



Family of Francis Starr's paternal grandparents, Mordecai & Harriet Starr, around 1900. Standing at the left is his father, Elmer Starr.

Dream Dreams

by Francis Starr

Edited by Christopher K. Starr

This autobiographical essay was written at the request of the author's family when he was in his seventies. A substantial part of it, treating the years in China, previously appeared in the Kingston, Ontario Whig-Standard Magazine (27 July 1991), 4-9. For an essay on Edwin V. Abbott and Francis Starr as relief workers, see Susan Reid (Canadian Quaker History Journal 72 (2007): 44-67). A comparable autobiographical essay by his mother, Elma M. Starr appeared as Contented (Gananoque, Ontario: Starr Family, 41 pp., 1989; abridged version in Canadian Quaker History Journal 73(2008): 64-79). The longer version of Contented includes a full family tree from Francis Starr's grandparents to 1989. A few of my own autobiographical anecdotes (Like a Magpie, 2009)¹ show him from a son's perspective. Aside from changing the Romanization of Chinese place names to

conform to the Pinyin system, editorial emendations are almost entirely confined to footnotes.

I figure my life has been generally interesting, sometimes exciting, and frequently useful. Here are some memories of it, but first some background.

My paternal ancestors were part of a migration of members of the Society of Friends who came to Canada from the USA in the late 18th century, because they trusted George III more than George Washington.

One of them, Francis Starr, bought land east of Newmarket, Ontario. He donated a site for the first school in the area and became the first teacher. Four generations of his descendants received their elementary education

¹ <http://www.ckstarr.net/cks/ANECDOTE%20REV.pdf>



Family of Francis Starr's maternal grandparents, Gilbert & Eliza McGrew, around 1910. Standing second from the right is his mother, Elma McGrew. To her right is her fraternal twin sister, Edith.

there, and it is now a museum. One of Francis Starr's sons, Mordecai Starr, became my grandfather. He was married just two days after his 21st birthday and used to say that he was his own boss for just one day. My father didn't go for that and delayed his own marriage till he was almost 34.

My mother, Elma McGrew, was an Ohio teacher who came to Ontario to enlighten Friends' children in Oxford County. When she returned home, my father pursued her, and they were married in the Friends meeting house near Harrisville, Ohio in 1915.

After a respectable interval, I joined them on 27 June 1916. This, presumably, was the result of their being joined previously. In the following years my sex education was largely from listening to the older boys and observing farm animals, and I've always been intrigued by the idea that my dignified and deeply religious parents would engage in physical union. They seem to have been satisfied with the results, and in the next 11 years four more children arrived. Gilbert, who followed me, fell victim to the 1919 flu epidemic, but the others grew up and all followed father's example and married US citizens.

My father was unhappy in Ohio, so before I was two years of age we moved to his home neighborhood outside Newmarket. There were no Friends' families in our neighborhood, and my parents were quite concerned about my association with the neighbors' children, who were inclined to be uncouth and often profane. The family that I visited most frequently had children both older and younger than me. An

early memory is of being there and being too timid to ask to use the sanitary facilities. I was too busy playing to go home, and conditions in my pants became noticeable; I was jeered so heartily that the only thing to do was go home. My poor mother was exceedingly embarrassed, but I do not remember any punishment. The only punishment that I remember at any time was my mother hiding my football when she was displeased with me. That was only serious when she couldn't remember where she had hidden it. Once Father became so enraged at my impudence at meal time that he threw a cob of corn at me. I dodged, and that was the start of a life of impudence.

One childhood exploit indicated I had the potential of a sharp businessman. English sparrows were an annoying pest on the farm, and there seemed to be no way of eliminating them. Father thought that destroying their nests would be a good control measure. As I liked to climb, he offered me a bounty of so much for sparrows' eggs and twice as much for baby sparrows. After collecting the bounty on some eggs, I rigged up a nest behind the wood burning stove and put the eggs there to incubate. Years later, I was somewhat surprised to hear my father relate that exploit to friends with what seemed to me some pride!

My parents took their Christianity seriously and we were brought up in the "fear and admonition of the Lord." Mother took the scriptural advice to "pray without ceasing" to heart, and my guess is that she talked with God as often as anyone. None of her children ever got too old for her to pray for their welfare and I expect that when in the 1940s I was in



Newmarket meeting house around 1955. This recognized historical site looks much the same today.

difficult spots in China, Poland and Pakistan, her prayers were the instrument of my preservation. Father prayed too, but didn't advertise it as much.

Once I listened in while my mother was trying to explain the Friends' Peace Testimony to a casual acquaintance. That person just could not accept the idea that Christians are not to destroy human life under any circumstances. "Surely, Mrs. Starr," he argued, "if somebody was intent on killing you, you would try to deter him even if you had to kill him." I don't remember mother's exact reply but it was to the effect that "If a person has evil in his heart and I kill him, I am the instrument of consigning him to hell. But if I am killed, I know that I will be acceptable to God and my killer may see that I died without hate or fear and come to experience God's redeeming grace before he dies." Sixty years later, I related that to a dignitary of the US State Department and he just shook his head in disbelief. When Bob McClure² told us in China of a famous Chinese person who had decided to become a Christian after witnessing a young missionary die gracefully and without resistance during the Boxer Rebellion, I knew what he was talking about.

Mother had been a teacher at a Friends' elementary school at Norwich in Oxford County, Ontario and on an Indian reservation near Buffalo, New York. She had special concerns about her children's education and tutored us at home. She felt it was not wise for us to attend the public school until the age of seven. Father had not completed elementary school and did not seem so concerned about formal education. I have few special memories of that part of my education. I neither loved it nor loathed it. Our school was about one and a half miles from home and I preferred to walk

even when my Aunt Esther would make available a ride in the buggy. The school was just one room, and we had a different teacher in each of the six years I attended. It was not considered an easy school, partly because of the enrolment, which was often in the forties.

Mother wanted her children to attend Friends' Boarding School³ near Barnesville, Ohio. She and some of her ancestors were educated there. I went to Ohio for the school year of 1932-1933, leaving well before school started. I made a trip to Virginia with my step-grandfather. I had some experience in driving so he let me drive and under his guidance, I developed a relaxed style that stayed with me throughout the years.

We spent one weekend in Washington, which gave me my first experience of city driving. In later years I drove in many cities and I'm thankful I didn't start in Mexico City or Calcutta! On First Day we went to Friends meeting. The President, Herbert Hoover, was there, as were a number of gawking, whispering tourists. Grandfather, being a dignitary among Ohio Friends, was invited to sit on the facing bench, and it was a highlight of his life that he was able to look down on the President of the United States.

Life at boarding school was pleasant, and the teachers were an agreeable lot. I was just an average student, except that math was anathema to me. Geography, history and civics were my main interests. Non-scholastic activities are what I remember best. I have vivid memories of one escapade. We captured a mouse one day in the dormitory and took it to study class and stored it in a pencil sharpener. When we were summoned to English class, I carried the mouse carefully by the tail behind my back. I was the last student into the class. The girls all sat in the front row so I dropped the mouse into the lap

² The medical doctor Robert B. McClure (1900-1991) was legendary in China. Comments about him by W.H. Auden & Christopher Isherwood in *Journey to a War* (New York: Random House, 1939) are probably typical of how he was viewed at that time. In later years he was the Moderator of the United Church of Canada. See: Munroe Scott's *McClure: A Biography, vol 1* (Toronto: Canec, 1977) and *McClure: A Biography, vol 2* (Toronto: Canec, 1979).

³ A Quaker secondary school, established in 1837 and continuing today as Olney Friends' School. The history of the school is told by William P. Taber in *Be Gentle, Be Plain* (Barnesville: Olney Alumni Assoc., 1976).

of the first girl. She threw up her hands and screamed and the mouse jumped into the lap of the next girl. She screamed and the mouse jumped to the next lap. There was more screaming and the mouse jumped on down the row of laps. The room was in an uproar. In a matter of seconds, the principal stood glaring in the doorway. He fixed his angry gaze on me right away and demanded, "Is thee responsible for this?" I confessed and was led off to the office. Incidents like this and an indifferent academic record made it seem pointless for me to continue beyond one year. It was at the depth of the Great Depression, and I argued that I was needed on the home farm, as we could not afford to hire help.

After a few years of farm life, I needed a change and so decided to go to California for the winter of 1937-38. I chauffeured for a Toronto real-estate dealer and his wife and daughter. It took us a week to get to San Diego, and then I was let loose. Unemployment was very serious in California at the time, partly because of the influx of refugees from the Dust Bowl states. A cousin of my mother's steered me to a job selling Good Humor ice cream on the streets of downtown Los Angeles. It was a pleasant occupation, but I ate most of my commission, so I decided to move on.

I answered a "Driver Wanted" and got the job of chauffeuring for Everly M. Davis, who claimed to have been Under-Secretary of the Navy in Woodrow Wilson's cabinet. He was an easy man to drive for, although I once frightened him by driving too close to a jay-walking lady on Santa Monica Blvd, and he cussed me for miles. The pay was \$1 per day and meals, as well as the use of the car at night. He had a Japanese cook, so I learned to appreciate Oriental food.

