

The Bills Are All Paid  
The Personal Memoir and Reflections  
of  
Barbara Beebe Gepford

Interviews Conducted by  
Ronald R. Stockton  
Dearborn, Michigan

2018

# The Bills are All Paid

## The Personal Memoir and Reflections of Barbara Beebe Gepford

Introduction by Ron Stockton

Chapter 1. A Colorado Girlhood

Chapter 2. Dad Returns from the War, Barbara Goes to College,  
Barbara Gets Married

Chapter 3. Off to Lebanon

Chapter 4. Life in Lebanon

Chapter 5. Three Setbacks: Tripoli, Beirut, Colorado

Chapter 6. Adventures in Hong Kong and a Crushing Defeat. Starting Over

Chapter 7. Life in Dearborn

Chapter 8. Reflections on a Life Well Lived

Profile of Ron Stockton

## **Introduction to the Project**

### **Ron Stockton**

Let's start with a confession. It took me a decade to realize that Barbara Gepford was a person of exceptional depth and substance. It was not really my fault. Bill had been brought in to head up the Arab ministry program of Littlefield Presbyterian Church in Dearborn. He was the Presbytery's Consultant for Interfaith Ministries, the high profile person who was always on the stage, in the newspaper, at the podium delivering a talk or presiding at a meeting. It was Bill who had recruited me to be on his Arab American Ministry Committee. This was a few years before Jane and I started attending Littlefield Presbyterian Church. Even then, although we lived in the same neighborhood and at that point attended the same church, Barbara was just Bill's wife, a quiet, gentle woman 10 years my senior.

But somewhere along the way, I began to realize that underneath that calm exterior there was a very significant person. Perhaps it was when she went to the controversial Re-Imagining Conference on women in the church and came back with stories that it was not radical at all (although those who opposed its goal of full incorporation of women in the church, including gender-neutral theological images, would disagree). Or perhaps it was when she led a delegation of women on a program to Africa; or maybe it was when my original Dearborn congregation had a major conflict and I had a sit-down with her to discuss the issues. Barbara was on the presbytery's Committee on Ministry (COM), the body in charge of overseeing congregational welfare and dealing with pastoral tensions. I found her extremely thoughtful and insightful in that exchange.

When Bill died in 2017 I was asked to say a few words at his memorial service. I thought Bill was a significant person who had made a difference in terms of Christian relations with the Arab community. Bill had deposited his papers in the Bentley Library, the state historical archive in Ann Arbor, so his legacy was secure. But Barbara had not. I had often thought about suggesting that she write her own memoir, but writing a memoir is a big task. Not many people can do it.

Six months after Bill's death, I suggested to Barbara that we sit down for a series of interviews that would constitute an oral history. The advantage of this format is that it is not necessary to write it. You can speak it. Then all you have to do is get it transcribed, do some editing to remove the mumbles and duplications, and turn it into a book. I had done a similar project with a colleague so I knew the logistics. Barbara was her usual modest self but she liked the idea. Jane and I met with her one afternoon for a pre-interview discussion. We decided to start meeting on a regular basis to record conversations. On each occasion, we would decide the topic of the next conversation and Barbara would get to work.

Jane was there for the first two interviews and the last, but missed the rest. She had come away from that first conversation with an insight that I had missed. I was interested in Barbara's life within the church and her life as an educational missionary. But Jane noted that Barbara had grown up in Colorado with memories of family who were early frontier settlers. That alone was worth recording.

There was one comment that Barbara made when we were just talking. It says so much about her that I wanted to make sure it got included in the text. Our country had just experienced a series of awful racial incidents, mostly involving police shooting Black suspects. In some cases, the victims were children. There had been demonstrations and protests, some of which were destructive. Demagogues had used these incidents in the 2016 Presidential election. Almost out of nowhere Barbara made the following comment: "I think God put the races together in this country so that we would have to figure out a solution to these problems and serve as an example to the rest of the world. It is our destiny as a nation to do this." I had just taught Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address in which he had made similar statements, about how God had put the races together into one country for a purpose we could not understand. It tells us a lot about the young girl Barbara and the adult woman Barbara that she sees her country this way.

Barbara took these interviews very seriously, as I knew she would. She would spend the time between interviews preparing what she wanted to say. She often had a sheet of paper filled with notes. Her memory for detail was astonishingly strong but searching through files and photo albums to regenerate one's life is challenging, both physically and psychologically. As she said to me, "I work really hard getting ready for these interviews, trying to remember everything I want to say." At several points in our interviews her voice would break as she recalled a particularly poignant or distressing moment.

Barbara has an endearing trait as she is talking. She will step back and comment on what she has just said. It is as if Barbara 2 is watching Barbara 1 and offering a running commentary. She will say, "Oh, my" or "Oh my gosh" or "Ok, Ok. All right."

Barbara also says at different points, "That's Bill's Story." This is an effort on her part to stay focused on her own story. This is her effort to say, "Bill would have his own perspective on these events, but these are my perspectives." This showed real intellectual discipline.

Barbara had a sense of herself as having a definite role. She was the mother of children, which she took very seriously. She was also a wife. That did not mean someone who just took care of the home. She often had her own career outside of the home. But she saw herself as supporting Bill and helping him to achieve all that he could be.

At several points, Barbara says, "We would have been happy doing this for the rest of our lives." She said that in Sidon, in Beirut, and in Colorado. She found it easy to be happy with life. She was not



driven by ambition or wanderlust. She was a contented person. That means she was very grounded, very strong inside. She knew who she was and what she wanted out of life. She could have achieved that happiness and contentment in a variety of places and a variety of occupational settings. She would have been happy as a teacher of girls, as a Dean's wife, or the wife of a pastor.

Barbara and Bill both had setbacks or periods of adjustment in their lives. When she started teaching in a Girl's School in Sidon, she became frustrated very quickly. It was a discipline issue, getting the girls to respect her authority. But she figured it out. Bill himself was knocked onto the ground at least three times: when he got deposed as Dean of Students, when he was removed from a Congregation, and when he was expelled from Hong Kong. And they suffered the greatest loss that anyone could suffer when they lost a child. Barbara was wounded during those times but she tried to stay focused. As she put it at one point, she was a heartbroken young woman. But her goal was to keep her family together and to keep her husband on track. She was willing to accept whatever move or whatever career he found rewarding. She warned him off of accepting a pastorate in a small town church, knowing he would never be able to achieve his potential in such a place, no matter how comfortable it was. When he was at loose ends in Colorado, she suggested that he contact the Mission Board to see if they had any openings. And when he was crushed after being expelled from Hong Kong she tried to get him refocused. Any man would be fortunate to have such a friend and ally.

The interviews were once a week, spread over eleven weeks, typically an hour in length.

Suzanna Emilio, who lives in Nebraska, did the transcriptions. She had transcribed the interviews for my own memoir project so I knew she would do a good job. She is efficient and fast with turnaround. Thanks, Suzanna.



