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Platz, Jessie Oral History Interview: Old China Hands Oral History Project

Julie Van Wyk

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Map of the AMOY MISSION

Fig. 1
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Preface

Interviewee: Miss Jessie Platz

Interview: June 23, 1977
Miss Platz's home in Hanover, Pennsylvania

Interviewer: Ms. Julie Van Wyk
B.A. Hope College
PLATZ, JESSIE MARGARET

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH AND SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Jessie Margaret Platz was born in Brooklyn, New York, on December 31, 1905 to Edward Frederick Platz and Jessie Marie Platz. Upon graduation from high school in Closter, New Jersey, Miss Platz was employed as assistant bookkeeper at the John J. Demarest Coal and Lumber Company in Closter for one and a half years. In 1925 she entered the Englewood Hospital School of Nursing and received her R.N. from that institution.

On September 26, 1930, Jessie Platz arrived in Amoy to begin her work as a missionary of the Reformed Church in America. Her first year in China was spent in Changchow where she concentrated on language study. The following year she was assigned to Tong-an to work as head nurse at the Elizabeth H. Blauvelt Memorial Hospital. In 1934 she was transferred to the Hope and Wilhelmina Hospital on Kulangsu where she was able to teach nursing, and supervised Public Health Nursing in the refugee camps on the island. Miss Platz served on Kulangsu from 1934 to 1937 except for one year's furlough in 1935 when she studied at Teacher's College, Columbia University.

From 1938 until 1947 Miss Platz served as Director of Nurses, Principal of the Nursing School, and Director of Public Health Nursing at Changchow Union Hospital, interrupted only by a furlough in 1944, when she again took courses at Teachers College.

Jessie Platz retired from the mission field in 1947 due to her mother's illness, but continued her nursing career at Muhlenburg Hospital School of Nursing, Plainfield, New Jersey, and New Brunswick and Somerset Valley Visiting Nurses Associations and Branchburg Elementary Schools, Somerville, New Jersey. Today Miss Platz lives in Hanover, Pennsylvania with her
father and keeps herself busy with handwork and volunteer work for the
Helping Hand shop for the handcraft of senior citizens.

The interview with Miss Platz is lively and full of insight into what it really meant to be a nurse in China. Included in the interview is a letter written by Clarence Holleman describing the R.C.A. mission's work with the refugees who streamed to the island of Kulangsu after the beginning of the war with Japan. Miss Platz was very involved with the refugee work at this time, so she adds details of her own work to Dr. Holleman's account. Also of interest in this interview are the stories Miss Platz relates about Public Health Nursing in Changchow during a period of heavy bombing by the Japanese, relaying mail from British internees to their families, and caring for an abandoned infant.

Miss Platz has contributed some letters and photographs, as well as a play she wrote portraying hospital life, which can be found in the Western Theological Seminary Archives.
INTERVIEW 1

VAN WYK: Miss Platz, can you tell me how you decided to become a missionary to China?

PLATZ: I went to Northfield Missionary Conference in the summer, and of course that's a wonderful place, and one really gets inspired up there.

VAN WYK: Where is this?

PLATZ: Northfield, Massachusetts. It's a girls' seminary up there during the year, a girls' school.

VAN WYK: What made you decide to go to China rather than elsewhere?

PLATZ: Well, it wasn't my decision. It was the Lord's decision, because the year we were at Northfield the emphasis was on Africa, and so I was all steamed up to go to Africa. But when I applied to the Board they said they didn't have any work in Africa but they needed a nurse in China.

VAN WYK: How did you feel about going to China, then, when you were interested in Africa?

PLATZ: Well, I accepted it.

VAN WYK: You were ready to go anywhere?

PLATZ: That's right. (laughter)

VAN WYK: Did you have any preparation before you went to China?
PLATZ: When I went to Northfield Conference I was just out of high school, and listening to all those missionaries get up and talk, I said, "I am too shy to be a teacher. I better be a nurse." So I went into nursing school for that purpose, but I didn't tell anybody that. So, for three years I was in my mind planning to be a missionary, but I didn't tell anybody.

VAN WYK: Was there a reason for that?

PLATZ: Oh, well, I guess I'm a private person, and probably it was hard enough to go into nursing school. My family, you know, would object, so I just thought I'd better not stir things up. (laughter)

VAN WYK: Did you have any language study before you went to China?

PLATZ: No.

VAN WYK: You went directly after nursing school?

PLATZ: No. I worked as Assistant Night Supervisor, and did private duty nursing in Englewood. And in Amoy we had no language school for the Amoy language, so we went there and had our tutors at home.

VAN WYK: When you arrived in China do you remember some of your first impressions of the country?

PLATZ: Oh, my, it was very exciting. Edna Beekman took Jeannette Veldman and I out there, and of course she was very famous among the Chinese, and the whole school came down to meet her. All the children were there on the jetty to see her, so we got into all that, too. Well, it was very, very, strange. And we went with Edna to where she lived,
which was the ladies' house, which we called Sa-loh.

VAN WYK: This was on Kulangsu?

PLATZ: On Kulangsu, yes. And there were three very old ladies there. I think there were only three; Miss Kitty, Miss Molly Talmage, and Miss Lily Duryee were there, and each one had a corner of this enormous big house. It was all very strange—no plumbing. And of course, you know, it was just difficult. I was about twenty-four then. Of course, Jeanette and I were together, so it was nice. We were sharing the experience.

VAN WYK: Were you with Jeannette Veldman the whole first year you were there?

PLATZ: Yes, because from Kulangsu we went to Changchow to live with Leona Vander Linden. Leona was alone there and we were her charges, and we went there to study the language. Changchow had a population of two hundred thousand.

VAN WYK: Did you work at all your first year while you were studying the language?

PLATZ: The only thing we did was private duty, taking care of the missionaries. Mrs. Hofstra had a baby that year, Mrs. Poppen had a baby, and an English missionary, Mrs. Busby, had typhoid. So we took care of these friends.

VAN WYK: Did you live on a mission compound in Changchow?

PLATZ: Yes, except when we lived at the apartment at Hope and Wilhelmina
Hospital, Kulangsu. But Leona's house was a very interesting spot because we were right in back of one of the big Chinese churches, and next to the women's school and girls' elementary school. There were no other mission houses around there. That was the single ladies' house, you know. (laughter)

VAN WYK: What do you feel about the mission compounds? Did the Chinese feel very free to come into your houses?

PLATZ: Oh, yes.

VAN WYK: The walls didn't cut things off?

PLATZ: They'd come knock on the door. The walls were to keep robbers out, I suppose, and they had broken glass on the tops. Did you know that?

VAN WYK: I wasn't aware of that.

PLATZ: Yes, in China--I think they have that in England, too--there are bits of broken glass set into the cement on the tops of the walls to discourage robbers. At night, the doors were locked. But you see, people went through that compound to go to the women's school, the girls' school, and to go to the church. You know, it was like Grand Central. People were going through all the time. It didn't bother anyone.

VAN WYK: So you didn't feel that it cut off communications?

PLATZ: Oh, mercy, no. Because any of the wealthy families in China would have the same thing.

VAN WYK: When you came out as a younger missionary you say that you
stayed with three older women when you got there in the beginning.

PLATZ: Well, actually Edna Beekman was there, too. That would be four at least. Edna wasn't so old.

VAN WYK: Were there differences between the younger and the older missionaries over feelings about the Chinese and feelings about possibly the Nationalists?

PLATZ: That far back we didn't have Nationalists. No, no, I think they still had a few warlords around, you know. No, at that time the missionaries were quite accepted. They used to tell about two lots of armies fighting each other and they'd stop so the missionary could cross the city. But that was a little bit before my time. But I mean, the missionaries were somebody then.

