

Please excuse the battered look of this - it is war worn!

Extracts from letters from Margaret Fincklett,

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Here I am on a springlike F.B. A.M. sitting in Katherine Hand's study, wearing a borrowed sheepskin-lined big Chinese coat and Chinese velvet shoes, and feeling too surprised to find myself here to be able to collect my wits enough to write sensibly, I fear! There is so much to say to you on paper and to all Ichowfu verbally that I am floundering already. The whole thing was too sudden and too startling to have yet been digested. Everything and everybody pointed to my coming, and though I was refused a seat in the car three times they brought me in the end.

Saturday the idea got borned and Sunday I and others prayed about it asking especially that Earle and Dr. Harding who then knew nothing about my idea of coming would be guided to give the right advice. Both at once said "come" though Dr. Harding under normal circumstances would have been the first to say "no". The car was already booked full of men and I didn't have a chance except that I was meant to come and they all saw it. Monday I packed like fury that revived up my courage to go and see the consul personally just because I was scared to do it, and I had to see red-headed Mr. Hawthorne who sat on me so hard last summer. He was as nice as could be and said not a word of objection! All the others had a travel permit but I hadn't time to get one and didn't worry. Monday afternoon Mr. Davies of our Mission (retired) in Tsingtao came over to say he was glad I was going. He's a bear on occasions and I have hardly seen him this year, but he came especially to give me his blessing! - - and so it went!

The last night was worse than hectic. Some of our refugees had invited me and all the students to supper and Anna Marie was to spend the night. We had an hilarious time and then I had to finish packing - till nearly 11:30. We were up again at 4:45, breakfasted at 5:30 and were ready to leave at 6: with the whole school assembled and looking like a funeral. The car came at 6:30 with only Kirk West (driving), Earle and Dr. H. It said "we've got too much stuff and just can't take you - that's all." - They were so emphatic that I didn't even argue (tho' you won't believe that). And they drove away without me! Ordinarily I would have burst out in loud lamentations (as you know), but I didn't even feel very sad, just felt it was alright. The whole school felt so sorry for me, they were nearly in tears - and Clara was exploding like a machine-gun!

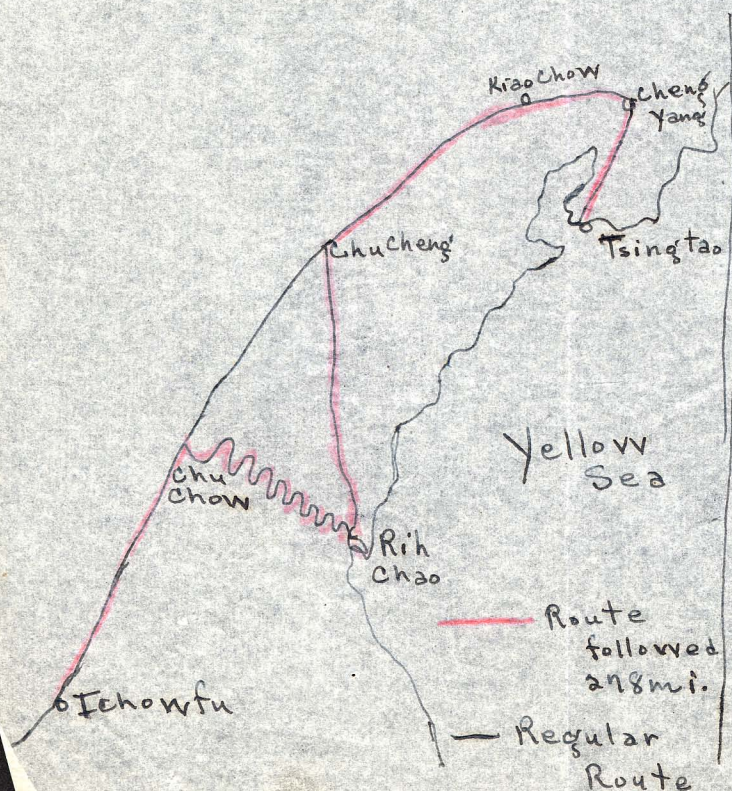
Anna Marie, Clara and I went upstairs and drank the coffee prepared for the trip and I began to regret all the money I had given the servants and would have to do over when I did leave - and we planned to have a buffet supper and big bust with the sandwiches, stacks of them also prepared for the trip. I was just taking things out of my bag when someone phoned that they were coming back for me!!! The cook boiled more coffee - I was glad I hadn't collected the money! And we quickly put things back in the bag - it seemed like a delirious dream - It was then about 7:30 - we waited - the whole school and Clara and me - till 9:30 when the car came the second time! And I was in it and off before I realized that Marie wasn't there!