# Chapter One

## A Colorado Girlhood

**Ron:** Let's start with your life as a girl. Tell us where you were born.

**Barbara:** I was born in Buffalo, New York and you'll ask why, if I was raised in Colorado. Well, my dad went to Buffalo General Hospital to have an internship. My dad finished medical school in Colorado, but he had been raised in Syracuse, New York and he thought of himself as a New Yorker transposed to Colorado. So at any rate, he wanted to go back to New York and so they went to Buffalo and I was born there. And I stayed there until I was about 22 months old. And then the depression was affecting their lives personally. And so they decided that they needed to go back to Colorado because he couldn't finish paying for more training in Buffalo. So they went back to Colorado and we went to Sterling. Sterling is the town where my mother grew up. Sterling is in the northeastern corner of Colorado. I don't really have any memory of the year and a half that we were in Buffalo. But I remember starting school in Sterling. And I'm always different than everybody else, because most everybody else in a town of about 12,000, maybe a little bit more sometimes, those people almost all were born in Sterling. So when I go to grade school, when I have to fill out any kind of a form, I have to say, well I was born in Buffalo, New York. So that probably separated me from everybody else from the very beginning when I was a little girl.

**Ron:** When was that? What is your birthday?

**Barbara:** September 2, 1930. September 2<sup>nd</sup> is just about the time that school starts, so it was always fun to go to school and get to celebrate my birthday on a school day. Well, when we got back to Sterling, my mother knew that finances were very limited. She decided the best thing to do was for them to get an apartment. I stayed with my grandma and my aunts all day long -- they took care of me. And my mother went back to the hospital in Denver. She was a supervisor of nurses at the hospital. She had graduated from UC nursing school in Denver. She had finished all her undergraduate work in Boulder, just like my dad did. But they actually met in Denver at the hospital. So at any rate, mother chose to go back to Denver, and I stayed in Sterling with my aunts and my grandmother and grandfather. My dad opened his medical practice on, as I figure it out, January 1<sup>st</sup> of 1933. I've got lots of papers, so we can correct some of this. But he started his practice, and of course when a young doctor starts a practice they don't make much money. So he was hanging in there and mother was getting paid. And mother would go to Denver on the train on Monday morning, real early, and she'd come home on Friday afternoon. So my first

memories were excitement when mother showed up, when she came home. I was cared for primarily by my aunt Edna. Aunt Edna would give me baths all week, but she scrubbed my face really hard. So when my mother came back from Denver on Friday afternoon, I was so excited because she was going to give me a bath and she was going to wash my face real nice.

**Ron and Jane:** (*Chuckling*)

**Barbara:** At any rate, those are some of my very earliest memories. I was the first child obviously, and we lived first in one apartment, which was very near a Catholic school. So I went to the Catholic school kindergarten for a little while and then we moved to another place, another apartment and I went to a

kindergarten there. And then when I was five years old we moved to our own house.

And I lived in that house until I was 11.

And so those years between five and 11 in the house that we call 331, whenever the family refers to it it's 331 McKinley Street on the north side of Sterling. And I had friends around the corner and across the street. We were quite a gang there in that area. And I was very secure in those years.

I had a great group of friends. My mom was a very good housekeeper. She didn't really like to cook very much, so my aunt helped with the cooking. And obviously by now my mother has finished going to work in Denver. After they moved to the house she didn't need to go to work in Denver anymore, so she was home all the time.



And my dad was making more money. So he was getting more patients all the time. And some of the things I remember about those years in 331 were my dad taking telephone calls. We had an old fashioned telephone. And if my dad and my mother went out, I had to "take care" of the telephone. By the time I was eight, nine years old I could handle a telephone call. I could take a message to give to my dad. A lot of times I was stuck taking care of the telephone. (Note: Photo of Barbara and her parents).

Well, in the midst of all that – now I’m skipping back a little bit – when I was 4 years old my brother was born. And he was a big excitement because he was a boy. So we wanted to show my dad’s mother and dad all about the new baby boy. So that was the big adventure and we went to the other side of Colorado, what we call the western slope of Colorado, and we drove over the mountains with a new baby that was only 2 months old to go visit the grandma and grandpa that were in Ouray, Colorado. And I’m going to just stick to my story right now, but the story of why they’re in Colorado is another story.

**Ron:** We’ll come back to that.

**Barbara:** I’m remembering things I feel about Bill. But, we went over the mountains to visit grandma and grandpa, and I remember very clearly their home. They had a big home at the time and they had a beautiful dog. And my grandmother was a born hostess, so she could entertain and she could fix beautiful food and she had a helper at the time that lived with them. So to me that was very, very nice time.

At any rate, coming back, Bob is my brother, and Bob is, he must have been about a year plus when we moved to 331. He was a little guy and he had some developmental problems. He was very shy and would cry easily sometimes. And I had to take care of him. So a lot of times if we were out playing, I had to supervise Bob and be sure Bob is ok. As we were growing up, I took my job seriously. One time my friend Joann was at my house when Mother was fixing supper. She asked us to shell some peas. We sat out on the front steps with a pan and the peas. Bob wanted to shell peas too. I told him to go away. He got mad at me. He got another pan, came up behind us on the steps and conked me over the head. He hit pretty hard. He said “you’re not the boss of me.” He didn’t like it when I bossed him around! Mother was angry with him and she made me lie down to rest to make sure I didn’t have a concussion.”

The other thing about those years was Joann. She lived around the corner, down the alley from me. She was exactly the same age as me and she was in the same class and we started to grade school together. She was an only child and her dad was a truck driver. Well, truck drivers were not financially as secure as we were. Joann liked to come to our house, she liked to be with us. She liked the idea that there was somebody else, meaning my brother, and in actual fact, Joann’s mother and my mother had gone to high school together. They were not friends. Joann’s mother was older than my mother. They never really were friends, but they knew each other. So at any rate, I was at Joann’s house a lot of times. I knew her dad and he would be nice to me when I was there. He would get ice cream when I was going to come to have lunch with them. But they didn’t get ice cream if I wasn’t there and I would hear all that from my friend Joann. Well Joann and I did everything together. We went from first grade, fifth grade, we got into trouble together. We planned programs together, we got parties together. We played in the neighborhood, kicked the can and red rover, red rover. We played all those games. So for a child it was a very secure



time, those years. And that's why I want to call attention to the fact that it was 331, those years between 1935 to 1941. And those years are important as far as the story is concerned. And another thing that I remember about the grade school years, sometimes my dad would say he had to go out in the country to make a call on somebody that was sick and would I like to go along. So both Bob and I would go, sometimes Joann would go too and we'd go out in the country and dad would have some patients that were not very far away and then some patients that were all the way to Crook or Iliff or on the other side of Sterling is Atwood. So he had patients in all the little towns. And sterling is the hub of that area of northeastern Colorado. So he was one of, there may have been six doctors in town, but he was the young one, as far as I was concerned, he was the young doctor at that time. Eventually he wasn't the young doctor anymore, but in the beginning.

