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1947-05-06, Letter from Eleanor and Edwin Cory to "Friends at Home"

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Hunan Bible Institute
Changsha, Hunan, China

May 6, 1947

Dear Friends-at-Home,

It's an odd sensation to know I'm writing to a number of persons at once, and not an easy thing to do, because you are all different and I would write in a different vein to various ones of you if I could write separate letters. We are so grateful to Frances Nielson at the Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles for her offer the evening before we left to see that these are duplicated. If postage from here were not so dreadfully expensive, I would like to write to you separately. At Christmas-time I thought we would be leaving quite soon for China, but our sailing date was delayed until March 14. We said good-bye to our family the morning of the 12th in Glendale, too the San Joaquin Daylight to Berkeley, stayed over a day with the Ekdahls of Bolivia, and sailed on the 14th. After five days, we arrived in Honolulu early in the morning and spent a wonderful day sightseeing as guests of Mr. and Mrs. Guernsey Brown, who have a Christian work there. We ended the day with a picnic supper on Waikiki Beach, with fresh pineapple for dessert! Then top an evening mid-week church service and back to the boat. The trip to Yokohama took nine days. It was a real disappointment that the American government wouldn't let us off the boat even though we were in the harbor several days. We were thrilled, as we left Yokohama, to be able to see Fujiyama in the distance, apparently floating above a sea of mist. We reached Shanghai two days later, and spent a couple of fascinating hours sightseeing in spite of a bedlam of the worst traffic I have ever seen—pedestrians, pedicabs and automobiles. That night we spent on the ship, and the next morning we today road by taxi across the city to visit the China Inland Mission headquarters. I was surprised to find then so extensive—a large six-story building and another four-story one, both in good condition. We were delighted to see some old friends before we had to hurry back to the boat. Another two days brought us to Hongkong, the end of our boat trip. It had been a good one, compared with others we have heard of recently, but traveling in troop ship style isn't very luxurious, and we all had taken turns with colds, coughs, flu, and seasickness. It was marvelous to see Russell Davis, who had come down from Changsha to meet us. The next few days he and Edwin worked hard to arrange for our trip inland and the handling of our freight when it should arrive. We stayed in the Peninsula Hotel at Kowloon in dormitory rooms, the only thing available. Because the Chinese lacked an application form to fill out, we had to leave our radio behind with one of the missionaries. On the tenth of April, we left Russ in Hongkong to take a boat back to America for a short visit, while a five-hour train trip took us to Canton, where we had to stay two more days before we could buy a ticket on to Changsha. We were thankful for the China Travel Service, which helped us with baggage and arrangements. They are looking for our freight, too, by the way, which has not yet

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arrived here. Finally we got off at noon, only to find when the train started moving that four pieces of our hand luggage were left behind! We were in the midst of praying desperately, when the train stopped, and suddenly there were the China Travel Service men, who had followed us in a taxi, with the missing bags! The scenery the next thirty-six hours was magnificent—wild flowers, rice fields, villages, mountains and rivers. We arrived in Changsha, the end of our road, just a month after we had started, to find a warm welcome from Charles and Grace Roberts and Miriam Davis and her three boys. As I may have

explained before, this Hunan Bible Institute is the China branch of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, and it is under Dr. Roberts' direction. He has been here for several years now, helping in the UNRRA organization and now somewhat with CNRRA, both of which groups have quarters in part of the buildings on this 10-acre compound. Besides these, there is an orphanage for 500 children here and a center where thousands of refugees passing through receive help. These are under Chinese control. Then there are some classrooms now repaired and usable and dormitory quarters to accommodate our 18 or 20 Bible students this opening year. We will be living, as soon as the walls are whitewashed and floors painted, in the lower floor of a rebuilt two-story residence, while the Davis family has the second floor. The bombed shell of another two-story house is next to ours. It will probably be rebuilt into a one-story bungalow. The presence of these several other organizations leaves us at present quite cramped for quarters. Little by little the grounds are being put into shape. Quite large vegetable gardens are planted now, and some of the flower seed we brought is already up. And, wonder of wonders, we have two cows! It's marvelous for the children to have fresh milk. There is the most startling contrast between the spacious, quiet grounds here and the noisy, dirty, crowded street just outside our compound wall. For the sake of the children, as well as for our own health, we are happy that we have the space that we do. We have already discovered something about the variety of Changsha weather. When we first started to unpack, it was so hot that I quickly repackage all our warm woolen clothing. But before long it started to rain at a temperature stayed for days at 60 degrees. When the humidity is approaching 100 degrees, that really is quite uncomfortable in an unheated, so out come sweaters and coats and wooly underwear and flannel pajamas! There is so much rain here that I'm sure I'll soon learn all about mold and the other unpleasant features of a semitropical climate. One of the compensations, though, is the lush vegetation that springs up everywhere. My Chinese lessons have just begun at eight every morning with a Mr. Ho, a Chinese who really understands how to teach. Edwin has an hour with him following mine, and Miriam has a third hour. The most discouraging part of it is that everybody seems to speak with a different dialect, and how am I to know which pronunciation to use? Edwin started right into work, with classes in Greek, New Testament Introduction, and New Testament Exegesis, besides several English classes each week in a nearby middle school. He has been

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working, too, on a tentative curriculum for next year. As soon as I get a little more settled, I am looking forward to teaching some English classes, too, because there are many opportunities to go into the forty middle schools of this large city. They are glad to have us make the English class a Bible class, using gospels in the hands of the students. It is surely an "open door" that we must have advantage of as we can. There is an English service for Chinese here each Sunday morning, conducted with simple choruses in English, reading in English from the Gospel of John, and a fine message from Dr. Roberts to conclude. I have been struck by the contrast between the good attention these young men give all through the service and the confusion we so often see at home in any gathering. Each Sunday afternoon, there is an English service at the home of one of the missionaries, mainly for the forty-odd missionaries of several denominations here in Changsha. Last Sunday, however, Edwin left instead at 3:30 for a university about three miles from here to speak to a Christian group. This university they told him, is almost 2000 years old and has a student body of 3000. He said a group of about 100 attended the service and were very much interested. Janice was not feeling well when we arrived—nor were Edwin and I for that matter—but all of us have come back to normal after those weeks of travel. And Janice is happy and content most of the time. She so enjoys playing with the Davis boys and the two little English girls who live near us.

And she is getting acquainted with the new amah who takes care of her part of the time so that I can be free to study. We are both very thankful and happy for all that the Lord has done for us thus far in bringing us safely to a place of service and putting such opportunities before us. We hope that you will pray with us that we may “walk worthily” here in Changsha. Yours in the King’s service.

ELEANOR and EDWIN CORY