Soldiers of Peace in the China Convoy: Edward Abbott and Francis Starr

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No narrative of Canada's contribution to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in China from 1944 to 1947 would be complete without reference to the extraordinary group of twenty-two Canadians who, as conscientious objectors (COs), volunteered for alternative wartime service with the China Convoy. Organized in 1941 by the American section of the Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU), and initially drawing on the support of Quakers both in the United States and Britain, the convoy provided medical treatment, public-health services, and mobile-surgery units to civilians and soldiers on both sides of the civil conflict then engulfing China.

This article focuses on the contribution of Edward (Ed) Abbott and Francis Starr to the work of the FAU and investigates the impact of the China years on their spiritual journey in living the Quaker testimonies.[1] While both were conscientious objectors, one was born to the Quaker faith and the other converted from Anglicanism; in the China Convoy, one was

The Friends Ambulance Unit

assigned to the transport division while the other served in the medical section, which supplied doctors and nurses and laboratory technicians to support the work of UNRRA and Canadian missionary bodies in China. In practice, the situation in China was so fluid and desperate – and the spirit of the FAU membership so humble and egalitarian – that the lines between the medical and transport divisions were blurred. The FAU's medical staff drove trucks and became jacks of all trades, even maintaining generators and X-ray equipment, and many members of the transport section provided rudimentary nursing and medical services well beyond their formal medical training. As a consequence, the careers of Abbott and Starr provide a window onto the diversity of Canadians' experiences within the FAU's China Convoy. They also highlight the complexities of providing humanitarian relief within a war-torn country, ones that remain relevant to the Quaker Peace Testimony in today's conflict-ridden global community.

Beginnings

In the spring of 1944, while recuperating in Canada from a bout of relapsing fever, the celebrated and colourful medical missionary Dr Robert McClure spearheaded recruiting efforts for the China Convoy that had been under way for over a year – primarily under the leadership of Arthur Dorland and Fred Haslam of the Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC).[2] McClure's reputation was already well established in China.[3] When Burma fell to the Japanese and supplies had to be airlifted over the Himalayas to China, McClure parachuted from rescue planes to treat the injured airmen and organized local villagers as stretcher bearers to carry the downed air crews to the nearest casualty stations. A "stalwart, sandy, bullet-headed Canadian Scot, with the energy of a whirlwind and the high spirits of a sixteen-year-old boy" who "wore a leather blouse, riding breeches and knee boots with straps,"[4] he proved an inspirational recruiter, "telling of a unit that offered opportunity for adventure, danger and service that was in line with the most demanding conscience."[5] He was also instrumental in overcoming what was turning out to be a major hurdle – the reluctance of the federal government's deputy minister of labour, Arthur McNamara, to issue the necessary permits to release the men, all of whom were conscientious objectors, from alternative service for work with the China Convoy. Even when Ottawa's approval had been obtained, as Thomas Socknat observes, "the Government carefully demanded secrecy in order to avoid public attention and possible discussion of this pacifist endeavour."[6] It would be well over a year before those Canadians who answered McClure's call would arrive in China to begin their work.

In China itself, members of the FAU gradually grew tired of being parachuted in to provide temporary solutions for a never-ending series of medical crises. Some of the FAU reports back home criticized UNRRA's efforts, charging that the organization "is so tied with investigation, red tape and presenting budgets that by the time [it is] ready to start working, the greatest need is past and inflation has thrown the budget to hell."[7] In September 1945, with McClure's strong urging, the FAU decided at its yearly annual meeting to concentrate its efforts in Honan Province, in the area of Chengchow, just south of the Yellow River.

The Honan area project encompassed eight separate schemes covering public

health, sanitation, epidemic control, and the establishment of ten transit camps with medical services and five industrial holding camps for longer-term care and rehabilitation of refugees – this at a time when flood damage, caused by the breaking of the Yellow River levies to halt the onslaught of the Japanese, made it impossible for refugees streaming northwest to reach their destination. The provision of medical services coupled with rural rehabilitation in Honan would remain the focus of the unit's work until it was forced to withdraw in 1950.

UNRRA and the FAU faced several obstacles in China that ultimately undermined their relief and rehabilitation work. First, their efforts were hindered by the lack of adequate medical personnel – there was only one trained physician for every 40,000 patients – and the dramatic decline in the quality of Chinese medical education. Both were symptoms of a broader wartime corrosion of the entire national public-health system. The FAU's medical priorities were constantly being adjusted to control epidemic outbreaks of cholera, smallpox, and the plague, and the worldwide shortage of medical personnel meant that UNRRA could provide only 189 medical staff to cover all of China.[8] The medical wing of the FAU was expected to help bridge the gap until Chinese medical personnel could be trained.

Secondly, the FAU soon discovered that ambulances in China could not evacuate the wounded because no roads ran to the front, and that this same lack of transportation infrastructure was keeping the country's tiny stock of medical supplies bottled up in southern China, at Kunming. The FAU scrounged trucks to convoy supplies and, when petrol proved scarce, the ingenious mechanics of the FAU converted the trucks to charcoal burners. It was the FAU's ramshackle charcoal-burning trucks, coughing asthmatically over China's battered, tortuous roads and mountainous terrain, that by the time of the Allies' victory over Imperial Japan (V-J Day) were moving 95 per cent of the medical supplies being provided to civilian hospitals in free China.

Thirdly, civil war continued to spread throughout the country after V-J Day, compounding the human tragedy already unleashed during the Japanese occupation. The FAU, which technically worked under UNRRA's umbrella, was forced to establish separate working arrangements with the rival Nationalist and Communist relief agencies that administered the UNRRA aid programs within the territories under their respective control. The Chinese Nationalist (Kuomintang) government set up the Chinese National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (CNRRA) in January 1945 and the Communists countered with the formation of the Communist Liberated Areas Relief Administration (CLARA). The rekindling of outright war between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China in the spring of 1946 seriously compromised UNRRA's ability to deliver, on an impartial basis, the medical supplies upon which its health programs and those of the voluntary organizations working with it depended. In July 1947 UNRRA deliveries ceased in the regions held by the Communists and its medical personnel were withdrawn. The FAU, however, soldiered on, trying to service the medical needs on both sides of the civil war.

By the beginning of 1946, the Canadians comprised only 20 of the convoy's 139 members, but the unit's medical chief, Dr Robert McClure, considered that the "the Canadian boys are the finest lot of new recruits that the FAU has ever received."[9] The gypsy lifestyle

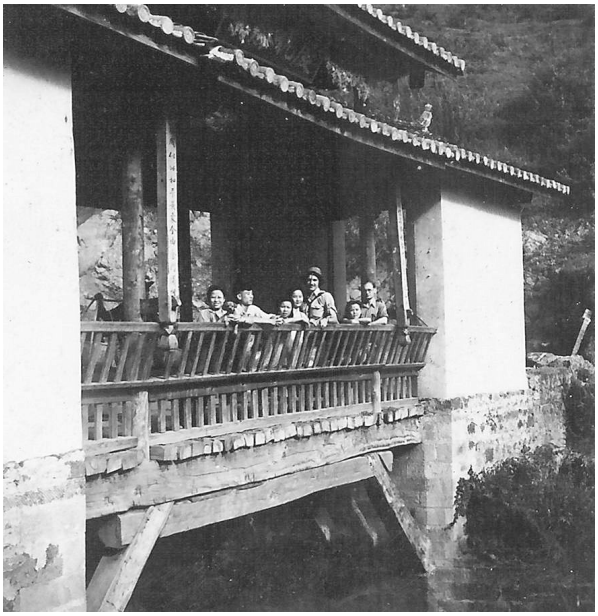
of FAU members brought them into closer touch with the real China. Sharing the same food, sleeping accommodations, and dangers of war and disease as the Chinese people, the FAU volunteers braved repeated bouts of malaria and relapsing fever, bandits, bureaucratic red tape, and floods to get the job done. Self-reliance, dedication, and resourcefulness were required to carry out the unit's work. And, in Ed Abbott and Francis Starr, the FAU found two "soldiers of peace" with just these qualities.

