized and eagerly devoured. Questions remain: What happened to the trap? Did we catch any more rats? I retain only the glorious memory of winning the prize.

LONGING, GRIEF, AND DARKNESS

*Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind ..
In the faith that looks through death.*

—William Wordsworth

One winter afternoon, the headmaster of our mission boarding school requested that all six of us Hoyte children meet him in his room. I remember wondering why this would be, since we were all in different grades and involved in completely different camp activities. There were ten stone steps leading up to his second-floor room, and I counted every one. I had a sense of foreboding. What could this mean? What could have happened?

It was a small room, and we crowded in, sitting on the bed, on the one extra chair, and on the floor. "Pa" Bruce broke the news in a seemingly matter-of-fact voice. To us, it was deadpan flat with no emotion and as hard-edged as a sword. I am sure that, from his point of view, he spoke with as much compassion as he could possibly muster, but it was no use. He had just heard from our father and had to tell us that our mother had died.

We sat there in complete silence, numb and unable to take in this startling news. It seemed to come from outer space, from another reality, and thus could not be true. Did Pa Bruce pray with us? I cannot remember. Did we hug each other for mutual support and comfort? I don't think so. If our dad had been there, our response would have been entirely different. We would have clung to him for emotional and spiritual support and together faced the bleak future without a mother. But he was not here, and Pa Bruce was no substitute, being to us a rather cold, unemotional administrator of our school.

The result was that we went off into our individual lives burdened with unimaginable grief and with no support from each other or from friends or teachers. For all the closeness and mutual joy of our family in Chefoo, we were now incapable of coming together as a grieving family or of being able to express that grief to each other. Part of the problem was that the structure of the prison school meant the different grades were so separated in everyday life that we as a family spent practically no time together. We were now imprisoned at a deeper level. With no parent to bring us together, we were emotionally adrift. A darkness had set in.

One of the teachers, Gordon Martin, must have sensed something of what we each were going through. He invited us six to his hut for a meal, encouraging us to share with each other. But it was a one-time shot and only a tiny glint of light in the overwhelming darkness. Our mother had been so much the focal point of our

functioning as a family that without her, the hope of being united after the war became meaningless. This made me realize that hope had become the very driving force for my survival in the camp. Now that was gone.

Many families have some dominant problem that has to be faced. It can be the divorce of the parents, drug addiction, deep disagreement between parent and child, etc. Ours was that with such incredible oneness between all eight of us during those glory days at Chefoo, the separation when Mom and Dad left for Lanchow and now the loss of Mom, without our father being present, was devastating.

For each one of us six, and for our father, here began the long journey from inner brokenness to wholeness, from darkness to light. I believe the healing power and love that I have found in Jesus Christ to be the key to my journey toward wholeness. My eldest brother, Robin, took the hardest blow. He must have felt responsible for the rest of us but now had graduated from school and moved into the single men's dorm. He was in no position to bring us together. The structures were simply not there. My elder sister, Mary, told me years later that she had cried herself to sleep for weeks, secretly hoping it was all a lie and that we would indeed see Mom at the war's end. The six of us were on different levels of grieving, but that became directed inward and so was bottled up. This related externally to our schoolmates, teachers, and other internees in that we did not express our grief and longing. There was no funeral service or any other type of closure, and I still clung to the thread of hope that the news was false.

Thirteen hundred miles away, our father was wrestling with his own grief. As superintendent of the large mission hospital in Lanchow, Kansu, he had more than a full-time job. Years earlier, he had contracted typhus and had nearly died. Now, our mother had caught the same disease. She came home one evening with flushed cheeks and dilated pupils. Why, oh why, had they been so desperately short of vaccine? By next morning, Dad had to know what she was helplessly grappling with. He nursed her day and night, sponging her every half hour or so to bring her temperature down. He watched her in anguish, knowing that if it had not been for the war, she would have been safely inoculated. But now it was too late, and his thoughts went out to us in the prison camp, so far away and so vulnerable to the grief that would follow.

So he sent the message to Pa Bruce. How painful it must have been to put the words together to make terrible sense. How the news reached us was only revealed years later. A Chinese friend of Dad's had undertaken the dangerous journey across no-man's-land, at times on foot, to carry the letter to the guard at the camp gate. It could have been shuffled off to the mail room, where thousands of unopened letters were found at the end of the war. But it reached Patrick Bruce, and so the news was brought to us.