**Jane:** Do you remember the kind of car that you had?

**Barbara:** The car that we had... That's interesting, we had, it was a red car and he always wanted to drive a De Soto. So about the time that, it was 1939 maybe, he was making enough money so that he could get a new car. So it was a big deal. He ordered a car from Detroit. I mean, this is really big when you live in a little town out in nowhere. And so then the train and the car came on the train and the train stopped in Sterling all the time. So it stopped, and the car got off the train and dad drove it to the house. And I remember that red car driving up to the house. He loved the red car. He got a red car several more times. So at any rate, it was usually always a De Soto.



**Jane:** Anyway, I interrupted you because you were talking about going out to the country with him.

**Barbara:** Oh well that, we would go out to the country and I would just usually always stay in the car. I wasn't too anxious to go in to help with the patient. I probably could have and dad would have probably appreciated it if I showed more interest, but I always pulled away from getting too close. I wasn't too happy about... it's interesting because I didn't want to see a lot of trouble, I didn't want to be involved, but I also thought I was always going to be a nurse. I thought I was going to be just like my mother and I idolized her. She could do everything. She was really smart, she went to college. She was a good nurse

and none of my other friends their mothers were not even college graduates. So I was going to be like my mother and I was going to be a nurse. So that's another story for another time.

**Jane:** But if you would have gone in, Bob would have had to go in too, right?

**Barbara:** Oh Bob, you mean with the call?

**Jane:** Yes. What would Bob have done?

**Barbara:** He might not have even been in the car. If we were out in the country, he might not have been there. Or if... it was not a problem. I took care of Bob. So I would stay with him, and one of the things we did in the car, we – this was my idea – we would go places in the car. We would go to San Francisco and we'd see the big ships in San Francisco. And then next time we would go to New York City and we would see all the tall buildings in New York City. And I just fantasized with him all the time, literally giving him all kinds of ideas. But it's interesting that in my head, I was going places even in that car when I was eight, nine, 10 years old. I was just really anxious to go places. We went into Denver a lot of times, and dad had to go to meetings in Denver. We went to Boulder a lot of times, we were in and out of Boulder a lot. My aunt moved to Boulder. And so Boulder, and actually the grandparents moved to Boulder too when they left Ouray, so everybody was in Boulder eventually, so that's where we went. And we had a lot of good times in Boulder, I loved Boulder and still do.

### **Dad Goes Off to War**

We're getting up to 1941, and I'm in the fifth grade and dad comes to the school and picks me up and he says, Barbara, I have something I've got to tell you and I want to take you home for lunch. Ok, so all right, so we went home and there our mother was in the kitchen and dad said, I've got my orders to go and I'm going to be leaving in about two weeks. Well, I didn't know anything about the fact that he was in the military Reserves. He had been in the Reserves for maybe, oh I don't know, maybe a year or two before that. During the Depression, worst years. My uncle had also joined the military because of the Depression and my uncle was a dentist. So my dad announced that he was leaving, and I'm 10 ½. Mother's about six months pregnant the baby's due to be born in March. Well mother's very shaken by this and I have a very vivid memory of mother and me and dad standing in the kitchen. And then the draft board realized that mother was expecting this baby, so they worked it out so that dad didn't go. And Judith, my sister, was born in March. And from that point they decided that this house, 331, wasn't large enough. It wasn't big enough for three children. And dad, well dad I think was very restless. He was very,

very aware of what was going on in Europe and he wasn't comfortable just sitting in Sterling. So, but we did stay there and he with mother picked a new house. They decided that we would move to this new house, which was on the other side of town. So instead of being on the north side of town we went to the south side of town. And we got into a house, and this is the week that I turned 11 we moved to the house on the north side of town and it was 109 Lincoln. So if I say 109, I'm referring to the new house. Not new actually, but to us it was new. And the house was built so that it was a big house with an upstairs and a basement and room for more children. And very nice. It was a wood, solid well-built wood house. It wasn't fancy brick, which I thought would have been real nice, but anyway, we had a big, it was a big solid house and it was right across the street from the junior high. And I'm just finishing the fifth grade and I'm going to get to move across the street to junior high. So that's good as far as I'm concerned.

Judith was six months old when we moved – this is 1941. I went to the church often, usually Sunday school and a nursery school. As soon as I was three years old I was going to the Presbyterian Church. The house, 109, is close to the church, it's really just two blocks away. It's close to the library and I went there a lot of times. I could walk to the library, I could walk to church, I could walk to school – I thought this is great. And we come home from church on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December and turn on the radio and my dad is just super, super anxious. He's pacing around in the kitchen back to the back area where there was a pretty pergola, back to the living room, back through the kitchen as they're listening to the news of December 7<sup>th</sup>. So here we've only been in the house... And in recent years I've put all this together more than I thought at the time. It all happened so fast, they were separate incidents to me. But literally we moved the first week of September and then December 7<sup>th</sup> came and then, within a week or ten days dad got his orders again and this time they were not changed. So he actually left on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April in 1942.

And there we were. Dad is the strong person in the family. He's the one that always backed me up when mother would disagree with me or mother wouldn't want me to have something. Dad would interfere and kind of help me communicate with mother. So dad was my *{sigh}*, he was my guy. And so the idea that he was leaving – I can't even talk about it now. [Barbara gets teary]. I tried for years to talk about it, but if I start talking about it even with my kids and I start talking about dad leaving, I can't talk without crying. At any rate, he left on the train and Sydney is a town that's about 30 miles into Nebraska from Sterling. And there are train tracks that go from Sterling to Denver and there are trains that go from Chicago to Sydney and then to I think Portland in Oregon. So there are choices of ways to get out west. And anyway, dad was assigned to go to Seattle. And so we went over in the car to Sydney and he got on the train and he left. And those were the, as I saw him going away it was like, oh dad, you just can't go. Well, so I probably devised out of that a way to live two levels at the same time and I probably have used that same skill since then on several occasions. And probably that's why, ask me questions later and you're going to see two different things happening at the same time. But, so for me, at that point, he...



Mother missed him too. Mother was shy and she was not as sociable a person as dad, so she missed him. We'd go to church and we always sat at the same place at church, and mother would start to cry at church. And I would say, mother you can't cry at church. I'd get embarrassed. So mother, you can't cry at church. So of course the stories of what was happening in Corregidor and in South Asia and in Europe, we were getting all these stories, so we knew why dad was there. There's no question. We knew that he wanted to be involved. He wanted to be able to help with the medical emergencies. And there was no stopping him. There was no way. Especially one other doctor in town was especially good friend of dad's, he tried to talk dad out of it, don't even agree to go. Well dad just couldn't stay, he couldn't stay. So we knew what was going on, and we knew why he was there. And he was aware, I don't know exactly how, but he was aware that he was going to be in Seattle for a while. So I know now why, but at the time we didn't know. And mother decided that she didn't want to have these three kids without their dad. So she decided that she's going to pack up the kids and we're going to go to Seattle. So this is a big change in our lives.

