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Western Theological Seminary

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**W89-1010.** Swart, J. Robert (1919-2000) and Morrell F. (1921-2013).  
Papers, 1948-2007, 2013. 3.00 linear ft.

### Abstract

J. Robert Swart attended Wheaton College (1937-1938); Hope College class of 1941; Western Theological Seminary class of 1944; attended Cornell University 1946-1947; ordained by the Classis of Wisconsin, 1944; pastor of Grace Reformed Church in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin (1944-1946); missionary to Sudan (1948-1962) and Ethiopia and Kenya (1963-1988). Morrell F. Swart was in the Hope College class of 1942; missionary to Sudan (1948-1962) and Ethiopia and Kenya (1963-1988). Correspondence, articles, and newsletters from J. Robert Swart and his wife, Morrell F. Swart, concerning their African ministries in the Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya. Also includes materials relating to the Food from Wind project, which uses windmills for irrigation.

Accession No.: W89-1010  
Provenance: J. Robert and Morrell F. Swart  
Donor: J. Robert and Morrell F. Swart  
Photographs: 32 images (Box 2)  
Processed by: Craig G. Wright, November 1990  
John H. Maassen, July 1999, July 2000

### Biography

John Robert Swart was born in Rockford, Illinois, in 1919. During the 1937-1938 academic year, he attended Wheaton College and eventually transferred and graduated from Hope College in 1941, and later from Western Theological Seminary in 1944. He also attended Cornell University from 1946-1947. During this time, he spent the summer of 1942 in charge of the Reformed Church mission in Mescalero, New Mexico. In 1944, he married Morrell Webber. Morrell Fosdick Webber was born in Flushing, New York, in 1921. She also graduated from Hope College, in 1942.

After their marriage, the Swarts began a ministry at the Grace Reformed Church in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, where Robert served as pastor for two years. They were appointed missionaries in 1946. In 1948, the Swarts were in the first group of Reformed Church of America missionaries to work in Africa. A mission was established in the South Sudan among the Anuak tribe. This work was undertaken in association with the United Presbyterian Mission. In 1963, the Swarts were forced to leave the Sudan due to an impending civil war. They then began working with the Geleb tribe in Ethiopia until 1977 when internal strife necessitated another relocation, this time across the border to Geleb lands in Kenya.

Robert became coordinator of the American Missions Medical-Educational-Agricultural Development Program, initiated the use of windmills for irrigation and developed an effective cassette tape ministry. Morrell was editor of the *Ethio-Echo* from 1972 to 1978, and together they had six children. The Swarts received honorary doctor of humane letters degrees from Hope College in 1981 and retired in 1988. Robert received the Distinguished Alumni award from Western Theological Seminary in 1999.

Robert Swart passed away in Canon City, Colorado, on January 21, 2000. Morrell Swart

passed away on July 30, 2013.

### Scope and Content

The Rev. J. Robert and Morrell Swart papers consist of materials from 1948 to 1996 which document the African missionary activities of both Robert and Morrell. Included are correspondence, newsletters, and articles written by the Swarts. The folders have been arranged alphabetically by topical headings, and the material within the folders has been arranged chronologically.

The papers primarily consist of correspondence between Morrell and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Webber. Other correspondents include Rev. Warren J. Henseler, Rev. John E. Buteyn, and Rev. Glenn Bruggers, as well as family members. These documents constitute a detailed report on events in Africa and are an excellent look at daily life in the mission field. Also of interest are the materials relating to the Food from Wind project, which introduced the windmill for irrigation purposes to Africa.

An added collection (Box 2) submitted by Morrell Swart is described by her as articles, etc. footnoted in the book, *The Call of Africa*. The materials consist of memoirs from various missionaries who have worked in Africa, correspondence regarding their expulsion from the Sudan in 1962, and extensive correspondence, especially with the RCA Board of Foreign Missions regarding their possible and eventually actual appointments to the mission field.

### Container List

#### Box 1

##### Articles

Abor years, 1953-1962 (also some Akobo)

Akobo years, 1948-1962

Swart, Morrell W., 1949-2007

Swart, Rev. J. Robert, 1955, 1967, 1974, 1949-1969 (2 folders)

Biographical Materials, n.d., 1963-2000, 2013 (includes Rev. J. Robert and Morrell W. Swart)

##### Clippings

Death of Hailie Selassie, 1975, 1979

Omo River, Ethiopia, March 30, 1980

Programs regarding Preparation for Africa, 1947

Correspondence, 1947-1988 (42 folders)

Expulsion from Sudan, 1962-1964

General, 1948-1982 (35 folders)

#### Box 2

##### Correspondence (cont.)

General, 1983-1988

RCA BFM pre-appointment and appointment, ca. 1947

Ethiopia, Papers, 1965-1995

Financial, 1978-1982

Food from Wind

    Correspondence, 1976-1979

    General, n.d.

    Mechanical Data, n d., 1974-1977

    Photographs, n.d. (30 images)

Food from Windmills irrigation project, 1975

Memoirs

    Africa missionaries 1980-1996 (2 folders)

    Sudan missionaries, n.d.

    Jack and Deb Swart, Sudan and Kenya, 1981-1989

Photographs, n.d. (2 images)

Proposals and Reports, 1977-1985

Rainfall Records of Omo River Post, 1966-1977 (logbook)

*Swart Newsletter*, 1948-1962, 1967-1995 (4 folders)