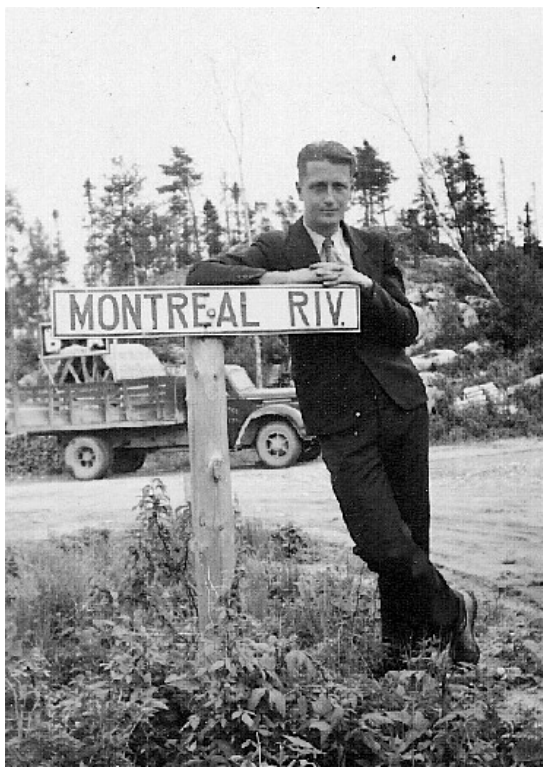
We spent Christmas at a 60-room house in Santa Barbara. Although I could not swim, I bathed in the Pacific Ocean for the first time. I hadn't been warned about an undertow and was almost carried out to sea. I guess Mother was praying.

When Davis asked if I would like to cook for the boys at his fruit ranch in the San Joaquin Valley, I readily agreed. There were four fellows

to cook for, and they were easily satisfied. There were two hives of bees nearby, which I raided early in the morning before the bees warmed up. The boys thought hot biscuits with fresh honey were okay. Things went well until one evening I served rabbit. It happened to be the same day that our cat disappeared. One of the fellows, who had been dishonorably discharged from the US Marines accused me of feeding them cat and went after me with a knife. I fled the place and never went back.

I returned to the Los Angeles area and sought out George Pollard. He had been a student of my mother's and had a landscaping and custom gardening business in Pasadena. I lodged at his place, and he let me take his sister-in-law for rides at night in his old Packard. In the spring I drove my Toronto friends home and returned to farming.

One summer I hitch-hiked to an Institute of International Relations meeting at Grinnell College in Iowa and the next summer to similar gathering at Duke University in North Carolina. At these gatherings I received an intellectual supplement to the Peace Testimony that I had



At his first alternative service posting at the Montreal River, Ontario.

absorbed at home all my life. Consequently, when the Hitler war broke out there was no doubt in my mind where I would stand when conscription was introduced. I informed the authorities that I would not join any armed forces but would gladly participate in useful alternative service.⁴

The Friends, Mennonites and Brethren had lobbied for alternative service for their draft-age men, and by the time the draft got to me a camp was well established at Montreal River, eighty miles north of Sault Ste Marie, Ontario. About one hundred of us left Toronto the night after the attack on Pearl Harbor, bound for the camp. When we reached the Soo, the next day we were transferred to trucks. The day was very cold, and we were thoroughly chilled by the time we got to camp.

Our project was construction work on the Trans-Canada Highway.⁵ It was mostly pick-and-shovel work, but it could be argued that it was worthwhile. A large proportion of our group was various shades of Mennonites, with a sprinkling of Seventh-Day Adventists,

Jehovah's Witnesses, Brethren and Christadelphians. As the only member of the Society of Friends, I was especially friendly with another loner, George Evanovitch of the Megiddo Mission.

My job was helper to Malcolm, a civilian employee who drove a team of horses moving rock on a stone boat. Malcolm was an interesting character, who chewed tobacco. He didn't bother to expectorate, so the juices oozed from the corners of his mouth and made a brown "V" down to the point of his chin. That was his "V for victory" over the rock pile.

Just before Christmas I became quite ill. The camp had no medical services, so I was trundled off to Dr Gimby, eighty miles away, with a temperature of 104°. We found Gimby at home. He made a cursory examination and asked "Did you ever have quinsy?" I replied that I had not, to which he growled "Well, you've got it now" and ordered me off to the hospital.

He must have looked in his medical book after I left, as he soon appeared at the hospital



With other conscientious objectors during alternative service, probably 1942.

⁴ National civilian service in lieu of military service in times of conscription, often on grounds of conscientious objection to violence.

⁵ A coast-to-coast system of east-west highways in southern Canada, constructed between 1950 and 1971.

and gave me another going-over. At last he enquired "Did you ever have scarlet fever?" Again my response was negative, and again he growled "Well, you've got it now." I was shunted off to a lonely place at the end of the corridor, where I would be less of a hazard others. Naturally, I was apprehensive about what I would have in the morning and wondered about leprosy or syphilis!

Gimby had several of his pals check me out the next morning, and they all agreed that I still had scarlet fever. I was carted off to the isolation hospital, which was an old house. It was a fortunate move for me. A Mrs Carmichael was in charge there, and I was her only patient. To use a Quaker phrase, she "spoke to my condition." Within hours I was feeling better, and in two days I was well. I didn't mind staying the prescribed four weeks, as bitter weather prevailed, and Mrs Carmichael was good company. Only two other patients came in during my stay in the isolation hospital. When I returned to camp I was made camp nurse, as a number of fellows were down with the flu, and my recent experience made me an authority on health care. My patients all recovered.

In mid-1942 we were suddenly notified that we were to be transferred to the west coast. The war with Japan was six months old, and it was feared that the Japanese would fire-bomb the forests of British Columbia. More standby firefighters were needed. This promised to be much more interesting and exciting than working a pick and shovel in the wilderness of northern Ontario.

The trip west was made in colonist cars via the Canadian Pacific Railroad and took three days. These coaches had bare wooden benches and a commodious luggage rack. I soon learned that the luggage rack was the best place to travel.

At New Westminster, we were parcelled out to various Forest Service stations. About a dozen of us from York County were sent to Langford, a village at the south end of Vancouver Island.

We were fortunate, as there was a better road system there than further in the interior.



Showing off at his alternative service posting in British Columbia, around 1942.

This meant that we did not have to carry our equipment so far. Roads were also a natural firebreak. And we could also visit Victoria, Canada's most beautiful city, on our days off. Sunday was always a day off unless there was a fire, so I was able to go to Friends meeting.

The forester in charge of our group was not antagonistic to "conchies" and was even quite congenial, so we were glad to fight fires for him. Our camp had about seventy fires that summer, and we were able to get to them quickly, so that they were overcome while still small. Our largest fire kept us busy for a week and covered over 1000 acres. Our camp had no illnesses and only a few minor injuries.

When the fire season was over, we were divided up among the other camps where there was more off-season work to do. This was mostly road building and snag cutting. Snags are

dead trees. Fire travels up them, and sparks are blown over a wide area. I was sent to Shawinigan Lake, where the main project was building a road across the island.

At first I was teamed with Leonard Burkholder on the cutting crew. That was monotonous work, but we devised ways of making it more interesting. One of them was to cut five or six trees to where they were about to fall and then fell an especially big one against them. They would then all go down with a loud crash.

When we got too far ahead of the gang blasting the stumps, I was sent to help them. Five of us worked at that. The procedure was for each of us to place dynamite under six stumps. When a signal was given, we scurried around and lit the fuse under each stump and then took shelter behind a nearby tree. If we didn't hurry, the first charge lit often blew the stump over our heads while we were firing the last one.

One day we came to a very large stump, and we decided to make an example of it. Five or six sticks of dynamite were placed under an ordinary stump, but we placed 101 under this biggy and fired them all alone. There was quite a crater where once had stood a big tree, and not a sliver of the stump was left.

After a few weeks of dynamiting, which involved kneeling on the frozen ground to place the charges, I came down with housemaid's knee. The foreman carted me off to the King's Daughters Hospital in Duncan. Here again I was fortunate in receiving concerned health care. Dr Watson was of the old school and didn't take the easy way and drain the knee. Instead, hot fomentations were ordered.

That made more work for the nurses, but another patient and I tried to make their lives more interesting. He was a walking patient and allowed to roam the hospital in a wheelchair. In the evenings, when discipline was eased, we would lurk in the corridors and waylay a nurse. He would place her on my lap, and I would

hold her there while he pushed around the wards. Some of the nurses seemed to appreciate the attention, and it provided some entertainment for the other patients. That was one of many enjoyable hospital experiences I have had, and it may well have helped to recognize the superior qualities of nurses. Both of my wives have been nurses.

Soon after being released from the hospital, I was granted compassionate leave to help on the home farm. It was a welcome change from the drudgery of road building and the excitement of fire fighting, but it was just for the summer of 1943. In the fall I was ordered to report to the forest service at Chalk River, Ontario.

There were two camps there. One was on a hillside overlooking the village, and the other beside the Petawawa River a few miles in the interior. I was assigned to the second one. It was in an interesting position, sort of a buffer between the Petawawa military camp and a camp for German prisoners of war. We had no problems with either the Canadian soldiers or the German ex-soldiers. Our work was mostly cleaning up tracts of government land.