Abbott and Starr: The Road to the China Convoy

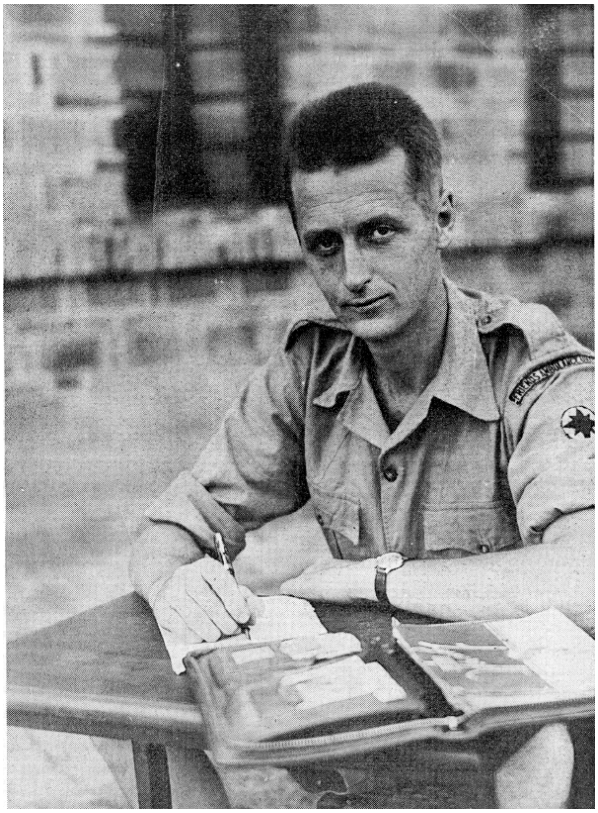
The eldest son of an Anglican circuit minister, Ed Abbott was born on 6 January 1917 in a log cabin in Grand Prairie, Alberta. Lack of financial security and an itinerant lifestyle simply went with growing up in a rural Anglican manse, and, in Ed's case, these realities of life were compounded by illness within his family. After the family moved back to Toronto in 1921 to obtain better medical treatment for his ailing mother, the four-year-old Ed and his sister were sent to the Irish Immigration Home until their mother recovered. Afterwards, the family moved around quite a bit before settling once again in Toronto. His normal boyhood routine – attending Runnemede Public School and singing in the St John' Anglican Church choir – was again shattered when he was removed to the home of a fellow clergyman during the illness and subsequent death of his infant brother from pneumonia. Ed remembers clearly that he dreamed of finding a cure to save his eleventh-month-old brother.

In the late 1920s, the family relocated south and west of Barrie when his father took charge of the parish of Ivy, Thornton, and Utopia. Ed completed his elementary education in the local public school and then spent a year at Barrie Collegiate, during which time the young teen boarded with the aging widow of the former school inspector. Fortunately, as the son of an Anglican minister, he was given a bursary to Ridley College, in St Catharines, Ontario, where he was exposed to a more rounded education and enjoyed playing, baseball, rugby, and cricket, while carefully avoiding hockey since his parents could afford only to buy girl's skates for him.

More significantly, during his senior year at Ridley, he read an article in the *Canadian Churchman* discussing the views of Canon Charles E. Raven, a leading pacifist English clergyman. A Liberal theologian, who was not only a pacifist but also a feminist and an outstanding field ornithologist and botanist, Raven rejected what he saw as the ultra-conservative and obscurantist views held by many of his contemporaries, arguing that human beings should use their God-given faculty of reason in the study of science and religion alike – two aspects of human knowledge and experience that, he believed, could be



Ed Abbott



Francis Starr, 1944

reconciled. The article persuaded Ed Abbott that "in sanctioning the resort to violence of war, the Christian Churches generally had departed seriously from the teachings of Jesus which they claimed to follow."[10] From that point forward, he knew that he could never follow Jesus if he did not remain committed to pacifism.

During his school years, Ed had often accompanied his father on his parish rounds, and he expected to follow in his father's footsteps when he entered Wycliffe College in 1936, registering in the philosophy course in preparation for the study of theology. After five years, as his pacifist beliefs deepened, he concluded that he could lead a more spiritually fulfilling life as a physician than as a cleric. While taking the medical-aptitude test required for entrance into University of Toronto medical school, he met "a young lady with a long braid," Vivien Duggan, "the person who was to become the most important affiliation in [his] life."[11] Dating Vivien meant being conscripted into the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship Movement and the Student Christian Movement (SCM); both fostered spiritual renewal among the student body through daily prayers and weekly study groups. While Vivien was primarily involved with the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship Movement and Ed was more active in the SCM, both student societies provided opportunities to engage in a non-denominational dialogue exploring the inter-relationship of spirituality, advocacy, and social justice.

The pace of life for medical students during the war became increasingly hectic as the medical program was shortened to allow students to take their examinations at Christmas during their third year. Faced for the next two summers with shorter holidays in which to earn enough money to complete his medical education, Ed went to work in the nickel mines in Sudbury, first in the smelter operation and then underground because the pay was better. But still it did not appear that he was destined to finish medical school. As a conscientious objector, Ed had been obliged to register for alternative war service and was informed that he would not be permitted to take third-year examinations. Fortunately, Dr Ramsay Armitage, the principal of Wycliffe and former chaplain-in-chief of the Canadian forces, who had won the Military Cross, made a personal pilgrimage in full-dress uniform to Ottawa and obtained permission for Ed to write the exams before being sent to a work camp.

In January 1944 Ed Abbott headed to Montreal River, not to practise medicine or share his life with the woman he loved but to do pick-and-shovel work on the Trans-Canada highway in below-zero temperatures. "De-

spite this, as the train bore [him] away, [he] felt jubilant that [he] had been given the strength to follow the Light given [him]."[12] At Montreal River, he met Walter Alexander, who told him of the CFSC's plans to recruit conscious objectors for alternative service with the FAU in China. Ed welcomed the opportunity to use his medical skills, which were quickly becoming rusty in the northern work camps. During the following summer, he was sent to a farm-service camp at Dover, near Chatham, and ultimately, before he joined the China Convoy, was transferred to the Connaught Laboratories to help manufacture typhus vaccines.

Abbott's memoirs of life in the work camps stress not the loneliness or physical hardships but a chance encounter with a kindly Quaker. He recounted that one Sunday, while sitting in a Chatham park, he was "feeling quite lonely. A white haired gentleman approached and enquired about my occupation. On learning that I was a CO from the farm service camp he invited me home to tea. This was Harold Zavitz, the first genuine Quaker I had ever met. This kindness reminds me of Shakespeare, 'How far that a little candle throws its beams, so shines a good deed in a naughty world.'"[13] After his release from alternative wartime service, Abbott's departure to begin training for the China Convoy at Pendle Hill, Pennsylvania, was delayed so that he might be able to work at Ontario Pioneer Boys' Camp on Lake Clearwater across from where Vivien was the doctor in the Pioneer Girls' Camp. "Needless to say it was a most enjoyable and memorable summer."[14]

Ed Abbott was an ideal recruit for the China Convoy. He had the medical skills that were so desperately needed in China. But, just as important, his parents and life experiences had fostered a strong work ethic and taught him to be frugal and self-reliant and to persist patiently towards his life goals. Despite the hardships the Abbott family endured, his parents provided a loving and supportive home built around an abiding Christian faith and a tradition of service to others. Ed was well aware of the financial sacrifices that his parents had made to give their five children educational opportunities. He also knew that his father, as an Anglican minister whose church fully backed the war effort, had faced criticisms from parishioners who did not understand his support of his son's pacifist beliefs. Abbott's ability to draw emotional sustenance from these core family values while serving overseas was further reinforced by his strong pacifist convictions. And now he also had Vivien to rely on – his endearingly tender letters to his future wife provided him with a lifeline as a man and as a doctor. She was both his confidant and his medical dictionary – though their "instant messaging" took about six weeks for a reply!