The straight of what happened is not clear to me yet, but I know they got out of Tsingtao the first time and couldn't feel right about it, so decided to go back and leave off some of the baggage and bring Ken Kepler and me!!!! Then when they began to rearrange the luggage they realized that four males could not come and Earle had to be the one left - There's no logic, but I believe there is providence in it - and here I am! They didn't even question the amount of my baggage but put me in and we were off - It's just one of those things - - - - -!

We got through Japanese outposts alright and had good roads. From Tsingtao to Chu Cheng no trouble beyond snow and ice on the roads, places where we had to dig a way through and others where snow drifts filled the ditches beside the road and we couldn't tell where the road was. It was ticklish driving and when we stopped to dig- bitter cold with a high north wind blowing. The car was heated and with three on the front seat we were not cold inside! The car also has a radio, so while digging thru frozen snow we got the ten o'clock broadcast from Shanghai!

The car was a thing of beauty with a Red Cross flag and American flag on either side of the hood, another big American flag on top, a third flying from a staff from the rear, and a big red cross painted on the top. We were alert for planes but saw none, tho' we once or twice mistook crows for planes! Saw, neither heard any fighting other than two roosters at a village and that was soon stopped. Neither was there any question about our going thru the outposts of both armies.

By 2:30 we were at Chu Cheng- halfway- we saw there the rising sun and a sentry. We met out "water lou" at the river there. The bridge was down and the river frozen over, but ice not thick enough to carry the car. After two attempts and getting stuck, we found a way through the ice and went ten li on the Ichowfu road when we came to the second destroyed bridge. Tho' we got beads from the village and crossed, we agreed that we could not get to Ichowfu that day (all bridges were reported to have been destroyed by the retreating army), and as none of us had bedding, we'd better turn back and seek a night's shelter at the Swedish Baptist Mission at Chu Cheng. There we were treated beautifully of course and made good friends as well as giving them bits to talk about. After Chu Cheng we were in Chinese territory, tho' we didn't see any soldiers till we were 60 miles south. But that is a long sixty miles and I will give it in detail. The "details" are also the work of the retreating army!! Meant to stop the advancing army !!



- Feb. 9 Chu Cheng to Rih Chao to Chu Chow
- 6:30 Breakfast - farewells
  - 7:10 Departure with good wishes
  - 7:20 Stop- brakes frozen stiff- chip off ice with sledge hammer
  - 7:40 Stop- flag staff broken by low suburb gate- splice and replace.
  - 8:00 Flag staff caught and broke, telephone wire stretched across road- replace Old Glory!
  - 8:10 Bridge over river cut in three places. Were up on bridge before saw danger. Looked for crossing on ice. Men K. testing ice with sledge hammer stepped in up to knees/bitter cold. Car crossed on ice. Men pried two boards out of bridge. 3x12 in., each weighing 80 lbs! Took along for emergencies. Plenty to come!!
  - 8:45 All passengers out while car and Kirkstruggle up steep river bank!
  - 8:55 Stones strewn across road and frozen in- all out to pry loose and make way for car.