I was assigned to the kitchen and, along with two other conscientious objectors, helped Mrs Blimke, the head cook. She was a good boss, and we had a great time. The achievement that I remember from that period in my life was making thirty-eight pies before breakfast one morning. I was also night fireman for a few weeks of the coldest weather. That involved making the rounds of various buildings and stoking the wood-burning heaters. When spring came I was permitted to return home to the farm.

For some time the Canadian Friends' Service Committee (CFSC)⁶ had been encouraging the alternative-service authorities to allow some C.Os to go to China for service with the Friends' Ambulance Unit (FAU).⁷ Early in 1944 it was agreed that twenty persons be recruited to that service. The CFSC was anxious

⁶ Canadian counterpart of the American Friends Service Committee (see note 11), founded in 1931.

⁷ A volunteer ambulance service founded by British Quakers and staffed mainly by conscientious objectors, active during World Wars I and II and for a time after World War II.



FAU unit in China around 1945. Among the others in this picture are Ontario Quakers Russell Beck (back row, third from right) and Edwin V. Abbott (middle row, left).

that some of those twenty be members of the Society of Friends, and as not many applied I had no trouble being accepted as part of the first group of ten. Delf Fransham from England, a member of Montreal Friends' Meeting, was the only other Quaker among the first ten. I had known him at Chalk River, where he served at headquarters camp. He was one of the few C.O.s that I met in the nineteen months' service who rose to be foreman of a work gang. Consequently, he was paid seventy-five cents a day. Ordinary fellows got just fifty cents a day.

We departed for Philadelphia late in 1944 and went to Pendle Hill, a Friends study centre in suburban Wallingford, near Philadelphia. Here we had Chinese language studies and were briefed on the operations of the FAU. Peter Tennant, an FAU old boy and titled Englishman, was our mentor.

Before then I had been both a US citizen

and a British subject, but before coming to Pendle Hill I had gone to the US consulate in Toronto and renounced my US citizenship. I didn't want to run the risk of the US Selective Service interfering with my going to China.

Our stay at Pendle Hill was a highlight in our lives for some of us. I was thrilled to make contacts with Friends in the home base of US Friends. It was great also to worship in some of the historic meeting houses. This was the home meeting of Douglas Steere. I also had numerous visits with my great-aunt, Hannah Starr Outland, in nearby Media.

It was also a privilege to get acquainted with Pendle Hill directors Howard & Anna Brinton.⁸ Howard had taught at Friends' Boarding School when my mother was a student there. Later he taught at Pickering College in my hometown of Newmarket.

Civilian transport to the Orient was practically non-existent in 1944, so we were sent

⁸ The author, educator and activist Howard H. Brinton (1884-1973) was very influential in shaping Quakerism in the twentieth century. Together with his wife, Anna S. Brinton (1887-1969), he directed Pendle Hill for many years. Pickering College is a primary and secondary school in Newmarket, Ontario, founded in 1942. Although independent, it has a long association with Quakerism.



Early in his FAU service in 1945. Note the military-style FAU uniform.

off to India in twos and threes as space was available in cargo ships. Late in December, Wes Brown and I were sent to Texas, and on New Year's Day 1945 we sailed out of Galveston harbor on the *S.S. Harold D. Whithead*, a liberty ship making its first voyage.

There were four other passengers, two Americans and two Chinese. The captain and crew were very congenial and allowed us the run of the ship, which I greatly appreciated. A week after leaving Galveston we were almost back at Philadelphia and joined a convoy off Norfolk, Virginia. Progress across the Atlantic was determined by the slowest ship. I made a practice of climbing the mast before breakfast to check the position of the ships. When I needed exercise I helped the deck crew and explored the holds. There were six hundred jeeps on board.

When activity is restricted, food becomes very important, so early in the trip I attached myself to the galley staff. They sometimes let me prepare my own meals, the most memorable of which was shrimp, sauerkraut and ice cream.

Passage through Gibraltar and the Suez Canal were memorable events. After Gibraltar, the convoy disbanded, and we traveled on alone. The main excitement of the trip came the night before we got to Colombo, Ceylon. The lookout thought he spotted a submarine, and everyone was ordered to battle stations. Tracer shells were fired to light up a wide area, but nothing unusual was sighted. One member of the armed guard suffered punctured eardrums, as he forgot to open his mouth when shots were fired. The next day the commander of the armed guard went ashore at Colombo to report the incident. He returned fuming, as the garrison commander had ridiculed him and told him he had been firing at fishing boats.

The rest of the voyage was uneventful, and fifty-six days after leaving Galveston we steamed into Calcutta harbor. It was my first view of the Orient, and my first human contact after going ashore was a boy of about t10 asking me "Hey, Joe, you **** my mother?" Some of the sailors were eager for such contacts, but I wasn't.

FAU headquarters was at 1 Upper Wood Street, and we were billeted at the nearby Astor Hotel. It was there that I first made the acquaintance of bed bugs. It was also there that I first heard the haunting Muslim call to prayer in the early morning.

Ed Abbott, Walter Alexander and Jack Dodds had arrived in Calcutta a week before Brown and I landed, so there were five of us waiting for transport to China. One evening, Ed Abbott, whose father was an Anglican clergyman, and I attended the service in a cathedral. For me, the outstanding feature of the service was a vigorous condemnation of anyone who refused to help the war effort. It was almost as if the priest knew that he had a couple of "slackers" in the congregation.

The only quick way to get into China was via the US Air Force, and after three weeks space was found for us. It was just my second experience of flight. The first was in a two-seater for about fifteen minutes from an airport north of Toronto. This time our plane was a C47, arranged for cargo and personnel. There were bucket seats along the sides and baggage

piled down the middle. Everything was all very casual, and as we prepared to board a soldier pointed to a heap of fabric material and said "There's the chutes, boys." It was left to us to choose the ones we wanted and figure out how to get into them.

For some reasons, we could not go directly to China, and we stopped over at a US base at Chabua, Assam. Ed Abbott and I played a bit of tennis, and he tried to teach me chess. I found it more interesting to explore the nearby tea plantations.

The second flight was more interesting, as it was over the Himalaya. We traveled high, so that supplementary oxygen was provided. My seat was not by a window, and as the sergeant from Wisconsin who sat next to me showed no interest in looking out, I asked him to change places with me. He refused, and it was plain that he was too frightened to move. He sat rigidly for the whole four-hour trip, gripping his carbine between his knees as if it were his only salvation. I don't suppose I will ever forget him and his trust in this killing device. I soon learned that between whiffs of oxygen I could get up to walk around and view the mountains from various windows.

As we approached Kunming, we banked sharply over Kunming Lake, and I thought we were headed for a watery grave. I was probably as relieved as the sergeant to be on solid ground again.

Friends were waiting for us, and we were whisked off to the home of "Stamp" Smith, postmaster of Yunnan Province. He was an Englishman and made his large home available to FAU travelers. He was the first of the four foreign "characters" I was to become acquainted with in China. He pursued a vigorous war on flies. He kept a swatter by his place at the table, which he applied to any fly within reach, even if it had fly landed on the head of a guest.

The next day we rode by truck to FAU operational headquarters at Chuxiong

(Kutsing). Administrative headquarters were in Chongqing, which was also the capital of China at the time. The first Sunday at Chuxiong, I walked around the city hall and counted seven bodies. That gave me some awareness of the cheapness of life in the Orient.

The FAU had two separate divisions, transport and medical. The transport division did most of the distribution of medical supplies in what was called Free China.⁹ The medical division supplied doctors, nurses and technicians to units of the Chinese army and understaffed mission hospitals. I knew I was going into transport work even before I left Canada, and I now stepped into a whole new world.

A number of trucks had been rescued from the docks in Rangoon just before the Japanese arrival. These were new trucks, but not much use to the FAU, as petrol was generally unavailable. Ingenious mechanics converted them to burn charcoal, and the FAU had a good transport fleet. The conversion consisted of mounting a furnace on the side of the truck. Charcoal was burned in this, and a gas released by the burning was drawn through a series of filters into the motor. The quality of gas varied, and at its best was about forty per cent as potent as petrol. Because of the fluctuation in the gas's quality, it was necessary to be able to control the carburettor air intake from the driver's seat. If there was not constant demand for gas, the fire would die down, and the gas would weaken. At the bottom of a hill there was sometimes a frantic manipulation of the air intake to get the right mixture. Each truck carried a few gallons of petrol for starting the motor, if necessary. It was very difficult to get the right air mixture with a cold motor and a new fire. One of our fellows, Bill Jordon from England, was very adept at getting the right mixture, and it was not uncommon for him to report "Well, fellows, I started without petrol this morning." I sometimes parked at the top of a long hill and so had lots of time to manipulate

⁹ That part of China under control of Chiang Kai-shek's party, the Guomindang (Kuomintang, KMT). There is a distinct hint of irony in his use of "Free China," as Francis Starr had a low opinion of the KMT and was, on the whole, more favorably impressed by the Communists.

the air intake as I descended.

I was given truck no. 27, with so many special controls that I didn't learn the use of some of them in six months' operation. The driver who preceded me was Tony Reynolds, a tall, scholarly Englishman. He kindly took me on his last trip and tutored me on the truck's operation. We made a trip southwest through Kunming, Paoshan and Dali, almost to the Burma border.