To add to his grief, a few weeks later, a Chinese spy sent by the Japanese to discourage westerners came to the town where Dad was and claimed to have inside news of Japanese prison camps. After giving some details about the camp at Weih sien in order to establish his credibility, he told the missionaries he had just heard that the Japanese had killed all the children. What was Dad to believe? He and the others with children in the camp waited for some kind of confirmation. After time passed without any, they finally concluded that the spy was lying. Meanwhile, there was the agony of waiting with much uncertainty.

RESCUE FROM THE SKIES

August 1945 had come, and there were rumors of Allied victories at sea. The Japanese published a weekly newspaper in English that was full of propaganda. Reported Japanese victories were closer and closer to Japan, so we sensed that the war was coming to an end. Two prisoners who had escaped earlier, Arthur Hummel and Christopher Tipton, were with the Nationalist forces out in no-man's-land, and they managed to get news into camp by means of the coolies who emptied the septic tanks each week. The coolies tended to have terrible teeth, with lots of cavities into which a message on a tiny scrap of paper could be stuffed. They also tended to spit, dislodging the message so it found its way unobserved to the ground, where a prisoner in the know could get the message. This was all kept very secret so that the rest of us were out of the loop.

August 17, 1945 was clear, cloudless, and warm. We were in class that morning when the distant drone of an airplane caught our attention. As it grew louder, we perked up our ears, for very few planes ever flew over the camp, and those that did were at high altitude. Quite suddenly, the sound was so loud that we rushed to the windows and looked out. There, unbelievably, was an American bomber, a B-24, flying low over the trees, so low that we thought it might almost touch them. It climbed, circled, and came in low again. The bold American star on its flank was unmistakable; it was clearly *one of ours*. Everyone was outside waving wildly but also wondering if the Japanese would try to shoot it down. After all, as far as we knew, the war was still on. But the plane came down toward us so brazenly, so exquisitely, with such unimaginable reality. The meaning was profound: This plane was for us! It was to give us a personal message. Our little camp, out in the boonies, had been remembered. Could it be that the war was over?

The magical plane gained altitude, heading away, after passing over us three times. There was a gasp, a hint of disappointment. Someone said, *They are leaving us! One day they will come back and deliver us*, and so it seemed when an even-greater marvel took place, almost in slow motion. The plane's undercarriage opened and seven dots appeared. Now it became clear that they were seven men

parachuting down toward us. And what parachutes! Their color was drab, but to us, they were in brilliant colors, the glorious colors of freedom.

How they contrasted with the shabbiness of the camp, for indeed we were drab. After all those months in captivity, most color had gone from our lives, with our clothes in tatters, devoid of color, and our food almost as colorless as it was tasteless. So I can understand why the parachutes—so important to me—appeared to my mind as in brilliant colors. The more-significant reality was that seven very real men were dangling from them. The parachutes floated down to earth at such a leisurely pace, indeed like a vision from on high, almost too wonderful to take in and all in slow motion.

Without hesitation and disregarding the danger involved, we rushed toward the main gate of the camp, burst it open, and ran out into the fields. As we passed through it, a couple of guards brought their automatic rifles into firing position, but, in obvious confusion, they slowly lowered them. Our goal was to reach the seven airmen. We prisoners were barefoot, and the ground was rough with broken glass, sometimes jagged metal, and prickly kaoliang vegetation, but we did not care. Half a mile out in a field high with kaoliang corn, our seven godlike heroes were unbuckling their parachutes. They had their rifles at the ready, preparing to fight their way into the camp if necessary, but were now taken by total surprise by this horde of ragtag, barefoot prisoners surrounding them in jubilation.

I was one of the first to reach Jimmy Moore, an alumnus from Chefoo, who had volunteered for the mission to help free his old school. His uniform was impeccable, his ruddy complexion like a god's, and just to touch his smart uniform was breathtaking. This was as close to worshipping a human being as a boy could get. Some of the adults and bigger boys carried him into camp on their shoulders, with us smaller ones tagging along.

The seven dismounted from their human chariots just inside the main gate, and their commander, Major Staiger, asked to see the Japanese commandant. A prisoner pointed to the hall where the Japanese officers had assembled. Staiger, who was only twenty-seven, drew his two revolvers and strode in to face the commandant, seated at his desk with his hands spread out in front of him.

The moment was crucial for both sides, as the commandant probably could not be sure that Japan had actually surrendered. If it had, he knew, killing the seven would make it tougher for him and his men. If their country hadn't, for him to surrender would be an extreme act of military cowardice and might lead to hara-kiri.