Francis Starr's background was different from Abbott's but, in the end, both arrived at the same destination. The eldest of Elmer and Elma Starr's five children, he was born on 16 June 1916 and spent the first two years of his life on his mother's homestead near Harrisville, Ohio, before the family relocated to Newmarket, Ontario. Both his parents were devout Quakers whose ancestors had emigrated to Canada after the American Revolution, and Francis remembers being impressed as a young boy by his mother's strong conviction that she would rather be killed than take another life:

> One of my earliest memories is of listening to a conversation between my mother and a casual visitor. They were discussing Friends Peace Testimony…

> He said something like this: "Surely Mrs Starr if you knew someone was intending to kill you, you would do anything you could to deter him. Even if you had to kill him." Mother had a ready answer. "If I kill somebody with murder in his heart, I'm the instrument for sending him to hell. I cannot take that responsibility. If he kills me and sees that I die without fear or hate, he may come to reconsider his ways and come to know Christ." Many years later I heard of a young man who went to China as a missionary. He had hardly got off his ship when he encountered an anti-foreigners demonstration. He was surrounded and his life threatened. He did not run away or offer resistance and was killed. A young fellow witnessed this and was so impressed with the way the foreigner died that he made enquiries and eventually became one of China's Christian leaders. I remember mother.[15]

Elma Starr, a woman of strong character and doggedly determined once she made up her mind on a course of social action, played an active role in Newmarket's Bogarttown Women's Institute and the peace and temperance movements and fought to improve the status of farm women in the inter-war years.[16] Francis himself spent the bulk of his formative years helping out on the family farm. Though he was decidedly less conventional that his devout Quaker parents, his mother's reformist activities fundamentally shaped his understanding of living the Quaker testimonies.

Despite his parents' best efforts, Francis resisted formal education. His year (1932–33) spent at the co-educational boarding high school, Olney Friends School, near Barnesville, Ohio – founded in 1837 to support traditional Quaker values such as integrity and simplicity – was simply too restrictive for his restless nature and free-ranging inquisitiveness. He preferred to experience life first hand. At age eighteen, he hitchhiked twenty-five hundred miles to attend the Quaker societies' general conference in the United States. The pacifist views that he had been absorbing all his life were reinforced when he attended sessions at the Institute of International Relations at Grinwell College in Iowa, which had a strong social-activist tradition, and at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. He held a variety of jobs, as a farmer, chauffeur, and ranch cook, before being sent as a conscientious objector to work in Canada's northern work camps for eighteen months, where he helped build the Trans-Canada Highway, fought fires British Columbia, and finally did some forestry work in Chalk River. His pick-and-shovel days ended when, after recovering from scarlet fever, he was made camp nurse. "Fiercely independent," "high spirited," and "cowboy" were all terms used by his FAU teammates to describe Starr, whose daring exploits and willingness to tackle any project became legendary among the transport division of the FAU unit.

Despite the differences in their personalities and educational backgrounds, Abbott and Starr shared a common bond – the courage to live by their convictions despite the social stigma and financial deprivation involved in being a CO, whereby all but $25 per month of their salaries was donated to the Canadian Red Cross. As members of the China Convoy, Ed and Francis would receive only a $5-a-month living allowance.

Setting Out

Ed Abbott and Francis Starr were among the first group of ten recruits who left in October 1944 to begin their training at Pendle Hill, a Quaker study centre near Wallingford, Pennsylvania.[17] Pendle Hill and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) cooperated to train personnel for service work around the world. Like other Canadians being trained there, neither Ed Abbott nor Francis Starr fully comprehended the degree of personal and professional adaptation that would be required while working and living in war-torn China. The time spent at Pendle Hill, and a few days of additional briefing at UNRRA's Maryland training centre, was meant to close the cultural gap and give the new recruits some idea what the FAU did and how they would cooperate with UNRRA. Unlike existing academic institutions, at Pendle Hill "students and staff would live according to Quaker principles and practices and … learning would be experiential as well as intellectual … It was to be an experiment in living and learning, grounded in work, worship and study. With the aim of preparing students to respond to injustice and violence in the world, education at Pendle Hill was seen as alternative and often counter-cultural."[18] There, life revolved around daily worship, study of Chinese language and customs, and work (including trips to a nearby mental hospital), with some time for recreation. The FAU derived greater benefit from the training provided at Pendle Hill than most other UNRRA staff did at Maryland. Whereas none of UNRRA's staff had field experience, "Old China Hands," with extensive and recent first-hand experience in doing medical relief work in China, such as Peter Tennant and Ken Bennett, gave detailed briefing sessions at Pendle Hill. Moreover, the Canadian recruits at Pendle Hill received more specialized training for their specific jobs as mechanics, X-ray technicians, or medical aids in China. It was also a time for forging strong bonds of fellowship among the men and women of the China Convoy. At Pendle Hill, Abbott became familiar with Quaker doctrines under the capable leadership of Howard and Anna Brinton, who had been appointed as directors of the centre in 1936 and fostered its development as a significant Quaker resource for the AFSC over the next two decades.

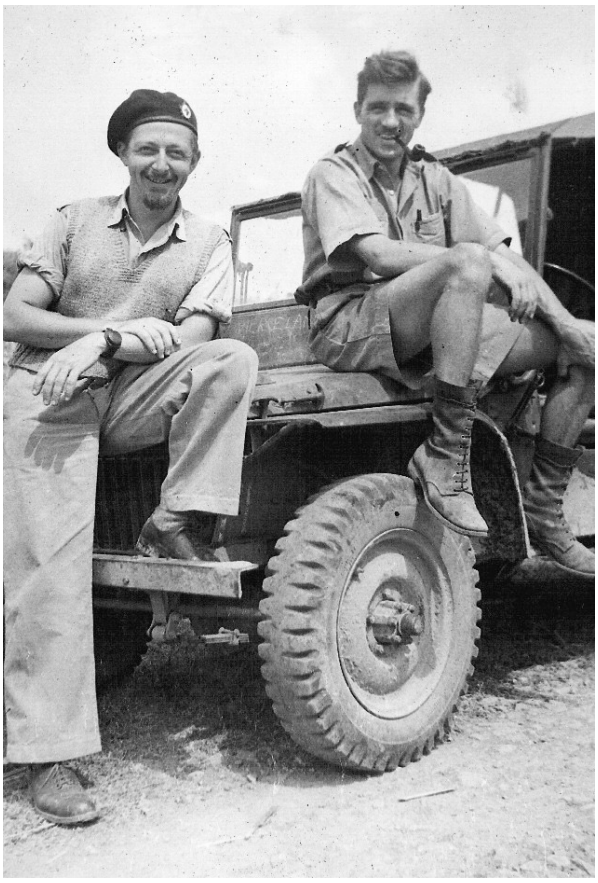
As space became available on U.S. troop ships or freighters, the members of the China Convoy left Pendle Hill in small groups for the first leg of the journey to the FAU headquarters in Calcutta, India. Ed Abbott left in the first group of three, along with Walter Alexander and Jack Dodds, and Francis Starr followed shortly afterwards. Fortunately, neither Abbott nor Starr were in the FAU group that was stranded mid-journey without funds after the freighter on which they were travelling was torpedoed. With the exception of a request that Abbott inoculate the whole crew – which he did without letting anyone know that he had never given a needle before – the days were passed studying Chinese, reading medical texts, and playing bridge at night. Once in Calcutta, the new recruits participated in the unit's humanitarian work and took turns at night in the warehouse watching over the unit's supplies until a flight could be arranged over the Burma Hump to Kunming, the only point of entry for all foreigners and supplies during the Japanese occupation. Calcutta – a city rich in culture but known for its extreme poverty – proved overwhelming: "The new sights, sounds and smells accosted us on every side while contrasts of grandeur and poverty disturbed us."[19] The stopover offered the new recruits some indication of

what lay ahead.