- 9:00 Bridge all gone except one stone beam- One board brought down off top of car to make crossing possible.
- 9:15 Bridge out- detour through water.
- 9:20 Bridge out- Used planks to cross- meant lifting 80 lbs. off of car twice, placing over gully, driving over, then replacing on top of car. No small job for once- backbreaking by the 14th time!
- 9:30 Bridge out- crossed on boards.
- 9:38 Rock and mud barricade 3ft. high- frozen hard- across the road. Ditches on each side. Tore out enough to pass.
- 9:43 Bridge out.
- 9:48 Rock and mud barricade on each side of a bridge- used planks on top and crossed. Only 13 miles from starting place, Chu Cheng!
- 9:53 Trenches dug on each side of bridge. Used boards to cross. Ken and Kirk did lifting and by this time pretty well played out. At each place Kirk would say, "well, one more place like this and I'm going back". But he didn't.
- 10:02 Trench across the road with rock and mud barricade on each side. Worst yet. Tore down and filled in enough to pass. Used hands, hammer, shovel. Kirk ready to turn back. Bitter cold, hands freezing.
- 10:15 Bridge over small river burned- river full of ice not thick enough to carry load of car- wasted time looking for crossing, finally made a dash across, broke ice and got thru- but water in distributor and froze on brakes- froze on fender and window within 5 min. Kirk jumped out and yelled, "I can't start her". He did !!!
- 10: 55 Smooth sailing for a li or so- then we were on a great gully where a bridge should have been before we knew it. Kirk yelled, "I can't stop" (brakes frozen) Again He Did !! Went down into a ditch and detoured, then up the bank to road.
- 11:10 Bridge out - down into a ditch, detoured, then up to road again.
- 11:50 " " " " " " " " " " " "
- 12:00 " " " " " " " " " " " "
- 12:08 " " " " " " " " " " " "
- 12:15 " " " " " " " " " " " "
- 12:20 " " " " " " " " " " " "
- 12:55 " " " " " " " " " " " "
- 1:20 Detour. Heard one o'clock broadcast! Just outside Hih Chao- Chinese sentries stopped us. First Chinese soldiers we had seen. Came out with pistols cocked. Much pointing to flags and me. Are your friends, effect. Passed without trouble, tho' they couldn't have been pleased that we had gotten over their attempts to delay and stop the other army's advance.
- 1:40 Bridge out over river. Here met Heien Chang body guard on bicycles from opposite direction. More protestations of friendliness! They told us we were on the road to Haichow! Returned ten li to Hih Chao and after one more wrong choice, found road to Chuchow. Heien Chang also told us that road to Ichowfu via Chu Chow was possible. He'd been by car the day before. We followed his car tracks. Great help
- 2:10 Started to Chu Chow. One hill after another, each higher and harder to climb than the last. Snow, ice, mud, hairpin turns, steep ascents, bottomless pits, beautiful country when we could look! 60 miles of mountain road to Chu Chow.
- 4:00 On top of nowhere got broadcast, Shanghai Jazz.
- 5:10 Followed auto tracks down terraced mountain side- literally! Kirk gave wheel to Dr. H. Couldn't stand to wreck car himself. We got down! After that more hills, villagers, river, flag caught on tree, etc.
- 5:40 Chu Chow. Passed Chinese sentries. Flag fell off in Chuchow.
- 6:00 Nearly dark. Grand road to Ichofu. Went warily because of shadows.
- 8:15 Ichowfu !! Not even questioned by sentries- and was Ichowfu surprised???????

That's just a table of facts- You will have to supply the emotion and bright remarks (lost to humanity), the alternate discouragement and return of hope, and the hilarity of the last 50 miles after we hit the Ichowfu Boulevard! Every time we thought and said it couldn't be done, there was a way. And often those gashes were there under the nose of the car before they were visible. It was a day of deliverances and of the fulfillment of all the promises of God's help and guidance and protection. The doxology at the end was not mere form- never sung with more sincerity.

So we came, and what now? Ichowfu is expecting anything. They say there will be resistance, but I don't believe it. American flags fly every where, also the blue cross of neutral territory. We are trying to get a guarantee from both sides that they will respect the neutral territory- our compounds and the Catholic in the city- but no replies yet. We have dug all out. Many country Christians and city people, our students and friends living in church, school and hospital compounds- and if there is fighting the numbers will increase. The city is jittery, most shops closed. No planes for a week or so, they say; the last bombs about Christmas time- and then hospital and school windows broken by concussion.

It's unnecessary to say I am glad to be back and see old friends. I'm having a wonderful time, but get into difficulties over names, and children who have grown up since I left. I knew the country people best of course and am hoping to get out to see them sometime. Everybody asks how long I am going to stay! And I say, "I'm here, and I don't plan / about the future". Aren't I wise?

Feb. 14. I'm amused at my silly self for being so happy, just wake up at night so thankful, and in the morning so full of interest in things and of wonder at God. Not that I haven't been being happy all the time. I know lonely hard times are ahead, even if there is no fighting and trouble here, but now I'm just enjoying everything and everybody.

Monday night the church gave a welcome feast to Dr. R. and me. It seems dreadful for them to spend the money this way now when people are in need, but I suppose it can't be stopped. Of course Monday was also the 15th of the first month and their feast day anyway, so they celebrated the two events together. The attitude of Chinese toward Americans has changed considerably since I first came to Ichowfu ten years ago. Then the national spirit was rampant and our stock wasn't worth a cent. Now it is not us, but our face that may save their lives, that is if we have any face when the crisis comes. I don't say that in bitterness, I think, but as a fact, and if we can by being here be a comfort or protection, then that's enough. This is the first affair the church ever gave me, for there was no welcome on arrival in 1926 and no "huang song" when I left, so it is a new experience for me. I felt the other night as I tried to tell them of the clear leading of God and in my pleasure in that and in coming back because He brought me, nearer than ever before to these people. I hope my coming will have some meaning for the Church- all I ask is that I can satisfy the heart of God.