**Ron:** You were going to move there?

**Barbara:** Yeah, so she put the house up to rent and we hadn't even been there a whole year yet. Some other people rented out house. We shut up one room with things that we wanted to lock. And then she packed very methodically. I learned so many things about how to pack and move, which I've applied since then many times. And so we packed up and she had a young German girl that was helping her at the time, so that girl was with us in the car. And we drove and mother did all the driving and we drove from Sterling and we drove through Wyoming and we drove through Idaho and we drove to Seattle. And this is 1942 August. So we got to Yellowstone Park on my birthday. That was September 2, Yellowstone Park. Well that was exciting. And I knew we were going to be where my dad was, so all of this was fine with me. Well, I was going to be away from Sterling and my friends in Sterling, but, you know, 11 years old, you can handle all that pretty easily. So we got into Seattle and we drove in and dad was on a parade ground in Fort Lawton in Seattle and they were, well you know, all the soldiers were parading and dad was part of a group that was watching the younger men parading. He was there and I just remember running across the parade ground and seeing my dad.

**Ron:** Disrupting everything.

**Barbara:** Yeah. *{Laughing}* Exactly. Exactly what I probably did. So big hug for dad, ok. So we settled in and they were building houses in the area of the, near the fort that had never been developed in Seattle. So it was really mostly blackberries and fruit on the hillsides around the fort. And the fort had been there

for a long time, but not developed until the war, and then of course it was reactivated and everything was happening at the fort. And so they were building homes in the area for all these newcomers that were coming because of the military people that are assigned there. So ultimately we got into a brand new little house that was just built, we watched it being built from the hole in the ground. And we moved in and all of this, I'm now, I've just turned 12. So we were there the two years from 1942 August to August of 1944. And then dad, well there are lots of stories to tell about getting acquainted in Seattle and we did a lot of traveling around Seattle and I learned a lot about it. I like Seattle. And I went to a grade school the first year that I didn't like very well, but the second year they said the grade schools were so crowded they moved the eighth grade to the big high school, so I got to go to the big high school when I was only in the eighth grade. And they separated us eighth graders down at a lower level of the big high school. But it meant that I could get on a bus and I could go down to town and I could go up a big hill – there's lots of hills in Seattle – and so I could go up the hill and go to school. And I loved going to school that eighth grade year. I liked it. So I didn't want to leave Seattle. But dad told me sometime in July probably that he was going to be sent out, that he was going to go on the ship. And now I knew that they were building a ship. They were actually re-outfitting two ships that had been merchant marine ships. And I have the clippings here, if I haven't given them to my kids already. They were re-outfitting two ships and one was the Marigold. [Note: Army Hospital Ship Marigold, commissioned in Tacoma, 1944]. And he was assigned to the Marigold. Sometime that summer he took me to the ship, and I was on the ship. I was down in the ship, in the room that was going to be his room. He took me all around and let me know what was going to happen so that I would know where he was. And then he said, now someday I'm going to get the orders to go, and I'm not going to be able to tell you. So some night at supper time, I'm just not going to come home. So ok. We sat on that for, I don't know, maybe ten days or two weeks, I don't know how long. But all of a sudden one day he wasn't there. He was gone. And I knew where he was and I knew the ship had gone out of the Bremerton shipyards. And I knew, I didn't know when I was going to see him again. And mother, of course, by then mother had decided that she was going go back to Sterling. The house would be easy, I mean, I think we rented it through this complex of houses that were built just for newcomers. So there was no problem with that. So she made all the arrangements again, just really very efficient. And she, my aunt in Colorado was ready to help mother get settled at home. So mother said she did not want a 14 year old running around Seattle



with all those young soldiers all over the place. She said I'm going to get this 14 year old out of here. Ok, mom I don't want to go, I'm having fun and I'm going to go to high school and it's great fun in high school and we're fine. Nope, we're going back to Sterling. Oh, I didn't want to go back to Sterling.

At any rate, so we got all packed up and we sold the car that we had there and we got on the train and we took the train and we went back to Sterling. And my aunt was there to meet us, Edna – the other aunt in meantime died, but I didn't tell you that. At any rate, Edna was there and we went back to Sterling and the people that lived in our house had to move out. I felt sorry for them. And then we moved back in and we set up just as we had before. But by then I finished junior high and I'm going to high school. So I started out as a freshman high school at

Sterling High School. And I probably moaned and groaned to myself about it for a little while, but I very quickly got re-acclimated to Sterling and back with all the friends I'd gone to grade school with. And my friend Joann was right there. She was very glad to have us back in Sterling again. You know, in those days there were no text messages, there were no telephone calls, we



never contacted. Maybe we exchanged one letter the whole time I was gone. But the minute I got back everybody was just back like they were with some new people that had come to Sterling. So there was a group of us that formed a kind of a cohesive group of people as teenagers do. And so I just settled into high school and joined the pep club and got very good grades and participated in Rainbow, you know, Masonic girls activity, and participated in the Presbyterian Church activities all the time and was part of the church activities. The Methodist church and the Presbyterian Church were the two big churches on Main street just across from the court house. We're talking about small towns here, so everything is close by. So that was part of the cohesiveness of this particular group. We were friends all the way through high school. Most of them have died now, but until they died, we kept in contact.

**Ron:** I want to go back to Seattle for a bit. When your dad took you to the ship, it sounds like he took you, but not your siblings.

**Barbara:** Well... Judith was too little. Bob was hesitant and shy but he went.

**Ron:** It just sounds like you are sort of your dad's number one daughter. I don't want to say favorite child, but you're the one that he links with more than the others?

**Barbara:** Yeah.

**Jane:** He was in the Army, not the Navy, but he was on a ship.

**Barbara:** Yeah, he was in the Army Medical Corp. It kind of happened by default. First place, he was really looking for a son that could be a football player. My dad was a football player, he was a swimmer. He was a champion swimmer and he was a hiker, he was very athletic. When he had grown up in Syracuse, they had a summer cottage in the years when they had lots of money and they were living on a lake. And one time his dad, my grandfather, told him that if they could swim across the lake by the end of the summer, he'd buy them a canoe or something. But Doug – my uncle, the brother – and my dad, Kenneth, foxed their dad up and they swam across the lake the next day. And he didn't think they could do it until the end of the summer. So he got them a bigger boat. He got them something more than a canoe. I don't remember exactly what it was, but anyway, they got something bigger just because they proved to their dad they could do it.

### **Some Family Stories**

But what I'm saying is that my dad was an athletic person and my brother is not. My brother inherited my mother's side of the family and I'm not as athletic as my dad but my personality was a lot more extravert. So that was part of the reason it happened. And I needed my dad sometimes. My mom would say, no, you can't have a bike. This was one time I remember. I wanted a bike so badly and Joann already had a bike and I didn't have one. Mother said, no you don't need one. Mother grew up in a family where there was no money, so she could very easily say no. and even though dad was beginning to make some more money, still my mom was very conservative. Very conservative. And so I had to get some help from my dad to get a bike. So I'd say dad. Ok. So he'd talk to mother and he'd calm her down a little bit and he'd say ok. So he'd take me to the store and he'd buy me a bike. Now that happened all kinds of little times, just day by day. And through the years, starting practically as soon as we sat around the table, he sat at the head of the table and I sat right beside him always, even until the end of time, I always sat near him. And he was fun, he was fun. Mother got to be fun in later years, but when she was a young wife she was taking life very seriously and she was trying to be the proper doctor's wife when she had grown up with so little financial freedom. She had been embarrassed.