In Calcutta, Ed Abbott seized the opportunity to join the medical rounds at the School of Tropical Medicine, where he was introduced to malaria, kala azar (a chronic and potentially fatal parasitic disease spread by sandflies), and amoebic dysentery: "How exciting I found it to be getting a glimpse of clinical medicine."[20] But an equally cherished experience from these days was his introduction through Walter Alexander to the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore, a Bengali philosopher, composer, poet, and winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. The ideals of simplicity, goodness, meaningful work, and world culture invoked in Tagore's writings provided a lifetime of inspiration for Ed Abbott: "In these works I found much pleasure and inspiration ever since. How apt his words in Gitanjali LX111 describe the experiences of my own life. 'Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own. Thou has made me known to friends that I knew not. Thou has brought the distant near and made a brother of a stranger.'"[21] Tagore opposed nationalism and militarism as a matter of principle and instead promoted spiritual values and the creation of a new world culture founded on diversity and tolerance.

The Road to Honan

After arriving in China, the two Canadians were quickly initiated into local conditions as they hitched a ride on the back of one of the FAU's trucks, taking twelve hours in torrential rain to complete the one-hundred-mile trip to Kutsing, the unit's regional operational headquarters. All new recruits passed through Hwei Tien Hospital in Kutsing to update their shots and get additional training before being assigned to a field team.



It was in these simple surroundings that Ed Abbott completed his "internship" in anaesthetics, performed his first surgery, learned to diagnose relapsing fever, and gained valuable practical experience in laboratory work related to tropical diseases. Constructed of wood, with bare dirt floors and without windows, except for the operating room, the humble hospital had no electricity when Abbott and Starr first arrived. Even simple surgical dressings were quite a production when sterilization had to be done by boiling the instruments over a charcoal fire.[35] Despite its primitive nature, Ed wrote to Vivien that "it is a grand place to work and is filling a big need."[22] "As long as there is something to learn I'll be happy."[23] In particular, he drew satisfaction from working with "like minded people" such as Dr Evarts (Ev) Loomis, an American doctor who had served

with the Grenfell Mission in Newfoundland. Loomis, who had encouraged Abbott to accompany him to the School of Tropical Medicine in Calcutta, proved a great medical mentor and friend.

Kutsing also taught the new recruit the limitations of his own and the unit's medical capacity. Medical work had to be adapted to local conditions; bike spokes served as Steinman pins,[24] and local silversmiths were approached to make gynaecological instruments that were unavailable in war-torn China. Nor was understanding the Chinese concept of face and gaining the trust of the people an easy task. Abbott could not easily accept that, at times, saving face meant that Chinese physicians left a patient unattended because another doctor had first contact. Abbott was sobered by the knowledge that ignorance and poverty were the root causes of many of the diseases he treated daily As he explained to Vivien, the Chinese people "have not the vaguest idea of cleanliness and the children are never bathed. Usually mother and baby are grimy and infected with scabies. If one tells them to bathe and boil the rags that serve as clothes, it will probably not be done as they have nothing to wear while their rags are being washed."[25] Other FAU members – like other foreigners who came to assist UNRRA – testified to their initial shock at the seemingly callous disregard for human life they witnessed everywhere they went in China and at the abject poverty: "pitiful sights – ragged and dirty children curled up on the streets on little bamboo mats or in tiny sacking pieces, absolutely alone in the world."[26] As Starr counted seven abandoned dead bodies on his first Sunday walk around Kutsing, he quickly "got some awareness of the cheapness of life in the Orient."[27] But perhaps just as important, at Kutsing, Abbott realized that doing international medical relief meant putting aside any sense of Western superiority in relation to the Chinese people. Such an attitude, he maintained, "is not in accord with our work." In contrast to some of the other members of the team, he firmly believed that short-term medical efficiencies should not come at the cost of continued goodwill.[28]

After two months at Kutsing, Abbott was assigned to the FAU unit at Mojiang, one of the several teams established to supply medical aid to French soldiers retreating out of Indo-China. On his arrival there, however, he was instructed to continue farther down the trail to Mohei, where the FAU had established a more permanent clinic, to replace Dr Pat Rowlence, then ill with appendicitis. "It took seven days more of strenuous hiking, at night sleeping at and in whatever was available" – including one memorable night taking shelter in a small one-room mud-and-thatched shack divided from the owner, his wife, some pigs, and a chicken only by a bamboo screen. While the Chinese carriers whom he had hired smoked opium nearby, Abbott spent most of that night swatting at rats, only to discover the next morning that one had chewed a hole in the knapsack tucked under his head to get at a chocolate bar.[29] The gruelling trek along the mountainous and bandit-infested trail to Mohei took its toll on Abbott physically and emotionally; the body of one of his carriers who had succumbed to malaria was only one of several left strewn along the trail.

The trek foreshadowed the challenges that lay ahead of operating a community medical practice in impoverished rural China, especially when Abbott was forced to take charge after virtually all of his team members had fallen ill:

[29 July 1945] There is so much I'd

love to say tonight but it's late and tomorrow makes the 7th day I've been big cheese here and it does tire one particularly with sick patients on ones hands that one cannot help. One died today … I stood beside him as he breathed his last and felt helpless. [30 July 1945] Darling – Where should I start? I'm still on OPD [Out Patient Department] and the hospital and it keeps me busy. On top of these, there are three or four calls in the village to make each day. I can't begin to describe cases or I'd not get sleep. In hospital, I now have a Bronchi-Pneumonia, an RF [relapsing fever], a leg ulcer awaiting a seed graft, a probable typhoid, the woman with headaches of unknown etiology and possible one with cerebral infection, an anal fistula [abscess], a bladder stone and 2 multiple deficiency and amoebic hepatitis cases. These latter two along with my meningeal cases are my major concerns… I think Pat [Rowlence] and David [Johnson] could take over again now but they seem to enjoy taking life easy under the coverage of convalescence. I don't find the lab work done very reliably and am continually having to check up or do repeats myself. I'll be glad when one of them comes back to take over.[30]

Abbott's letters from Mohei provide a telling story of the team's efforts to be a part of and to improve the health of the local community, whose values and lifestyles in many respects contravened their own private

The Mohei Team

beliefs. The Mohei team did not live within a walled community but travelled to the surrounding villages to cope with outbreaks of typhus, cholera, and relapsing fever. On one such trip to a tribal village where people were dying of relapsing fever, it was dusk when the FAU team had finished giving all the inoculations and was offered a sweet syrupy liquid that contained many thin rings, which turned out to be chicken intestines. "Thus fortified [Abbott] headed back along the bunds with the guide leading the way with a flaming torch,"[31] making one last stop at the guide's village to give injections to his two wives living in two separate households.

On 26 September 1945, after a tearful good bye on the covered bridge, Abbott left Mohei "heart sick to see the sign on our door saying the clinic was closed and see patients turn away." He knew "that poor people [would] have no source of medical treatment and suffer and in many cases [would] die without help … It [hurt him] too to realize that the local Chinese doctors will more than fleece patients for real drugs."[32] Runaway inflation encouraged widespread black marketing in drugs throughout China.

Ed Abbott's experiences within the Mohei community shaped his future attitudes towards humanitarian and development work. In confiding to his future wife that he hoped the two of them would return to China to work with the Society of Friends, he wrote:

> I do believe that we have an opportunity that the "professional missionary" has not got on the same basis… I feel the layman has opportunity to witness in a more powerful way than a man with a dog collar… I feel that the witness of living reaches much further than the spoken message and goes unimpeded past barriers that are impregnable to formal preaching. In this area of China, the conditions of living, moral standards, health and jurisdiction are the most backward of any part… A town such as this needs organization to lift the public health, give it water and electricity, give it access by roads to the outside world, newer types of agriculture ... new industries and with the right leadership in these things and, with unselfish and loving approach, the message of Jesus will be demonstrated and the people drawn to follow him.[33]

Like other members of the China Convoy, Abbott had come to realize that medical relief alone could not produce sustainable change. He, like others, was struggling to reconcile his personal spiritual journey with the FAU's wartime relief work. Many of his colleagues also questioned whether medical treatment was fruitless if people simply returned to old sexual practices that would lead to reinfection; they, however, more so than Abbott, longed to heal the spirit as well as the body by actively spreading Christianity. The desire for both a longer-term approach to relief and rehabilitation and a closer spiritual relationship with the Chinese people influenced the FAU's decision to concentrate its efforts in Honan.

