Dear Friends:

The months are rolling by fast and it is high time that I was writing you about all that is taking place here in Hengyang and about the things that make up the life of a first year missionary: Life here is a full one to say the least! We have been in the peculiar position of being on the front and yet not seeing the front though occasionally it has lifted its head and has reminded us of its presence in rather vivid ways. On the whole, however, the things that fill our days are not war-time activities and tho' our numbers are fewer than in normal times the work of the mission goes on much as usual.

The business of language study has been my first responsibility this year. As soon as life settled back into routine following the bombing last July, I began to concentrate on Chinese. I know what it is to be an illiterate for it was as someone who can speak, but cannot read or write that I began my study. The matter of finding a good teacher has been a problem all year. I have had one and then another and none for more than two or three months at a time and a good part of the time I have studied by myself. It is not ideal, but it is the best one can do until the time comes when language schools will be available again. In the meantime I am thankful for the knowledge of the language that I acquired as a child which has made it possible for me to pick up vocabulary more quickly and enabled me to start work in the hospital before completing a regular course of study. I am learning the national language, or mandarin, which is now understood in most of China, but I'm also glad for my native dialect of Ningpo which comes back most readily and which has proved to be very useful in the clinic where frequently we have patients who are refugees from the Shanghai-Ningpo area. Often I find that I can understand these people much better than the nurses or doctors who are not familiar with that particular dialect. It is like meeting someone from the old home town when we start conversing and always amuses the onlookers no end to hear us.
The mission voted that I should limit my work in the hospital to three hours a day so as to insure my putting in sufficient time on language study. This means that I have not had very heavy responsibilities in the hospital, but at the same time have been able to help out some and have not had to shelve my medical work entirely as would ordinarily happen during the first year of language study. I have been responsible for the Gynecology and Obstetrics clinics and am in charge of the in-patient Obstetrics department. It has proved very interesting work and I am glad to say that there has been a gradual increase in the number of patients. In this field it is a definite advantage to be a woman physician for there are still many who would refuse to come to be examined by a man. In the clinic work the two most discouraging things we face are the high percentage of venereal disease and the far advanced cases of cancer. In the past three months I have seen eight cases of in-operable cancer of the uterus and as there is no X-ray or radium available for treatment, making the diagnosis is the same as signing a death warrant. As for venereal disease, there is no well organized federal or state control and provision for treatment as we have at home and the drugs required for treatment come at such exorbitant prices that it puts them beyond the reach of many a patient. Many patients become discouraged by the expense before the necessary course of treatment is completed so that what treatment they have had is of doubtful value since it is not followed up sufficiently. At present one injection for the treatment of syphilis costs $600.00 national currency. At this rate the amount of free work we can do is necessarily limited. A great deal remains to be done in educating the public concerning the control and prevention of these two classes of diseases. The problem will never be satisfactorily solved without greater aid from the government in both this field of education as well as in making the necessary drugs available to the class of people who cannot afford them.

The work in Obstetrics is generally of a brighter nature, though there too we frequently encounter difficult cases resulting from the handiwork of untrained mid-wives or tardiness in seeking hospital care. We seem to be the
place where they come after everyone else has failed. I can think of several examples of this. One case came to us after having been in labor over three days at home. The mid-wife had done all the tricks of the trade and thoroughly contaminated and infected the case before the family finally decided to bring her to us as a last resort. The baby was no longer living and the we were able to complete the delivery with forceps without too great difficulty, the mother had had more than she could stand and also died within twelve hours.

Another mother came to us after having already been in the delivery room of another hospital. The case was difficult and the patient was not wealthy, so the delivery was not completed. After trying another local hospital and being refused admission, they finally brought her to us. This time, the baby had long since died, we were able to save the mother. A third case came to us only recently who had been in the hands of a private practitioner who had applied forceps without any of the routine preparations for such a procedure and then, the three people were said to have tried their strength, was still unable to complete the delivery. We were able to deliver a live baby in spite of all the preliminary interference, but the little thing had had one eye badly damaged in the process. This eye had to be removed, but the baby suffered no ill effects from the operation and mother and baby went home in good condition in the normal number of days after delivery. The most encouraging thing about this department is that more and more patients are coming for pre-natal examinations and some even come for post-natal check-ups. Both these are fairly new developments in the medical work in this part of China.