**Ron:** Was she poor as a girl?

**Barbara:** Yes, yes, yes, yes.

**Ron:** So that really affected her.

**Barbara:** It *really* affected her.

**Ron:** And your dad grew up more in a middle class family, so he was more relaxed around money.

**Barbara:** Yeah, and I skipped a whole lot about that. But when dad was about 11, 12 years old my grandfather who was a mining engineer had gone to Canada and made a million dollars. They came back to Syracuse with a million dollars and he was a manager or supervisor, somehow on the Water Board – I don't understand it exactly – in Syracuse and they had plenty of money. They had one of the first cars that was driven in Syracuse. They lived right near the church and they were very active. My grandfather was an elder at the church and da da. So that was the background that my dad had. Well they spent their million dollars and my grandfather decided that he was going to make a million in Colorado. So he moved the family to the mining area near Ouray, on the western slope of Colorado. He was manager of two mines there. He was going back east to get investments for those mines but the money did not come because of the Depression. So they lost a lot of money and they lost their house. So the last years of their life they did not have money. And they didn't have the investment opportunities that they have now. They didn't have the security for senior citizens that they have now.

**Ron:** Right, you were just on your own.

**Barbara:** Yep.

**Ron:** So there's another question that I wanted to ask you. You mentioned growing up in the Presbyterian Church. Was that the heritage church of your family?

**Barbara:** That was my dad's heritage. His family were Presbyterians for, all the time in Syracuse they were Presbyterian and I don't know anything other than that really. Maybe if I took, I've got some letter things that dad has written little bits on that I might have. But basically that was Presbyterian. My mother grew up in what they call the Christian church, you know that's another denomination. And so she always

went to the Christian Church, which in Sterling was around the corner and not too far away, but it wasn't as big, as impressive as the Presbyterian Church. And mother had always thought that the Presbyterian ministers were educated and she respected the Presbyterian ministers very much. But she did not think that the Christian church ministers had the same amount of education. So she was always shaking her head at what the Christian church ministers were saying. No, she just couldn't swallow that. She always felt that way even when she was very young, even before she married dad.

**Jane:** But she stayed in that church.

**Barbara:** She changed to the Presbyterian Church. She changed right away. She wanted me, she wanted us to be raised in the Presbyterian Church.

**Ron:** Interesting. In those early times, going back to the 1800s, the Presbyterian Church really had an ethnic profile, didn't it?

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Ron:** It was associated with Scots people, but that's not your ethnic heritage.

**Barbara:** Not Scottish. No, the ethnic Scottish heritage, I don't think there's any *{sigh}*... Really, the Beebe family came from Alsace Lorraine from the northern part of France, near Normandy.

**Ron:** I know that place, yes.

**Barbara:** The story goes that there were four brothers that came to America at the same time, about 1650, something like that. And they came to America and then they spread across America. One stayed in New York, another across the country and once in a while you'll run into a Beebe heritage someplace along the way and you'll think, I wonder which brother they were related to. But my family obviously was the New York family. All my father's relatives were all New Yorkers. So really, now it's incredible because now people ask me where I was born, I say Buffalo. Well, here it's no big news because people know New York here, so there are a lot of people probably born from here, but it was big news in Sterling.

**Jane:** And Sterling was a small town probably with a real stable population.

**Barbara:** Stable, yeah. People came and went.

**Jane:** But you were a newcomer, for sure.

**Barbara:** Not really because my mother's family had been there, my mother went to Sterling when she was four years old and that's another whole story. There's a big story about that. My mother's family came by ship from Norwich in England and her mother, my grandmother, was eight years old when they came to America. So they were so English, oh my gosh, they were so English. My dad was more New Yorker, but my mother was more English and that was part of her conservative background too.

**Ron:** And what was your mother's name?

**Barbara:** My mother's name was Griswold, Martha Griswold. Well, the family, when they came from England, Mr. Nichols was my great-grandfather and he was working in a big department store in the fabric department. And if you know me, I've done a lot with fabrics and sewing and I've worked in a fabric store and Joanna is a wonderful quilter. The fabric background seeps into the family at each generation. But he was having trouble with his eyes and the doctors in Norwich said you have to get out of those lights, the neon lights that were used in the 1800s in the department stores. You're going to go

blind if you don't get out of those lights. So he decided that he would bring his family to America, get some farm land and be a farmer and be out in the sunshine. So he did that. He packed everybody up and my grandmother can remember the ship. And in fact, somebody in the family, and I was looking for this this



morning, Mr. Nichols, my great-grandfather wrote that they were on the ship. So there is a copy of that,

and I have a copy of it, the story of the trip on the ship. But he came, with the family, they had three children at that point. They came to New York and they got off the ship and got a train right in New York and went straight to Nebraska. They were in eastern Nebraska, where the soil is black and it was a good place to start a farm. He bought some property there. My mother was actually born in a little town called Unadilla, in the eastern part. There is Unadilla in Michigan too, I know that. But at any rate, she was four years old when she left eastern Nebraska and came to Sterling. That's another big story.

**Note from Ron:** The child in the photo is Martha Belle Griswold, mother of Barbara. Far left on ground is Emma Rebecca Nichols Griswold; Man is Charles Nathan Griswold; Woman seated is Rebecca Sabrina Hammond Nichols; Behind the seated woman is Eliza Sabina Nichols Walker; on porch in dark skirt is Edna Mae Griswold; on porch in light skirt is Myrtle Emma Griswold. The photo was taken in Eastern Nebraska near Lincoln around 1912.

**Jane:** She left the farm.

**Barbara:** Well, what happened was that her... Let's see, her mother, my grandmother wanted to go to high school and she was, I don't know if they actually had moved into Lincoln. They lived in a little town, they moved from Unadilla, they lived in another little town nearby and they had a farm. And Mr. Nichols wanted my grandmother to drop out of school when she'd finished her sophomore year of high school and go into town, into Lincoln, and work in somebody's home because he decided that she was old enough and she had enough education and very English in terms of, she could go into a home and work and bring some money into the family. Well, my grandmother was very, very upset about that. She was very discouraged, but she did what her dad told her, so she dropped out of high school. And so this was a scar to this day probably. She worked like her dad wanted her to and then she wasn't dating very much and then this fellow came along named – I'll think of it – Griswald, Mr. Charlie Griswald. And Mr. Griswald was a little bit older than my grandmother. He was kind of not too ambitious and he was in the area, in the neighborhood and was courting my grandmother. Well, my grandmother wasn't too excited about this, but she married Mr. Griswald. And then they kept on living with the Nichols family in the farm, and my grandmother was happy at the farm and then she had three daughters still on the farm, Edna and Myrtle and then Martha. And then Mr. Nichols said, Mr. Griswald, you gotta get out and take care of your own family. You gotta get out of this house and you gotta go on your own. Well, Mr. Griswald – that's my grandfather – wasn't too happy about that, but Mr. Nichols, his father-in-law said, you gotta go. There were jobs on the train and there were two cousins working in Sterling. They were builders in Sterling. So the Griswald family, my grandmother and grandfather and the three girls came to Sterling when Mr. Nichols said they had to move out. My aunt Edna was the older one, 21 at the time, and she was crushed. She did not want to leave and she felt really terrible about that. But at any rate, they did



come to Sterling and then at that point my mother was four years old, and my mother always grew up kind of embarrassed about her dad because he could never ever really make a living. He was a good man and oh my gosh my mother's gotten mad at me because she says, he was a very moral man. Ok, ok, ok.