VAN WYK: Did you feel that the mission stressed one area over another, such as medical versus education?

PLATZ: Oh, no. No. Everybody was equal, it was understood. I mean, we accepted each part of the work as being important.

VAN WYK: So you didn't have great difficulties among missionaries?

PLATZ: No.

VAN WYK: How about your work with the other missions in the area?

PLATZ: You're speaking of the general area? We, the English Presbyterians, and the London Mission were the big three. But in the Amoy area it was union work from scratch. And way back when they started the missions the wonderful old timers decided there was no point in bringing Western
denominations in and starting all these different churches. It was union work, and I understand that they fought the Board on that issue, but it really was no trouble at all. There were Seventh Day Adventists there in Amoy, and they were very nice and we visited with them, too. They didn't eat meat. But they were entirely independent.

VAN WYK: They were not part of the union work.

PLATZ: No. They were separate. That's right. As far as the foreign missions went, that's all I can remember in that immediate area besides the Catholics.

VAN WYK: Did you have much connection with the American Consulate while you were there? Were you ever given orders to evacuate?

PLATZ: Oh, yes. Things like that turned up now and then, yes. I think that we were never ordered. We were advised. I'm not sure, but I think the British could order, but the Americans were advised.

VAN WYK: And did the missionaries upcountry also supply the consulate with information about what was going on in the countryside?

PLATZ: Oh, no. The consulate was there to serve us. We didn't tell them anything unnecessarily. (laughter) No, I'm sure there was nothing like that. I mean, that was there for its own purpose. They had a Fourth of July picnic for us, and things like that. Big events, but otherwise, no. It was a beautiful building. The consulate was right on the harbor, you know. Well, we went there when it was necessary.

VAN WYK: Mostly for official business or parties?

PLATZ: Yes. I don't think there was much social life between the
consulate and the missionaries because Kulangsu was an international settlement, and there was the community. We thought of the community. The foreign community was there, and they had plenty of people to have a social life with.

VAN WYK: I'd like to talk a bit about your work then, first in Tong-an, and later in Amoy and Changchow. Who assigned you to your work?

PLATZ: The mission as a whole.

VAN WYK: Is this the Board in New York, or is this the mission in China?

PLATZ: The Amoy mission in China. You see, they had entire control over things like that. They had mission meetings once a year, and executive meetings when necessary. And they fought everything out there. (laughter)

VAN WYK: I was going through some of the Board minutes and they mentioned that the Women's Board of Foreign Missions was responsible for a lot of the women's work. Do you know how those were conducted?

PLATZ: I was not conscious of that at all. The Women's Board of Foreign Missions was here in this country and we went to their meetings and things and spoke when home on furlough, but otherwise I was not conscious of it out there. The mission itself had autonomy. Is that the right word?

VAN WYK: You mentioned in your vita form that when you went to Tong-an in 1931 you were the only missionary at the hospital.

PLATZ: Yes. Well, when I first got there, Dr. and Mrs. Ted Oltman
were there because they had been there for language study. But they were assigned to Sio-khe. And then the Koeppes were there, and Ruth Broekema. Now at this compound, there was the hospital, the doctor's house, the minister's house, and the ladies' house all in this compound besides the girls' and women's schools. So, actually at first Ted Oltman was there, but then I don't remember how long afterwards they were transferred. They knew they were going to go to Sio-khe. It seemed like the mission didn't put you in the place you were assigned to serve for language study. There might have been a good reason. After all, stumbling along with the language, one might have made enemies, you know. (laughter)

VAN WYK: So who were you working with in the hospital?

PLATZ: With a Chinese doctor, a Chinese midwife who was not a nurse, the Bible woman who was a wonderful saint in her own right. She got leprosy later on. It was very very sad. And coolies.

VAN WYK: Now, was the doctor educated in America or in China?

PLATZ: No, he was one of these doctors who studied with the American missionary doctors, the early ones. See, the missionary doctors would get people go come in, and teach them to be doctors. That was it, and I don't believe that he had any other particular training. Later on, of course, through the Nationalists and I suppose the Communists, he became a big doctor.

VAN WYK: How about the midwife? What kind of education did she have? Was it Chinese training?

PLATZ: She went to some other hospital. I think it was up in Foochow,
and had a year's training, and of course she was very proud, you know. And I'm afraid straight out of nursing school I was very stiff. There was only one way to do things, "the Englewood way."

VAN WYK: And your way and her way were not the same?

PLATZ: Were not always the same. See, I wasn't used to midwives at all. At that time in the U.S.A. there were no trained midwives. You wouldn't know that, but a midwife was just some untrained person who went out and delivered babies, and I'm afraid that was the way I was looking down my nose at her. I didn't really give her credit for her training.

VAN WYK: Did you have specific conflicts with her?

PLATZ: I don't really remember. I just remember that it was difficult to work with her.

VAN WYK: You mentioned that there were fifty beds in the hospital with only three trained people there. Did you have to turn away patients, or were you able to keep up with them?

PLATZ: Oh, it was never full. I don't think it was ever full, because there were lots of partially trained doctors in the town just like Dr. Tan was. And of course in those days Chinese didn't rush to the hospital so much. They used old Chinese medicine, too, you know, where they used crushed pearls and tiger balms on wounds.

VAN WYK: Did they normally go to the herb medicines before they came to the hospital?

PLATZ: Lots of people did, but people who had contact with missionaries
through attending schools had faith in Western medicine. Now, this of course was considered a branch hospital of the big hospital down at Kulangsu, and Dr. Holleman was the doctor in charge and made periodic visits to us. When he came then they would call in the people who needed operations and things like that. You know, we'd do big surgery for a while.

VAN WYK: You also noted the problem of patients smoking opium in their rooms.

PLATZ: Oh, yes.

VAN WYK: Was that common?

PLATZ: Opium was smoked all over China. One walked down the street and passed a house, and most of these houses within the villages were open front, and you'd get that horrible smell. You knew it; you just knew it. But see, this Chinese doctor, of course being Chinese, he didn't ever want to make anyone lose face, and for some reason or other he permitted this old man who needed some kind of treatment to stay in the hospital. I don't even know what he had right now; it might have been T.B. or something. But how I hated the smell of that opium. They smoked it, you know, in a pipe sort of thing. But I always felt, well, an American doctor there wouldn't permit that.

VAN WYK: So there was nothing the hospital did about this?

PLATZ: I only remember one incident. I really only remember one incident.

VAN WYK: Another thing you mentioned was that you took home an abandoned infant for a while.
PLATZ: Yes. Baby Jin-tek. At that time Jeane Walvoord, who had just come out, and Ruth and I, we lived together in the ladies' house. And we were walking down this big road to the town and saw a lot of people underneath a big tree. There weren't many trees. So, you know, nosy, we went over to see what it was, and there on the ground was this tiny baby--looked like a little monkey, she was so undernourished. And there was a very small can of condensed milk next to her, and one of those old-fashioned baby bottles with the tube and the nipple on the end of tube. And there she was.

Now, the story was that her father was an opium smoker, and her mother couldn't afford to keep this baby, and that across from this tree was a Christian village, and that the mother probably put her there hoping the Christians would take her. But anyway, we got her. Since nobody else took her, we did, and thinking, you know, we'd take her to the hospital. Well, there wasn't any night nurse on duty in the hospital. I doubt if we left her there for more than one night if we did, and then we brought her home. And Mrs. Koeppe loaned us one of her baby beds and Jeane and I had a ball, of course feeding this baby, and Ruth, too. Oh, how we loved this baby. I'll have to show you her pictures later.