The hospital as a whole is a busy place. At times it is surgery that is busy and then there may come an epidemic of some sort and the medical department will fill up rapidly. Of course immediately after a bombing is when surgery becomes busiest. We have been fortunate this year in that there have only been a few bombs dropped and at no time were any great numbers injured, tho' we have had as many as thirty or forty come in for treatment at a time. Many of these
cases are pathetic sights requiring amputations and other radical surgery and usually they have to stay on in the hospital for many months. During the year many gifts have been made to the hospital by the men of our air force and a large percentage of them have gone toward endowing free beds for the use of patients such as some of these bombing victims who could not possibly afford hospital fees over a long period of time. Others, too, have been helped by these free beds. At present there is one little girl who was brought to us by the police. She had been a veritable slave in someone's home. They had kept her as long as she was strong enough to work, but gradually her state of malnutrition became more and more severe and she became worthless to them and so was thrown out on the street to die. I have never seen anything, animal or human, look more starved and still be alive. Today I passed her on the porch of the hospital and stopped to talk with her for a few minutes. You would never know she was the same child and she has one of the most contagious smiles I've ever seen. There is something bewitching about her despite her shaved head! A twinkle in her eye and lovely rosy cheeks make it hard to believe that when she came to us she was so weak she couldn't even walk. Her legs and feet are the slowest in making the recovery. She still has two small patches of dark tissue on her toes which she almost lost from gangrene, but she goes shuffling around the hospital with her big smile and expressive eyes making herself right at home with the staff wherever she is. After all this is the only home she has!

One of the most interesting activities that I have taken part in is the Wednesday evening English Speaking Fellowship Group which meets here in our home. Soon after I arrived here my friend Sophia Chang, who with her husband is the moving force of the Chinese Y.M.C.A., asked me if I would help her organize a group which would get together weekly and whose objectives would be the sharing of life experiences, the study of Christianity, the cultivation of friendship and the practice of English speaking. After talking it over, we decided to use the new book by Stanley Jones, "Abundant Living", as the taking off place for our
discussions. The book hadn't reached China yet so I was very glad that the young people of the St. John's church in Berkley had given me a copy before I started out. Many interesting and stimulating discussions evolved out of the study of this book. In fact Sophia became so interested in it that she asked Mr. Terry of the Christian Literature Society to cooperate with her in putting it into Chinese and already they have made considerable strides in the translation. It has been most interesting to see the great variety of people that have come to our meetings. Doctors, teachers, business men, men of the political world, railway men, Christian workers and occasionally men of the U.S. air force drop in to join us. At times our discussions evolve around personal problems, religious and spiritual matters. At other times we go into the realm of world politics, the kind of a world we want to see, what we can do to bring it about and related subjects. Frequently we have interesting guests passing through who have given the story of their experiences in other parts of China and help us to widen our viewpoint about the present situation here. We have even had visitors who have just come out of occupied China and have had the opportunity of hearing about life there. It has all proved most interesting and a fine chance to get acquainted with folks that we might otherwise not have met at all. Out of this group also developed the demand for an English worship service. In some ways the local Chinese church does not fill the need for a dignified worshipful service which many of these people who have come out of port cities are used to. As in most Chinese public meetings, there are babies running up and down the aisle and curious people standing on the side lines, a good deal of noise and people getting up and moving around in the middle of the service and the like. So it has been a real need filled to have a service in a place where curious people are closed out and where babies are not allowed to run at will, where there is good music, a choir to sing the responses and all in all a very worshipful atmosphere. Many people who would otherwise never think of going to church are attending this service. Some of course come because of the opportunity to hear English, but all that come seem to enter into the
spirit of the service and we feel that it is a real opportunity which has opened up for reaching those which the established church has not reached. This service is sponsored by the Y.M.C.A. and is held in the Y.auditorium. The whole idea originated with the Chinese themselves and our participation is not on an official basis as a mission, but because they have asked us as individuals to cooperate with them. It is the kind of thing that I hope we will see more and more of in the future... not necessarily the emphasis on English, but the fact that there is a feeling of need and that the need was filled by their own initiative and not by the promptings of the mission.

The "Y" is also sponsoring a series of English Bible classes and has asked some of us to teach them. We are using Hoffatt's modern translation of the New Testament for these courses. The first one was the study of the gospel of Mark and now we are studying John. Each time the group that registered was large enough to be divided into three classes according to the amount of English each person has had. For me this has proved one of the most worthwhile experiences of the year. It is the first time I've ever attempted to teach a Bible class aside from regular Sunday School work. There is a world of difference between teaching someone who has grown up in the knowledge of the gospel story and teaching someone who has never read it before. It is really a challenging thing, it has made me look at the story in an entirely new light myself as I try to put myself into the place of someone who is hearing it for the first time. How much we take for granted! These inquiring minds have faced me with some challenging questions and I find myself thrown back on hard study and much prayer in order to prepare for them. The members of the classes are largely young men who have had middle school work and are now in business in the city, some with the railway, others in banks, the post-office, telegraph office, still others are doctors, members of the hospital staff, etc. It is opportunities of this sort that make life out here a challenging thing when we realize that many are willing and eager to hear about Jesus and all that He means to this world.