**Jane:** But not a successful one.

**Barbara:** Not successful financially. No, he was a very good carpenter and he had chickens and they had a little plot behind their house and they had tomatoes and he was a good gardener. He had all these skills, except to work with somebody, the story I always heard was if there were 10 jobs and 11 men, the one that would lose his job would be my grandfather. He just couldn't work with people very well. Now he was very nice to me and I was trying to find this photograph album that I haven't found yet that has pictures of me with him taking me for the walk in one of the little tailor tots. And he would never take me for a walk without a dress on. He'd say, now grandpa will take you for a walk, but we gotta put a dress on you first. Ok, so then he would take me for a walk. So he was a very loving person, but he and my aunt Edna would tangle all the time. So there was trouble. And because of that they did not have much money. So my aunt, actually stopped after her sophomore year and my aunt, Edna, started helping people in Sterling. And she helped in people's homes, she sewed for people, she cooked. Ultimately she began cooking in Boulder. She cooked for sororities. She did all kinds of homemaking skill kinds of things. I used to love to watch her make bread. She made bread and she was real good at it.

**Jane:** She stayed single.

**Barbara:** Yes, she never married. Mainly because of the scars from the move. I quizzed her one time, probably too hard. She said she fell in love with one guy, she was about 17 years old. I think this was in Nebraska and he got another girl pregnant and that made her so mad that she just wasn't going to get involved with anybody else after that. I don't think she actually told me that in so many words, I figured that out. But she said, "Barbara, you'd make a dead man talk," because I'd get her to tell me stories.

## Chapter Two

### Dad Returns from the War, Barbara Goes to College, Barbara Gets Married

**Ron:** Barbara, tell us about your last few years in high school. I understand that was important.

**Barbara:** Well, my dad came back from his military service at the end of the Second World War. He was home in December of 1945 and I was continuing my sophomore year of high school. So between my sophomore and junior years, I got a job and I worked at the job for a little while at an office supply store. I loved that job. I also got involved in activities in the community and at church and with the Masonic Order Rainbow. So I was a busy girl. And then in about September of that year, my dad who's now been home six, eight months, calls me aside and says, we're going to have another baby. It turns out that my mother is pregnant and she's not happy about it at all. I'm going through my junior year of high school and I'm coming home from school and seeing her in the kitchen stirring pudding crying, just crying. She doesn't want to have to take care of another baby, with a sister that is now six years old. She thinks it's time to be finished taking care of babies. She's learned how to get along without dad at home. She's gained a lot of confidence in herself. She does not want to start again with more babies. So that's very impressionable to me as a junior in high school and I'm trying to do whatever I want to do at school and I wanted to keep on with my job. And mother was getting more and more uncomfortable.

Then my dad decided to go to New York for a training program that he really needed to do as he got back into his practice again. So the last three months, between February and May, my dad was back in New York again and I was doing ultimately all the driving in the car, trying to keep mother cheerful. And at the same time my dad had recommended that I take a course in the high school that was a unique course. It was supposed to be a course designed for girls that were going to go on to college, but they're going to learn a little bit about cooking and housekeeping and arts and crafts so they'll be more happy at home. This is before women's liberation movement and my dad came home and was very aware of how unhappy my mother was, so he thought that I should take this particular course. Ok, so I agreed with that. And it turned out I loved the course and I loved the young teacher that was just out of college herself, very, very impressed with all of this. So I went on and I finished taking the class and my mother was just about to have the baby. So it comes up May, my dad is supposed to come home the very end of May, and guess what? The baby's on the way a week before my dad gets home. So as it turns out, I'm the one who takes mother to the hospital, I'm the one that takes care of my brother and sister, keeps track of things and mother sends me back home again – she doesn't want me to be at the hospital when the baby's born. And

of course I call my dad in New York and say, dad, this is what's happening. Well he was scheduled to come home pretty soon after that, so within a couple of days he flew back from New York, to Denver. And I got in the car – now this is Sterling, it's a hundred plus miles away from Denver and I was just 16 – and I drove the car with my friend Joann and probably my little brother too. And we drove into Denver ourselves, all the way into the city and met my dad at the airport and took my dad home and took him straight to the hospital so he could keep track of mother and get the baby home.

After that I finished my junior year of high school. Pretty impressed all that year. A lot of stuff happened. Then it's my senior year and we struggled through with a new baby. And I have to come home, and I have to get the cold sheets off the clothes line, and I have to help feed the baby and I have to come home from dances early sometimes so I can help take care of the baby in the evening. And do any of my friends have to do any of that? No, nobody else's mother has a baby at that age. All of that made me feel like, if I was going to be a homemaker I really, really needed to know more about home so I wouldn't be so unhappy as my mother. In the meantime, where am I going to go to college? I decide I'm going to go to Iowa State because there's a wonderful course in Home Economics at Iowa State. And so instead of being a nurse, like I thought I would be, like my mother, instead of going to Boulder to the University of Colorado, which I assumed I would always do, I decided to go to Iowa State. And Iowa State is far enough away from northeastern Colorado that to get there you have to get on a train. So I applied and I was the only one in my class that went out of state to school. But I went to Ames. It meant getting on the train in Sterling. There's a streamliner, the City of Denver, a big thing, going to and from Denver and Chicago. It would come through Sterling stopping early in the morning, leaving late afternoon. Also, it went in and out of Ames, Iowa on the same route. Actually as it turned out my little baby sister took her first steps at the train station between my mother and I as I was going to college, the first time I left home. So goodbye little sister, goodbye brothers and sisters, I'm out, going out in the world, I don't have to worry about everybody at home any more. So it was... I had moments of homesickness, but not serious.

**Jane:** You felt free.

**Barbara:** I got to go off to school and I was happy at school. Got involved with activities and of course gradually involved in sorority life and friendships in Ames. I got involved with the course work that I really liked, got involved at the YWCA and got involved in the council program at the home economics department, ended up with a lot of responsibility there. Dated, had a good time in college. Didn't want to graduate from college. I was really sad when it came up to graduation day. In that period of time, my folks got in the car and drove to Ames once. Now that's an overnight drive from Sterling to Ames, going across Nebraska and Iowa. But at any rate, they came. I was in Mortar Board my last year of school, and

so they came when I was tapped for Mortar Board. That was a special occasion for them. And another time I was responsible for the float for the parade, which always happened in the spring festival. And that was kind of difficult. Our float didn't win, but I worked on it. And every time I ever see a parade all the rest of my life, I think of the agony that we went through to get that parade float all put together.