But even so--I guess you would say with the doctor's limited knowledge of pediatrics, she didn't grow very fast. First we had to force her to eat. We would put the milk on the spoon and force it into her mouth and hold the spoon until she swallowed. That was the only way to get her to eat. She actually looked like a little monkey. We could see that she wasn't gaining enough so we decided to take her down to Hope Hospital, our big hospital. So I was elected. I went on the long bus trip with Jin-tek wrapped up in my nurse's cape and we put her in there
for maybe two or three months, and then Dr. Holleman sent word, "Come and get this baby. She doesn't belong in the hospital." She was well by that time.

So back we went and got Jin-tek and brought her home, and she was fat, and rosy, and cute. By that time Jeane Walvoord had gone to Sio-Khe. Only Ruth and I were left. Ruth had to go about her York, and I had to go to the hospital, and the cook wasn't always home either, so I would have to take her to the hospital with me and sit her in her chair while I did my work. Well, this was no life for a baby, and so we looked for a nice Christian family to take her.

VAN WYK: And were you able to find someone to adopt her?

PLATZ: Yes, we found a young couple. They had been married five or six years and had no children, and we gave her to them. Now, you know, there weren't any laws of adoption or all that sort of stuff; we just gave her to them. Ruth went off on a trip that day. She didn't want to be there to see me give her away. And then very shortly after, they moved down to what we called the South Seas. It was called Malacca, but I don't know what Malacca is called now. Maybe you do. Probably around Singapore, Penang, someplace like that. And she grew up with them. They sent us pictures of her when she was growing. And they had children of their own after that. We don't know how she was treated after that. But I remember once there was some rumor that Jin-tek was such and such a place in school. Boy, did we get excited. But I don't think it could have been true. Later on somebody down there in Singapore found her and she's married, and I would say for the last six or eight years we exchanged Christmas cards.
The story was they wanted to give her back to us after we were home in this country, and she was a grown girl by that time. But we didn't just look into that at all. Last year I didn't get any Christmas card from her. That was baby Jin-tek.

VAN WYK: Do you feel that her being female had a lot to do with her first being thrown away and second not being taken up by anyone?

PLATZ: I don't know. I have no idea. In China so many people had what they called "little daughter-in-laws". They took babies into their home and they probably treated them all right. Then, when their own children come along, they called these little girls "little daughter-in-laws", and they had to wait on the family and the little kids and things like that. We didn't look forward to anything like that happening to Jin-tek, but we don't know. The war came on. We weren't able to keep track of her then.

VAN WYK: Did you ever have to evacuate from Tong-an while you were there?

PLATZ: Yes, we did once when there was a Red scare. And we had to evacuate at the drop of a hat. There was a bus that took us. Ruth and Mr. Koepppe stayed behind because first we packed trunks, and then, when the time came, we had to go in a bus, and so they were going to see to it that everything came down on a boat. They were always the brave ones who stayed behind.

But the Chinese from the hospital, and Mrs. Koepppe and the children, and the midwife, probably the doctor, too--I can't remember--we all piled into this bus and went down to a place just opposite Amoy. And we went and stayed at a school overnight because there was no launch when we got
there. Anyway, I remember it was a hot night, and all we had for bedding was quilts, you know, good old Chinese quilts. And in the middle of the night there was a knock on the gate. We all really got a good scare out of that but it was only some more evacuees coming in. And the next morning we were taken on a boat to Amoy harbor.

VAN WYK: Did many Chinese evacuate as well as missionaries?

PLATZ: Oh, yes. The Chinese are great runners. (laugher) I mean, anybody with any means at all, they never stayed behind. They were always rushing off, to the South Seas or any place. They knew how to run.

VAN WYK: Did the Communists ever come to Tong-an that time?

PLATZ: No. They never came. I don't believe they came to Tong-an that time. Only robbers got in the house and took what they wanted. The Communists got to Changchow, I think. We probably were away a few months and then went back and started over.

VAN WYK: Were you able to do work in Amoy while you were there?

PLATZ: Oh, always. The hospital was there. They always put me to work while I was there. (laughter) That was no problem, work.

VAN WYK: You mentioned returning to Tong-an again after you moved to Amoy. When was that, and why was that?

PLATZ: Well, there was no trouble up there. That was my station.

VAN WYK: Later on, though, after you had moved for good to Amoy to do work in Amoy.
PLATZ: No, I never moved for good to Amoy. I think it was in 1934 that Jean Nienhuis went on furlough and I was transferred to Hope Hospital for one year to help. Then Jeanette was superintendent of nurses, and I was the teacher there for one year. And after Amoy fell to the Japanese I went to Hope Hospital again.

VAN WYK: Did anyone replace you in Tong-an?

PLATZ: No, that was not that important. There wasn't anybody. You see, we only had so many nurses on the field.

VAN WYK: And Amoy Hospital took priority?

PLATZ: Yes, because they had the nursing school there, and always we filled the gap there.

VAN WYK: Had you already been trained to teach nursing at that time?

PLATZ: No. I had no training at all to teach. That was the one thing I wanted to do was teach nursing, and I just had my own background and my nursing experience.

VAN WYK: How did you find that it went? Did it go quite well?

PLATZ: I taught nursing arts which is a cut and dried thing.

VAN WYK: That's the practical?

PLATZ: Practical nursing we called it in those days, yes. And of course always I had to have a language teacher so that I could get the words that went with these different subjects in Chinese. Whenever I taught a new subject like sociology, etc.
VAN WYK: So there was always another Chinese in the class helping you translate, or did you learn this outside of class?

PLATZ: Oh, no. No, I would put maybe an hour or two a week with a teacher to pick up whatever the vocabulary was that I needed to use to teach.

VAN WYK: Then you taught in Amoy?

PLATZ: Oh, yes. We did all our work in Amoy.

VAN WYK: Was the hospital in Amoy significantly different from the hospital in Tong-an?

PLATZ: Oh, definitely. It was more up-to-date. They even had an X-ray. And of course I think they mostly had two American doctors there, too. It would be Dr. Holleman and Dr. Hofstra and Dr. Oltman. You know, filling in always for furloughs.

VAN WYK: How many students were you teaching there? What was an average class of nurses?

PLATZ: Hmm. Well, I can't exactly say. We would have when we first were there maybe there were four or six seniors and four or five juniors and so forth. But in 1940 we had at that time our biggest class. We always spoke of the double ten class. You know, the holiday was the tenth day of the tenth month, October 10th. And that day we took in fourteen students, and oh, that was my pet class, it really was. That was big.

VAN WYK: Did you have trouble recruiting students?

PLATZ: No. When we first went out there of course nursing was sort of
looked down on a bit. The high school principals would say, "Oh, so and so doesn't do very well. Let's send her over to the nursing school," instead of sending her on to senior high school. That was the way it was then. But as years went on, then it was very popular.

VAN WYK: Did most of your nursing students then come from the missionary schools, the girls' schools?

PLATZ: No, no.

VAN WYK: They came from...

PLATZ: Some came from government schools.

VAN WYK: When you were in Amoy this was a time when there were a lot of refugees around there, and you mention setting up refugee health programs. What did that involve? Was this inoculations or education?

PLATZ: That was during the Japanese war. And you see the Amoy island had fallen to the Japanese, but Kulangsu was an international settlement, and therefore Chinese from everywhere flocked over there. I think there were thirty thousand, anyway, and Kulangsu is a mile and a half by a half mile long, up and down, you know. And they put up a bunch of mat sheds, I don't know how many, that took in people. I don't think you know what a mat shed is. Well, it's a frame, let's say it's a big building framed with sort of dried leaves stuff on the outside, and one very rough floor inside. And each family that came along spread out their quilt or their blanket, and whatever space that covered, that was their area. The whole family lived on that spot. There were kitchens that cooked the rice, and the rice was carried in big open buckets for
quite a distance by coolies, you know, on a pole with two big tubs of it, and brought in there twice a day. And the people themselves had to scrounge for stuff to put on it. Maybe they bought a little salt turnips or other vegetables to eat with the rice.