That was the only time I stayed in a hotel in two years in China. It was a real adventure. Shortly after a fell asleep, a rat ran across my face. I turned on the light, and a number of rats scurried down holes along the baseboard. Almost as soon as I extinguished the light, they returned, so the rest of the night was spent chasing them down the holes.

In the morning I had a grandstand view of the movements of the Chinese army. A contingent of soldiers was camped on a vacant lot below our window. In some things the Chinese are very methodical, and a bowel movement first thing in the morning is part of the way of life with them. The sergeant sent some of the soldiers to the far corner of the lot, where they functioned, and he sent another group. Only a few minutes were allowed, and if a soldier attempted to take overtime, the sergeant gave a sharp "Kwai i diar!" (Hurry up!). No time was allowed for reading the morning paper. That was a feature of military discipline that I found commendable.

After our return to Chuxiong, I was put on main line hauling to Lushien, a port on the Yangzi River. That was a trip of about five hundred miles, and it sometimes took a week. Generally, I had a convoy of three or four trucks with hired Chinese drivers. We usually slept on our trucks for safety's sake, and the trucks were also cleaner than the roadside inns.

At Bijie was a China Inland Mission operated by Lutheran Sisters from Germany. We always aimed to stop there on account of the German cooking, and we sometimes slept at the mission. The Chinese drivers always stayed with the trucks, and one night I was awakened by a messenger from the trucks with word that the drivers were under attack. I

hurried to the parking place with one of the Sisters, and the appearance of foreigners frightened the thugs away.

Each truck carried a charcoal boy, whose job was to buy the charcoal each morning and break it into pieces of about a cubic inch, so that it would burn evenly. My charcoal boy was a cheerful fellow of about my age named Xu Gua-bing. I anglicized his name to Sugar Bean. His English consisted of two four-letter words, one of them used in polite society. At the start of our association he was quite nervous, but I was pleased that after a few weeks he would sleep hour after hour as I drove.

Each truck was also equipped with a V-shaped block of wood. If on a steep grade it seemed as if the truck was about to stall, the charcoal boy would jump out and apply the block of wood to the rear wheel. This would give the driver time to rev up the motor and lurch ahead a few yards, when the block would be applied again if needed. It was an interesting, although slow and sometimes tiresome, way to make it up a hill.

The US Army was sending convoys over the same route, and these were often attacked by gangs of bandits. I never heard of any of our convoys suffering from bandit action. We made it a policy to stay in towns overnight, so as not to be an invitation to bandits. One afternoon I arrived at a certain town to find two army convoys camped there. Two hundred bandits with machine guns were reported to be lurking in the hills beyond. The Yankees expected another convoy that day and planned to go out in force the next morning. They urged me to travel with them and enjoy the protection of their weapons. They planned to leave at 0900, but I said that was too late. I refrained from telling them that their guns just invited attack. We went through the bandit area without incident. The Yankees never caught up with us, even though they were petrol-powered. Maybe they didn't have enough guns. If you are going to rely on carnal weapons, you can never be sure that you have enough.

I was spending the night in a mountain village when news came through that the war in Europe was over. I do not recall when I first

heard that the war with Japan had ended. For some time we had been hearing that the Chinese Nationalists had been leaving the war with Japan to the Communists. More and more US supplies were coming through for Chiang Kai-shek, as he knew the Communists would be a real problem after Japan was eliminated.

Soon after the end of the war with Japan, we acquired some new Dodge trucks. Alcohol was becoming available, so larger jets were installed in the carburetors, and we were able to continue to use home-grown fuel. Alcohol had considerably more power than charcoal, but it was of irregular quality, so extra fuel filters were required.

Late in 1945 the FAU decided to concentrate operations in Henan province. I was given two of the new trucks and Lord Hugh Russell, newly arrived from England, was assigned to the second. I had never dreamed of becoming a lord and certainly not of having a lord as my apprentice. We got along very well, and I was glad to have some exposure to nobility.

Our trucks were loaded with supplies for Henan. We traveled via Changsha and had many interesting experiences in areas recently liberated from the Japanese. It was the Christmas season, and one evening in Changsha we attended a concert at one of the missions. The commander of the local Chinese army garrison came and brought a guest -- the ranking officer of the Japanese prisoners. A real Christmas gesture.

When we arrived in Hankou, we found that our trucks were needed there, so we loaded our supplies onto a train and experienced a new mode of travel. Zhengzhou, capital of Henan, was only a few hundred miles away, but the trip took a week. The train had no coaches, but we had a boxcar to ourselves. Others joined us at Hankou, and we were now five. The only convenience we had was a little charcoal fire.

Once the engine broke down, and we sat for a day. Some other travelers had seen my tool box when I adjusted the step to our vehicle, and they petitioned me to go and fix the engine. I went and looked at it, but I had no idea what ailed it, so I told the other travelers that I didn't

have the right tools. That saved face for all of us. I never heard who fixed the engine.

Another time we sat for a day while the crew visited a nearby coal mine for fuel. Once we were careless with our little fire, and it burned a hole in the floor of the boxcar. And another time when we stopped the crew removed the ashes from the engine, and there was a fight among the local people for a few bits of unburned coal.

At one town where we had a prolonged stop, the halt, the maimed and the blind gathered around to seek our help. I assume some foreigners must have done public health work in that area before the war, so the natives assumed that all foreigners were doctors. We opened our first-aid kits and did what we could. Most of the cases were eye problems, and we used all of our argyrol on them. Our most interesting and probably most serious case was an abdominal abscess. We lanced and cleaned it and then wondered what to do for drainage. Somebody produced a condom, which we left hanging from the wound, and the operation was a success. Fortunately, the train moved on before our first-aid kids were completely exhausted.

Food wasn't much of a problem that week. Most of us carried emergency K-rations scrounged from profligate Yankee soldiers. And at one stop a restaurant was nearby, so we had a feast, except for some kidneys that hadn't been cleaned properly and were too "high" to eat. I shocked a proper Englishman in our group by applying my pocket knife to a chopstick that was longer than its mate.

We arrived in Zhengzhou in good shape and soon had many contacts with Japanese prisoners of war. The Japanese had been reluctant to surrender to the Chinese, whom they considered inferior, and so surrendered to any Caucasian they could find. One contingent surrendered to a lady missionary.

I was soon sent north to Anyang, where I helped to restore a mission hospital to operational status. Once I assured some Chinese craftsmen that a certain procedure was "jia bu tsuo," meaning "good enough" or "will do." They looked at me with disdain, and I

imagined them saying something like "makeshift foreign devil." After a few weeks at Anyang I was seconded to the CNRRA, the Chinese branch of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. My first project was organizing an irrigation scheme by using pumps on barges on the Wei River. I didn't last long there, and I never heard whether my successor did any better than I did.

After the war with Japan was over, the Communists moved down from the north, and the civil war was underway in earnest. One area of activity was just a few miles north of us in Henan. An opportunist warlord was in control of that area. When the Japanese invaded, the warlord decided that his future was with them and became their puppet. When the Japanese were defeated he decided that Chiang Kai-shek -- known in the foreign community as Chancre Jack -- had the best chance and threw in his lot with him. The Communist offensive forced the warlord to take refuge in the walled city of Yungyien. The Reds diverted a nearby river to make a huge moat around the city. The warlord had liquidated too many Communists to have a chance of becoming acceptable to them, so he sat tight and waited for Nationalist deliverance.

Word reached the FAU of serious health problems in Yungyien, so the Communists were asked for permission to take in a doctor and medical supplies. Permission was granted, and I was chosen to drive the truck with a doctor, nurse, interpreter and medical supplies into Yungyien. My truck was salvaged from Japanese army supplies. It was a copy of a Chevrolet. The starter didn't work, but it had beautiful ignition, and one turn of the starting handle got the motor going. The brakes were worn out, but that didn't matter, as we drove through flat country that was uninhabited by other motor vehicles.

A boat was waiting to take us across the moat, which was about two hundred yards wide. Entering a city that was being starved into submission was a weird experience. While the others were setting up shop, I made a tour of the city wall. Dummy cannons were located at spots where the enemy might try to come over, and all trees had been cut for firewood. The

Nationalists had tried dropping bags of food from planes, but this destroyed the roofs of too many houses, so the scheme was abandoned. At the end of the day, the warlord invited us to eat with him. Food was in short supply even for the boss man, and we didn't have a Chinese feast. I kept thinking what my farmer pals back in Ontario would think if they could see me breaking bread with one of China's most notorious warlords.

It didn't take long to distribute our supplies, and the next day we returned to our truck. We had left some personal items in it, and it was obvious that they had been examined, but nothing was missing. That was a pleasant surprise, as we knew from unhappy experience that everything would have been stolen from a truck left unattended in Chiang Kai-shek's part of China.

In 1938 the dike on the south side of the Yellow River near Zhengzhou had been blasted in order to release the water in an attempt to stop the advancing Japanese armies. The maneuver was fairly successful, but it also meant that during every flood season vast areas of Henan were flooded. One of the CNRRA's first projects was to put the Yellow River back on course and restore the flooded areas to agricultural use. I was among the foreigners recruited to train Chinese in the operation of North American tractors and ploughs.