Like Abbott, Francis Starr strove to adapt to the conditions and values of a country profoundly different from his own. Starr knew that he would be assigned to the transport division before he left Canada, but he stepped into a whole new driving experience in China – the charcoal burners. Francis was given truck No. 21, "with so many special controls that [he] didn't learn the use of some of them

in six months operations."[34] His enthusiasm for life on the road never abated even though the challenges of convoys went well beyond the continuous breakdowns and lack of personal space or privacy, for there was no such thing as a routine delivery run across China. Starr recalled the unexpected turn of events during one of the inevitable delays on the train tracks: "The maimed and the blind gathered around and sought our help" and, astonishingly enough, were quite prepared for "anyone of us to operate on them." Undaunted, the FAU team broke open their first-aid kits, made a fire, and sterilized the instruments. With Starr playing the role of "policeman and consultant" to control the inflow of patients, they offered what little help they could. No records were kept, but Starr estimated that, of the eighty people treated at their makeshift clinic, "at least half the people were beyond help as far as we were concerned. We could merely say … can't do anything about it and turn to the next one." For Starr, "the whole proceedings were rather bizarre but served very well to illustrate the awful needs of the people out here."[35] While eye problems and scabies accounted for the majority of the cases treated that day, minor surgery for an abdominal abscess was also attempted, even though it meant using a condom for drainage. The incident is symptomatic of the range of medical tasks with which the small FAU units dealt on a daily basis. Besieged by constant requests for medical attention and supplies, the unit's members found it difficult not to be consumed by their inability to make a meaningful difference in a land where the level of human suffering was simply staggering

As the Japanese retreated, the FAU followed in their wake, entering vacated hospitals in the towns and cooperating both with UNRRA and with the mission hospitals established by various Canadian and British religious denominations to provide emergency medical relief, epidemic control, and medical and public-health education. Band-Aid solutions were the order of the day. FAU teams often had to pull up stakes in one project, before permanent funding or replacements had been found, to meet an emerging crisis elsewhere.

Despite repeated offers from American soldiers to join their convoys, Starr preferred to travel without the protection of their weapons. He "refrained from telling them that their guns invited attack" and on one occasion was left wondering about the fate of an American convoy in the bandit-infested country when its more powerful petrol-fuelled trucks failed to overtake him on the road.[36] Armed with only naked courage, Starr became legendary within the unit for his maverick behaviour. While stationed at Kutsing, Abbott and others had first-hand experience of Starr's daring "shopping excursions" for supplies to nearby American army warehouses about to be turned over to the Chinese Nationalist forces. On one such trip, having arrived at the base to find it already occupied by the Chinese, all except one of the FAU's trucks returned empty. The whereabouts of Starr and his truck remained a mystery for several hours until finally the groaning of a truck overflowing with cargo could be heard as it crept up the steep hill to the unit's garage. According to the story the brash young Starr recounted: he had pulled up to the warehouse platform, saluted, and confidently ordered the Chinese soldiers to help load his truck. The unit's leader, thinking of his members' recent close calls with trigger-happy Chinese soldiers, replied: "Jesus Christ Starr." The others gathered around added "Amen."[37]

Honan and Despair

After Starr joined the unit in Honan, convoy life proved even more arduous, with supply runs often being only a few hours ahead of the roving bands of "reds" that looted FAU camps and stole their trucks and fuel. Starr recalled loading his truck, an old Japanese relic without brakes, to make one of his most interesting and dangerous runs to deliver food, medical supplies, and a mobile medical team to relieve the starving civilians in the besieged city of Yungnien, deep within "red territory" and completely surrounded by water, where China's most notorious warlords had taken refuge. As he navigated the dangerous road and broken bridges, "guerrilla[s] [sic] popp[ed] up out of a wheat field or from behind a tree … [Starr] was quite impressed with the way these boys toyed with the hand grenades that dangled from their belts." When the convoy finally arrived in Hantan, Hopei, the headquarters of the Communist forces in the area, they were "feasted, lectured and bedded at a party hostel." What surprised Starr was that the truck could be left unguarded without fear of being robbed and that "there appear to be no rich people and no poor people." This was quite a contrast to their experience trucking supplies through territories held by Nationalist forces in southwest China, as well as to the conditions they encountered upon entering the besieged city of Yungnien the following morning:

> Ever since I crossed that mile or more of water… to what seemed like another world, I've been trying to record the emotions caused by the trip, but they don't seem to be for words. We pulled out about noon with three small boats loaded with medicines, vitamins and food from the "la by shing" of Canada, USA and Britain for the "la by shing" of China. It was a grand gesture, those small boats of brotherhood and mercy crossing the foul waters of hatred, lust and murder. Nevertheless in many ways, the whole thing seemed as futile as we were probably just prolonging the starvation period of some of our fellow men. And then on the other hand we had come out here to help them and their enemies, the same amount of medical supplies as we took into Yungnien had been given to the Communist representative… and by setting them an example of unselfishness, we could only hope that our mission would ultimately result in some good. I suppose practically all suffering is caused by human greed but this was the first time I had ever come into physical contact with men whose greed and hatred was causing suffering among their brothers. It was quite a different sensation from just reading about such people.

In contrast to the Communist village of Hantan, in Yungnien "the streets were almost de-

serted and an atmosphere of death hung about the place." To Starr, it seemed that "the people were starving in an orderly fashion, with the poor going first and the property owners hanging on according to the amount of their possessions."[38] His China years precluded acceptance of the black-and-white stereotypes of Communist regimes that prevailed throughout the Cold War.

Whatever doubts individual members experienced or private political views they held, FAU convoys went where few others dared and made possible the survival of nursing schools and hospitals that had endured bombs, bandits, and much else.[39] By the time that Starr delivered the medical supplies to the Communist headquarters at Hantan, in January 1946, another truck convoy had left Chungking for Yenan, the Communist capital, taking drugs, supplies, and a medical team, including the Canadian Jack Dodds, to the International Peace Hospitals.

Starr participated in several projects, organizing irrigation, distributing wheat seed, and instructing Chinese farmers on the use of American tractors. But he derived most satisfaction from his work assisting in an orphanage in Fukow where, according to him, they "set up a regular processing line of stripping, scrubbing, shaving, clothing and feeding and the changes that occurred in those, poor homeless waifs were unbelievable."[40]

Throughout much of 1946, Francis Starr was seconded to work with UNRRA's chief engineer, Oliver Todd, nicknamed "Todd Almighty" for his mercurial temperament, to restore the Yellow River to its former course. Recounting one of his experiences, he wrote:

> Todd was annoyed with the Chinese engineers who did not seem in a hurry to get the job done, so I was appointed collie pusher on the trestle. I had more experience working with the Chinese than any of the other foreigners, and I had a great time… One evening I came across the old bed at that little dike, and the water was just about to go over. It was almost dark and I knew that there would not be time to get equipment over and demolish the dike as planned, so all alone I demolished a small section of it and the water went rushing through. The gap widens very fast and I went back to camp and bed. I didn't dare tell anyone. When the change was discovered in the morning, the river was already seven miles down the old bed. Without supervision or assistance, I had put the "China's Sorrow" back on course.[41]

Starr did not see the project completed; in early 1947, despite UNRRA's offer of another contract, he said that he had enough of "idleness" and chose instead to start the long trek back to Ontario.