VAN WYK: Who sponsored the food?

PLATZ: IRCK—International Relief Committee of Kulangsu. I came across here a letter, a report of Dr. Holleman's that I thought was very interesting, but I don't know whether you want anything like that on here.

VAN WYK: Sure. You will read now from a letter from Dr. Holleman.

PLATZ: "The saddest cases of all are the cases of all the little children under two years of age. In the emergency the mothers have lost their milk and are trying their best to feed the little ones food that was meant for grown-ups. The little stomachs rebel, and now we have the hospital full of little children with summer diarrhea and intestinal complaints. A clinic has been started for just such cases at a Christian school. Mrs. Holleman and Mrs. Anderson, a British missionary, have started the work there. They are now feeding about two hundred children with properly prepared milk, giving baths, generally disseminating cheer and instruction. This letter is already too long. I will close by quoting a story written by Mrs. Holleman to our son Robert:

"We have more than a hundred and eighty babies registered at our milk kitchen, but not all of them come every day. Most of the babies are girls and one can buy them cheaply these days. A dollar twenty can do, and several women have offered their baby to me and to others who are working here, free. It is not strange that such should be the case. One woman came the first few days. I noticed her eyes were very red, and it looked as if the tears were ready to well over all the time. Then one day she came and said she had lost her milk ticket. We scolded her a little and said that if she didn't have her ticket she could not get milk. We gave her some, however, because her baby was ill, and we didn't want to deprive the little one of milk just because the mother had been careless. We didn't give her another ticket, though, thinking to impress it upon her once more the next morning that she should be more careful. The next day she came again, and when her baby
wouldn't drink she returned the milk to me. I told her to drink it herself, thinking every bit she got would help to increase her own strength. She said she just couldn't swallow it. One of the nurses standing by asked her whether she had already had her morning rice, and she answered that the bowls of soft rice had been served but she was too bitter hearted to eat it. Then she told me her husband hadn't gotten across the harbor from Amoy in the flight and she didn't know whether he was alive or dead. Her baby was ill. It was a boy, the only child she had left, and she was getting old. She wanted to give it to someone to keep it alive, but no one would take it. Nearly everyone is a refugee who has no means of caring for it because no one wants a sick baby. The tears were running down her face, and she looked so sad and hopeless so that all of a sudden my heart was filled with great compassion for her. I reproached myself silently for having added to her trouble by saying anything about her ticket and I tried to make it up to her by writing a note to Hope and Wilhelmina Hospital and asking them to please try awfully hard to make room for this woman and her baby. The hospital took her in and a few days later she was back to get milk for her baby again. Such a transformation! Her baby was better, she had been told of a savior, and her tired heart and mind was reaching out to Him.

"I remember that we had scheduled an operation, a dead bone in the lower leg for the morning of the attack."

This is the attack on Amoy by the Japanese.

"There seemed no particular reason why we should not carry on as per schedule. During the operation the bombing was continuous and the planes kept flying back and forth over the hospital. It was a bit of a strain because we could not know whether the next bomb might be dropped on us. It reminded me of an experience we had ten years ago in Lungyen when the Chinese warlords were admitted to the hospital the first day of the fighting. During the next three days we got a total of over four hundred wounded, some of them seriously. To prevent possible complications we required each soldier as he came in to turn over his arms and ammunition to the hospital. However, we did not consider it safe to keep these guns in our own hands lest it might lead to trouble with the Japanese. Accordingly the guns were turned over to the police as fast as we got them. That first evening some American sailors from the U.S.S. Marblehead were detailed to guard the hospital. We were particularly worried about our nurses and the wounded soldiers in case the victorious Japanese soldiers should become unruly. It was a wonderful comfort to know that we had this protection not for ourselves so much as for those for whom we were responsible. I think I
understand as never before why the Chinese call our flag the flowery flag and our country Bi-kok, the beautiful country.

"The morning of May 12 I was visiting the operating room when a messenger from the International Relief Committee announced that I had been appointed to take direction of the medical end of the committee. It was but natural that the superintendent of our hospital should assume this post and I could not avoid a responsibility. But for one who was already busy before the war and whose duties now were at least doubled, to further assume responsibility for the health of another eighty thousand people was no easy step. Obviously the first thing to do was to get the cooperation of whatever qualified medical persons there might be on the island. A circular letter was prepared and runners were sent out to call a meeting at our hospital. About twenty-five doctors attended. All of them volunteered to do free vaccination and inoculations if the materials were supplied them. All of them were also willing to give freely of their professional services if the medical supplies were furnished. Matters were organized accordingly. A central depot of supplies was established. I myself and assistants hurried around to get supplies. Proper requisition blanks were prepared. Vaccination certificates were printed and issued to all those who had filled the requirements. The refugees were scattered. Fifty camps holding forty-two thousand of them. In addition there were many thousand in private homes.

"Arrangements for feeding, housing, washing, and so forth were made day to day. The International Relief Committee met repeatedly to plan all events. Through it all the masterful leadership of Rev. Poppen kept things moving in an orderly fashion. Too much cannot be said in praise of the truly herculean labors of Mr. Poppen. He was everywhere and oversaw everything, and by his executive abilities stimulated everybody to emulation. It was early seen wise to centralize all work as much as possible and this was also the case with the medical work. A large dispensary was established in charge of Hope Hospital at a point a mile away from the hospital. It treated two hundred people a day, thirty-seven thousand during the year. The clinic at Hope Hospital proper continued at the same rate and our hospital that year was responsible for seventy-five thousand calls, and many hundreds of people stayed in the hospital. During the last eight months of 1938 over six hundred babies were born at the hospital and other work was in proportion. Besides this, still another hospital was opened and also did a tremendous amount of work. Three doctors of our hospital in addition to myself gave part-time to this work. A mat shed was erected only a few steps away from the hospital in which were housed over forty tuberculards and two lepers. These people were cared for by one of our hospital doctors and by the visiting nurses. Mention has been made of Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Holleman. That summer they and others who helped them, both Chinese and foreigners, continued to run this work. Mrs. Holleman, against protest from her husband, insisted on walking the half a mile and returned twice daily through the burning sun to go to this work because she did not have the
heart to ride and be comfortable when everyone else was so miserable. The result was that she developed water on the knee and was kept abed for nearly a month. Mrs. Anderson also became incapacitated later. Fortunately Jessie Platz arrived at the time of the need and was able to take over this work, not only, but also supervision of the visiting nurses. These nurses were from our hospital and at least one graduate and two students at a time. In many respects the most worthwhile medical work was done by the nurse. For pure efficiency, motivated by love, they could not be excelled. Milk, food, soy bean milk, baths, vaccinations, medication, and nursing care were given to the patients in the camp without stint. No doubt hundreds of children owe their lives to this work. This was an outstanding demonstration of Christian fortitude, perseverance, and love. Jessie Platz can smell out a sick person or anyone who is in misery from far, far away, and inspires her co-workers with the same zeal.

VAN WYK: Miss Platz, would you like to tell more about the camps in your own words?