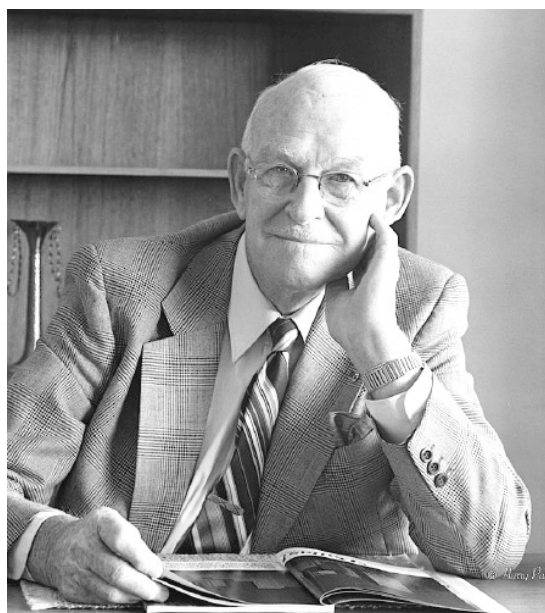
A camp was established in a central area, and I was in charge of the compound and machinery maintenance. Our cook had been trained by Anglican missionaries and so was acquainted with the foreigner's superstition of boiling drinking water. Once I found him setting the pots of boiled water out in the breeze to cool. He had satisfied the foreigners' shim and didn't think about contamination from dust.

Once I went to Kaifeng to supervise the movement of a fleet of small Clark crawler tractors with earth-moving blades to our camp. Fording a river was a memorable event. It was not deep, and ordinary trucks could drive through, but our new tractors were so low that I was sure the engines would drown. I decided they could drive through if the blade was set at

about 16 inches, so as to divide the water. If full speed was maintained, the water would not return to its natural level until the engine was out of danger. It was an inspiration to see our little tractors dividing the water and racing across. Three of the drivers lost their nerve in mid-stream and slowed down. Their engines drowned, but we winched them to shore, and the engines soon dried.

After three months we moved to higher ground, as the river had not yet been contained, and the flood season was approaching. I built an outdoor shower, consisting of a barrel mounted about seven feet up on scaffolding, with a shower head at the bottom. We would fill it in the morning, and by mid-afternoon the water was warm enough for comfort. A local child was our chore boy, and he and I engaged in frequent horseplay. One afternoon he threw sand on me as I was showering. Without even donning a towel, I went after him. He headed for the nearby village, but that didn't deter me, and we had a cheering crowd as we raced down the main street. I didn't catch him, but he lost so much face from being chased through the village by a naked foreign devil that he never repeated the prank.

As winter approached, the tractor project was disbanded, and I went to south Henan, where there was an unusual number of homeless children, to help to set up an orphanage. It was one of my most satisfying times in China. Local bureaucrats were supposed to decide which children were acceptable, but we sometimes rescued children on our own responsibility. One cold, snowy night, some of us were coming home from conferring with the governor when we spotted a child huddled under a doorstep. We took him with us and got special satisfaction from washing, de-lousing and putting new clothes on him. A sad boy, too old to be eligible for the orphanage, parked at our door for a number of days, until I finally admitted him. He had an advanced case of kalazar -- parasites of the spleen -- and didn't have long to live. I often wonder what happened to him, as we turned the orphanage over to local authorities when we got it organized and running smoothly.



Robert B. McClure in 1984.

At the start of the account of my China years, I mentioned Stamp Smith as one of four outstanding foreign characters that I met in China. Now is the time to deal with the greatest of them all, Dr Robert B. McClure. His story has been well told by Munroe Scott, so I'll content myself here with relating my favorite observation of him in China.

In the spring of 1946 I was confined to the FAU infirmary in Zhengzhou with amoebic dysentery. One morning Bob McClure appeared and asked for a bed. He had been traveling all night and seemed to be quite unwell. A technician came and took some blood and went to analyze it. He returned in a few minutes with the results. Bob decided that he had malaria. He prescribed for himself and went to sleep. By mid-afternoon he was propped up on one elbow and telling stories. Soon he discharged himself and went to the operating room and got to work. Malaria couldn't keep Bob down for long.

Another character was catholic bishop Tom Meagan. He was a Yankee and, unlike most of the priests in the area, didn't have a beard. I often stopped at his mission in northern Henan and one morning breakfasted with eleven priests of seven nationalities. One day I stopped at his mission and met him in the yard, so we visited right there. A Chinese who obviously

wasn't acquainted with the mission personnel came in and, as I was the one with whiskers, kowtowed to me and started to tell me his story. The bishop didn't seem embarrassed but soon put the visitor straight. Later I met a cute Chinese nun who, in her limited English, told me of a recent field trip with the bishop. His operation of the jeep impressed her. As she put it, "That bishop sure drive like a bat outta hell."

Throughout 1946 I was having so much to do with the Yellow River that I decided I had better have a share in the dam that was being built to restore it to its original course. Oliver J. Todd, United Nations Relief & Rehabilitation Administration [UNRRA] advisory engineer for the project, lived next door to the FAU compound in Zhengzhou, so I appealed to him.

He was a Yankee who had lived in China for a number of years and was reputed to know the Yellow River better than anyone else. He was also the most impetuous character I have ever been associated with and was known far and wide as "Todd Almighty." Several people warned me that I wouldn't last long with him. He readily agreed to take me on, but for a few days he wanted me to drive for him. We made trips out to the dam site, and he also had business in the surrounding area. Some of the trips were to the north side of the river, and the only place to cross was on a railroad bridge a few miles upstream. The bridge was over a mile long and shaky from numerous bombings. Regular trains did not cross it, and a yard engine was kept at each end to take a few cars across at a time. Jeeps and trucks traveled on planks laid between the rails and another row of planks outside the downstream rail. The first time we approached the bridge Todd told me "I always drive across here at 25 mph." That sounded like a challenge, so I held the jeep at 30 mph all the way across. He didn't complain. On the way back that night we approached the bridge, and the soldier who regulated traffic stepped out to stop us. Todd said "Don't stop," so we sped past. About halfway across a train loomed in the darkness. Todd should have known better than to pass the soldier without permission, as once before he had done that and had to back the jeep off the bridge. He got out and went

ahead to negotiate with the driver.

He soon came back to the jeep and sadly informed me that the train had no reverse gear. Driving a jeep forward on two sets of loose planks in the darkness is hazardous enough, and I didn't contemplate for a moment going into reverse. The jeep was powerful, with good gears and traction, so I put it into a compound low and four-wheel drive, eased up to the engine and pushed the train back off the bridge. Todd didn't criticize the maneuver.

The only time he criticized me was once when I met him by appointment at a certain airfield. He alighted from the plane, came over to the jeep and said "The plane is going on down to Xinjiang, so I'll stay with it, and you meet me there." It was about a forty-mile trip, and when I got there Todd was quite annoyed that I hadn't gotten there as quickly as the plane. That is an indication of how unreasonable he could be.

Throughout the years, the annual flood had widened the breach in the dike to over a mile. Earth fill was pushed in from the sides, and when the gap was narrowed to about 1200 feet, a trestle was built, across and rock was hauled from a nearby mountain and dumped into the breach from the trestle. Todd was annoyed with the Chinese engineers, who didn't seem to be in a hurry to get the job done, so I was appointed to keep pushing the work on the trestle. I had had more experience than any of the other foreigners in working with the Chinese, and I had a great time. One night a little flash flood went through and upset our pile driver and weakened a section of the trestle. Todd ordered me to concentrate rock filling at that section, and after a week it was stabilized. The mass of rock that appeared at the surface was named Starr Island.

Slowly we raised the river, which inched up to the level of the old river bed. A dike about three feet high had been constructed across the old bed, so that when the water got to the top of it, the dike could be demolished and the accumulated head of water would rush down to the old bed. One evening I walked out to the old bed at the little dike and saw that the water was just about to go over. It was almost dark,

and I knew there wouldn't be time to get equipment over and demolish the dike as planned, so all alone I broke down a small section of it, and the water went rushing through. The gap widened 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 China's Sorrow¹⁰ back on course. There was a lot of hard work ahead, and the river had to be raised another eight feet before it stopped going through the trestle. I didn't wait around for that, and early in 1947 I started the trip back to Ontario.

The train ride to Shanghai was the most memorable part of the trip home. The train was so crowded that the only place I could find to sit was on the steps of the carriage. Soon after darkness descended, word went around that the previous train had been attacked by Communists. Our crew decided they would fool the Reds. All lights were extinguished, and full speed ahead was ordered. It was a time of apprehension, as we didn't know if we might come to a place where a bridge had been destroyed in the last few hours, so that the train would tumble into a canyon or river.

Nothing like that happened, and after the danger zone was passed I feared that I might go to sleep and fall off the steps, so I moved into the cab of the engine. This already had so many people in it that there was no place to sit. I crawled out a window onto the catwalk along the boiler. It was wide enough for sleeping, so I lay down with my back to the boiler, wrapped my arm around a brace rod, and had a restful night.

In Shanghai a converted troop ship was loading for a Pacific crossing. I went aboard and after fifteen uneventful days landed in San Francisco. A few days were spent exploring that fascinating city with ex-FAU pal Sherman March, and then I boarded a train for Toronto.

