Angus, William Oral History Interview: Old China Hands Oral History Project I and II

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ANGUS, WILLIAM ROBERTSON, JR.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH AND SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

William Robertson Angus, Jr. was born in New York City on October 4, 1901. His parents, William Robertson Angus and Agnes Kenney Angus were both native New Yorkers as well, and his father, after many years as manager of the 125th St. store of Acker, Merrill & Condit, bought a grocery in Oradell, New Jersey.

William Angus Jr. went to study agriculture at Rutgers from 1918-1922, and while there became interested in the Student Volunteer Group. He remained active in that group throughout his college and seminary days. After receiving his B.Sc. from Rutgers he attended Hartford Theological Seminary at the suggestion of the mission board to whom he had expressed his interest in missionary work.

In 1925 Rev. Angus finished his theological training at Hartford and set sail for his first assignment to the mission field. He settled in Sio-khe, a city southwest of Amoy, and was involved in language training, English teaching at Talmage College in Chang-chow his second year, and district evangelism. It was also during this first assignment that Rev. Angus married his wife, Agnes Joyce Buikema, a 1925 Hope College graduate.


After leaving China for the last time in 1951, the Angus family went
to the mission field in the Philippines, where Rev. and Mrs. Angus worked with church extension and hoped to start several Chinese congregations. He left the field in 1967 and is now retired and living in Orange City, Iowa.

The interviews with Rev. Angus are lively and informative. Time does not seem to have affected his memory at all. In his first interview, Rev. Angus gives a picture of some of his impressions of China and missionary life there as he was first introduced to it in 1925. One facet of the Chinese scene at that time was the emergence of nationalistic and anti-foreign feelings among the Chinese which Rev. Angus captures in examples of some of his own experiences. He also gives a neat rundown on mission organization in Fukien Province, on the cooperation of different denominations and some resulting difficulties, and the effects of the depression on the mission boards in China. The war with Japan is also touched on by Rev. Angus in this first interview, especially in regard to how it brought out some of the differences between the Communists and the Nationalists in terms of party discipline.

In the second interview Rev. Angus focuses on life under the Communists. He talks about the restrictions on travel, the inclusion of all village members into one association or another, his personal dealings with Communist Party officials, and his exit from China under their supervision. One of Rev. Angus' most powerful descriptions in this interview is that of the Chinese peasant, caught for years in the conflict between warlords, bandits, Nationalists, and Communists, never knowing where to place his allegiance, punished no matter where he placed it.
INTERVIEW I

VANDER HAAR: How did you become interested in missions?

ANGUS: I was a freshman in college. I was taking the ag course. I heard him at a Y.M.C.A. meeting. I heard a missionary speak. He talked about China and about its bare hills and so on, and well, I thought I'd like to go out there. And I went to a Y.M.C.A. conference at Silver Bay in the summer, and there I became a student volunteer. So the rest of my college and seminary days, I was in the Student Volunteer Group, and used to attend their conferences and so on. And I went to Silver Bay one other time and that sort of reinforced my decision to become a missionary. I didn't know anything about Reformed Church missions, I didn't know where their mission in China was, or anything about that, but while I was in Hartford Seminary, Miss Morrison and Mrs. Fagg visited Hartford, and I happened to be sitting at the same table with them, and they asked me what I was going to do, and I said I belonged to the Reformed Church and was going to go to China. And they said, "Well, Miss Morrison here is a missionary in the Reformed Church area in China, and Mrs. Fagg had been a missionary before her husband died." And so they talked to me about it. And Bill Vander Meer was at Hartford after. He was a short termer. He came back and he was a year below me, and Ruth Broekema studied here at Hartford. She was there, and what year, I forgot, I guess it was my senior year, because she went out in twenty-four, and that was my middle year.

VANDER HAAR: Now, did Hartford have special mission programs?

ANGUS: I think that the Board asked me to go to Hartford, I mean, the Board secretary asked me to go to Hartford. And I think that was the
reason, that they had a school of missions. And although I took the theological course, I had, as a matter of fact the department did, had a free elective course, where you can take any course you want to as long as you added up the number of points in each department in order to graduate. So, I was able to take mission courses, and courses on China, too. As our faculty advisor told us in our junior year,"You can take all the senior year courses in your junior year if you want to, but I don't advise it."

VANDER HAAR: So you had some preparation, then, for mission-type work.

ANGUS: Yeah, I did.

VANDER HAAR: Then, of course you didn't have any language preparation at that time?

ANGUS: No.

VANDER HAAR: Now, I'm interested. Did the Board Chairman suggest you go to Hartford?

ANGUS: The Board secretary.

VANDER HAAR: Was this when you expressed interest originally at the end of college, before you went to seminary?

ANGUS: Yeah, I must have applied before seminary. I can't remember very well. I remember meeting with the Board secretary a couple of times, and getting my recommendations, and so on. Dr. Potter sent me to, he was the one that guided me to go to Hartford.

VANDER HAAR: Then right after graduation you were assigned to be a mission-
ary to China. Had you specifically applied for China?

ANGUS: Yeah, I applied for China.

VANDER HAAR: Then you arrived in Sio-khe in September, 1925?

ANGUS: No, I arrived in Amoy. I sailed from Vancouver on September first, and I arrived in Amoy September twenty-fifth.

VANDER HAAR: After that you went to Sio-khe?

ANGUS: Sio-khe. (corrects pronunciation) When I arrived in Amoy I was in wool clothes, and Mr. Talman took me to his house and he gave me a suit of his whites to wear. Then Mr. Eckerson came along, and he took me over into Amoy city and took me through the streets over there in Amoy, because he wanted to show me a Chinese city as soon as I got off the boat, so that he could see what kind of an impression it made on me. And then he and I took the launch toward Tong-an. We first took a launch and then took a river boat, and got to Tong-an. And then I stayed with him there for about a week or two. He wanted to take me up into the mountains, but while I was there he got one of his migraine headaches that knocked him out, and so I didn't go to the mountains. And then later on I went back to Kulangsu, and then up to Sio-khe with Mr. and Mrs. Voskuil, and I got sick on the boat, and I had to go to bed as soon as I got to Sio-khe. And Dr. Hofstra came over and found I had dengue. D-E-N-G-U-E. You know what dengue is? They have dengue mosquitos. The same mosquitos that carry yellow fever, but they weren't infected.

VANDER HAAR: Now you said that Dr. Eckerson wanted to show you a Chinese city right away. Do you remember any of those first impressions?
ANGUS: Sure, sure. I remember walking through the streets, and some of them were wet spots, you know, and mud and loose stones in the streets. Some of them slopped us with splashing mud. And Mr. Eckerson bought a piece of meat in the market, and they didn't wrap it, see, they just put a piece of grass around it, knotted it, and he carried it along like this, holding onto a piece of grass.

VANDER HAAR: Like a purse, sort of.

ANGUS: Yes, a piece of meat hanging down. And then he bought some bananas and some pineapples, and when we got on the boat we ate the fruit. He cut the pineapple in half, and he had a knife with a broken blade, and he chopped the pineapple with this, the inside of the pineapple with the knife, and then we ate it with a spoon. I remember those things. And he told me that the boat going up to Tong-an was a river boat. It was called the River Brick. Yes. Like a brick wall.

VANDER HAAR: Now, as you arrived, during that whole period, there are a lot of things written in history books about the beginning of nationalistic feelings, and the Chinese anti-foreign feelings. Do you recall that?

ANGUS: Sure. The Nationalists came through Sio-khe in the fall of 1926. The local troops, they were under a sub-warlord. The warlord in Shanghai, I don't know his Amoy name, but his Mandarin name was Sun-ch'uan-fang. And the local warlord was Tiu-ge. And Tiu-ge had control of Chang-chow and Sio-khe area, and as far as, I guess he had control of Tong-an, too. His troops withdrew as the Nationalist troops came in. And so when the Nationalists came to Sio-khe, they just walked in and the other troops withdrew, and they had a little shooting down the road from Sio-khe. That was the rear guard of Tiu-ge's troops. And then the Nationalist
doctors came to see Dr. Hofstra's hospital, and they got along, and had tea together, and that was about all, and the Nationalists took over.

VANDER HAAR: What was it like? Was it different under the Nationalists than it had been?

ANGUS: Well, yes. When we first went to Sio-khe, practically all the best fields were put in opium. There were fields of opium, you could see those flowers, purple, or red, or white. That was the best crop the farmers could grow. The most profitable crop, because it was such a little volume, see, and so expensive. So it was easy to carry it. And the warlords used to put a tax on opium and force the farmers to pay the tax whether they grew opium or not, see, so if you didn't grow opium you had to pay this high tax, but if you did grow it, there was enough left over so you had a good profit. So, the farmers liked to grow opium. But it was against the church rules. Christians weren't supposed to do it, and it depended on the place. In some places the Christians did grow opium, and in other places they absolutely wouldn't touch it.

VANDER HAAR: How did the mission or the church try to deal with that situation?

ANGUS: They tried to discourage the Christians from growing opium.

VANDER HAAR: Now, did that change under the Nationalists?