PLATZ: There were, as Dr. Holleman said, many—he said fifty—camps. Kulangsu is an island, it's up and down hill, and you never walked on flat ground hardly, so we climbed to many of them. "Nothing on wheels" was permitted on Kulangsu. Some people used sedan chairs, carried on poles by men. There were two mansions on the island that were empty and the refugees lived in these also. One of them had marble floors and was about three or four stories high and it seemed so ridiculous to go in this beautiful building and see the families one after the other, each with their blanket and all their belongings, pots and pans—the few that they carried with them—and one basin. And it used to bother the student nurses terribly because of course there wasn't a great lot of water supply. But in public health we had a routine that you had to wash your hands before you started work out of your little bag. So, what I would do was give the person their basin and say, "Go get me some water." And the student nurses were horrified. You see, they were more cleanly than
I was because the basins were grimy. (laughter) But I'm sure with the soap and the clean water it was all right. And you can imagine that we had to kneel on the floor or squat down to change dressings, or bathe the baby. Not only were the refugees who came from other places considered refugees, but the boat people were, too. There were a lot of fishing boats, naturally, in the Amoy harbor, and the Japanese would not let them go out to fish, so they were refugees, too, and therefore came under our care. And so we would have to go out to these boats and see the sick people just the same, and climb up planks and whatnot to get to them. And it really was a very satisfying experience.

VAN WYK: Were you also involved in handing out food, or were you mostly responsible for medication?

PLATZ: No, I had nothing to do with handing out food. How many were there? Forty-three thousand? The food I handed out was milk and soy bean milk to the babies; that was at the milk station that I had charge of. Of course I had people, Chinese, working there; nurses worked there too.

VAN WYK: You mentioned student nurses. Did you often pull your students right into work . . .

PLATZ: Oh, they had to do the same work I did. Sure, they were learning public health nursing. They each carried a bag and they went around, and we would have a list that Mrs. So and so is in number one mansion, you go there first and change her leg dressing, give her some medicine, or something like that. We had a regular schedule just like public health nurses have in this country.
VAN WYK: Let's go back just a little ways. Were you in Amoy when Dr. Sung was there with his revival meetings?

PLATZ: Sung, yes, Dr. Sung.

VAN WYK: Were you around at that time when he came through?

PLATZ: Yes, I went to a couple of his meetings. The people went wild about him. If he was going to have a meeting at six o'clock they went there at three o'clock to get a seat. It was terrific! Oh, the Chinese just went daily to hear him. And to me he looked like a mad man. I'm afraid I never really appreciated him at the time, but since then I've read books about him and I realize what a wonderful man he was. But he would go ranting back and forth across the platform, waving his handkerchief and whatnot. I know I had a seat right at the edge of the platform one day, and you know the people came and brought their food with them coming so early, and he was coming straight at me and I put me foot forward and kicked over somebody's foodbox. (laughter)

VAN WYK: Was there a lot of skepticism among the other missionaries also?

PLATZ: Oh, I don't know. I couldn't say what they all thought. I think they thought he was wonderful. They had more brains about things like that than I did. (laughter)

VAN WYK: I think I would do some wondering myself.

PLATZ: And of course he was preaching in Mandarin and had an Amoy language interpreter. I don't remember that I learned much from him.

VAN WYK: Apart from your work with the refugees, did you have other public
health programs, like under normal conditions?

PLATZ: Yes, when I was transferred to Changchow, of course.

VAN WYK: And what did that involve?

PLATZ: Well, I better tell about getting Changchow.

VAN WYK: O.K.

PLATZ: I was assigned to the work at the Changchow Union Hospital. Now, you remember we were there to study the language in our first year. At that time there was no hospital there. There had been one, the old hospital that was started in 1888 by an Englishman who was an Egyptian originally. I don't know which you should call him. Dr. Achmed Fahmy. He worked there thirty years and retired in 1920. He taught several good medical students. He was from the London Missionary Society and he was married to one of the Reformed Church missionaries, Miss Duryee, and they had a little old hospital there. I remember when we were in Changchow studying the language we used to go over there to see "Dr. Fahmy's hospital." And it was just like a row of little rooms, and one didn't go from one room to the other, one had to go outside, down steps, and up more steps to go into the next one. But then, as I said, we were in union work in the church, and we were going in for union medical work in 1937. And a new English doctor came, the London Mission Dr. Willis Busby. He started up this work again, in 1928, in these old buildings. Anyway, then with the outbreak of the Japanese war in '37, the Japanese airplanes once in a while come over and threw a bomb now and then on Changchow.

VAN WYK: In Changchow?
PLATZ: Yes. The theological seminary in Changchow was a union endeavor also. Their building was not quite completed when the Japanese war broke out and they decided that it was not conducive to good study to be disrupted by air raids. So they refugeed the seminary back into the country, up into the hills, oh, twenty, thirty miles away at EngHok, and the Changchow Union Hospital took over the seminary because that was far better for a hospital than the little old buildings. And then I was assigned to go there and work with Dr. Busby. I think then Dr. Hofstra must have come back from furlough about that time and he was assigned there, too. Anyway, we both worked there together. And there was Dr. Busby, and there was Phyllis Reed, an English nurse. And we got things started very nicely there, and the building was at the London Mission compound. It was three miles away from the Reformed Church compound. And everything went fairly well. There was the nursing school at which Dr. Busby had started teaching nurses, some boys, some girls of primary school education. He did the best he could. But we inherited that.

Well, then more bombing came. I went there in 1938, after the refugee camp work on Kulangsu. And then the hospital was bombed once. At that time I was living in the Reformed Church side, and riding a rickshaw over to work everyday. Every morning, riding the rickshaw to work I prayed for the people in the hospital. Well, nobody in the hospital was hurt. It was just the hand of God at work because we had one direct hit. But outside of the hospital there was sort of a waiting room, a shed, where the outpatients and rickshaw men waited. Several people were wounded and killed there. And after that, all the patients went home, or were too disabled to go. And then we started the visiting, the public health work in Changchow to go find our patients—some of them
had typhoid, this, that, and the other thing—and take care of them.

VAN WYK: But your patients were afraid to stay in the hospital which might be bombed again?

PLATZ: Yes, at that time, after the immediate bombing. Of course the Japanese were so clever. Previously—before Pearl Harbor attack—the Japanese had told all the missions to mark their property clearly. You painted your country's flag on the tennis courts. They knew just where we were. I'm sure this bombing was before the Pearl Harbor attack. The London Mission girls' school was bombed previous to that. And that was just across the field from us. But we had air raids all the time. I didn't hear them. I always said, you know, I was greatly blessed because I think it was in hearing those planes come that put such great fear in people's hearts. I never knew when they were coming. The whole hospital could be running away and they were yelling back, "Pit Haw-sul!" We had one room that was blocked off, you know, with cement block. I would just go in there with whoever went with me, and everybody else was rushing out into the fields. But really, it wasn't so scary. The nurses and everybody, right after our bombing went to a village everyday. Dr. Hofstra, the business manager, and his wife, who was scared to leave him, and I, we always stayed; and Phyllis Reed and Dr. Harman, too. By that time we had another English doctor, Dr. Harman. He was a peach. We just got along fine with him. But gradually there wasn't so much bombing anymore, you know, and the hospital went back to normal again. Everybody came back and worked again; patients came to stay again. But
we continued the public health service then, and of course we did a great deal of immunizations all over, like we'd go and give plague injections in a school, or a business office.

VAN WYK: Was it difficult to find Chinese to accept the innoculations?

PLATZ: They loved it. They loved shots, the Chinese did. And vaccination, of course, had been going on for years, and just untrained people did them, and it used to make me so cross. They must have been scared one wouldn't take, and you'd see three big scars on a little tiny kid's arm. Not one, three! But you know, we never had any trouble with those school children. From kindergarten on up everybody stood bravely and had their shots every time. In later years here in this country when I was a school nurse and we did the polio innoculation I had kids fainting all over. I was horrified. What's the matter with the Americans, they are little weaklings! (laughter)

We'd start off for our assignment, and if there was an air raid warning, why we would just lay down in the roadside, and wait until it was all over. And we'd be starting giving the injections in a school full of kids, and there'd be an air raid signal, and bang! they'd all rush out to go to shelters. You know, those children didn't know anything about peace. In those days the children were born in this war time and they were accustomed to air raids. It was just normal, there was no panic. They knew they were supposed to go to the air raid shelters and they went. It was just a daily thing. We just had one rule for the public health nurse: that if any bombs were dropped they were to come back immediately to the hospital so we knew they were all right, and they could help if we had wounded. That was it.
VAN WYK: Now, it was while you were in Changchow that you registered your nursing school there with the Nurses' Association, right?