It was good to be back home. Things were going well on the farm. My younger brother, Stuart, had finished school and was learning farm management. After a month at home, I found the foreign service urge still very much alive, so I volunteered for service with the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). They were recruiting fellows with farm experience to go to Poland to train Polish farmers in the use of machinery sent by the UNRRA from the USA and Canada. I was accepted and, after a short orientation period at MCC headquarters, shipped out of New York on another converted troop ship.

We landed at LeHavre, and I took the train to Paris. There I learned the hard way that English was not acceptable. The French were embarrassed that their language had been superseded as the dominant international language and refused to speak English. This was quite a contrast to China, where everywhere we went we met Chinese who were eager to practise their English.

A few hours in Paris were enough, and I took the first train to Brussels. Mennonites there befriended me and soon arranged for a plane trip to Prague. It has been one of my regrets that I was so eager to get on with the job that I didn't take time to explore that historic city. A plane was loading for Poznań, and I went aboard. Our plane was accompanying another, and the two didn't have radio contact, so the pilots communicated by tipping their wings. It was not a method of conversation that I enjoyed.

Poznań was headquarters for our project, and I was soon teamed up with Paul Miller of Iowa. We were assigned an interpreter named Joe, who had learned to speak English from listening to the BBC. We toured state farms and felt that we did some good. Sometimes it seemed as if we were a sort of football between UNRRA and the Polish government. In addition, we were discouraged and embarrassed at the ease with which our machines broke

¹⁰ The Yellow River occupies a place in Chinese history comparable to that of the lower Nile in Egypt. Due to uncertainty in the spring floods and occasional cataclysmic events, it is nicknamed China's Sorrow.

down. We wondered if US manufacturers unloaded faulty equipment on UNRRA, as it would certainly have ruined their reputations if sold back home.

After four months our project wound down, and I shipped out of Gdynia on the *SS Batory*. I had enough money to get to England and so landed at Southampton and went to work for the farmers' unit in Surrey.

Later I went north to see ex-FAU friends Al & Margaret Matheson. Al offered me a job running a combine harvester. I was billeted with some German POWs who also worked the same farm. They told me that they feared capture by Australians and Canadians, who were more brutal than the Yanks or Limeys.

I had no desire to spend a winter in England, so I went to London to see if the Friends' Service Unit could use me. India had just gained independence and had been partitioned from Pakistan, and there were millions of refugees needing help. Friends were naturally concerned, and soon I was on my way

to India. It was snowing the morning we left London. Minutes before our boat-train pulled out of Euston station a messenger from Friends' House¹¹ came with word that a Yankee girl was leaving for India, and as she had never been abroad it would be appreciated if we met her in Bombay. We were given her name – Dorothy Ruth Schlick – and the name of her ship, which carried only six passengers.

When we were moored at Port Said, we saw a Yankee ship approaching. As it drew alongside we saw that it was the ship we were expected to meet. Six passengers were at the rail, and we called out for “Schlick,” but none of them responded. We must have passed her ship in the Red Sea, as it had not arrived in Bombay when we did. Two days later it came, and we surprised Schlick by greeting two girls by that name, just in case, as they came ashore.

Ken Aldous, who traveled with me from England, and Dorothy and I spent a few days in Bombay and then entrained for Delhi. When we arrived there Dorothy was immediately



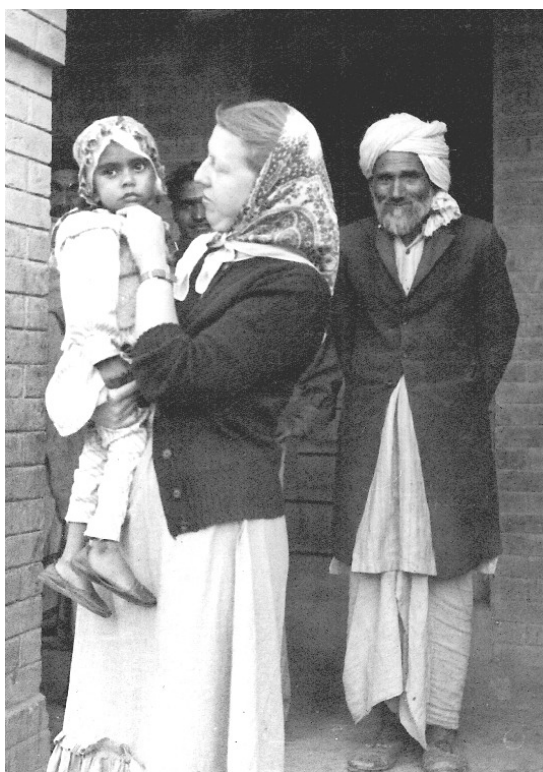
Second arrival in India.

¹¹ Headquarters of Britain Yearly Meeting in London.

conscripted by Mahatma Gandhi. An Englishman, Richard Symonds, had contracted typhoid fever while on one of Gandhi's special missions. I stayed in Delhi for a few days and went twice to Gandhi's 5:00 p.m. prayer meetings. Fifteen years after worshipping with the President of the United States, I worshipped with the greatest man of our time.

It was decided that I should pilot a motorcycle to Pakistan. I hadn't had much motorcycle experience, but after ten days of struggling through deserts and mixing with ox-carts and camels I felt like a veteran. In one town I had a close call and didn't even know what had happened until some days later. I had stopped to think things over and was immediately surrounded by a group of Sikhs. They were fingering their knives and muttering about Pakistan, and I detected some hostility. The fact that I was unarmed and showed no fear apparently puzzled them. A schoolboy who could speak some English came along, and I told him what my business was and showed him my passport. That apparently satisfied the unfriendly ones, and they backed off, so that I could get moving. When later I recounted the incident to Friends in Pakistan they told me that if I had made one false move I would have been done in. At that time my whiskers were red, a sign of a first-class Muslim. In those days, Sikhs and Muslims were butchering each other at the drop of a fez, so I was very thankful for that schoolboy.

In Pakistan three other volunteers and I decided to start operations in Khanewal, about one hundred miles south of Lahore on the edge of the Sind desert. Khanewal was a railroad town with a normal population of about 25,000. Fully that many refugees from India had crowded in, so there was plenty of scope for relief work. He had three vehicles, and I was appointed transport officer. The government gave us a mansion abandoned by a Hindu. Along came Mohammed Fayaz Khan, who had been a mechanic in the army, and he became our vehicle maintenance man and number one driver, as well as our interpreter when needed. Dorothy Schlick had applied her Yankee know-how to Richard Symonds's typhoid with good



Dorothy Starr with refugee child in India or Pakistan around 1948.

effect back in Delhi, so she was soon free to join us. She set up a hospital, and a refugee doctor came along and added his expertise. Many bales of clothing sent by the Church World Service were distributed, and a breakfast program was organized.

We acquired a huge old kettle and set up a cooking station in a central area. Some sort of grain mixture was available, and we served cooked cereal every morning to anyone who was hungry. We had some refugees do the actual cooking and serving, while we supervised, except one morning when I took a turn at stirring. Suddenly nobody was hungry, and we found out that it was forbidden to eat food prepared by an infidel. After that I kept my hands out of it.

Dorothy Schlick and I were developing quite a friendship. Sometimes, in the interests of privacy, we went to a nearby graveyard. The jackals seemed to enjoy our evening visits to their domain. In June we were in Lahore, just six months after we had met on the Ballard Pier in Bombay. I was almost 32, and I figured I was old enough to take responsible action. By then



Dorothy Schlick shortly before she met Francis Starr.

Dorothy was known as "Schlick Chick" or sometimes just "Chick." I asked Chick to be my wife. She must already have given the matter some thought, as she answered in the affirmative and with flattering enthusiasm. We decided to move right ahead with the matter and consulted with James Manry, a Presbyterian minister whom we knew well. He suggested posting the banns in English on the door of the native church, so there wouldn't likely be any protest. We wanted to have a Friends-style wedding, but that wasn't legal, so Manry agreed to sign a certificate as officiating minister, and things went well. Ken Aldous was best man. Mohammed Fayaz Khan was there, as were the Minister for Refugees of the government of West Punjab and a representative of the Yankee embassy.

It was a practical time to get married, as we were due to be repatriated. The next day we entrained for Karachi, and a two-month honeymoon was underway.

In Karachi we experienced the first strains on our new marriage. I had neglected to make hotel reservations. The city was crowded with

refugees, and all hotels were full. Eventually the YWCA agreed to find a place for Dorothy, so I went to the YMCA. An unusual way to honeymoon! The next day we made the rounds of all the crummy little hotels and finally found one that offered us a sort of room on the roof. We were together again, but not alone, and the bed bugs welcomed us.

The next job was to make arrangements to leave the country. Plane travel wasn't yet common, but we found a ship that would take us to Bombay. The booking agent told Dorothy that she would need an exit visa, while I as a British subject could come and go as I pleased. The official looked through Dorothy's passport and noted that she had no entrance visa. That didn't impress us, and we told him that all we wanted was an exit visa. "But" he patiently explained "we have no evidence that she came into the country, so we can't grant her an exit visa." We had no answer for that and departed to take advice. Soon we returned and informed him that Dorothy had entered the country in an area where there were not yet any border posts, and anyway, the fact that she was standing there before him was evidence that she had entered the country. He accepted that and granted her a visa.