In the crucial moment, the commandant drew his samurai sword and revolver and handed them to the major. In a brilliant response, Staiger handed them back and insisted, with one of the parachutists who spoke Japanese interpreting, that they would work together in

arranging relief for the camp. We who were waiting outside were relieved to see the major come out with his revolvers in their holsters and a smile on his face.

It is hard to describe the sensation of freedom that came over me. Theo and I walked out through the guard-less gate with a sense of ecstasy. I asked him, *Do you mean that we can go wherever we like?* After nearly four years in captivity it was incredible that we now had freedom. After we had first come into camp, the world beyond the walls began to shrink and become unreal. It was almost a two-dimensional stage set. Our only reality was the narrow, colorless existence of confinement. Suddenly, the outside world became not only three dimensional but had also taken on the fourth dimension of apparently infinite possibility. From grayness, we now looked on a multicolored world. Indeed, the world was our oyster.

We were free.

For the next two weeks, the camp was run by the "fabulous seven." They were intelligent, reasonable, and gracious, and put up with our adulation with quiet ease.

Printed instructions that were airdropped to us said:

The Japanese government has surrendered. You will be evacuated by Allied forces as soon as possible. Until that time, the present supplies will be augmented by airdrop of U.S. food, clothing, and medicines. The first drop of these items will arrive within one or two hours. Do not overeat or overmedicate. Follow directions.

Thus began the Americanization of Weihsien. On an almost daily basis, huge B-29 bombers came overhead and dropped all kinds of rich food, clothing, and other supplies. Canned peaches were my favorite food. Of course, we overate and were duly sick.

Then the news came that we would have to wait for another month, as the only way to Tsingtao on the coast was by rail, and the Communists had blown up two of the bridges. This helped us realize that although Japan had surrendered, the war between the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek and the Communists under Mao Zedong still was ongoing.

How that month dragged on! We were so ready to leave, to escape the drabness of the camp, that a sense of letdown was inevitable. A new team of American military men was determined to cheer us up, and every morning, we were awakened by loudspeakers booming out "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning" from the Broadway musical *Oklahoma!* A reading room was set up with American magazines. We British boys were caught up in enthusiasm for our American liberators. Then at last—and we were more than ready—the rail line was fixed.

The day for departure came. The train slowly and cautiously progressed to the coast. As we crossed the two reconstructed bridges, I looked down into the deep

ravines they straddled. The temporary girders looked more like flimsy scaffolding, inadequate to my inexperienced eye, but here we were, crossing without mishap.

Though the American air force ran the interior camps such as ours at Weihsien, the British controlled Tsingtao. We were greeted at the station by a smart detachment from the Royal Navy in their impeccable, white uniforms, and the Royal Marines band from the cruiser HMS *Bermuda* played a cheerful welcome. Housing was at the famous Edgewater Mansions Hotel, every room with its balcony, view of the ocean, and private bathroom. Four of us shared one of these luxury suites and reveled in the simple pleasure of turning on a tap and actually getting instant hot and cold water. Never had we experienced such a thing. That evening, there was a showing of an American film *Babes on Swing Street*, my first movie since *Snow White* in Shanghai! I watched it with fascination. This was America! I had just turned thirteen and was ready for the American swing lifestyle.

A troopship, the USS *Geneva*, took us to Hong Kong. Everything was stainless steel: the galley, the dinner trays, the cutlery, even the bunks. The food was extremely rich and the crew very chatty, particularly to us boys. But the weather was so rough we could not enjoy much of this "affluence," and were glad to land safely.

In Hong Kong, we were to await Dad. He did not know where we were, and we did not know how he was ever going to find us. It turned out that he had many more problems than we did. It took two weeks of persistence and assurances that another doctor could take his place for him to get permission from the local mandarin to leave his position at the hospital and go to the coast.

Before him were fourteen hundred miles of a country that was still in chaos, in the middle of the Chinese civil war. Roads and bridges were bombed out, and transportation almost impossible to find. Trying to get to Chungking five hundred miles to the south, he at last got a seat on an overloaded bus that became stuck, after two weeks of hazardous travel, at a river where the bridge had been destroyed. There seemed no way forward, but several hours later, he managed to get a ride on a U.S. army truck that was being winched across to the other side.