PLATZ: Yes. I think the registration was completed after I left. It was several years' work. There was so much red tape, you know.

VAN WYK: Was the Nurses' Association a new thing in China, or had this been going on for quite a while?

PLATZ: Oh, no. The Nurses' Association of China was begun in 1909, and they gave their first examination in 1912. It was started by Cora Simpson, an American, and for all those years that was the criteria. A school had to be registered with them, and then the nurses could have their examination. But . . . in 1937 the Chinese were getting very Nationalistic. The Ministry of Education took over the accreditation of nursing schools. When we sent in for our accreditation to the Nurses' Association of China—and in 1943 our graduates took the NAC Examination—we were advised to register the school with the Ministry of Education. It took a couple of years to accomplish this.

VAN WYK: Why was that? Was it just red tape, or were they objecting to specific things?

PLATZ: No, just red tape. That was red tape; all teaching to be done in Mandarin, the principal to be a Chinese, an endowment fund of sixty thousand dollars needed, etc.

VAN WYK: Was the hospital in Amoy, was the nurses' school there registered?

PLATZ: They were registered with the Nurses' Association of China for a long time. Do you want dates?
VAN WYK: No, let's just go on.

PLATZ: O.K. But when the school became registered with the Ministry of Education, they could no longer be called the Changchow Union Hospital of Nursing. They had a name then, Jin Su. I was in this country during the war then, and that was my Chinese name. I said, "My land, I feel like I'm dead!" (laughter) It wasn't the Platz. It was the Chinese name for Jessie. It became the Jin Su School of Nursing.

VAN WYK: Well, congratulations!

PLATZ: I don't suppose it's still going under that name, and yet it might be because to the ordinary Chinese it would just be a good name.

VAN WYK: One other thing you mentioned in your vita sheet was that you relayed mail from British internees to their families.

PLATZ: Oh, yes.

VAN WYK: What was the situation?

PLATZ: After the attack on Pearl Harbor. The Japanese captured the British ships, all the coast steamers and everything. They took them over. And the ship people were interned at Hope and Wilhelmina Hospital on Kulangsu. At that time the hospital was still running, but then our people were internees too. Gradually, people weren't coming to the hospital anymore for fear of the Japanese. Gradually it was closing, and so Jeannette was sending her nurses inland to me, because we were in free China. And one of the nurses came in wearing my new shoes that my mother had sent, and somehow they came through the war. And there was a piece of paper like this (very thin) with all the names and home addresses of
the interned British people, the ship people who were interned at Hope Hospital. And it was folded up in a little piece like this. And so I wrote to all the relatives of the ship people in England, in Australia, wherever, to tell them where their men were staying. Then of course, after some months the men were all moved to Shanghai to the internment camp there, and they were allowed to send letters, you know, a special little form. They could write twenty-five words. So they would send them to me, and I would write the messages to their people at home. Then their people at home would write long letters to me, and I would have to condense them to twenty-five words and send them to the men in camps. (laughter) Oh, that was our indoor sports. We had a ball doing that. We really did.

VAN WYK: How long did that continue?

PLATZ: Oh, until we left in the summer of 1944.

VAN WYK: And that whole time . . .?

PLATZ: Well, that was from about 1942 to 1944 when advice from the consulate came, "You should get out--Japanese might go inland." Just think, that was from '41, and they never came inland. We were thirty miles away. All they had to do was go across the water from Amoy Island and come in thirty miles. The Chinese had chopped up all the roads, big ditches across them, so nothing could go through except on foot, or by plane, you see. I guess the Japanese didn't need it. They didn't bother to come. And we had all kinds of scares, you know, that they were going to come.

VAN WYK: Were you able to get the medical supplies you needed at that
time?

PLATZ: The supplies were getting low. But you see, there were lots of Chinese doctors around, and I guess there were smugglers, too. Things were getting low, that's right.

When Jeannette came back to China—all these ship people who she had taken care of, there were a bunch of them in Hong Kong—they gave her a big party, they gave her presents and everything. I can't remember for sure, some of them wrote to me of course after the war. When I came home the last time through Hong Kong some of these ship people and their wives took me out to dinner. I had never seen them before, but they were so appreciative, and their families.

VAN WYK: Another area I'd like to talk about is evangelism within the hospital. What went on in the hospital in Changchow? Did you have organized . . .?

PLATZ: We had a pastor, and oh, students were mostly Christian. I think perhaps before they graduated they all became Christian. And we had a Bible woman, and a hospital preacher. And we all did what we could, you know. And there was chapel service every morning. Oh, we had the nurses' chapel by themselves first, and then there was regular chapel service.

VAN WYK: And did patients attend this service?

PLATZ: Oh, yes. That was for the patients and anybody who went.

VAN WYK: Was the Bible woman well received by the patients? Did many people enjoy talking to her?
PLATZ: Chinese are very polite people—like the Japanese, right? I don't think it would ever be like in this country where somebody would say, "I'm not interested in that!" No, they would listen. They would mostly listen. They'd be glad somebody came to talk to them. They were really good. Whether they accepted the gospel or not—one did not always know.

VAN WYK: They would at least listen?

PLATZ: They would, yes. But now comes one I should tell you about.

Lee Paik Chuan his name is. This is the story of the life of Lee Paik Chuan:

"It is a sorrowful thing to recall to my mind the reckless life I had when I was in my first place, Rangoon. I was born one of the sons of a wealthy paddy merchant. The fortune my father bequeathed to me had made me once a proud and sinful youth, knowing nothing about the truth of life. My friends were mostly atheists, and I was a so-called Catholic. I never attended church ever since I left the Catholic school in 1934 owing to my illness. I never been baptized. I started the treatment in early 1935, my illness remained stationary, sometime better, sometime seemed to be the same. In 1937 I started a poultry farm with incubators and two thousand eggs. The farm was run under the name of my elder brother of my same parentage. I kept white leghorns and Rhode Island Reds for egg production as well as for exhibition. I had yearly importations in breeding stock from Australia and England.

"My business was running smoothly until the outbreak of the Pacific war. I forsook the farm and left Rangoon with my family. At last we came to Kunming, Yunnan Province, China in separate groups. We could not understand the Mandarin language so we then decided for Fukien. My elder brother with his family flew to India from Kunming and took his refuge in Bombay. I, my mother, and my younger brother, came to Changchow and stayed in Sin Han Kai. One of my brothers, one adopted by one of my barren mothers who also came to Changchow two months later. My mother was infected with T.B. and diabetes, and often fell ill. We spent quite a large sum in consulting the so-called physicians practicing western medicine, and could not bring the illness under control. A friend informed us that there were doctors and sisters of American and English nationality in the Union Hospital. My brother at once went and besought the doctor, Dr. Hofstra, to come and see my mother as she was too weak to go to the hospital. The doctor came on a bicycle. After examine my mother, advised to send her to the
hospital. As we were the newcomers in Changchow we did not
know that the American doctor was from the house of Jesus Christ
who came to Changchow for to save the sick and not a professional
doctor.