The voyage on the *SS Barjora* to Bombay was memorable. We, as the only foreigners on board, were given a cabin and ate at the captain's table. The deck and holds were packed with refugees, so exploring the ship was out of the question.

After two days in Bombay without finding any shipping for North America, we took a train for Calcutta. That was a pleasant but uneventful trip. We stayed at Friends' House on Upper Wood Street, and I was able to show my bride around town, as it was only three years since I had been there on my way to China. Passage to Boston on a Cunard Lines cargo ship was soon arranged, and we left the Orient.

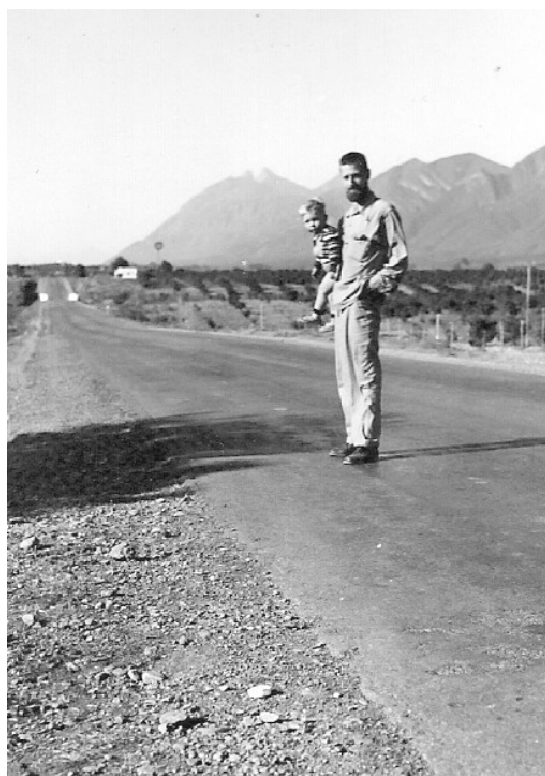
The ship carried twelve passengers. One of them, a lady missionary, was sea-sick before we even left the dock. We had a short stop at Colombo, where we went ashore to visit a friend of Dorothy's. The next stop was Port Sudan, where we went ashore very early in the

morning. We were glad to return to ship for breakfast and a cool room. After that we stopped at Port Said, where part of our seven hundred tons of tea was unloaded. Dorothy undertook to increase my education by teaching me to speak Spanish. Had I known that my twilight years would be spent in Central America, I would have taken her more seriously. All I remember from her lessons were "¿Qué hora es?" and "¿Excusado dónde está?" By the time we got to Boston we were tired of traveling, so we hurried down to Philadelphia to report and then entrained for Ontario.

Life in Ontario was pretty ordinary after the Orient. We rented a farm next to that of my parents, and the next August we were joined by Christopher Kenneth. We were glad to report that to our missionary friends back in Pakistan, as we suspected that they thought we had had a forced marriage. Quite early Christopher was introduced to First Day school at Toronto Friends' Meeting. One of his little friends there couldn't pronounce his name and called him something like "Kipper." That became his name, and at forty years of age he is still called by it in the family.

For the winter of 1950-51 we decided that we should do some traveling. Dorothy had assisted in Friends work camps in Mexico and had majored in Spanish at Simpson College in Iowa, so we decided to visit some of her old haunts. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)¹² arranged for us to meet with Friends groups along the way, and our prospective hosts were advised that we were vegetarians. We got well acquainted with macaroni and cheese, as that seemed to be the only known meat substitute.

The winter in Mexico was pleasant. We helped at a number of AFSC work camps. Late one afternoon in a suburb of Mexico City, Kipper disappeared. He could not be found in our compound, so I went onto the street to search for him. I spotted him just as he was going through the swinging doors of a bar at



With son Christopher in Mexico during the winter of 1950-51.

the end of the street.

We returned to Ontario in the spring of 1951, and I got a job as resident farmer on a farm on Highway 27 near Toronto. While there, Margaret Sushila was added to our family. She was named for Margaret Jones, the British midwife who was with us in Khanewal, and Gandhi's doctor.¹³ As time went on, my employer and I developed a state of incompatibility, so I ceased farming in that area.

Carlton Street United Church in Toronto had acquired a country property that needed management. Jim Finlay, the minister, had been on the committee that selected Canadians for the FAU in China, and we were eager to work with him and his church. The board of the church accepted us.

Dorothy, Kipper, Sushi and I were soon installed at Carlton Church Farm on the edge of Alton, about fifty miles northwest of Toronto. It was a privilege to be a part of that project

¹² An organization of American Quakers founded in 1917 to assist civilian victims of World War I and to provide a venue for alternative service for conscientious objectors. It is still active.

¹³ Sushila Nayyar (1914-2000) was an Indian medical doctor and political activist.



Starr family in early 1954. Above is Christopher, sitting on their parents' laps are Lucie and Sushila. Andrew was born later that year.

and participate in its development. Soon we were providing a holiday place for all sorts of under-privileged inner-city people. And we thought it would be nice to have another child. Dorothy had become "inconceivable," so we approached the Children's Aid Society for help. At that time it wasn't fashionable, as it has since become, to adopt a child of a different race from one's own, so we expressed interest in adopting a child of Oriental ancestry. We were offered a variety and settled on a chubby little girl whose father was Japanese. We named her Lucie Marion, after a favorite teacher at the Friends First-Day School and Dorothy's favorite in-law.

As often happens, an adoptee triggered something in the mother, and Dorothy soon discovered that she was no longer "unbearable." This alarmed the committee in charge of farm policies, and it was suggested that with four children we couldn't devote enough time to the job. Grandfather Starr's house on the corner of my parents' farm had become vacant, and we

were invited back home.

Being part of an agricultural farm again was great, but there often wasn't enough to do, so I took on the agency for McCulloch chain saws. Dorothy became editor of the *Canadian Friend*,¹⁴ and the grandparents helped with the children. Andrew Francis was born in the York County Hospital in Newmarket, where Kipper had started out almost five years earlier.

I had never imagined myself as a salesman. I had tried selling magazine subscriptions in Los Angeles long before, and lasted just half a day. But I soon found that I had no hesitation about chain saws. It was exhilarating to be able to make a cut in ten seconds that took as many minutes with the old hand saw. McCulloch had never had a representative in the Newmarket area, and there were only two real competitors, Clinton and Pioneer. In two years I had them practically eliminated, and almost everyone in the area that needed a chain saw had a McCulloch. It was time to move on.

We had been hearing about a new Friends meeting in Ottawa, and our family and that of Gordon & Betty McClure developed a concern to add more bodies to the new meeting. The McClures also had four children. Some of us traveled to Ottawa to review the situation. We contacted our old friend from Pakistan days, Norman Fenn of Carleton College,¹⁵ and he introduced us to George Johnston of the English Department, who was going on sabbatical. George was willing to have four adults and twice as many children crowd into



The house down the hill from Starr Elms occupied by Francis Starr's family prior to the move to Ottawa in 1956.

¹⁴ Journal of the Canadian Yearly Meeting of Friends.

¹⁵ Carleton University since 1957.

his home on Third Avenue for a year, so we moved to Ottawa in mid-1956.

Ottawa was a great place. At that time, it was big enough to have everything, but small enough that a good walker could go most places on foot. Gordon and Betty, being teachers, soon got jobs, but farmers don't fit in so well in a city, and McCulloch was already well represented. I tried selling Volkswagens, but the boss thought I was too impudent, so I moved into frozen foods. The gimmick there was to sell a freezer before letting the prospect have access to bargain foods. I sold a few freezers.

Next was a job with a landscaping contractor, where I was right at home, as I had experience in planting, pruning and removing trees. This lasted until I was offered the position of equipment manager in the Athletics Department of Carleton College. As my formal education had been meager, I was thrilled to be associated with Carleton, a new and progressive college. When I started in 1958, the enrolment was less than a thousand, so I got to know most of the students and, as I was my department's first full-time employee, I had some status. Norm Fenn was the director of the department and, although I never made inquiries, I have always suspected that I was offered the job at his instigation.

I was at Carleton for fifteen years, and my time there ranked right along with the China years as the most satisfying time of my life. Of course, there wasn't the thrill of a country at war on the other side of the world, but I had good rapport with most of the students and some of the professors, and my world travels seemed to impress them more than my lack of formal education.¹⁶ I also appreciated the opportunity to visit most of the other universities in Ontario and some in Québec in the course of traveling with Carleton sports teams.

My marriage didn't fare as well as my job.

Dorothy and I drifted apart, and in 1969 a separation was arranged. There was no bitterness or animosity, just the sadness of failure.

In 1963 the CFSC had acquired the use of Grindstone Island in the Rideau Lake for peace education purposes. I became active in management of the physical side of the project and for some years did much of the purchasing of equipment and supplies. Grindstone Island has an area of about ten acres. It was the summer home of Admiral [Charles E.] Kingsmill, father of the Canadian navy. There is a central lodge, a boathouse and a number of sleeping cabins. The lake is relatively unpolluted, and the place was ideal for conferences, seminars and relaxation.