Not all of the team had been able to join the main body of the FAU in Honan. Ed Abbott had replaced Walter Alexander as the business manager in the Tengchung hospital, located in a converted temple near the Burma border in Yunnan Province. Even though he had hoped to "avoid the horrible fate of going on administration," he accepted the reassignment because he "thought that one must carry out the job appointed as well as possible and by doing so help out the smooth running of the organization."[42] "The hospital set up here is really tops." Walter Alexander had done an excellent job remodelling the old temple into a smoothly running hospital, starting a nursing school, and expanding the public-health

clinics. Abbott continued making improvements to the hospital's facilities and began experimenting with a more modern, safer system of pumping water from the wells than the traditional method of wooden buckets. He also built the first "Chinese" toilet – the design of which took into account the Chinese habit of squatting rather than sitting – within the hospital from parts scrounged from the nearby abandoned American airbase. Even when Abbott assumed increasing responsibility for the medical work in addition to his administrative responsibilities – as the other members of the FAU team withdrew – he viewed the heavier workload as an excellent learning opportunity. On ward rounds, he saw burn cases, gun-shot wounds, gas gangrene,[43] and a range of tropical diseases "that medical school would find difficult to equal."[44]

Plans to hand this hospital over to the Chinese were derailed because "of the political tangle involved in CNRRA's program which the FAU wanted to keep out off." Abbott had little regard for the priorities of the CNRRA, which, he believed, planned "to do work in this area (chiefly as usual) because they have vast stock in Yenan and it is either inconvenient or too expensive to ship them to the recently occupied territory,"[54] where the real need was. Unselfishly forgoing the opportunity to join the unit in Honan, Abbott stayed on in the hope that other arrangements could be made for the hospital. As it turned out, UNRRA would offer to send an American doctor and nurse in March of that year, by which time Abbott believed that "there is not enough work here to keep those of us who are here busy."[55]

He left the hospital saddened by the suspicion and greed that marred the FAU's relations with the local CNRRA hospital committee, which charged that the FAU had "pulled a fast one in getting them to sign for the drugs and supplies left here so we could get replacements from [the CNRRA main warehouse] in Kunming." As he explained events to Vivien: "They are now insisting on getting all that is coming to them and asking for supplies for 200 beds. Such selfish provinciality makes me mad. They have a hospital with a maximum of 60 beds and with only 13 occupied at present and want to bring supplies down here and store them and duplicate instruments etc. which other places have dire need of. It is contrary to the spirit of the FAU."[56]

The gentle-spirited Canadian was determined to leave with enough supplies that the FAU could carry on its work elsewhere. A pacifist and conciliator by nature, he did not easily initiate confrontations with local authorities. Nonetheless, he "took the bull by the horns" and confronted General [Sun] Li [Jen] and the local hospital committee and "managed to scare them with the suggestion that they have no legal right to the stuff FAU has brought in." He spent the whole morning at loggerheads with the committee but "came away with the consent to the removal of the items listed." Abbott knew he was not "popular in certain quarters but would rather have it that way than have them get so much more than they could use."[57]

When Abbott arrived back in Kunming, he seized the opportunity to give "the dope on Tengchung" to the local UNRRA representative, who promptly froze the CNRRA supplies in the warehouse and not only replaced all the FAU supplies left behind but also gave the unit badly needed surgical instruments. [58] In a land stricken with corruption and greed, the lone voice of an ethical Canadian medical worker had finally been heard.

Other FAU hospitals weren't so fortunate.

At Kwang Sheng Hospital in Changte, Honan, an UNRRA doctor, Coralie Rendle–Short, "was withdrawn from the hospital by UNRRA owing to the increased military activity" only a fortnight after she had been gallantly escorted there by Ed Abbott as his final mission before returning to Canada. McClure's time in China also ended sadly. The country was increasingly torn by civil war between the Nationalist and Communists forces, and in December 1948, after seeing his Hwaiking hospital reduced to rubble and learning that his eldest daughter was ill, he left China.[59] The move to Honan could not stem the rising tide of civil war or the onset of the Cold War.

Personal Legacies: Living the Quaker Testimonies

Ed Abbot returned to Canada to marry Vivien on 6 September 1946 and started medical school two days afterwards. Following graduation in 1949, he interned at Toronto Western Hospital and then completed his surgical residency in Belfast, Ireland. In retrospect, he appreciated that "the time away in China was all good experience helping to prepare one's life work" and that it made his subsequent medical training much more meaningful.[45] Life in the China Convoy marked a watershed both in his religious beliefs and in his attitudes towards international development. After China, he realized that he had more in common with the Quakers' traditional values of pacifism, social equality, integrity, and simplicity of lifestyle, arising from personal conscience and revelation from "God within," than with an Anglican faith bound in traditional, hierarchal institutions and prescribed creeds. Like many other Quakers – he formally joined the denomination after his marriage – Abbott believed that his faith did not fit within traditional Christian categories of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant; instead, his Quaker testimonies provided a guide towards another way of personally experiencing God – spirituality in action.[46] For Abbott, worship and social action, the sacred and the secular, have no dividing walls between them.

Abbott's work with the China Convoy increased his awareness that sustainable development must go hand and hand with the elimination of war and poverty and be attuned to the culture and developmental needs of the recipient community. Before theories of socially and culturally sensitive Third World development were articulated, he understood that people had to be helped to become self-sufficient. His beliefs would be put into practice and further refined as the Abbott family, with children in tow, spent the next thirteen

Ed & Vivian Abbott

years working in rural-development projects sponsored by the AFSC in India, at Bapali in Orissa and then in Rasulia, Madya Pradesh Province: "Recognizing that disparity of living standards and opportunities between the haves and have not nations may underline envy and strife, the AFSC proposed an experimental program to uplift a given underdeveloped area"[47]– encompassing agricultural, industrial, educational, and public-health initiatives. Drs Ed and Vivien Abbott's work in India centred upon community-based public-health initiatives to provide clean water and better sanitation and to train rural health-care workers. Ed Abbott helped to improve the health of India's poorest rural communities by designing locally manufactured cheaper well systems and latrines. The "Barpali," as the toilet he designed came to be known, gained widespread acceptance and was acknowledged by other international-aid workers to have dramatically promoted healthy living throughout rural India.[48]

Upon his return to Canada in 1965, Abbott continued his public-health work, serving as the medical officer for Scarborough, where, once again, preserving collegiality and making steady progress towards improved public-health standards took priority over cost efficiencies. After he retired in 1978, the couple moved to Oro, Ontario, at the prodding of Gordon Keith, another China FAU old hand, to share a communal lifestyle and Quaker fellowship. There, they helped to found the meeting house known as the Mill House.

After over sixty years together, Ed and Vivien Abbott live a rich and rewarding life together that embraces the traditional Quaker testimonies, which now include stewardship of the environment. They continue to be social activists, especially in their promotion of ecological and social sustainability. Ed Abbott supported efforts to have the Gross National Product economic indicator (GNP) replaced by a more ethically relevant measure of the country's well-being, such as the Genuine Progress Index (GPI), which considers social and environmental repercussions as well as economic growth. For Abbott, the GNP indicator embodies the unbridled materialism and corporate oligarchy that he believes has stifled the democratic process, widened the economic gap between rich and poor, and fostered the recent conflict in the Middle East to control oil production. In contrast, the Abbotts advocate a community-based approach for achieving sustainable development that values voluntary work and is cognizant of the negative effects of resource depletion.[49] The couple lives a frugal life, growing much of their own food. On most Saturdays, they and a few dedicated Friends still hold a peace vigil in Orillia. After thirty-five years of dreaming and hard work, Ed and Vivien Abbott recently welcomed the first residents to their new homes at Foxfell Friends Cooperative Community Corporation, a Quaker-sponsored project to establish affordable and energy-efficient housing. Their sensitivity to social ills and desire for social justice and sustainable development reflect the well-established Quaker testimony against the worldliness and extravagance of a society where a few consume the resources of many and nations become engulfed in conflict as they pursue their economic self-interest.

As for Francis Starr, after a brief visit with the family in Newmarket, he was soon "buzzing off again," convinced that "his countrymen had little realization of their Christian responsibility for their distressed brothers." He found that "after two years of rubbing shoulders with millions of people that seldom know as much as seasonal security,

[he had become] … indifferent to worldly possessions." Starr journeyed to Poland to help the Mennonite Central Committee train Polish farmers on machinery donated by UNRRA.

His circular letters from Poland bear all-too-familiar overtones to relief work in China and indeed to the conditions faced by present-day international-aid workers:

> To many of you relief work probably sounds like a glamorous undertaking. It sounds as if it would be just grand to go among the starving, naked unfortunates of the world and pass out bread and clothes and be greeted as a modern saviour. Frequently moments of great satisfaction come along but relief work many times is about as frustrating and discouraging as being a used car salesman in the late 1930's. Instead of being greeted as a friend and helper, the relief worker frequently had to overcome fear and suspicion on the part of those he is trying to help. Interference from the government of the needy people generally has to be contended with and the greed and hatred of the petty bureaucrats is constantly hampering the efforts of the relief worker.[50]

He continued to believe that "there is a way out of the world impasse but it is through love and never war." That belief took him back to work on international-development projects in India and Pakistan with the Friends Service Committee.