ANGUS: Yes, the Nationalists prohibited growing opium, so it was grown only in sort of out of the way places. And they substituted tobacco in most of the places where they had grown opium. But we did get a Nationalist general around 1930, just before the Communists made their raid, and he encouraged the growing of opium again because he wanted to
make money out of it. And when the Communists came down on this raid, he loaded all his opium up, and got that out first.

VANDER HAAR: Now, that was an example, I suppose, of corruption within the Nationalist ranks.

ANGUS: Yes. He was a general. He was a good friend of Chiang Kai-shek, and Chiang Kai-shek always hated to, you know, do things against his friends or his classmates.

VANDER HAAR: So then in your first years you were involved in what you call district evangelism here?

ANGUS: Yes.

VANDER HAAR: Could you describe a little bit what you do in that?

ANGUS: Well, you see, the mission assigns us to districts, and if you're an ordained missionary you become a member of the classis of that district. You see, the church in south Fukien was about seventy years old when I got there, and everything was organized, synod, classis, and rules for congregations, and, that is, churches and chapels. And a chapel was a church that was not self-supporting, and usually had an unordained man taking care of it. So we were assigned to a classis, and then we came under the jurisdiction of that classis. So, so far as any church work was concerned, all ordained missionaries belonged to a classis. But some of them had their work assigned to them by synods. Synod appointed teachers in the seminary, they appointed to various committees and so on, so most missionaries had some assignments from synod, and some assignments from classis.

VANDER HAAR: This was all under the Chinese Church then.
ANGUS: Yes.

VANDER HAAR: What did the mission group as a whole have to say about missionary assignments, or how did the mission, and classis, and synod work together?

ANGUS: Missionaries also had assignments from their own mission, but the mission assigned the place. For instance, if you were assigned to Sio-khe you belonged to the Chang-chow classis. If you were assigned to Tong-an, you belonged to the Amoy classis. Tong-an had no classis of its own. And it you were in Leng-na you belonged to the North River classis. And most of my assignments came from the Chang-chow classis. I was assigned to be moderator of churches that had no pastor, and I was assigned to various committees, and then we all belonged to what we called the Gospel Band.

The Gospel Band, maybe you've heard about that from other people.

VANDER HAAR: Were these after Dr. Sung? Sung Phok-su?

ANGUS: No, the Gospel Band is when all the pastors and preachers get together at one place, in one church, which was the host church. Once a month we gathered on Monday and we departed on Saturday. And then during the week every morning and every afternoon people from the local church would lead us out by twos or threes to the villages. We'd speak in the villages or we'd visit Christians, and then Christians in the various villages would invite us to hold an evening service, and we'd go out with a special anthem song, have an evening meeting, and they would invite all the neighbors around, bring out the benches. And then we'd have a business meeting before we departed to decide where we were going to go next time.

VANDER HAAR: Now you said that when you arrived the church had already
been there for seventy years, and pretty much had the system set up.

ANGUS: Yes. I was sort of a cog. That's why I said about that conference meeting, it was all part of the system.

VANDER HAAR: I noted in the interview in the Democrat you said that initially you wanted to have been an agricultural missionary?

ANGUS: Yes.

VANDER HAAR: And the board didn't want you to? Could you elaborate on that a little?

ANGUS: Well, Dr. Potter said, he was the one that took care of me really, "We can't send you out unless you become ordained." Well, as soon as you become ordained and you go out there, you go out as an ordained missionary and they assign you to do an ordained missionary's work.

VANDER HAAR: What did you feel about that?

ANGUS: Well, I was some time getting reconciled to that because I didn't feel like an ordained man, and I didn't feel as if I could be a preacher. But I thought, well, I had to make the best of the situation.

VANDER HAAR: So they didn't really have any agricultural missionaries at that time?

ANGUS: I don't think so. Well, later on, though, India had one. If it was agriculture, they went to India then. I don't think they had any in my day.

VANDER HAAR: When you went out did you really have any impression of what it would be like when you arrived? Was it kind of a surprise?
ANGUS: I had only one impression, and that came true. And that was I pictured myself walking on the paths between the rice fields. That turned out to be true. But I had no idea, no, what life was going to be like, and I gave away my rug and my pictures and things like that to my fellow students before I left. I thought I wouldn't have any stuff like that over there. And, so, I was surprised, you know, we got out there and found that missionaries lived in these large houses. There was a reason. A lot of those houses were built early, for instance, in Sio-khe the doctor's house. When that house was built by Dr. Otte they didn't know what caused malaria. All they knew was that if you lived up higher then you weren't so likely to get it. And so that house was built so that the family lived upstairs. And some of the other houses were built like that. They didn't know the causes of some of these diseases. They had plague every year in China. Dr. Otte died of plague. I don't know whether anyone knows quite when they found out that plague was caused by fleas that lived on rats. But they knew when plague came to south Fukien. They knew the exact date. And that's in Mr. Pitcher's book, when the plague came to Amoy, the ship that brought those rats, because they had a terrible epidemic of plague in the Amoy area. Some churches lost a lot of their members, and in one place in the Sio-khe area they told me that the population was decreased by two-thirds. And then it eased off, and in my day there were just scattered cases every year, but we all got the inoculation every spring. Sometimes plague came before the inoculation came.

VANDER HAAR: So, you were kind of surprised by the living conditions.

ANGUS: Yes.

VANDER HAAR: You lived in a compound then, most of the time you were
there?

ANGUS: Oh, yes, we lived in a compound. In Sio-khe there were two houses in one compound. That was the single ladies' house and the pastor's house. In the other compound there was the hospital and the doctor's house. They were across the cobblestone paths from each other.

VANDER HAAR: Did you ever feel that living in the large houses within a compound isolated you from the Chinese?

ANGUS: Well, in my day, the Chinese were used to that. And they were just beginning to be critical. One elder, one time, at Synod in Chioh-be got up and said, "The older missionaries were like fathers to us." And they didn't seem to mind. The Chinese didn't seem to mind, they felt at least these people came to tell us about Christianity, and they know a lot more about things than we do. See, that was sort of the attitude of some of the Chinese Christians. And he was complaining that the present day missionaries weren't like that, they weren't like fathers. The trouble was we couldn't have been like fathers. They wouldn't have accepted that. But the attitude changed, and then in our day sometimes they would feel more resentful against missionaries, because, you know, missionaries' salaries were much higher than pastors' salaries. That was hard sometimes.

VANDER HAAR: What about the non-Christian Chinese? How did they react?

ANGUS: Non-Christian Chinese. Well, I was a country worker. I think students had a different attitude. The country people took you sort of in stride, you might say. They alway felt they were at least your equal. You know, I mean you were a foreigner, because . . .
ANGUS: Yes. They always felt that we were at a disadvantage being foreigners. And they were to some extent curious about your work. What I liked about them was that you could talk to them, sort of man to man, you know? They'd talk to you, give you their opinions. I always thought it was a good, healthy attitude on the part of the country people.

VANDER HAAR: That was a little different with the students.

ANGUS: Yes. The students had more of a feeling of what we would call envy, or sort of as if it's, well, unfair that you've had so many more advantages than they had.

VANDER HAAR: Did this ever cause difficulties in the school work? I notice you said that you were a teacher in English at Talmage College your second year. I know in some parts, like especially northern China, there was a lot of student unrest. Did you run into that?

ANGUS: Not that term. I had some nice students that term. I was teaching then. In those days they had two courses, the Chinese course and the English course in high school. And in the English course they taught subjects in English, and I had those boys. They were good boys. Later on, I think it was my next term, that time was when the government was encouraging students to be sort of critical and be naughty in some ways. I can't remember exactly when that was. They had some more or less radical fellows there. Then later, in the 1930's, when my wife happened to be teaching at the college, the New Life Movement came in, and all the students had to have their heads shaved, and they all wore black uniforms, and when the teacher came in, the leader of the students would shout, and they'd all stand at attention until they were released. I always used to say "rest" when I went in. Oh, I did teach a little while, then. But the
New Life Movement made the students do everything according to order and they gave them only half an hour for lunch, and all that sort of thing. They had to stand and eat their lunch, all kinds of things like that.

VANDER HAAR: Very regimented.

ANGUS: Yes.

VANDER HAAR: Then before that, what kind of difficulties would you have within the school with the students?

ANGUS: Well, they just wouldn't be friends with us, and they wouldn't take any discipline.

VANDER HAAR: Was this mainly because you were a foreigner?

ANGUS: No, no.

VANDER HAAR: Or were the Chinese teachers having that difficulty, too?

ANGUS: I think they were having it to some extent. For instance, one time one of the officers of the Nineteenth Route Army got up and spoke in the high school and said, "What are you fellows doing here in school? You ought to be out in the streets helping the revolution," see. The Nineteenth Route Army, they were the ones who defended Shanghai against the Japanese, and then they came down to Fukien, and they were in our area for I guess about a year. And then the Nationalists bombed Chang-chow, and Chuan-chow, and they drove the Nineteenth Route Army out. The Nineteenth Route Army came at the end of the Communist raid in '32. They took their place and the Communists retreated back up to Kiangsi.