**Ron:** You mentioned Mortar Board. What is that?

**Barbara:** Mortar Board is the honorary for women. There's Phi Beta Kappa for the real smart people and then the people that have high, high, high grades but more activities are eyed for Mortar Board. Well, ok, I'm Mortar Board. Well my mother was Phi Beta Kappa, so I could never top my mother. And you know all this time, mother and dad were reflecting the fact that it was difficult to raise a baby who turned into a three, four, five year old and my brother and sister and their problems. But at any rate, that wasn't my problem, so I just didn't worry about it. Sometimes I knew my mom and dad were upset with each other but I kind of acted in the middle of that and I felt sorry for my dad a lot of times and I felt sorry for mother too, so that was always a thing I kind of had to worry about. But I didn't let it affect my college activities. I was very glad to be in Ames and I loved the coursework. I was very good in fabrics and I was probably very, very good in sewing and in the tailoring and all of the advanced work in fabrics. Cooking and large quantity cookery, I didn't do as well, but I survived. And I got down to graduation and in the meantime I had a variety of friends, boys and girls, I dated. But that's not really the story of the rest of my life. So we'll kind of skip that.

### **Summer Camp**

One of the things that I really, really liked to do in the summer time, especially after I had to quit that job at the office supply, which I had to quit because my mom didn't want me going to work when I needed to stay home and help take care of the baby. Well, ok, I didn't work at the store after that one year, but up in the Rocky Mountains near Estes Park there's a Presbyterian camp about 18 miles outside Estes Park. The camp was first established just after the war and I was one of the first students taken from the different churches in the Presbytery – this is Boulder Presbytery, among the first students that went up there just to try out the area. The Presbytery hadn't yet bought the property, but they wanted to see how some of the young people responded to it and I was among those. We said, oh, it's really nice, we like it. So they bought some property. Then each year it was a big thing to go to summer camp, and I went to camp and my brother went to camp for his age level. And I went when I was 15, 16, 17 as a camper. And then about 18, after I had graduated from college, actually the year before I graduated from college, between my junior and senior years, I went to the camp again – the camp is named Highlands – it's still

there and very active. At any rate, I went to camp my junior year and I heard about this guy at camp, because my brother had been in camp the week before. And my brother had come home, back to Sterling and said, hey, there's a really handsome guy there at camp, a nice guy, he works down in the kitchen. Oh well, so what. I had boyfriends in college and I really didn't think too much about that. Well, I went to camp the week after my brother did. And I was supposed to be a counselor for the junior senior girls, a bunch of silly girls. And now of course I'm a junior in college, so I'm not a silly girl anymore.

What happened was that I was taking care of the girls in the camp, Cabin 9, and I tucked the girls in bed for the night and they were silly. They were giggling and it was getting later and later. Well right near Cabin 9 was the administration cabin and at the administration cabin there was one room where this young fellow who was kind of a maintenance man who was also a seminary student was right close to Cabin 9. Well about five o'clock in the morning, all of a sudden this guy... Well I should tell you beforehand, when the girls in the cabin went down to supper when we first got there, they came to me and they said, oh Miss Barbara, you should see this handsome guy, he's down in the dining room and he is helping to clean and get ready and he's mashing the potatoes. You go down there and see him, oh he's a really handsome guy and again I thought, oh fiddle faddle. I'm not paying too much attention and I'm sure not going to let those 16-year-olds know that I'm even looking in his direction. So when we get down to the dining room and I look at him I think, oh my goodness, holy moly, I've never seen such a handsome guy, oh my gosh. And did I let the girls think that? Oh no, I didn't tell the girls what I thought, oh no. But I was really surprised. So that's the preamble to what happened at five o'clock in the morning.

### **Meeting Bill**

So I had these girls back at the cabin, I've got them all settled for the night. And all of a sudden this young seminary student whom I think is very, very wise and also very handsome and supposed to be very smart, he comes out of his cabin over there in the administration building, comes over to our cabin and bangs open our door. And I have these girls all in their pajamas, in the beds, all tucked in for the night, and he thinks it's real funny. He says, well, you were noisy until two o'clock in the morning and I couldn't sleep! So this is what it was. So he had to go down in the kitchen and light the fires. And I was so mad at him and so – I got out of bed – I said, how could you do that? He's supposed to be a smart man, how could he do that, he's supposed to be a seminary student, he's supposed to be wise. How could you do that? So at any rate, I got out of the bed, I got myself dressed and I went walking and I bet I walked about three miles just thinking, oh he was so dumb, and I was so mad. Then I heard the bell ring for breakfast, so I got back in time to get the girls down for breakfast. Well, we survived the rest of that week and I went home to my mother and all I could think about, all I could talk about, was that guy that was such a naughty boy. He opened the doors when the girls were still asleep. I was really mad at him. So

mother just stood there and listened to me talk. At any rate, that was the end of that. At Thanksgiving time I got a card from him. Ok, well I found out later he sent cards to five different girls. He was looking around. But at any rate, I didn't send him any card, but I knew who he was and I knew what he did and I knew he was sending me a card. Ok, that was the end of that.

I'm out of school now, I graduated, and boyfriends in the background from Ames were in the picture, but I wasn't really sure about any relationships that I've had at the time. And so the minister from the church said, Barbara, we need to have somebody up here at the

Highlands again, would you like to come up and be a counselor again? Well, yes, I'm out of college, I've got a job starting in September, but I didn't have anything to do for the summer. So I said ok. So we were driving up the mountain and that's about a four hour drive from Sterling to get up to Allen Park into Highlands Camp. And we're driving and we got not too far from Highlands and the minister said, Barbara, by the way, Bill's going to be up there again all summer. Oh no, he's going to be up here. Well, the minister from Sterling whose name is Reverend White and a very good friend of the family, he knew all the time that Bill is going to be up there but he



didn't tell me. So I thought, oh my gosh. Well, of course, Bill's now finished another year of seminary, so he's finished two years of seminary. And he's coming back to the same camp again, he's going to do the camp maintenance stuff again. So I said you've got to stop the car at the next filling station. I had my hair up in rollers and I was not going to walk into camp with my hair in rollers. So the minister said, ok. And of course he was up to no good. At any rate, he stopped the car and he let me get out and I combed my hair and I put on a different dress, I just had jeans on, I put a dress on, oh my gosh. Then we got into camp and the camp is kind of at a high level and you walk down a hill to the lower levels where the dining room is. He parked the car at the higher level and I got out of the car and I walked down the hill and Bill is standing at the bottom of the hill and he's watching me all the way down the hill. And I just thought, oh my gosh, oh, what am I going to do, oh my goodness.