In 1973 I resigned my position at Carleton University and drove my Volkswagen camper to Costa Rica together with Raymond King, a younger friend of the family. I had gone there by plane the year before to visit Hubert Mendenhall, with whom I had roomed at Friends Boarding School. He had led a group of Quakers to settle in Costa Rica twenty years earlier. Most of them were from Alabama, and they were unhappy with persecution by the Selective Service and with their country's war stance in general. I had liked Costa Rica so much that I was eager to return, and the trip by road provided many reminders of travel on the Burma Road.¹⁷ Formalities at borders were rather tiresome, though, as it was required that we get clearance from Immigration, Customs and the police not only to get into a country but to get out, and we passed through five countries. I decided I didn't want to face all these borders again, so I sold the camper and returned by plane to Florida early in 1974. From there, I chauffeured Lilian Beamish of Ottawa back home and turned to Grindstone Island.

A day in late June 1974 proved to be a

¹⁶ Francis Starr made no attempt to conceal his paucity of formal education, yet he saw no reason why he should not interact with students and professors as an equal.

¹⁷ A road from Lashio, Burma to Kunming, the main part built in 1937-1938 to allow transport of war material into China for the Sino-Japanese War effort. When Burma fell to the Japanese in 1942, it became necessary to supply the Chinese forces by air from Assam over the eastern part of the Himalaya, known as the Hump.

turning point in my life. Things were quiet at Grindstone, so I drove down to Howe Island, near Gananoque, Ontario, ostensibly to visit Rev Frank Abbott. He was the father of Ed Abbott of China days and was staying with Ed's elder sister, Kathleen. Ed had told me that she was recently widowed and, as I was actively searching for a new companion, I felt that she should be added to my list. When I drove into her yard and saw her there with her family of Labrador puppies, I had no idea that my search was over. I had a good visit with Frank and just happened to discover that Kay – Kathleen's everyday handle – had bought a little chain saw to trim her trees. She was afraid to use it, so I made arrangements to return. Matters progressed naturally from then on, and by fall we had agreed that we should be one. I was surprised how easy it was for me to adapt to a married state without a ceremony, inasmuch as I had been inclined to intolerance of couples who "lived together." Nevertheless, we considered ourselves married, and it was five years before we felt the need of an "official marriage," to use my mother's term.¹⁸

Kay was anxious to see Costa Rica, so we bought another Volkswagen camper and with her Labrador dog, Rani, and my shepherd-collie, Cindy, we motored down late in 1975. We had a short visit with Kipper and his wife, Anne, at the University of Kansas and then spent a few weeks camping in South Texas.

I made some investigation and found Acorn Ranch, a nudist park north of Corpus Christi, where I was glad to introduce Kay to a new way of life. She was somewhat apprehensive at first, but when one is in a group of liberated people it becomes easy to shed that original perversion, clothes. As Mark Twain said, "Modesty died when clothes were born."

The journey through Central America was uneventful. We drove along Lake Nicaragua without a stop for a swim. Raymond King and I

had swum there three years previously, and the next day we were warned that this was not a good idea, as it is the only body of fresh water with sharks. When we got into Costa Rica we went to Coco Beach and had a good time in the water, and the dogs enjoyed it too. When we returned to our camper we found that it had been visited by two-legged sharks, and we were cleaned out. Kay's purse and my pants and shirt had been taken, so all our money, travel documents and things that ordinarily travel in purses or wallets were gone. Fortunately, the vehicle had a good supply of fuel, so we journeyed on to Monteverde and were among Friends.¹⁹ When the 25th of December arrived a few days later, Kay and I hiked up to the Continental Divide, where with a little imagination we could see both the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea. For what is supposed to be a big meal, we had cheese sandwiches and bananas. That Christmas was a memorable one.

After the New Year was well underway, we journeyed to San José. American Express responded to our predicament and advanced us some funds, but the Canadian embassy was very lackadaisical in issuing us new passports.

The next winter we decided to drive to Costa Rica again. We had no reason to hurry, so we visited another naturist resort near Pensacola, Florida, camped on Padre Island and explored Mayan ruins in Yucatán. For some years I had had the name of a woman in Belize in my address book, so we went looking for her. We found her at what she claimed was the largest allspice plantation in the world. Belize was rather unimpressive, on the whole, so we moved into eastern Guatemala. However, the road was so bad there that we feared that we wouldn't have enough fuel to get to a gas station, so we returned to Belize. There we camped in the square of the parliament building under construction in the new capital of

¹⁸ For a biographical sketch of Kay, see *The Canadian Friend* (May 2004):18-19.

¹⁹ Monteverde is a community in Puntarenas province situated within walking distance of the continental divide. It was founded by Quakers and other pacifists from the USA in the 1950s in objection to the Korean War. It still has a significant minority Quaker component and is a popular ecotourist destination on account of the nearby cloud forest.

Belmopan. We had a leisurely trip across southern Mexico and entered Guatemala on the Pacific highway.

Late one afternoon we got stuck on a beach in El Salvador. Villagers gathered around to see what the Gringos would do, and another Gringo didn't help by coming along and informing us that he had been stuck and it had cost him \$60 to get out. I decided I wasn't going to pay even sixty cents, so we pretended that we had planned to camp there and settled down for the night. By midnight all the villagers had departed and I devised a scheme for using the tide to get us moving. It worked, and before the jeering locals could return the next morning we were on our way. We journeyed along the coast until we found a quiet little private beach, and we spent Christmas there. It was a delightful time. At low tide I chipped oysters off the rocks, and we had another memorable Christmas dinner.

At the Costa Rican border we were told that the country was under a malaria alert. One of

the measures for combating the dread disease affected us right there. It seems that somebody had found mosquitoes breeding in the water in an abandoned tire, so the order went out: No unmounted tires in Costa Rica. We had one on top of our camper, and the Customs people said they would have to confiscate it. I suggested that that was a handy way for them to get free tires for their own use, but they denied this and said they would burn it right there in our presence. "No, you won't" I replied. And I pulled the tire down, rolled it back across the border and gave it to the Nicaraguans.

Wintering in Costa Rica was becoming a habit, so in 1983 we decided to try an Ontario winter. It went well, but one was enough, so except for one winter "Down Under" we've been commuting to our hideaway in Costa Rica each year. People have asked me what part of the world I like best. Costa Rica, New Zealand and Yunnan are all the best.

Right now it is 1990, and these memoirs of mine are drawing to a close. Both my parents



Francis & Kay Starr at Almonte, Ontario in 1998. With them are their grandchildren (left to right) Nova Starr, Xari Chartrand, Francis A. Starr and Bevan Chartrand.

have moved on to Eternity. My children are all happily married – Kipper for the second time – and I have six grandchildren and a host of happy memories.

Dorothy died in a diving accident in the Bahamas in 1977. Of course it was a shock to many people, especially our children, but if I can go as quickly while doing something I like, I hope nobody mourns.

In my time I've been shocked by stories of children fighting over their parents' estates. The dispersal of Dorothy's estate was in pleasing contrast to these and is a special memory to me. Kipper and Sushi were executors, and one evening Kipper and a friend came to see Kay and me at Koinonia, near Americus, Georgia. We had a pleasant visit, and Kipper revealed that although Dorothy had willed the bulk of her estate to our children, they wanted me to have some of it. I tried to decline gracefully, but when we visited Sushi in the spring she gave me a sizeable check.

Another special kindness is remembered now. Once, while I was hitch-hiking near Toronto, a kindly cop gave me a ticket and a ride to a road where I could hitch-hike legally. I thought the charge was unreasonable, so I returned the ticket with a protest. Sometime later I was notified that a magistrate had fined me \$10 or two days in jail. I thought it was an insult to value me at \$5 a day, and I also thought two days in jail might be interesting, so I ignored the magistrate's message.

A few weeks later at home in Ottawa I received a phone call that went something like this. "Mr Starr, I'm Detective Soandso, and I have a warrant for your arrest. When would be a good time to come and arrest you?" I was on the spot, as I was scheduled to preside at an important Friends committee meeting the next day, so quick thinking was called for. "It's too bad for you to have to come all the way out here just to haul me back" I said. "How be if I come down and turn myself in on Monday?" The detective readily agreed.

On Monday I turned myself in, being careful not to take any money with me, as I suspected that the cops would shake me down. They did, but they shook in vain and so locked

me up. They notified the Toronto police that they had me, and two cops drove up from Hogtown and hauled me back to the Toronto Don Jail.

The Don Jail is a notorious institution, and when I was pushed into a big cell with eight other fellows I was apprehensive. I had no reason to worry, as my new friends were mainly concerned about how the cops had treated me. They wanted to know if I had been fed on the long trip from Ottawa. When I replied that there had been no suggestion of food, the cops were roundly cursed. One grizzled old fellow wasn't content with cursing. He went over to his bunk, lifted the mattress and fished out two slices of bread for me. It was white bread, which I disdain, and had been in very questionable storage, but I ate it and was thankful for the gesture.

Odd ending? No. Writing is harder than working, so it's time to move on.



Namesakes at Francis Starr's memorial service in the Newmarket, Ontario meeting house. Left to right: Francis Andrew Starr (grandson), Andrew Francis Starr (son), Stephen Francis Starr (nephew) and John Francis Warman (grandson). Inset: Wayne Francis Stanley (nephew).