VANDER HAAR: This was after 1932.
VANDER HAAR: Now, when the Nationalists came in the first time in 1926 to Sio-khe, did you have to evacuate?

ANGUS: No. They didn't do anything in Sio-khe, but down in Chang-chow, that was my second year. I guess that was my first year too, but I wasn't there. There was a mixture, see, of Nationalists and Communists. They hadn't separated out yet, and they had slogans all over the city. We'd never seen anything like this, you know, every pillar, every blank wall was covered with slogans, painted or pasted. And they were celebrating all kinds of anniversaries, Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, and various other socialist people. And they wanted the schools to have holidays out to celebrate all these, and have parades, and so on. That didn't last very long.

VANDER HAAR: How much were you aware during this whole period of the influence of socialism, the Communist party, on the Kuomintang?

ANGUS: I don't know. I guess I wasn't so very much aware in those early days. It was after the Nanking Incident that we became aware of what was going on. Remember the Nanking Incident? That was 1927 and the consul called us all down to Amoy to Kulangsu, the International Settlement. Then we talked more about it, and then of course, that was in '27, I think, and in '28 I think it was, the Communists came into Leng-na, and Dr. Holleman was captured. Do you remember?

VANDER HAAR: Yes. I remember Dr. Holleman's in Leng-na, is that it?

ANGUS: Yes.
VANDER HAAR: So you were called out for the Nanking Incident in '27, then you went back into the area, into Sio-khe? After that you went to Chang-chow in '31, on return from furlough?

ANGUS: Yes, that's right.

VANDER HAAR: Then I guess it's in '32 that you had your first real experience with the Communists?

ANGUS: Yes, that was I think in April, April '32. As a matter of fact that lasted five weeks. We went down to the International Settlement until the Communists retreated. Of course, that was just a raid. They didn't go to Amoy, they went down to the coast, down by the English area, down to Un-sio.

VANDER HAAR: Then at this point were the Communists in open conflict with the Nationalists?

ANGUS: Oh, yes, they were in conflict with the Nationalists. We were in Chang-chow, and people there said, "Aw, the Communists will never get down here, they've got to go over the mountains," and so on. And they kept reassuring us, saying, "Just stay." And then they found out that the Communists had out-flanked the Nationalists, they were coming down the North River. So they got down to Phaw-lam when they cut off Chang-chow. So they said to us,"Well, you better go down." And we arranged it, and all our folks in Sio-khe and Chang-chow went down to Kulangsu.

VANDER HAAR: So, the consul called you down that time again?

ANGUS: No, I don't remember anything about the consul. He may have done so, but we were going to go anyway.
VANDER HAAR: How were relations with the consul during your stay?

ANGUS: Oh, very good. I was married in 1927, and we had to have the consul and his wife out to the wedding. That made it legal.

VANDER HAAR: Sort of like a ship's captain.

ANGUS: Yes.

VANDER HAAR: Then at that time, it was more or less a raid, as you said. Was it at all apparent, I mean, could you have dreamed at that point that the Communists would ever take over the country?

ANGUS: No, we didn't think so. Then, after that, you know, Chiang Kai-shek used to have an extermination campaign every year. The Communists did withdraw into Kiangsi, into a place called Juichin. I don't know what the Mandarin for that is, I think it's Juichin, over the border of Kiangsi, and that's where he built up his forces, and that's where the Nationalists used to go and attack every year. And they cut off their salt so they couldn't get any salt, and did various things that forced them into this long march that they took.

VANDER HAAR: Did you notice any changes when you went back in '32, the period the Communists were there, or wasn't it really apparent?

ANGUS: No, not so much in Chang-chow, but in Leng-na, the Communists were there for four years. They went there in '28 and they stayed there until '32. They divided all the land, all the fields, and eliminated the large landholders. And those fields were never given back. They stayed that way.

VANDER HAAR: Even after the Communists left.
ANGUS: Yes, and so when the Communists came in the second time, in '49, the fields were already divided. Had been divided in '28 or '29.

VANDER HAAR: What kind of a reaction was there in the countryside to the Communists' coming in '32?

ANGUS: Oh, people were, I think they were scared, and it was hard on the Christians.

VANDER HAAR: Now, I was noticing a lot of people have talked about language difficulties. Now, of course you spoke Amoy. Did you pick up some Mandarin, too?

ANGUS: No. I was out in the country. If you worked with students, then you might pick up some, but if you're out in the country, what you mainly need is the local dialect. Let's say Amoy is the standard. And if you go to Chang-chow or Tong-an, or Choan-chiu, or Hweian, these are variations, and what you have to do if you're out in the country talking to farmers, you have to learn the local variations of the language. And you practically never hear any Mandarin unless you talk to the school teachers.

VANDER HAAR: So you probably had more than a couple of local variations?

ANGUS: Yes. And when we went down to Amoy or Kulangsu, and went into the store and wanted to buy something, they could spot us right away. They knew where we came from.

VANDER HAAR: Were there requirements of how long you had to study language before you actually were assigned to the field?

ANGUS: Yes, it's supposed to be full time your first year. Full time lan-
guage study, and half time your second year.

VANDER HAAR: Were you able to accomplish that?

ANGUS: Oh, yes. You see, my first year was in Sio-khe, and that's all I had to do was language study. Except they asked me to teach English in a primary school, and that wasn't very difficult. Because, you know, just to teach the kids a little bit, to say various things. But in my second year, see, I was teaching in middle school, English in middle school, and I had language study half time besides that. I never became very good at language, I wasn't too fluent, and I didn't really get the rhythm. My wife did much better. She got the rhythm and spoke it very well. Our best linguists were Mr. Eckerson and Miss Holkeboer. They used to say, you want to say it in Chinese so that it's a pleasure for them to hear you. But I never achieved that so that it was a pleasure for them to hear me.

VANDER HAAR: Well, it's a very difficult language, I'm sure.

ANGUS: Yes, but you get to like it after a while, you know, and you think maybe that's the way it ought to be. My wife and I studied Mandarin in 1946, 1947, up in Yale, and it always seemed to us that the Amoy language was much more euphonious than Mandarin. It didn't have any of those harsh sounds that Mandarin has. All the sounds seem to be pleasant sounds.

VANDER HAAR: Perhaps we can get back to earlier when we were talking about anti-foreign feelings. Did you have any experience with anti-Christian, anti-foreign feelings in the streets?

ANGUS: Nothing serious, really. The kids, you know, sometimes would follow
you and say hoan-a, hoan-a. That really means that, it really means a person who doesn't act according to rules, I mean, an uncivilized person, a barbarian. And they'd sometimes follow after you yelling hoan-a, but that's nothing. And one time we used to have what we called thaw-kiong. Those were local Communists, and one time I ran into them in the county seat, in Peng-ho, and we were supposed to be having an evangelistic meeting. Instead of that these people came in and took over at the end, lambasting the United States, and the pastor that was with me got up and lambasted them, which I thought was pretty good, pretty courageous. That's about the only time I had any confrontation with them.

VANDER HAAR: What do you think the cause of some of the anti-foreign feeling, and anti-Christian sentiment was? I know that it wasn't as prominent in southern Fukien and southern China as northern China.

ANGUS: Well, there were lots of things to be dissatisfied about, of course. The foreigners had had charge of the customs and the salt and so on. That was so that they could collect money that had been loaned to China, like foreign consortiums and so on. But people in the country just gradually became aware of these things. Students would make speeches boycotting this or boycotting that. When I first came to China there was a boycott against the British. Because of the May 26 Incident in Shanghai they were boycotting British goods. And later on after Japan attacked China, they were boycotting Japanese goods. There would have been a Chang-chow boycott forced by the students. Students were involved. In the shops they would pick up a piece of Japanese china and smash it on the floor. One shopkeeper said to me, 'Tell me, which china of mine is Japanese?' I looked on the bottom of his vase and it said in English, 'Made in Japan'. And one
was particularly attractive. I said it's made in Japan. He said khaup-e. That means weep for your father.

VANDER HAAR: Now, getting back to the organization of the church. When you arrived already, the missionaries were involved in union work, with the British, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians, in one Chinese church?

ANGUS: That's right.

VANDER HAAR: How did that work?

ANGUS: Well, you see, with the English Presbyterians I think it worked very well. The London Mission had had a different policy. The English Presbyterians and the Reformed Church had been together from the beginning, way back in the 1840's. But the London mission didn't have their Chinese church unite with ours until around the 1920's. And they had a different organization, and not like the Presbyterian system. And also their preachers were half laymen, they were some of them farmers, and so on, earning some of their own salary, rather than being, depending on the church and the missions for salary. And when some of these men were called to some of the churches in our Reformed Church section, or the English Presbyterian section, they didn't quite fit in with some of the other preachers, and things like that. And then in synod, there were sometimes disagreements about how things should be run. So it worked pretty well, but it wasn't exactly smooth. Then, later on, during the depression the Methodist Board gave up the Methodists in the Eng-chhun area, and those Methodist missionaries' salaries were taken over by the English Presbyterians. And then those Methodist churches in that area joined the South Fukien Synod, so we had Methodists come to our meeting. In 1927, the South Fukien Synod joined the
Church of Christ in China. They were organizing it then, so it became the South Fukien Synod of the Church of Christ in China.