It was in India that Starr met a well-educated and refined American nurse – a graduate of Yale University, School of Nursing, Dorothy Schlick, known thereafter as Schlick Chick or just Chick. The couple was married in Lahore Pakistan on 17 June 1948. In Khanewal, south of Lahore on the edge of the Sind desert, they worked with the members of the refugee community who had fled India after Partition, providing health care and operating an emergency food station until they returned to Canada. After a brief stint of farming in Ontario, the couple worked during the winter of 1950–51 in the Friends' work camps in Mexico, where Dorothy had spent time before their marriage. In the spring of 1951, they returned to Ontario, where Francis eventually was hired to manage the Carlton Street United Church property near Alton. "Being part of that project and participating in its evolution was a privilege. Soon we were providing a holiday place for all sorts of under privileged children inner city children." When the couple learnt that they were expecting a fourth child, they decided to move.

Francis then tried a number of jobs before being hired in 1958 at Carleton University in Ottawa, where he spent the next fifteen years as the property manager of the Athletics Department. The Carleton years "ranked right along with the China years as being the most satisfying time of my life … I had a good rapport with most of the students and some professors and my world travels seemed to impress them more than my lack of formal education."[51] During these years, Starr was politically active, speaking out against nuclear proliferation and championing human rights and political liberty. Many former Carleton students remember his battle with the university administration for the right to wear his famous red suspenders, with "Vote NDP" emblazoned on them, and their arguments over political and social-justice issues. A colourful and well-respected figure on campus, "the Bearded Wonder," as he was known

among the student body, challenged many students' Cold War assumptions about the political and cultural superiority of the West and "usually managed to win the daily verbal battles."[52]

During several summers, Francis Starr also acted as the property manager at Grindstone Island in Big Rideau Lake (one hundred and forty miles south of Ottawa), which was established by the Friends Service Committee as a peace-education and non-violence training centre (1962–90) to come to grips with what the Friends thought were the three main issues facing Canada: banning nuclear weapons and preventing nuclear war, promoting non-violence and peaceful solutions to world conflicts, and seeking ways to strengthen the United Nations and international law while acknowledge the reality of global poverty and the expansion of corporate power. Among the many peace initiatives inaugurated on Grindstone Island, one was particularly reminiscent of the FAU's earlier work in China – the decision to supply medical aid to all three sides of the Vietnam War.[53] While Murray Thomson, the peace education secretary from 1962 to 1969, was the founding force and continued to provide the inspirational leadership behind the programming, the work would hardly have been possible without the efforts of Francis Starr and other able and concerned Friends who worked on the island. It was, in his mind, "the ideal place for conferences, seminars and relaxing." [54]

Meanwhile, the friendship between Francis Starr and Ed Abbott deepened, especially after Francis became his brother-in-law. Over the years, removed from the Indian refugee camp that had forged strong personal ties, Francis and Dorothy became increasingly conscious of the differences between them. Their lack of compatibility was formally recognized when the couple divorced amicably in 1969.[55] Tragically, his former wife was later killed in diving accident in Nassau in 1977. During a visit with the Abbotts in June 1974, Francis Starr had taken Ed's advice that it might cheer him up to visit his widowed sister Kathleen (Kay) for a few days on Howe Island near Gananoque, but, somewhat to Ed's surprise, Francis "never left." Even though he was then divorced, he did not formally marry Kay until after Dorothy's death.

Like the Abbotts, Francis and Kay Starr put their Quaker faith into action daily, particularly the principle – which Francis embodied in his own life – of resistance to established power structures. The couple spent many years wintering in the long-established Quaker community in Monteverde, Costa Rica, preferring, they said, to live in a country where health care was the priority, not military spending, and returned for the rest of the year to their solar home that Kay designed and Francis built on Howe Island. Along with the Abbotts, they joined Conscience Canada, whose members withheld, in a special peace trust, the portion of their taxes that the government spent on military spending.[56] Francis Starr continued to believe that "if we aren't threatening anybody, we aren't nearly as likely to be threatened. Today most fearful nations are the ones with the largest military establishments and thus are the greatest threat to mankind's welfare."[57] His views never veered from those that he held in China: military power was incompatible with freedom, incapable of providing security and ineffective in dealing with evil. The couple spent their final years living in fellowship with the Abbotts. Francis died in the spring of 1999 and Kay on 4 April 2004.

Conclusion

Ed Abbott and Francis Starr provided valuable service as members of the China Convoy. Both displayed adaptability, resourcefulness, and humility in their attempts to be with and help the Chinese people. The FAU's already well-established reputation among Chinese political leaders on both sides of the political spectrum opened the door for daring medical-relief initiatives, but Abbott's and Starr's sheer courage and determination took them the rest of the way. They would have stayed on or returned to continue their work in China if the political circumstances had been different. China had shaped their minds and hearts.

While the Canadians in the FAU's China Convoy collaborated with UNRRA and other voluntary agencies engaged in relief and rehabilitation work, the unit never abandoned its own ethos of service and clung tenaciously to its right to decide where and how the resources of the FAU would be used. Cooperation with UNRRA was tempered by the FAU's growing frustration that UNRRA could not divorce aid from the politics of civil war or the onset of the Cold War. The FAU remained critical of UNRRA's chief benefactor, the United States, as it purported to conduct "peace talks" between the Nationalists and Communists under General George Marshall while providing military support to Nationalist forces.

Within the FAU, the mixed team of Canadian, British, New Zealand, and American volunteers, bound by their pacifist beliefs, worked reasonably harmoniously, but there were undercurrents of discord between those who advocated a secular approach to humanitarian relief and those who advocated conversion to Christianity as a necessary corollary of more permanent change.[58] The experience varied with the individual. While some could not stand the food, the poverty, and the smells, the majority adapted to life on the road or within the makeshift hospitals. The fiercely equalitarian spirit of the unit meant that most were able to work alongside their Chinese counterparts, crawling under trucks and sharing meals in roadside cafes, rather that imposing orders from above. They also developed a respect for and love of China and its people and an understanding that Western culture and methods needed to be adapted not adopted. Ed Abbot, like others on the medical team, had learned to adapt locally available items for expensive surgical tools – a skill that proved useful in his future medical-aid missions. The FAU's understanding of the role of international development in living the Quaker testimonies, and particularity the Peace Testimony, would be further refined as a number of members moved into international work with UNRRA and its successor agencies or with the Friends Service Committee in an increasingly complex and interrelated global community.

The experiences of the FAU's China Convoy bear sobering familiarity with contemporary events. In countries such as Afghanistan, humanitarian relief and rehabilitation efforts are weakened by their use as an instrument of war rather than as a vehicle for social justice and human betterment. Also, as Canadian Friends seek to expand and renew the spiritual roots of the Quaker Peace Testimony, they must cope with an international relief regime that lacks an effective international governance system, one that respects the individuality of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) while also coordinating their efforts with those of United Nations agencies.

Ed Abbott and Francis Starr lived by their Quaker beliefs. Like other Canadian Friends "empowered by the Spirit of Christ to work

for those in need," they "continued to build a house of living stones with their own contributions to the Glory of God."[59] Their concern about the injustices of racial discrimination and economic exploitation, their sensitivity to the needs and aspirations of individuals in less fortunate parts of Canada and the world, their commitment to live simply and conserve resources so that, as individuals, they could share generously what they had with others – all grew out of a powerful desire to remove or mitigate the causes of war. Peace and development remains a vital but challenging focus for the Friends Service Committee to this day.