At Chungking, things were in chaos, but with persistence and prayer, he found that the Red Cross was looking for doctors to help with the refugee situation in Shanghai. He would do anything to get to his six children, and promised to work for the Red Cross until he could find where they were. Resplendent in the uniform of a Red Cross doctor, he took the thousand-mile flight and got to work. I never found out how long he worked there, but it must have been frustrating to still not know our whereabouts. Finally, the good news of our waiting in. Hong Kong came through, and he "hitchhiked" on a destroyer to meet us.

We were housed in old army barracks on Kowloon, on the mainland across from Hong Kong island, being watched over by one or two teachers who were determined to hand us over to our parents no matter how long it took. A group of us waiting teenagers had made friends with a British Warrant Officer, Charlie Tongue, who invited us to the warrant officers' mess hall, treated us to lemonade, and, wonder of wonders, took us for motorcycle rides at the deserted Kai Tak Airport. The thrill of going sixty miles an hour with the wind in my face was a new, post-war experience.

REUNION WITH DAD

One day, a teacher called out to me, *John, your father is here! He is over by the reception office.* My heart started to thump with memories of Chefoo but also of the huge gap of time, distance, and grief that separated us. What would he look like? Would he recognize me? Would I recognize him? Most important—is it possible that Mom could be with him? But the thought faded, as the teacher had said *Your father* and not *Your parents*, but still there was the finest thread of hope remaining.

We hugged, and I clung to him; Mom was not there. A new, huge pall of sadness engulfed my soul. A strangely new grief was overwhelming the joy of reunion.

Elizabeth was with him already, and we all went off for a walk. As we walked, hand in hand, I realized that I hardly knew him. He was a stranger to me now, and I felt the pang of being an orphan for five years. He had suffered even more grief than we, and yet it was a separate grief. I tried to put myself into his shoes, but failed miserably. With the immediacy and desire of a teen-ager, I also experienced the tug to be with Warrant Officer Tongue on his speeding motorcycle rather than walking along with this stranger.

But there was also the joy of being reunited, and the fact that the six of us were with him now for the long voyage to England and the future together. Did I distrust him for having left us in Chefoo all those years ago? I still loved him, but it was a distant love that needed to be reawakened. Deep down, I knew that he and my mother had responded to a pressing need and had acted in good faith. What I hated was the system, the missionary mentality that put "the Lord's work" before family needs, the devout phrases and prayers that glossed over the deep schism created in family after family. In the years ahead, I would have a long road of healing to walk. Each of us did.

Many years later, after I married Luci, and Dad had died at the age of ninety-four, I had some very helpful counseling about those deep hurts that had been with me for years. As a result and with a huge weight lifted off my soul, I was able to write a letter to him, forgiving him for leaving us as orphans. I believe that I have found peace and forgiveness. The light of forgiveness has flooded out the darkness of anger and bitterness.

We had to wait another two weeks before a troopship heading to England had space for us. Of course, it was free passage, with the British government paying for our travel to anywhere in the world because of our imprisonment, even to the last bus fare. Dad had considered going to New Zealand, but as we did not have any relatives there, he chose war-torn England even though conditions were much worse there.

While we were waiting, we had some good family times together. We took trips to Repulse Bay on Hong Kong island and to the Tiger Balm Park. There was dinner with a very wealthy Chinese family that lived at the top of the cable car route. On the mainland, we also visited a retreat center that had melded Christian belief and Buddhist practice. The symbol over the gate was a cross in the center of a lotus flower.

As we hiked the dusty hills beyond the center, we came across a column of soldiers marching in the opposite direction. They looked exhausted, dragging their boots, and had rundown equipment and dust-covered rifles. What struck me in particular was their complete silence. It was as if all the energy they had was being preserved for the march, and there was nothing left over. Suddenly I remembered that China was still at war. The soldiers were sweating, and their body odor was pungent. It was as if they had just lost a battle, and all they wanted was to go home. They must have been Nationalists, and were definitely in retreat. The vivid contrast of the serene lotus ponds, temples, and exquisite landscaping of the retreat center with the harsh reality of war-torn China remains vivid in my memory.

Next day, I was walking near the military base on Kowloon and stopped by a parade ground. There was shouting and vile language. On getting closer, I found a British sergeant major drilling four very senior Japanese officers. A British soldier explained that they had been important Japanese commanders in the southern Pacific. Here was this huge, muscular warrant officer yelling and screaming at the diminutive Japanese. His language was obscene and more than abusive. I found myself feeling sorry for the officers. At that moment, they were no longer symbols of the terrible separation that had led to the prison camp but were human beings, just like me, frail and vulnerable.