One of the greatest privileges we have had has been that of entertaining
our servicemen here in our home. This has seemed like a little piece of the U.S. to many a homewick fellow and we have had many good times here together. We have tried to have a group in at least once a week and oftentimes a few drop in for supper and the evening uninvited. Our cook has become famous for his morale. For a few months during the winter we had the Blackstone family from Chenchow staying with us with three children, Bobby aged ten, Margaret eight and Jeanette four. Our popularity went up about one hundred percent during that period. What a treat it was for the fellows to see some honest to goodness American kids. The whole Blackstone family is very musical and so our evenings of entertainment always had plenty of music, Bill's lovely baritone, Betty's pian and the children's singing to say nothing of the whole gang of us around the piano trying out songs old and new. Each Sunday evening a group of us go over to the hostel for a service with the men. Bill Blackstone and Ted Homig both serve as part time chaplains for the group here and take turns conducting the services. The services are well attended and the men have been very generous in their giving. The offerings taken have gone to several different projects such as the free beds in the hospital, the printing of Moffatt's translation of the New Testament, the school expenses of certain needy children, and so on. Some of the men have taken up individual projects as well. One sergeant picked up the little beggar boy who was dogging his heels and took him home to the hostel with him, cleaned him up, fed him, and fitted him out with clothes several sizes too big for him. Then the question of transfer arose and what to do with "Butch". So they piled him in a jeep and brought him over to the mission. It took a number of coolies and some severe talking to get "Butch" reconciled to the idea of leaving the new-found heaven, but now he is very much at home in our day school, lives with the dean of the school who takes care of him as tho' he were her own and receives frequent visits from his "Yang-papa" (foreign papa) who has been responsible for his expenses all along.

Since Miss Gernhardt went on furlough in February I have fallen heir to
the housekeeping duties of our co-operative. This has been an entirely new experience for me and I certainly felt very green and shaky at the prospects of taking over, but it has proved to be one of those things that looks bad until you start trying. Thanks to Miss Gernhardt's good foundations and a staff of servants that keep things going smoothly in spite of the inexperienced manager, we seem to be getting on quite uneventfully, despite rapidly fluctuating numbers at our table. We range anywhere from eight to twenty-eight, depending on what transients the day may bring and whether or not we are entertaining servicemen. At present our own immediate group is six, but we have never been alone any day in the past four months that I can think of. I'd love to let you have a peek in our Guest Book, but that'll have to wait until the war's over and we can talk about names and people without thinking twice. I can only say that it's a varied and interesting list and that we prize it very highly. Someday, when the history of this war is written, we'll look back in it and say 'there's his name; remember when he dropped in on us that time and we let him scrape the fudge pan'. We've tried to think of various names that might be suitable for our establishment such as "The International Club", "The Elastic Inn", "The Cross Roads", etc. Our advertising might read thusly: "Whoever you are and wherever you're going, stop at the Hengyang Mission Hotel. No warning necessary. Open day and night (if you can wake us!) No questions raised as to race, color, or creed."

Perhaps you would be interested to hear a little about the other members of the Millican family. I have received replies to two of the Red Cross messages which I sent into Dad from here. They go direct to Shanghai apparently taking about three months to reach him, not due to the distance but to the red tape. His messages coming to me have taken only a month. Both have been very cheerful and have assured us that he is in good health, in fact friends who came out on the last repatriation write that he is in better health than when he went into camp. He keeps busy with his routine camp duties, etc., teaching Chinese in the university which has been organized among the camp members.
Now that the weather is good he says he is out of doors a good deal of the time and throws horseshoes for recreation. Apparently there is a library in the camp for he mentions reading in his leisure as well as playing chess. It is good to know that he is well and has work to do that keeps his mind alert and that his spirit is unbroken. God is certainly teaching us lessons concerning the oneness of those that are one in Him and that distance and camp walls cannot really separate us. Mother is in New York at present awaiting a passage back to China...so that we will at least all be on the same side of the ocean! Her passport has been granted, but we have not heard yet as to how or when she will sail. The Board has appointed her to come out to help with the work of entertaining the servicemen. It is not easy for women to get passage these days, but, if it is really God's will for her to come at this time, I know He can make it possible.

This letter has been written at multiple sittings, for the past few days have been filled with many rumors and our thoughts are turned to evacuation plans. All this may be entirely unnecessary and by the time you receive this letter we may already be laughing at ourselves, but those of us in Hengyang have felt that we would rather be safe than sorry so we have gone ahead with some preliminary preparations which will enable us to carry on the work of the hospital elsewhere should these rumors prove to have some truth in them. The past week or so has made us more conscious of being on the front lines than we have felt for some time. We wish we could see into the future, but, since none of us can, it seems best to live each day as it comes and to leave the rest with God. It is enough to know that we are here to do His will whatever comes.

I want to take this opportunity to tell all of you who have written or sent gifts to me that I appreciate your remembrances very, very much. I'm sorry that I haven't been able to reply to everyone individually yet, but I really do hope to do so! It means so much to know that all of you are backing me, that I can count on your prayers and that actually the work that I do here is a job
we are all working on together.

This letter carries special greetings to the friends in Butler, Pa., who have recently taken on a part of my support. I'm sorry that we've never had an opportunity to meet and get acquainted, but I will be thinking of you as part of my "family". One of these days I hope we'll be seeing each other.

Best wishes to all of you. I'm counting on your constant prayers!

Very sincerely,