The community of Friends is numerically small. Nevertheless, Abbott's and Starr's lifelong commitment – to service, advocacy, integrity, collaboration, and environmental stewardship – serves as a reminder of the continued importance of individuals raising their voices as the basis for building world community – "the Quaker concept of speaking truth to power" – even when the causes are unpopular or the goal seems too daunting.[60]

Finally, the life stories of Abbott and Starr reflect the broader Quaker community's struggle to ensure that its time-honoured Peace Testimony acknowledges the growth of transnational corporations as well as the abject poverty and social inequalities accompanying the globalization of the post-Second World War era. Ed Abbott and Francis Star understood that the Peace Testimony is not just an opposition to war and violence but is rather a call for reconciliation, justice, and social and economic equality.

Notes:

[1] Before they left Toronto, the Canadian Friends Service Committee had offered to help its members keep in touch with family and friends by duplicating and distributing any letters that they sent back home. This article relies on that material as well as letters that remain in private collections and interviews with members of the FAU.

[2] It should be noted that, when the Second World War broke out, the CFSC worked with other churches and persuaded the government to extend conscientious-objector status to all such objectors, not just to members of the historic peace churches. Thus, while all members of the FAU were COs, they were not all Quakers.

[3] Dr Robert McClure was born in 1900 to missionary parents in China. He trained as a physician and surgeon at the University of Toronto and returned to Honan, China, in 1923 as a medical missionary. In 1937 he was lent by the United Church Mission in Honan to the International Red Cross as field director for central China during the Sino-Japanese conflict. He was in charge of the transport of medical supplies to various areas in southwest and west China. From 1941 to 1946, he served as director of the Friends Ambulance Unit in China.

[4]http://www.ku.edu/carrie/specoll/AFS/library/4-ww2/Friends/fau07.html

[5] Munroe Scott, *McClure: The China Years of Bob McClure* (Toronto: Canec Publishing and Supply House, 1977), 367.

[6] Thomas B. Socknat, "The Canadian Contribution to the China Convoy," *Quaker History: The Bulletin of Friends Historical Association*, 6.2 (1980): 69−90.

[7] Jack Dodds Private Papers, Jack Dodds to "Dear Mother, Dad et All," 8 July 1945.

[8] George Woodbridge, *UNRRA: The History of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration*, 3 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 2: 414.

[9] Scott, *McLure*, 387.

[10] Edward Abbott Private Papers (EA), "Medical Memoir."

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Francis Starr Private Papers (FS), "A Testimony for Peace."

[16] See FS, Stuart S. Starr, "Memoirs of My Mother," Appendix D in the memoirs of Elma McGrew Starr (1890−1885), "Contented" (1989), 38−9.

[17] Pendle Hill was established in 1930 as a Quaker study centre to prepare its adult students for service both in the Religious Society of Friends and in the world. The founders envisioned a new Quaker School of Social and Religious Education which would be "a vital center of spiritual culture" and "a place for training leaders" [Rufus Jones, Preliminary Announcement, 1929]. See Pendle Hill's website: http://www.pendlehill.org/about/history.php

[18] Ibid.

[19] EA, "Medical Memoir."

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid. Born in 1861 in Calcutta, India, into a wealthy Brahmin family, Rabindranath Tagore had briefly studied law in England (1878) before returning to India. Highly influential in introducing the best of Indian culture to the West and vice versa, he is generally regarded as India's most prominent cultural ambassador to the world.

[22] EA, Ed Abbott to Vivien, 6 April 1945, Kutsing.

[23] Ibid., Ed Abbott to Vivien, 26 March 1945, Kutsing.

[24] This fracture pin has diverse clinical applications. It is used in skeletal traction for alignment and reduction of long bone fractures.

[25] EA, Ed Abbott to Vivien, 5 May 1945, Kutsing.

[26] University of Minnesota Libraries, Social Welfare Archives, Fred Hoehler Fonds, vol. 91, file 16, Clark to Fred Hoeler, 22 March 1946.

[27] FS, Francis Starr, "Memories of Wartime China," Kingston *Whig Standard Magazine*, 27 July 1991, 5.

[28] EA, Ed Abbott to Vivien, 20 May 1945, Kutsing.

[29] Ibid., "Medical Memoir."

[30] Ibid., Ed Abbott to Vivien, 29 and 39 July 1945, Mohei.

[31] Ibid., "Medical Memoir."

[32] Ibid., Ed Abbott to Vivien, 25 September 1945, Mohei.

[33] Ibid., Ed Abbott to Vivien, 9 June 1945, Mohei.

[34] FS, "Memories of Wartime China," 6.

[35] Pickering College, Canadian Quaker Yearly Meeting Archives, Friends Ambulance Unit, China Convoy, Francis Starr to Friends, 17 March 1946.

[36] Ibid. See also FS, "A Testimony for Peace."

[37] EA, taped interview with Wilfred Howarth, "With the FAU in China."

[38] Ibid., Francis Starr to Friends, 1 January 1946.

[39] For a description of the FAU's crucial role in the rehabilitation of Hsiang Ya Hospital and nursing school, see Francis E. Schlosser, "Rebirth of a School of Nursing: The Rebirth of a Nursing School and Hospital in Central China," *American Journal of Nursing,* 47.8 (1947): 533.

[40] FS, Francis Starr, "FAU Member Tells of Relief Efforts in Stricken China," Newmarket *Era and Express*, 30 January 1947.

[41] FS, "Memories of Wartime China," 9.

[42] EA, Ed Abbott to Vivien, 30 September 1945, Kunming.

[43] A rare but life-threatening form of gangrene usually occurring at the site of a wound or surgical incision.

[44] FS, "Memories of Wartime China," 9.

[45] EA, "Medical Memoir."

[46] Ed Abbott, in a letter to Vivien at Easter 1945, clearly marked his evolution to Quakerism: "It was a thrill to take communion with my brother Christians of this country and to realize that though they have a different tongue there is only one church and its is not Anglican, RC, Brethren or any other man made distinction." EA.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Other international nurses, working with the World Health Organization (such as the twenty-six-year veteran British nurse, Barbara Bubb) in India, were familiar with the Barpali and its positive effect on raising sanitary standards throughout the country. Susan Armstrong-Reid's interview with Barbara Bubb for a biography, currently in preparation, of Lyle Creelman, chief nurse of the WHO, 1954−68, August 2007.

[49] For a fuller development of these ideas, see Edwin V. Abbott, letter to the editor, "The Canada Well-being Measurement Act (Bill C-268)," Orillia *Packet and Times*, 14 February 2001, and his favourable review of Mike Nickerson, *Life, Money and Illusion* in *Conscience Canada*, spring 2007, 6.

[50] FS, Francis Starr to Friends, 7 November 1947, Pozan, Poland.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., Clipping, "Francis Starr − Supervisor of Athletics Facilities."

[53] These programs included training in non-violence, French-English dialogue, conferences for diplomats, and Quaker-UNESCO seminars organized by the Canadian Peace Research Institute. For a fuller discussion of the history of peace activism at Grindstone Island, see Murray Thompson, "In Retrospect: Friends and Issues of Peace and War, 1965 and 2000," *Canadian Friend*, May-June 2005, 12.

[54] FS, personal memoir, "Dream dreams, Then write them, Aye, but live them first."

[55] I am grateful to Stuart Starr for providing information about his brother Francis's personal life during a talk given at the Sharon Temple on Saturday, 15 September 2007, and during a follow-up phone interview on 4 October 2007.

[56] FS, Marie Cocking, "Quakers are Gentle, Peace Loving but Determined," Kingston *Whig Standard*, 14 September 1990, 29.

[57] FS, Francis Starr to *Whig Standard* editor, undated.

[58] This theme is developed more fully in the chapter entitled "Bridge of Sorrow," dealing with the work of the China Convoy, in Susan Armstrong-Reid and David Murray, *Armies of Peace: Canada and the UNRRA Years* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, forthcoming 2008).

[59] Canadian Friends Historical Association website: http://canadianquakerhistory.ca/canadian quakers

[60] See "Speak Truth to Power: A Quaker Search for an Alternative to Violence, a Study of International Conflict Prepared for the American Friends Service Committee." Submitted to the Executive Board and approved for publication, 2 March 1955. Available at: http://www.quaker.org/sttp.html