Our treatment at Weih sien had been relatively benign. My sense of compassion ran right across my anger at the war. Would I have felt differently if we had been treated like the prisoners on the Bataan death march? Later, we were to discover that the Japanese High Command in the Pacific was planning to kill all prisoners in early September, on the anniversary of the war's turning toward Japanese defeat. It would have been less than a month from the day that we were set free. If I had known that, would I have thought differently? I am extremely grateful that the war ended when it did. We later learned that the camp's deliverance by parachute had been urgent because of that threat by the Japanese high command.

On the troopship heading for England, I spent time with Dad and my siblings. He told us more about life in the interior, the difficult traveling both westward and back to the coast, and more about our mother. However, he found it hard to discuss her final days. His sense of loss was beyond words. He never mentioned the Japanese spy who told him we had been killed, something we found out from another missionary at his hospital years later. It must have been too painful for him, as he may well have believed it.

ENGLAND-BOUND

Back to the troopship. We boys spent time with the green berets, the commandos of the British forces that had fought in Burma. Their tales of extreme cruelty by the Japanese were numbing and hard to believe, as we had not seen that side of the war. Were these men exaggerating? Could humans be so cruel? Sadly and much later, when I was older and more mature, I was to confirm that most of this was true. Laurens van der Post's book *The Night of the New Moon*, Laura Hillenbrand's *Unbroken*, and a more-detailed study of the history of Asia under Japanese occupation made this conclusion inescapable.

The question was raised over and over in my mind: "Why were they so cruel?" The reason for my question is that from our point of view at Weih sien, we were treated reasonably well, though with many other problems, while thousands of others were not. Having read the experts, I have come to my own conclusion that at least part of the problem was to do with how the Japanese military was structured. There was a huge gap between the officer class and enlisted men. There was pride, elitism, extreme discipline, and a sense of the devaluation of the individual soldier for the glory of the Japanese empire. Thus, the kamikaze pilots and the willingness to commit suicide rather than surrender. This expressed itself in officer-inflicted cruelty toward the privates which was then passed on to prisoners of war. Sadism became the norm.

Camp commandants seemed to have lost sight of what we in democracies treasure, the ethic that each individual is of unique and supreme value before God. Now, when I visit Japan, I am treated with great courtesy and kindness. There is no Japanese army, just a defense force. If there were an army, I would wager it would be very different from that in World War II. A democracy has been established. It took a war to make that great nation change. America also had to learn a lesson in human rights. Thousands of American citizens were imprisoned by the U.S. during that same war purely because they were of Japanese heritage. Will we be able to relearn that lesson in the twenty-first century?

The troopship went through the Suez Canal, and we were at anchor at Port Said for a couple of days. A number of us signed up to hear a famous American band in a Nissen hut out of town in the desert. It was my first

experience with Big Band music, and it blew me away. I later became a great fan of Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, and Glenn Miller, and still have their vinyl records.

I had a strange experience while at Port Said. All alone on the ship's deck, which was level with the dock, I was looking out over the harbor and the immediate dockside when an Egyptian man came up to me without boarding the ship. He was friendly, jocular, and spoke perfect English. He was wearing some exotic perfume. I found him interesting and began to like him. Then he said something that took me completely by surprise. Would I like to come with him so that he could show me the town? When I answered, *No, thank you*, he did his best to persuade me. Eventually after things began to sour, he abruptly left in a state of muffled anger. I am so glad I never went with him. Later, I wondered if this might have been a kidnap attempt? How close was I to serious danger?

As we cruised the Mediterranean and began to think of England, fear of the future came to the surface. Family-wise I felt secure. My father was with me, and I was beginning to be at peace with him after the long years of separation. However, the huge question of why Mom and Dad had left us at Chefoo, the effects of the trauma of separation, life in the Japanese camp, and the death of my mother remained unresolved. On the other hand, my five siblings were here with me, and I thought how lucky I was to have three big brothers. The whole idea of facing a completely new reality, a postwar England with school and its demands and discipline, was daunting. We had shipboard lectures on Britain to help us adapt, but they didn't seem as if they'd help. I was about to start my new life in a semi-state of misery. If there was ever a time I needed my mother, it was then. So ended my first thirteen years. England, a strange, new world, lay ahead, and with it a contrasting sense of dread and expectancy.

Red is a strong color. My China years have left indelible marks on me, but I am convinced that everything can be redeemed. Those marks may be scars but not festering wounds.

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