"My brother asked him about his fee, and he then told
my brother that he would accept no fee. If we like, we can
give donation to the hospital. My mother was admitted into the
hospital the next day. Her illness was immediately brought
under control. Not long after the town of Changchow was threat­
ened by the Japanese and was under the evacuation order. I
sent my mother and brother to Kweiling where my sister and
brother-in-law were there lest they will be fallen in the cruel
Japanese hands. I was forced to stay alone with a broken heart
and tears. My hatred to the Japanese was so bitter that I
bought a revolver for changing my life if the enemy should
come. The tension calmed down a week later. In the last week
of October, 1943, I fell seriously ill, and could neither eat
nor sleep, as the pain in my stomach and the lonely circum­
stances made me so grievous that I nearly committed a severe
wrong. A friend who visited me called an English-speaking
Chinese doctor who visited me four times in two days, and yet
could not diagnose the trouble. On his last visit the doctor
asked whether I could afford to pay three thousand dollars money
of 1943 for three small packets of powder which said to be very
costly and would heal my pain. Later I found that the powder
was nothing but aspirin just to relieve the pain for a while.
The doctor came voluntarily the next morning and I asked him
whether I could consult the American doctor at the Union Hospital.
He seemed very reluctant to answer me and said that the hospital
would not admit me. But my friend would not mind for a try.
He went and besought the American medical superintendent, Dr.
Hofstra, and explained the condition of my disease and the
seriousness of my stomach pain. Dr. Hofstra seemed to have a
great compassion on seeing me. He admitted me into the private
room number three. The pain had subsided on the third day of
my admission. I begged the nurse to tell me what trouble was
that caused me so painful in my stomach. The nurse told me that
it was the liver inflammation.

"During the period of my hospitalization I was introduced
to the great healer by Miss. J.M. Platz. I knew her name written
on the book, The Upper Room, she had kindly given to me, and
another American lady who came to preach the gospel concerning
the Lord Jesus Christ."

That must have been Bessie Bruce.

"I was sorry not to have asked the lady's name. The gracious
and sympathetic attitudes of the American and English mission­
aries at the hospital made me so eager to study the sermons of
Lord Jesus Christ. It so happened I met a preacher on my coming
to the village. We often had long discussions about the Holy
Bible and which kind of persons were worthy to be called Christian.
May God guide me to become a truthful Christian, and worthy to be called a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him I ask, Amen.

And then it's to Miss J.M. Platz:

"Dear Madam, Please excuse me for my break at the last line of page three. I am afraid that I might go beyond the things concerning my life. To say the truth and not for the favor. I had never in my life met a Christian like you all four in Union Hospital. You all did not seem to scare from my leprosy, allowed me to read the books while I was in the hospital. You all have made a cripple to walk, showing hope to the hopeless. In the hospital there were few funny nursing students who came to see me with shrunken faces instead of counting my pulse she was counting my temple. That sort of look sometimes may awaken the morale of a patient. To me, I took it in fun. I am glad and thankful for my leprosy. If not, I would not have a chance of knowing you all. My life would most probably be proud and sinful, blind to the truth. In conclusion I would like to ask you whether it is lawful for a leper to ask for baptism. I beg you to forgive me for the scrawl of this letter. May the Lord prepare a room in His Father's mansion and take you all Himself on his second coming. Yours sincerely, Lee Paik Ahuan."

VAN WYK: Now he wrote this all out for you?

PLATZ: He wrote this in English. You see, he came from Rangoon, and his schooling was probably in English. He had a most wonderful way of writing, and one time he wrote to the English nurse, Phyllis Reed, and said, "When I was in the hospital Miss Platz gave me a garden, and your letter put flowers in my garden." Isn't that precious? But that's only one person, and one unusual one.

VAN WYK: Now is Miss Reed the . . .

PLATZ: She was the English nurse, yes.

VAN WYK: And she's the one that you had some personal conflicts with?

PLATZ: Yes. She was a difficult person. You know, some of the British are. She was a nurse midwife, well trained, and all that, and she used
to storm in and fuss about things. Sometimes I could do something, and sometimes I just let things ride, you know. After the war she got back there before I did, so she became the superintendent of nurses.

VAN WYK: This was the same position you had held before the war?

PLATZ: Yes, that's right. And that didn't bother me. Of course you see then I was supposed to help with the nursing school and take charge of the public health and we got along fine. It was just change like day from night, you know. There was no problem at all. Of course I was only back there a year.

VAN WYK: Union Hospital also had supervision over some of the upcountry hospitals, is that correct?

PLATZ: Yes.

VAN WYK: And again is this the case where the doctor went out to check on the other hospitals?

PLATZ: Yes. Maybe an annual visit. We were so busy in our own place. We had— one place was Leng-na, the one Dr. Holleman mentioned, Lungyen, that was the other name for it. That was a hundred miles away, and of course in the war years there were no buses, because the roads were cut. But I remember in particular one trip I took up there, probably one of the last ones before we left the first time. There were hospital supplies to go, and somebody had to go with them, and Harriet and Walter de Velder were up there, you know. Yes, I guess that was the boat trip I took. You walked ten miles or had a sedan chair to the river. You know how impatient
we are about buses ten minutes late? One could sit there for a day waiting for the boat to come. Then all of a sudden they see the boats coming and everybody gets excited, and you have to get in a little sampan, and the boats hardly stop for you. You know, you have to get a little boat, get the stuff in and go out, climb on the boat. I can't remember whether that was an overnight trip or not on the boat. The boat people and passengers live together on the deck. The pig lives in the bottom of the boat. (laughter) And then, this way, the boat had to go up the rapids, and these boat people poled the boat. No engines. They'd do real poling. Then when the boat gets to the rapids the boat people, except the grandmother who does the steering in the back, all get out and they have a great big bamboo cable, and they walk along the side of the mountain. There's probably some kind of a path, and they have to pull the boat up over the rapids. They make a lot of noise with all this pulling the boat. After getting through the rapids they all get back on again and pole some more.

Then we got to this place where we got off, and we had to walk ten miles more with luggage and everything to where Talmage College was refugeeing, and Bill Vander Meer was there. He was principal, or in charge of it. And we spent the night there, and the next morning I was supposed to have a sedan chair. It was a long trip, and three or four burden men carrying the supplies. Well, it looked like rain, and the chairmen came, and said, "Let's wait until tomorrow. It looks like rain." I said, "I can't wait. The burdens have gone already." So I had to walk. I had to run and catch up to them. And it was so cute, you know, these big men are such simple people. Some of them of course are opium smokers, too. But the burden men kept talking about the Japanese. When the Japanese came, if they came, they were going to hit them with their hoes and their
shovels and things. They were going to fight them, you know. Well, on
the return trip through that same town, there was one of the smiling men.
He was being conscripted for the army, you know, drafted. All the army
did was just go in and grab them, it was very sad.

VAN WYK: Did you run into that a lot, the conscription efforts?

PLATZ: Well, it was going on all around us. But the pathetic thing was
that, you know, the Chinese soldiers have nothing. They've just nothing,
and no care. If they can't walk they're left by the roadside. Their
families never know where they are. Most of them are illiterate, they
couldn't write letters home. And they were funny. The soldiers go around
fanning themselves with their fans on a hot day and carrying rifles!

VAN WYK: Were there many efforts to avoid the draft?

PLATZ: Oh, yes. A rich family would buy somebody to take their son's
place. That sort of thing went on. Patriotism wasn't one of the big
things there.

VAN WYK: I guess not. (laughter) Did you ever run into Communist soldiers?

PLATZ: No, fortunately I never did.

VAN WYK: You never had to face them?

PLATZ: No. Of course, I had left before they came in. Dr. Holleman
was the one who was captured by the Communists in 1929. Well, the other
missionaries who were there at the end were arrested by the Communists.
Was your father there when the Communists came?

VAN WYK: Yes.
PLATZ: He was. No, I was out before that.

VAN WYK: You mentioned the burden bearers talking about the Japanese. Did they also talk, or did other people around you talk about Chiang Kai-shek or the Nationalists? Do you have any idea of the feelings toward the Nationalists?