VANDER HAAR: This is in '27?

ANGUS: Dr. DePree was one of our delegates.

VANDER HAAR: Now how do you think the union work affected the mission? Was it an asset in contrast to some of the denominationalism of other missions?

ANGUS: I think so. Yes, I was in favor of that. I'm sure that it worked much better than the formation of separate churches, and much better for the Chinese, too, for their organization.

VANDER HAAR: Now, how would that work? You would be under the Synod, actually, each of the missions. Were there other splinter groups?

ANGUS: Yes, there were Seventh Day Adventists, and then we had a Chinese denomination. Two Chinese denominations. We had the True Jesus Church, and then we had the Little Flock. The True Jesus Church was like the Seventh Day Adventists in that they worshipped on Saturday. The Little Flock, maybe you know about them, they had several, several things of their, some of their own ideas. They didn't really have ministers, they had several leading elders, and they wouldn't call themselves a church but a place of meeting, and they would never take a collection. All giving had to be put in a plate at the end of the service.

VANDER HAAR: How were relations with the Seventh Day Adventists and the Little Flock?
ANGUS: With the Seventh Day Adventists they weren't so bad. We had a run-in every once in a while when they tried to take people out of our church. One of their chapels or churches would, but that didn't amount to much. Their main work was down in Kulangsu where they had a school, and they raised cows. We did have run-ins with the people in the Little Flock. Not so much with the True Jesus Church, although that happened. They weren't so strong as the Little Flock. The Little Flock was stronger, and they were more aggressive. One time in a certain place, I forget the name of the place now, the man there had married a second wife. He had been excommunicated, and when he died, the pastor wouldn't give him a Christian burial.

VANDER HAAR: This was someone of the Little Flock?

ANGUS: No, no, not yet. Wouldn't give him a Christian burial, see, so his son was angry about that, and one of his sons found out that there was a group called the True Jesus Church, so he came back and he said to his brother, we don't have to belong to this church. There's another church we can belong to, the True Jesus Church. So they left the South Fukien Synod, and they joined the True Jesus Church. And that is interesting because there were only five families in that church, and two of them left, and joined the True Jesus Church.

VANDER HAAR: He was excommunicated because he remarried after his wife died?

ANGUS: No, no, no. Because he had two wives at the same time.

VANDER HAAR: Two wives at the same time. Oh, I was a little confused there for a second. So then, I'm a little interested in the dynamics of, you hear a lot about how the church in South Fukien was independent, was not
a Reformed Church there. In what ways was that true?

ANGUS: It had no relationship to any of the boards at home, no organizational relationships, an independent church. The boards, and the missionaries of the three missions when they came in helped, and they were sort of given, I'd say, a dual relationship to the church at home and the church on the field. They were accepted as full members of the classis, with the right to speak, and the right to vote, same as the other ordained ministers.

VANDER HAAR: But the mission itself still had funds, though, didn't it, that they would allocate?

ANGUS: Oh, yes. And until almost the end, almost before the Communists came, the institutions, the schools, and the hospitals, were under the mission. But gradually that changed. The schools first. The schools, you see, after the government insisted on registration of schools, then the schools had to have their own boards, so they elected the school boards, and these school boards were responsible to Synod. And the hospitals, too. Later on the hospitals too came under the hospital boards, and they were responsible to Synod, I mean, they reported to Synod. So, when I first went out there, the institutions, the schools, hospitals, were under the mission. Only the seminary, the seminary was under the Synod. And in general, the idea was that each mission appointed a teacher to the seminary.

VANDER HAAR: Now, that would cause some conflicts, too, wouldn't it? Perhaps theological?

ANGUS: Yes, it did, because the Reformed Church was more conservative than the British, and sometimes some of our men would start a campaign in Synod against one of the British teachers, but the Chinese would never go that
far, would never actually ask them to withdraw, so the campaigns started by some of our people never succeeded.

VANDER HAAR: Now, getting back to the living situation, coming to China without any real background in it, did you gradually intermix culturally with the Chinese, or was there real culture shock?

ANGUS: Now I didn't have much of a shock, but I remember, when I first went to Sio-khe, Miss Vander Linden had come back from furlough. She had been in Sio-khe, and she was now assigned to Chang-chow. So, in Sio-khe they had several parties in her honor. Those were my first Chinese feasts, and I attended about three of them. So it was almost as soon as I got to Sio-khe. Of course when I got to Sio-khe I was sick with this dengue, but afterwards Miss Vander Linden came along, and then they had these feasts. They were really good. It was very good food, and so I enjoyed it very much, but you had to get used to their method of eating, you know, with the bowl in the middle, and everybody putting chopsticks into the middle bowl, and so on, and even more so in the country. Now, in the old days, many missionaries when they went out in the country on a country trip, they'd take a cook along, and then the cook would cook their meals for them. But in my day, most of us just went out and ate whatever came along. One other difficulty was in paying for what you ate. It was hard to know just how to do that if the church was our host, and it couldn't let you pay. If a pastor was our host, then we had to figure out some way to reimburse him, but we, it was simpler to go out that way. Although we did carry, we did have our own bedding to carry, and our own mosquito net.

VANDER HAAR: What was life like? I'm sure you got to some very small villages in contrast to the larger church centers?
ANGUS: Well, yes, they usually could put you up. Most, well not most, a lot of the older churches had, you know, what they called the prophet's chamber, a place where missionaries could stay, some room somewhere where missionaries could stay when they were there. And other places they just took care of you as best as they could. Sometimes they would put a couple of boards on horses, and you could put your pad on there, and sleep on that, and sometimes they'd take a door out of its socket, lay that across a couple of horses so you could sleep on the door. That was, we really considered that neat. Out of the way of anything special, I mean, they must have done that a good many times. You know, the doors didn't have hinges, they had a round projection on each end. It's part of the door, see, it goes, you push the door up into this upper socket, and then let it down into the lower socket.

VANDER HAAR: I know what you're talking about. You were talking about the food. Were there other cultural things that you adjusted to? As in, the Chinese must have had to adjust to you a little bit as an American missionary, and you had to adjust to them. Do you remember any other area of adjustment?

ANGUS: Yes, well you had to get used to mosquitos, and some places had to get used to bedbugs and fleas, and things like that.

VANDER HAAR: In a small village, when you visited that, you probably wouldn't have been the first missionary ever there, but would there be a little bit more unfamiliarity with foreigners?

ANGUS: Well, sometimes, but most of the villages I went into, I mean, where I stayed overnight, were places that had had missionaries before. Sometimes
we'd get off the beaten track and get into some place where they had never
seen a Christian, or never seen a foreigner. They were very nice, though.

VANDER HAAR: You were discussing the depression before, and mission work
with the Methodists coming into the area. What was the effect of the
depression on your mission work?

ANGUS: Well, it affected our subsidies to the Chinese church. I remember
Dr. Boot was treasurer of the committee on preachers' subsidies of the Synod,
that is, the Preachers' Central Committee. He felt very acutely the fact
that our board didn't have the money, and he used to bemoan that fact. He
said that he felt that he just couldn't do it. In a way it was not so bad,
because it helped squeeze out some of the more, some of the unnecessary
subsidies, and forced some of these churches that should have done
better to do better than they were doing.

VANDER HAAR: So the Synod subsidized churches that were weaker?

ANGUS: The three missions gave their money to the Synod. Synod's
committee would apportion it to the classical committees, and they would
apportion it to the various places.

VANDER HAAR: In '32 the Communists came into Chang-chow. You came back,
and stayed at Chang-chow until '39?

ANGUS: '37. The war had already started, the war between Japan and China,
it had already started then. And my furlough was due in the spring of
'38. But they decided that they would advance the furloughs of people whose
furloughs were due, so they sent me to the U.S. in '37, and then I came
back in the spring of '39. And the war had been going on all that time,
and they had people, an influx of refugees from Amoy. The Japanese had taken Amoy meanwhile, and Amoy is an island, and Kulangsu is an island, and Quemoy is an island in the harbor. The Japanese took the island. They didn't take the mainland. They left the mainland alone. But from Amoy to Kulangsu, flocks, forty, fifty thousand people fled, and they organized a relief to take care of these refugees, and that was what was going on when I came back from furlough. And the Japanese had cut off the mainland, so that the three missions had two motor boats that went through the Japanese lines, and through the Chinese lines, to take the missionaries back and forth.

VANDER HAAR: Well, I thought I'd ask, we were just talking about the war, and one of the questions in historical circles is the degree to which Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists really tried to fight the Japanese, or whether the Communists were more effective. I thought that maybe since you were there for the whole war that you might have a comment on that.

ANGUS: There was a draft. They drafted young men from the various districts, and so on, and down our way they tried all kinds of ways to avoid the draft. And students in high school were exempt, in Talmage College. Of course the schools in Kulangsu came under the Japanese in 1941, December 1941, but up-country they were still under the Chinese government. And, high school students were exempt, so we got a lot of kids in high school who had no intention of studying, and no desire to do anything except just stay there, and parents who were quite willing to pay the fees, and so on, just to keep those kids in high school. And that made problems, and then one time, the boys struck, and the local magistrate got into it, and told the boys he'd get them back in school, and get things fixed up for them, and so on.
Talmage had difficulties sometimes. And another way of avoiding the draft was to be an only son. An only son was not drafted, so people would send their boys off to relatives, and so on, so they could all be only sons. And then, another way was to falsify your age so that you're either too young or too old. We used to see these draftees, they would lodge them at churches overnight you know, at one stage of the way, you know, and they used to have them tied so they wouldn't run away. Their right arm to the next fellow's right arm and so on all the way down the line, marching like that. And then I remember one church, it used to get these fellows all the time, and they used to nail the windows and all the doors, except one, shut, and they would take out all the benches and furniture, and put straw on the floor, and keep the draftees in there overnight until they went on the next stage of their journey.

VANDER HAAR: So you think part of the Nationalists' problem was real trouble getting recruits and manpower? That was mainly the Nationalists that had this problem with draftees, or did the Communists share that problem?

ANGUS: Somehow or other the Communists seemed to have more discipline, they seemed to be able to make them do things, and they tried to make them like it. But I talked to some draftees, some soldiers who had deserted, and they always complained about the kind of treatment they got when they were draftees in the Nationalist army, and their claim was that the officers pocketed all the money, so then they didn't take care of the soldiers well. I'm sure in the Communist army that wouldn't have happened. They had, they had a, in fact I think the reason the Nationalists lost was because they didn't have a chain of command from top down to bottom. In fact they, it's pretty hard to find any links of command in the Nationalist
army. Each officer was sort of loyal to himself. So they weren't organized well enough to do anything, and even their generals were corrupt, they were just helping themselves. Whereas in the Communist army they had that chain of command, from top to bottom, and they had better discipline.

VANDER HAAR: So you think that the charges that the Nationalists failed to muster very effective defense against the Japanese are pretty accurate?

ANGUS: Oh, yes. I think that their generals were not loyal enough. They were mostly looking out for themselves.

VANDER HAAR: Then you came back in 1939. Did you decide to come back knowing the conditions in China, and the war going on?

ANGUS: It was just the ordinary thing to do. When Veenschoten and Poppen came back they were caught. See, I got back before Pearl Harbor. They came back, and they were caught. In Kulangsu they couldn't get up country. They had to stay there 'til they got home on the second Gripsholm. But when I was there it was still before Pearl Harbor. The trouble was that I took my family down to Kulangsu and I went up-country and I couldn't get back. They were down there and I was up-country. They were exchanged and went to America on the first Gripsholm.

VANDER HAAR: It was a long period of time.

ANGUS: Yes. We were separated for four and a half years.

VANDER HAAR: Then there were very few of you left there: Miss Broekema, Dr. Eckerson, and yourself.

ANGUS: Dr. and Mrs. Depree.
VANDER HAAR: I'm curious what kind of difficulties you encountered during this period in the mission.

ANGUS: Yes. Miss Hoelkeboer got as far as India, and she couldn't get to China until after the war was over, and she said, "I wondered how you were getting along, whether the mission was working and so on." But we had a mission meeting up in Eng-hok. See, the seminary and the high school moved out to the country because of the bombings, and she said, "Then when I got the minutes I knew, I knew that you were acting according to the organization, and through the agenda and so on." It was sort of fun, in fact some of our folks went home after Pearl Harbor, the DeVelders, for instance, and Miss Bruce, and Bill Vander Meer. They all flew over the hump. We started out with eleven missionaries up-country, and then we wound up with these five. And I was the only ordained missionary who could walk, I mean, Dr. Depree could walk all right, but he was a seminary teacher, so I used to make the rounds of all the districts, in sort of a circle, and then I'd land in Tong-an and visit Mr. Eckerson. And I'd also go through Eng-hok, where the Deprees were. And then just before peace, just before the war ended, I was going to Tong-an, and we were were going to Chuan-chow, I think, for a youth meeting, when I came down with typhoid in Tong-an, and there I was when the war ended.

VANDER HAAR: At that point you went on furlough. As the war came to an end, what was your opinion of the political situation in China?

ANGUS: I was really more optimistic. I never thought that the Communists would be able to make it, would be able to get control. Of course, my confidence eroded as time went on. And then, after I'd been home on furlough and came back, and was assigned to Leng-na, up there we saw the Communists,
I mean we saw the Nationalists on their retreat, going along the road down to Amoy, and then they were going to go over to Formosa. You'd see them all day long, you know, the soldiers and trucks going down the road.

VANDER HAAR: What was the reason for your optimism at that point?

ANGUS: Well, because the Nationalists had so many more troops, and so much greater area and so on, and I never knew how the Communists were able to get control of so much of the country until I read *Thunder Out of China*. Then I understood how the Communists had worked behind the Japanese lines, and they got control of big areas behind the Japanese lines, whereas the Nationalists had been cooped up in Western China.

VANDER HAAR: Well, maybe that's a good stopping point for today.
INTERVIEW II

VANDER HAAR: I was interested in when you talked about the Nationalists coming in '26, and you talked about a very patriotic society, a patriotic pastor who was arrested by the Nationalists? And another interesting thing was that he was very patriotic, and he had actually sounded off against the foreigners, and missionaries included. Was that usual for a pastor?

ANGUS: You don't often come up against them, at least not in my experience.

VANDER HAAR: Then you said at another point, you wrote about the revolt of 1933. What was going on then? This was in Chang-chow?

ANGUS: There was a general from Canton, Chhoa Ting-khai, and he was very, he was not a Communist, but he was very anti-Chiang Kai-shek, and was head of the Nineteenth Route Army which came into our area after the Communists left after their raid in '32, and they decided that they were going to revolt against Chiang Kai-shek. And Chiang's Nationalist planes bombed Chuan-chow, and they bombed Chang-chow. I guess they convinced the Nineteenth Route Army that they couldn't make it, and the Nineteenth Route Army retreated to Leng-na. I forget how long they were with us, maybe six months or a year. We got to know the generals quite well. I don't know if Chhoa Ting-khai spoke English or not, but some of the other generals spoke English quite well and there was one general, Ng Kiong, the Chief-of-Staff, and he was quite an interesting man, and we talked with him. He spoke English, but he spoke French better than he spoke English. I remember I was moderator of the Soa-pia Church when the church was occupied by soldiers, and it was up to me to go and see the general to see if he could get the soldiers out. And I went to see this man, and he immediately picked up the phone and called the
town where the soldiers were, and told them to get out. Whether they did or not, I don't know. That's another question.

VANDER HAAR: Did the soldiers often take over churches in areas?

ANGUS: Yes, quite often.

VANDER HAAR: This would be, I suppose, in Nationalist times. Then, as we concluded yesterday, we were just getting to when you came back in '49, after World War Two.

ANGUS: '47, I think.

VANDER HAAR: Yes, you came back in '47. That's when you studied language at Yale, you studied some Mandarin?

ANGUS: Yeah, '46 to '47.

VANDER HAAR: Now, as you came back, that was right in the middle of the conflict between the Communists and the Nationalists. How aware were you of that situation?

ANGUS: Well, we knew what was happening, but it seemed quite a long ways off. And we didn't know if the Communists would ever make it down to where we were. We had our son John with us, and then later, our son David was evacuated from Shanghai, he was in a high school in Shanghai, and he came up to live with us, so we had two boys living with us, and then we were watching the Nationalist soldiers go by on the road, and that made us feel that the Communists would be coming. So we decided we'd better get the boys out of there, so we took the boys down to Hong Kong, and they went out to the Philippines, to a high school in the Philippines. And then we came back to
Amoy, and we got as far as Chang-chow, and then the Communists came while we were in Chang-chow, before we got to Leng-na. And so we and the rest of the folks in Chang-chow just stayed in our beds that night, and when the take-over came through we heard the shots and heard the people go by, and the Nationalists went out, and the Communists came in. And in the morning it was all quiet. Then our problem was to get back to Leng-na, and Dr. and Mrs. Oltman and my wife and I, we decided that while things were still unsettled, that was the best time to get out, otherwise they might restrict you, or keep you, so we just took our bags and got on the bus. That was already in Communist hands. When we got there then they asked us how we liked their regime, and if we had any criticisms.

VANDER HAAR: So what was your answer?

ANGUS: Oh, I just gave them some non-committal answers.

VANDER HAAR: So then when you arrived in Leng-na did you try to continue your work as normal?

ANGUS: Yes, I tried to. I couldn't leave the town. They didn't say you can't leave, they just said your pass wasn't ready yet. They did that to me a couple of times, and then I realized that my pass would never be ready. So Walter de Velder and I had time on our hands. He had gone down to Hong Kong about the same time we had, and sent his wife and children home on one of the President boats. And there was very little we could do in Leng-na. We used to get the Chinese newspaper, and read that every morning, look up the characters we didn't know, and so on. It was just one sheet, and it was all propaganda. We didn't get any local news. The only local news we got was when somebody was saying that he had become converted to communism, and
he approved of all the things they did, and felt sorry for the things he had done, and so on. Usually these apologies would come in the advertising section of the paper.