PLATZ: Let's put it this way. When we first went to China we didn't know anything about the government. Nobody talked, I mean, in our circles nobody talked about it. When Chiang Kai-shek arose, Jean Nienhuis had his picture on the wall. That was the first we really were admiring any Chinese in charge. I don't really remember that we had time to talk about anything political with the Chinese. The only thing was certain—never suggest anybody was a Communist. Oh, they were so scared. I remember once I made that error. I don't know why, there was something strange about one of our nurses, and I said to somebody, "Do you think she's a Communist?" Ah! They were horrified, because to be a Communist meant you were killed. There was no in-between way. To accuse somebody of being a Communist meant that Chian Kai-shek's people just took them out and shot them, that's it. There was no way. There was no good Communist.

VAN WYK: So then if there were Communists in your area you weren't aware of them?

PLATZ: No, you weren't aware of them. Absolutely not! Communism wasn't a political party at all. It was a scourge.

VAN WYK: Were you affected by inflation under the Nationalists?

PLATZ: It had been coming on right along but we didn't feel it too much
until, I would say, after Pearl Harbor, I think. Then it got really bad.

VAN WYK: Did this change your attitude towards the Nationalists or did you feel this was pretty much inevitable under the circumstances?

PLATZ: Oh, no. That was just the powers that be. We paid no attention. Struggled from day to day, that was all. I used to sell things, you know.

VAN WYK: Your own possessions?

PLATZ: Yes. The thing was, we had some of our salary held back, either in New York or in Hong Kong in the bank in gold. We spoke of it as gold. I suppose it was gold then. Therefore, we needn't have been so hard up if we got our whole salaries brought in. But people just thought, well, there's no use in putting anything in the bank in Chinese money, see? So that was it. And I can remember I used to try to get Dr. Hofstra to give me an advance. He was the treasurer. And he would act to me just like my father: "What do you do with all your money?" (laughter) Oh, it was funny. You know, someplace I think I have something that shows I got three million dollars.

VAN WYK: Three million dollars?

PLATZ: Yes. Which was probably about twenty-five dollars U.S. (laughter)

VAN WYK: Were you in charge of paying your nurses, the nursing staff, or anything else like that at the hospital? Were you ever in a treasurer position?

PLATZ: No, no. I don't think so. No, I think that the business manager made them up, the salaries, in envelopes, and I probably handed them out
to the nurses.

VAN WYK: But you didn't have to work with the inflation directly like that?

PLATZ: No. And people were paid in rice quite often instead of all in money, you know. I don't remember that the nurses were, though. But when we got a little behind we would sell something. I sold my typewriter I know, and I sold different things.

VAN WYK: Were you aware that the Communists were very likely to take over before you left China?

PLATZ: I don't know. I don't know whether I thought too much about it. Because I left China because my mother was sick. That was the reason, and so I'd only been back there a year and I was wound up in the work, and we knew there was always the Communists in the background, but I didn't think about that aspect.

VAN WYK: Were you expecting to return to China again at some point?

PLATZ: I didn't know what to expect.

VAN WYK: It depended on . . .

PLATZ: Yes, it entirely depended on my mother's condition. My mother lived four years, and by that time--I came home in '47 and four would be '51--I couldn't very well leave while she was alive I didn't think.

VAN WYK: I have some more general questions I'd like to ask you about your work there. And one of the things that really interests me is the number of women, of single women missionaries in China.
PLATZ: Yes.

VAN WYK: Do you have any idea why there was such a large number of them?

PLATZ: Well, the Lord called them, that's all. I can't think of any other reason. It was something that you were called to do, I guess. And a lot of single missionaries got married after they went out there.

VAN WYK: Did you ever feel that you had opportunities in China to work that were unavailable in the United States?

PLATZ: Oh, I'm sure. I never would have gotten to have charge of nurses to that extent in this country.

VAN WYK: Was that something that attracted you to China? Did you anticipate that before you went or not?

PLATZ: Oh, no. My aim was the regular aim—the spread of the gospel, and to teach nurses. That was my first aim. And then of course when I was home on leave, on furlough, I took some courses in public health nursing, and wanted to get that started out there. That was more my aim then.

VAN WYK: Another thing in connection with women in China was the place of the Chinese woman, her status in society. And do you know that you had any special effect on the Chinese women because you were in such positions of responsibility?

PLATZ: I don't think so, because the Chinese women were in positions like that, too. One of my first teachers was principal of an elementary school out there.

VAN WYK: Were these mostly through mission schools?
PLATZ: Well, some were principals of mission schools.

VAN WYK: Were non-Christian women also in these kinds of positions?

PLATZ: I believe they were. We had one cute, cute woman I liked. She was the principal of the London Mission school, you know, elementary school. She had five or six children. She had a husband, but he must have been a couple of hundred miles away. They only brought him back for the weddings and things. But she was quite independent, you know. And she named all her children—the one was the translation of Precious England, Precious Germany, Precious France, Precious Italy. (laughter) Oh, dear. That was so strange. And she didn't have any sons, so she adopted one.

But Precious England—that's Enid Liu—she was in charge of the girls' school there, she was on our nursing school board. She was very strong for Chiang Kai-shek, and you know, went to meetings where he was, and everything, so when the Japanese were coming she had to get out. She went to England and took up nursing and midwifery. She was getting on in years, and she ended up teaching in the seminary in Singapore. It's a union seminary down there, and she is retired now and in order for her to keep her permit to stay in Singapore—they're fussy down there—she has to work five years for the church down there. She was a wonderful woman. That was Precious England.

VAN WYK: If you were to do it all over again, go back to 1930 and go out to China again, would you do things differently, or would you have the mission board do anything differently?

PLATZ: Well, by this time I would have had sense enough to go take some Bible courses. I had none. Sunday school and church was all I had, and
when I wrote to the mission board and said, "Is there anything else I must do?" they answered, "NO, if you know your own work that's all right." I had no degree, no nothing. Just an R.N.

VAN WYK: Did you feel this was a real deficiency?

PLATZ: It was, definitely. It was a real deficiency because I had not been used to speaking in public at all. To have to take part, just to say grace was a hard thing. And then at certain mission meetings we would have to lead the devotions. Oh, that was killing. That was really killing. That's one thing I couldn't take.

VAN WYK: I can understand it. (laughter) Would you like to see a renewal of the missionary movement in China again?

PLATZ: Yes, but not by white people.

VAN WYK: What would you like to see?

PLATZ: I mean, it would have to be by the natives.

VAN WYK: People like overseas Chinese going back to China?

PLATZ: That's right. I think so, yes. It would never be the same. Absolutely never. You can't do it over again. But, you see, I firmly believe that there are plenty of Christians there. There are plenty of Christians who suffered, and I get something called **Underground Evangelism**. Do you know that?

VAN WYK: No, I'm not aware of it.

PLATZ: Well, that one is mostly for Russia, but now it's for China, too.
And out of that I learned that—I think it's on the southern border of China, Kunming, there are Christian villages—they are getting Bibles into China underground, and they are broadcasting in, and all that. So they don't need the Americans to do it. Unless the Communists change and we were invited, or something like that. But I don't think for one minute there will ever be the kind of missions that there was. We had our job, and we did it. Actually, while I was there I felt the church was all independent, and the schools had to be independent, and they had wonderfully educated people to do things. I thought the only thing that was necessary there was medical missions. By that time, you. Well, they're getting along out there now as it is.

VAN WYK: Do you feel that the Communists were helped a great deal by the groundwork that the missionaries laid?

PLATZ: I believe.

VAN WYK: I have no more questions. Would you like to add anything?

PLATZ: I can't think of anything now.

VAN WYK: Well, thank you very much.

PLATZ: You're very welcome.
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