VANDER HAAR: What changes did you begin to notice around the village?

ANGUS: Well, so far as the church was concerned, the local church continued services, but we had a classis meeting, and they wanted to know what this was, so some of the Chinese told them, it's a meeting of all our classis. And they said, well, don't do this again. Then we had some street meetings, and they said don't do that again, you're blocking traffic. There was no traffic, though. They usually had an excuse for any restriction. And so, we went calling; we weren't supposed to go to any other town, in fact the Chinese couldn't go either. They had to get passes to go from one town to another. And things went along sort of like that until the United States froze the Communist assets in the U.S. Then they decided they were going to freeze American assets in China. And so they went through our houses, and asked, "What belongs to you personally, and what belongs to the mission?" And then they sealed up everything that belonged to the mission. We had a man who was supposed to account for the dealings with us, and he was called the control man. He also had control of the hospital, and Dr. Oltman was held responsible for all the medicine in the hospital, and for practically everything the hospital used. But he had no authority over any of the people under him, because the control man had all the authority. So he had all the responsibility, but didn't have the authority. However, the control man was a reasonable man. And one time, they used to have meetings of all the hospital employees, and the doctors, and everybody, and the control man would ask if anyone had any complaints. And one of the most humble
of the hospital staff, I forget what he was, he got up and said he couldn't afford to give his money back to the hospital treasurer, and then he found out that the hospital treasurer was getting kickbacks from various people on the hospital staff, and Dr. Oltman didn't know that until that came out in this meeting, and then the control man disciplined the treasurer.

VANDER HAAR: Once they had frozen your funds, how did you get by? I know that in Chang-chow they had one of the local businessmen supplying them with funds secretly. Did you have to do something like that?

ANGUS: No, we sold lots of stuff gradually, and used the money we got for it. They didn't dare do that in Chang-chow because they were afraid they'd get people in trouble, but somehow, under our people, we were able to sell our things, and in fact one of our deacons sold for us non-commission. And one Communist came up and said to him, "What are you doing here, why are you selling their things?" Well, he said, "I'm doing it for the money I get out of it," and that seemed to be okay. They came up one time, oh, they invited us down to an opera one time. The White-Haired Girl, that was the opera that they gave. They did a pretty good job of that. They gave us seats way up front. There was another time they said they wanted to borrow some of our records. They wanted to borrow Russian records, and I said all our stuff is frozen, we're not supposed to do anything to it. And so they went out, and came back again with a document, and they borrowed two records. And I had to sign, and they had to sign, before they took the records. And then they came back a few days later, and said they wanted to have an extension. They wanted to keep them a little longer. So we both had to sign again. Things like that were all done with efficiency, with order. I got the impression that everyone was afraid of making mistakes, and they had
them disciplined right down from top to bottom. And no people dared to overstep the rules. Have I got the rules of the game in there?

VANDER HAAR: Yes.

ANGUS: Yes, that shows it well. We had these people coming in all the time, and if we just had a screen door hooked, they didn't dare come in. It was only if you happened to have the door unlocked that they would come in, and they never dared take anything.

VANDER HAAR: Did you have during the period you were there in Leng-na any harassment or just a restriction on your movement?

ANGUS: Really just restriction. Except the last month or so, then we had to get out of our houses. They were afraid that Amoy was going to be bombed. And they moved the Amoy University up to Leng-na, and they took our houses for the faculty housing, and so we had to get out, and we moved into the hospital. They had rooms in the hospital. And they told us we had to get out of our houses at a certain time, but they didn't move in until about five days later. In the meanwhile, somebody came into our house and took out all our old magazines, and took the mirrors, took all the mirrors, and took everything with them that they thought was worth while, out of the house, because the Communists weren't guarding it. And the students came up, and we had plastic screens, and the students came up and cut all the plastic screens out of the frames. Well, of course they found out about the students because there were so many of them, and they went to the school and began asking around, and found out that these kids had picked up the screens. And then we went through the houses with the patrol man, and we told him what was missing.
VANDER HAAR: So, were you surprised at the Communists' success in South Fukien?

ANGUS: Yes. I was surprised that they were able to control so many people, not only in South Fukien, but all over. And I guess the reason was that they infiltrated every group, and that they formed new groups. Everybody belonged to something. Teachers belonged to the Teachers' Association, and doctors belonged to the Doctors' Association, and all the professional men. The farmers belonged to the Farmers' Association, and the women belonged to the Women's Association, and all that sort of thing. And they had meetings, meetings of these groups, and at the meetings they'd shout slogans, and every time they'd shout a slogan you'd have to raise your fist and repeat. And then they would spot anybody who wasn't particularly keen about doing this. And they'd keep an eye on you, and at the end of a year, in one night they arrested five hundred people in our county, and they did the same thing on the same night in the adjoining counties. And they infiltrated our high school board. They said, they told the board, they staged it sort of, "You must get rid of these reactionary people, and get progressive people." Our high school principal was a man who was very intelligent, I've got him in several poems, who used to use the Communists' own rules against them. He studied their rules, constitution and all, and then he'd tell them, "You're not doing this according to your own rules." But that didn't work and they wouldn't talk with him. And the principal of the primary school said of him that his words have bones in them, they stick in your throat. And so then they, one evening, they arrested him. We didn't know that he was being arrested. He had become discouraged, and decided that he wanted to go back to Amoy, leave the school and go back to Amoy. He told them he was going, and they said to him, "Go up to headquarters and get your pass." He went up
to headquarters and they arrested him, and jailed him, and nobody knew just what jail they had put him in, so the principal of the primary school went out and found out where he was and reported back to us. Then sometime, a week or more later, they came and woke his wife up at night when she was in bed, and said, "Your husband's being attacked, and you must come and defend him." So she got dressed, went out to the place where they were presumably trying him, and they arrested her. And so they were imprisoned. They were made to do hard work; he had to carry stones and she had to take care of the garden. Then a stone fell on his leg and broke his leg, and so they let him go until his leg was well and then they arrested him again.

VANDER HAAR: Now, did your feelings towards the Communists change at all after they arrived, or after you came back in '47? What idea did you have about communism, I guess, is what I am asking, prior to your real experience with them later on, in '47? What I'm trying to ask you is did you have the preconceptions about the Communists already in '47, or did your attitudes towards them change at all while you knew them?

ANGUS: Well, the preconception we had at the time of the, in 1932, when they looted our house really wasn't exactly favorable. They took our stuff down to the public park and handed it out to people. And after we left, then the people came into our house and took whatever they liked of the stuff. You see, our house was used as headquarters when they came to Chang-chow, and they rearranged the furniture and so on, and we came back to see that. They moved the sofas into our pantry and used it as their office. They put a telephone in there. But they preached against us, how we had so many things, and other people didn't have any, and for a right division you had to share with all the other people. And in Leng-na, you know, they
used to come up and walk around our veranda and look in our windows, and though the house doors might be locked or hooked and you couldn't get in, you might still walk around on the veranda. One time Dr. Oltman had an argument with some soldiers who wanted to go in the house. The door was open, he happened to be there when the door was open, and so he had an argument with them whether they should come in or not. His point was, this was private property, and it wasn't for anyone just to walk in. And they said everything in China belongs to the people, and we're the people so we have a right to go in. And that was sort of the attitude of the ordinary soldiers.

VANDER HAAR: I was curious about how the Chinese themselves felt about the Communists coming in. Of course, in Leng-na they had already been there awhile.

ANGUS: No. I mean, well they had been there in '28, and then had gone away in '32.

VANDER HAAR: How did the Chinese and the Chinese Christians feel about them coming back?

ANGUS: They, their idea was, it wasn't going to last. They used to say that this can't be. It couldn't last long.

VANDER HAAR: So are you saying that they were less concerned?

ANGUS: Well, they were used to political changes, and up to then none of the political changes had lasted very long. So they thought, well, these fellows come in like this, and soon they'll have to get out of here.

VANDER HAAR: A month before you left you had to get out of your houses, clear
the schools, and during that period of time you really couldn't do much work. Then did you have to apply to exit?

ANGUS: Yes, we had to give the reason why we wanted to get out.

VANDER HAAR: What reasons did you give, and how did they react?

ANGUS: We said we wanted to go home and see our children. They, I don't know how they reacted, but they said we had permission. They wouldn't let Dr. Oltman out until six months later because he was in charge of the hospital, and they hadn't yet decided who was going to take over, whether it was going to be a military hospital, or a civilian hospital, so they wouldn't let him go until they decided. So we came out in April, and he came out in September.

VANDER HAAR: What did he do while they were keeping him?

ANGUS: He said that he used to embarrass them, walking around the town, talking to the shopkeepers. He was very popular. And he sort of lived with their propaganda.

VANDER HAAR: Then how long did it take after you applied for you two?

ANGUS: About a few weeks, I think.

VANDER HAAR: So they didn't hold your applications up as long as some of the other RCA missionaries?

ANGUS: I don't know. The Chang-chow people got out about ten days ahead of us, and the Tong-an people got out about ten days after us, I think.

VANDER HAAR: Then were there incidents on the trip out that were exceptional,
or aggravating?

ANGUS: No, we were pretty well, we had pretty good treatment. One thing was that in Chang-chow we had to stay in a hotel there, and the police came in in the middle of the night and wanted to see our papers, but we didn't have our papers with us. They were in the hands of the control man, no, not the control man, hands of the guide, and that was the agent of the travel company. So when the police themselves came in and asked us where our papers were, we just said they're in the police headquarters. That was all, and finally they would stand around awhile and then go.

VANDER HAAR: Now I'm interested in the comment you made earlier about how you felt that the people back home got misconceptions of what the missionary role was, what missionaries did. Could you elaborate on that a little bit?

ANGUS: That's going back. Well, when I wrote my first batch of poems I was in New Brunswick on furlough, and one of the ministers in New Brunswick at the time, Theodore Brinckerhoff, he is now retired, used to come once a week and we'd read these together, and then we'd discuss them. And he said, "Now I'm getting some idea of the kind of work you do out there. It was all more general and more vague in my mind until I saw these actions." You see, he read about these actual incidents.

VANDER HAAR: I was particularly interested in some of the incidents. There seemed to be problems of Sunday observance, two wives with one husband. How did the mission and the church try to deal with these cultural differences between Chinese tradition and what we in the Western culture think is proper?

ANGUS: Well, in most cases we had to settle it the Chinese way, because in some things we had control, like in the schools, but perhaps we've done
more our way in the school or in the hospital, for instance, where the missionaries had more say in things. Otherwise it was a church matter. That would come up in consistory or in classis. We had our say, but that wasn't necessarily decisive.

VANDER HAAR: Were there problems about Sun Yat-sen's picture in schools?

ANGUS: Well, I don't think the missionaries liked it, but they accepted it; they had to. But Kulangsu was different. Kulangsu was on the International Settlement, so the schools on Kulangsu were not so subject to regulation, and I think the missionary say-so had more influence there.

VANDER HAAR: Were there other areas of difficulty, like Sabbath observance?

ANGUS: Yes, that varied from place to place, and it would depend upon the church and the attitude of the church and the church elders. The problem was that market day came every fifth day, and Sunday came every seventh day, so that sometimes market day and Sunday coincided. And that was a great problem for some of the shopkeepers. Whether they close shop, or whether they would just go to church and let somebody else mind the store, or what they'd do. Of course the doctors, they all expected they didn't have to worry because Jesus had healed on Sunday, I mean on the Sabbath, and so they felt they were going to carry on. But the storekeepers found that quite a whole other problem.

VANDER HAAR: That was something the Chinese church really had to reconcile for itself, probably. The missionary didn't try and tell him what to do. We were talking about your trip out. I sort of cut you off then. I was wondering if you had anything else that was of interest. I know some people had such dramatic exit stories.
ANGUS: Yes, I know that. Miss Broekema and Jean Nienhuis. We didn't have any trouble.

VANDER HAAR: You went out with just your wife?

ANGUS: Yes, just my wife. We went down to Ko'-tin and got on a launch, and the launch took us to Swatow. And one thing that happened to us, we had, they kapt our passport, and didn't give it back to us.

VANDER HAAR: Do you think it was perhaps better for you because it was just the two of you rather than a group as it was for some of the others?

ANGUS: Yes, it might have been. They put us in a hotel in Swatow and they told us not to leave the hotel. They put it on the basis of our own safety. So we were in this room, and all we had were, we had the room in the hotel, and the lobby, the hotel lobby. And they fed us in the hotel, but my wife, she had a little frying pan, and she got a little clay stove, and then she got the material and we used to cook breakfast on the stove in our room.

Oh, about being on the boat, that was interesting. They wouldn't let us keep a piece of Chinese paper with Chinese characters on it. We had our passes, and we got on the boat, and about four o'clock in the morning when the boat was going to start, one of the soldiers came in and asked for our pass, and he got off the boat. We were sitting on that boat, oh, I guess we got on about midnight, and sat around until about four o'clock in the morning, and we'd been sitting up on the deck. The bunks they were going to give us were occupied by the customs men. They were going to examine us before we left, see, and so we sat up on deck. As soon as the ship started, then everything changed.

VANDER HAAR: Yes, that problem interested me, too. It sounded as if when
you were talking about your trip out that there was sort of a veneer of toughness, and underneath there was sympathy.

ANGUS: Yes.

VANDER HAAR: One thing you haven't talked about too much is the effect of communism on the church itself.

ANGUS: Well, there were restrictions out gradually until practically all we had was the Sunday service in various places without much communication where we could get together in discussion groups. And as far as our work was concerned, I never preached after the Communists came, but I used to say the benediction because I was the only ordained man there after Dr. Walter de Velder went home. So I used to get up and say the benediction, and they objected to that. They'd say, we can't have this warmonger get up on the platform and say the benediction. And so after that we stayed away. That was the last few weeks.

VANDER HAAR: It's been over twenty-five years now since you left. What do you think the state of Christianity in China is today?

ANGUS: I don't know, but it was sort of, they were, the Communists, I think, inherited everything. And how successful they've been, it seems from lots of different people that go through there that it's been quite successful.

VANDER HAAR: I've been interested recently in some publications of church news, some Presbyterian publication talking about how the Communists have achieved a lot of the social goals, in their view, that the missionary was trying, attempting, to lead. How do you feel about all the reports about the new China?
ANGUS: I feel that the great thing that happened was peace. And it became the victor's victory. You know, the things that the Communists used to use against the Nationalists are the things that they do themselves now. For instance, they said that the Nationalists used to store up the grain and keep the grain for years. Now they do the same as the Nationalists used to do. And they used to destroy Nationalist records when they raided a village, and it was Fascism. The Nationalists, you know, bureaucracy and keeping records, and all that stuff. The thing is, they were the victors, and the Nationalists were the vanquished. The Nationalists might have done a lot of these things, or attempted them, if they ever got organized. The Communists were better organized. So that's some of the things that the Communists have helped a great deal.

VANDER HAAR: What about Mao's death and the future for China? Do you think communism is there to stay?

ANGUS: Yes, I think it's there to stay. Not that I want it to stay, but I think that they've got a tight enough organization to hold it. You never know what could happen. The South might break away from the North some time, and I see many possibilities like that in the future. That's something that's happened in China many times.

VANDER HAAR: I was going to ask a few more general questions on the mission work on the whole, and one of them was a lot of missionaries in South Fukien and Southern China area have felt that mission work in Southern China was much more, I don't know if successful is the word, but met with better results in some ways than mission work in Northern China. Do you feel that that was the case?

ANGUS: I don't feel that particularly, at least during the time that I was
there. We were plagued by bandits and unrest, and all that, and people were going into the cities. The city churches were growing, getting an influx of people, whereas the country churches I thought were suffering, people going away. As a matter of fact, for a good many years we had a small loss in our church membership for the whole synod, year after year like that. And I think that part of the reason was that it was very difficult to have any kind of a program to last us from one year to the next because you never knew what area was going to come under the control of this bandit or that bandit, or whether some new army group was going to take over, and all sorts of things like that. For instance, when the Nineteenth Route Army came to a town around Lam-sin...Oh, there's one called "Communists" in there, right?

VANDER HAAR: Yes.

ANGUS: It tells about the hideout in the mountains there. Well, the Nineteenth Route Army were going to root those people out, and they, the trouble was, it wasn't the actual Communists who suffered, it was the people on the border, you see, who had to give them rice. So they would go down to these farms and country villages, and they would demand rice, and they'd have to give them some, otherwise they would shoot them. So then the Nineteenth Route Army came in, and they arrested all these people who gave rice to the Communists, and they shot about a hundred people. And one of our friends said that there was about one guilty person in the whole hundred, about one Communist in the whole hundred that they shot. And that's a tough situation for these people to be placed in. They were on the border, and might be in a place between two bandit bands, and these people on the borderland always had the conflict. There were three main bandit groups. One had control in West River, one was up in An-khoe, and one was outside of Chang-chow.
VANDER HAAR: They were kind of the common man caught in between. I was wondering, in retrospect what do you think some of the effects mission work and missionaries' presence in China had?

ANGUS: Well, I think it was a stimulus to all kinds of things, all kinds of groups, whether they were Christian or non-Christian. They sort of were stirring up action, and I think that the missions were a great factor in all this turmoil in China.

VANDER HAAR: In what ways? Do you think that without the missionary presence there would have been less?

ANGUS: I suppose.

VANDER HAAR: Seeing the Communists come do you feel that even so the results were positive?

ANGUS: What I had hoped would happen. The Communists with force broke down a lot of these obstacles that were obstacles to the missionaries. Well, the ancestor worship, the clan system, and all those traditions. And if Christianity ever gets, a Christian mission ever gets another good chance in China, people think they would have a much better opportunity than before.

VANDER HAAR: I noticed with interest in one of your poems, the one on Communists, that they treated the kidnapping of pastors and preachers that you were writing about, that they treated the pastors differently from any other individuals, and their impressions of them. For instance, one who had offered to repay all the money that the church was going to pay for his ransom, they treated quite well. And then he said as a rule, one of the elders said, as a rule I don't think that religion makes any difference, that after
the clan elders and officials who are their true enemies. How did you react to that statement?

ANGUS: Yes, well, I don't think that they zeroed in on the church very much, the Communists didn't, before the Communists took over. They were interested in the officials, people who were in connection with the Nationalist Party, and officials under the Nationalists. As a matter of fact, as to the pastor in that poem, when the Communists took over, they shot him because he was a member of the Nationalist Party, and he used to send information to the Nationalists.

VANDER HAAR: It's sometimes hard to differentiate where they're punishing a person perhaps, or executing him for his Christian beliefs or for his political beliefs.

ANGUS: One time they raided a village, and they killed a Christian, but he was a representative of the salt gabelle. He was collecting the salt tax, and I don't think he told anyone he was a Christian before he was an official.

VANDER HAAR: One question we have been asking just out of curiosity is if you were to do it again, if you were to go again, what would you do differently?

ANGUS: If I had to prepare I would prepare differently, and if I had foreknowledge. You sort of, as I said at the beginning, you're sort of boxed in when you get there because it's been going on for seventy years, and so on, and everything is set.

VANDER HAAR: A pretty traditional church there already, much like here in the US. We don't change too frequently. Did you go there with that idea?

ANGUS: No, I had no idea, I had no idea what it was about.
VANDER HAAR: Another question we always ask is would you do it again if you were to have the chance?

ANGUS: I think so, yes.

VANDER HAAR: I think that pretty well goes through most of my questions, unless you have anything on the top of your mind.

ANGUS: I had something a while before, but I can't think of it now. The control man came whenever he wanted to talk, and he said when you go back to America tell all the people that we Chinese are for peace, and we believe the American People are for peace, but the government isn't the people. It was about that once when Dr. Oltman and I were there, and I was looking at him so innocently that Dr. Oltman couldn't keep from laughing. He was smoking a cigarette, and he said, he told me later, I wasn't watching him, he told me later he turned around to knock the ashes off the cigarette so the control man wouldn't see him laughing when he was talking. We also had a talk in church one time, the speaker wanted the congregation to go against the Americans. We were sitting there in the congregation.

VANDER HAAR: Was there much anti-American feeling held against you?

ANGUS: de Velder had an interesting experience. There was a chapel about six miles up, and they got hold of the preacher there and they said to him, de Velder has applied to go to the states. He is a spy. And the preacher said, "No he isn't." And they said, "We know he's a spy." And the preacher said, "If he's a spy I'll let you cut off my head." We were lucky that way. Did you ever read "With God in Red China" by Stockwell? Well anyway, he got into trouble because some of his own people, you know, were mad at him. Now before we left there was an advertisement in the newspaper for three days,
and anybody who had anything against us had a chance to go to the control man and report, and there was a Chinese doctor in town, and one of the deacons came and told us that before we left they came to the Chinese doctor and said is there anything against these folks? And he said no, and that was, you know, lucky for us. Stockwell was put in prison for a long time because he had a situation same as mine. When de Velder went home I had to take over the treasurership of the primary school. And this fellow had to take over the mission treasury or something like that when his predecessor went home, and he had gotten rid of a preacher, not he, but his predecessor had gotten rid of a preacher who was unsatisfactory. And this preacher informed against the treasurer, he was so on, and so on, and that's the pretext they used for our high school principal who was a Chinese. Thirteen years before when he was principal of Anglo-Chinese College in Kulangsu he had discharged a teacher on the grounds of incompetence, and he had also been editor or something of a paper which produced an anti-Communist article in those days. And this man, because he'd been discharged way before, had chosen to use the article in the paper not written by him but by somebody else, and on the basis of that they arrested him.

VANDER HAAR: Were you aware of the public trials going on and the accusations?

ANGUS: Yes, but we didn't experience them; Poppen did. But we could see meetings, see, our house was on a hill. (The houses in Leng-na were in the cemetery land sold to the mission.) We'd look across to the opposite hill where there was the public park, and we could see the meetings there. We couldn't see what they were doing, except shouting and raising their hands. We had some friends eating with us, and the kid said he saw them hitting the bandits, and his mother said they weren't bandits, they were just innocent
people.

VANDER HAAR: The bandit-Communist distinction was a difficult one to tell at times, I'm sure.

ANGUS: There was a certain class of Communists that were called thaw-kiong. There were local Communists, and there were others, it depended on how sincere they were in their Communism, who might have been bandits, or might have been half-bandits and half-Communists. Like these fellows that took ransoms and said they were Red soldiers.

VANDER HAAR: Well, I guess we better wind it up.
Preface

Interviewee: Rev. William Robertson Angus, Jr.

Interview I: September 16, 1976
Rev. Angus' home in Orange City, Iowa

Interviewer: Mr. David M. Vander Haar
B.A. Hope College

Interview II: September 17, 1976
Rev. Angus' home in Orange City, Iowa

Interviewer: Mr. David Vander Haar
B.A. Hope College
Fig. 1

Map of the AMOY MISSION

[Map depicting the Amoy Mission area with various locations labeled, including Siou-yo, Lemoa, Chang-poo, and others.]

Note: The diagram shows various stations and missions within the Amoy region, with labels in Chinese and English.

Fig. 1
Rev. & Mrs. William Robertson Angus, Jr.
# Table of Contents

Preface .......................................................... v  
Biographical Sketch and Summary of Contents ........ vi  
Interview I ........................................................ 1  
Interview II ..................................................... 31  
Index .............................................................. 52
INDEX

Angus, William R.
anti-foreign feelings 17-19
assessment of political situation in China after the war 29,30
Chinese Christians' feelings about the Communists 39
Communist take-over of Chang-chow 33
conflict between Nationalists and Communists 32
cultural adjustment 23-25
description of church organization and relations between churches 19-23
effect of the depression on mission work 25
exit from China 40-41, 43
involvement in Gospel Band 7
language difficulties 16-17
Leng-na under the Communists 33-40
mission activities during the war 29
Nineteenth Route Army 31
separation from family 28
sons, John and David 32
treatment of cultural differences by the mission 41-42
views on China today 44-45, 47
Bandits 46, 51
Boot, Dr. Theodore 25
Brinckerhoff, Theodore 41
Broekema, Ruth 1, 28, 43
Bruce, Miss 29
Chiang Kai-shek 6, 15, 31
Chinese Church 6-7, 19-23
Church of Christ in China 20
Cities, towns and villages in South Fukien
  Amoy 3, 7, 9, 26, 33, 36, 37
  Chang-chow 4, 7, 12, 13, 14, 25, 31, 33, 35, 38, 41, 46
  Chioh-be 10
  Chuan-chow 12, 29, 31
  Eng-hok 29
  Kiangsi 12
  Kulangsu 3, 4, 13, 14, 26, 28, 42, 50
  Leng-na 7, 13, 15, 29, 33, 36, 38, 39, 50
  Sio-khe 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 17, 23
  Tong-an 3, 7, 29
  Un-sio 14
Communists
  and the church 44, 48, 49, 50
  capture of Dr. Holleman 13
  conflict with Nationalists 14, 32
discipline 27-28
  in Leng-na 15-16, 33-40
Party 13
public trials 50
raid 6, 12
take-over Chang-chow 33
Depree, Dr. & Mrs. 20, 28, 29
de Velder, Walter 29, 33, 44, 49, 50
Eckerson, Dr. 3, 4, 17, 28, 29
English Presbyterians 19
Fagg, Mrs. 1
Hartford Seminary 1,2
Hofstra, Dr. 3,5
Holkeboer, Miss 17,29
Holleman, Dr. 13
Little Flock 20,21
London Mission 19
Morrison, Miss 1
Nanking Incident 13-14
Nationalists and the draft 26,27
bombing of Chang-chow and Chuan-chow 12-31
capture of Sio-khe 4-5
conflict with Communists 14
corruption of 6,27-28
prohibition on opium production 5
retreat from Chang-chow 33
New Brunswick Seminary 41
New Life Movement 11-12
Nienhuis, Jean 43
Nineteenth Route Army 12,31,46
Oltman, Dr. & Mrs. 33,34,35,39,40,49
Otte, Dr. 9
opium 5
Poppen, Dr. 28,50
Potter, Dr. 2,8
Reformed Church 1,19,22
Seventh Day Adventists 20,21
Shanghai 4,12,32
Sino-Japanese War 25-26
South Fukien Synod 19-21
Sun Yat-sen 42
Sung, Dr. Phok-su 7
Talmage College 11,26,27
Talman, Mr. 3
True Jesus Church 20-21
Vander Linden, Miss 23
Vander Meer, Bill 1,29
Veenschoten, Henry 28
Voskuil, Mr. & Mrs. 3
warlords 4,5
Yale University 32