Well, then there were ups and downs that particular week. I found out there was another girl there from seminary that had bought \$50 worth of clothes to come to the camp. She'd applied to the camp because Bill was going to be there. She knew him from seminary and she wanted to marry him. Well, first night we were there, she told me all of this. So I thought ok, I don't have to worry, she's going to move in on this guy, so I'm not going to worry about it. Well, we got down to the dining room. It was an old Quonset hut, you know, the long narrow Quonset huts that we used to use during the war and after the war. So there was a piano down at the end of the Quonset hut and this gal was sitting down there playing

the piano. And my husband asked me to go to help him – my husband – this boyfriend, this young Bill – he asked me to go with him to repair some plumbing in one of the cabins, and I thought uh oh.

**Jane:** *[Laughing]*

**Ron:** This is the old, “let’s go repair the plumbing” trick. Every guy knows this trick.

**Barbara:** He invited me to go fix this plumbing and it was pouring rain outside and it ruined a pair of shoes, but I went with him to help with the plumbing. And all of the sudden, all of the time I knew this other girl was there keeping an eye on Bill. When we came back into the quonset hut there she was at the other end of the hut. She was playing the piano and she was crying. I could see she was crying. Oh my gosh, I thought, I’ve just done the wrong thing. And I told Bill, I’m not going to go out with you. I’m not going to help you anymore because this other gal is upset. And he said, you take care of yourself and don’t you worry about anybody else. Ok, ok, ok. So I did what he told me, so he kept paying attention to me all week long and he would walk me home back to Cabin 9 and I was again in Cabin 9 as one of the counselors. I think there was a connection between one



camp and the next because I went home and came back again and after about nine days he walked me up to the steps in the back of Cabin 9 and he said, Barbara, I want to marry you. And I thought, oh boy, I’ve got a boyfriend in Ames and I’m not really sure that this is cricket. And I said, well I can’t say anything now, I can’t commit myself to anything. And Bill says, well I want to marry you. Ok, ok, ok.

Well I had to go home and I had to go to my job in Iowa, it was a teaching job. So I went back to Iowa and all the time I’m thinking, well, what am I going to do? This other boy is going to be back at school and I have this problem. And Bill says, I want to be married in September and I thought, there’s no way. And I told mother, oh mother, he’s talking to me about getting... She said, we can’t have a wedding in September. There’s absolutely no way we can have a wedding in September. So ok, ok, so I debated what to do, what to do. I have this other boyfriend that’s still in the picture. Oh dear, oh, I’m in a terrible mess. So I finally decide I have to say something. So I tell the other boy, no more. I never really told Bill what was going on at Ames. It’s a good thing, because I by then figured out he wouldn’t like it. And so I told the other fellow I’m going to marry somebody else. So that kind of finished that relationship. So I told Bill, I’m going to get married, I’ll marry you and I’ll tell my family we’re going to have a Christmas

wedding. Mother says, well we can't have a wedding on Christmas Day because the other kids need to have a Christmas. So if we're going to have a Christmas, it has to be after Christmas. Ok, so it'll be between December 25<sup>th</sup> and the 1<sup>st</sup> of January. In the meantime, Bill has invited me to go to Kansas City to visit his family and to meet his family.

### **Barbara Discusses Bill's Family**

That all happens in the fall and I want to digress a bit to tell you a little bit about his family in Kansas City. His mom and dad lived on Lotus Street and his aunt and his grandmother lived in quite a nice comfortable house not too far away from his mom and dad. His grandmother had been a shoe salesman in the great big Emery, Bird and Ferrell department store in Kansas City and she had worked there for a long time. And his aunt was a math teacher at the high school in Kansas City and she's a brilliant woman, a very smart woman. She and I eventually learned to appreciate each other, but she was kind of intimidating because she was smart. Bill's mother had been sick and she had had some mental breakdown when Bill was nine years old, 10 years old and that had been a real problem for his dad, and his mother, and his aunt, his grandmother. They all took care of his mother. But Bill grew up with a deep sense of concern for his mother and didn't have a comfortable home situation because of his mother's illness. His father had grown up in Kansas City, but there wasn't very much money. And his father had dropped out of school at the end of the eighth grade, so he had no high school education. And he had been a very stable worker and he'd been in the military in the First World War, probably with some chemical damage which Bill always thought about, was concerned about for his dad. But at any rate, after the First World War he and some of Bill's uncles, two of his uncles came back from the war but never did really pull out of some of the secondary effects of the war. Bill's dad was healthy, but he didn't have the advantage of education. He was very concerned for Bill's mother and eventually he just couldn't keep a job because he would get called home so often to help take care of Bill's mother and that created a great deal of tension between Bill's dad and his aunt. Now his aunt, Libby, was the sister-in-law, the sister of Bill's mother and she always was angry with Bill's dad.

So Bill grew up with the tension in the family between his father and father's family. None of them really had a lot of money, they were construction workers, builders in Kansas City. And his grandmother and aunt worried so much about his mother. And his grandmother was Bessie Minckemeyer. She had a job at the big department store after her husband left her. That happened several years earlier before Bill was born. Mr. Minckemeyer was William Minckemeyer, but he left on the train one day when Libby was about 12 years old and Ruth, Bill's mother, was about eight years old and he never came back. He just went to work one day but instead of going to work he got on the train and he went to Colorado. He built another family and had another relationship, which the family really never knew about until



years later. So Bill's grandfather wasn't in the picture, but his great grandfather, Mr. Proctor, was Bessie's dad. Mr. Proctor from Quincy, Illinois. The family had come to Quincy, Illinois and had some connections there. So there were some of Bill's relatives that were, cousins actually, in Quincy. So after Bill and I were married that fall, he wanted me to go to Quincy to visit the family. So we took the train from Chicago where the seminary was and we went to Quincy and I met the cousins. The reason they came to Quincy was that his great, great-grandfather from Germany came to America probably about 1865, about the time the Civil War was either going on or had just finished. His name was Minckemeyer. He came from a very Jewish family in Germany in probably the Jewish part of Berlin. He sensed even in the mid-1800s that the Jewish community was not going to be welcomed in Germany, sensed it obviously almost 100 years earlier, a lot of people did. So he went on his own by ship to America and he met an American girl... no, he met another European girl and after they got to Quincy they got married. So the great, great-grandfather never identified with the Jewish community in America. The family never identified with the Jewish community in Quincy or in Kansas City. Part of the family had gone from Quincy to Kansas City just about 1895, 1898. Ruth and her sister Libby were born in Quincy but they went to Kansas City because their dad had worked on the train there. So that's how they ended up in Kansas City. At any rate, that tells a little bit about Bill's background.

**Jane:** So you went to Quincy rather than going to Kansas to meet Bill's family

**Barbara:** Well that's a good question. Actually I went to Kansas City first literally – sometimes I get mixed up the time and the ages here. In the fall before we got married, between September and December, I went to Kansas City because I met them before we actually got married and that was Kansas City. So I met Grandma Bessie and Libby and Ruth and Bill's dad Herbert. So Ruth and Herb and I went to their houses and they got acquainted with me and they got acquainted with the fact that I wasn't the other girlfriend that Bill had thought he might marry.

**Jane:** Did you know about her at this time?

**Barbara:** Oh yes, I knew about her from day one. There wasn't a big issue about it, it was just this was part of his background. So the other friend that he had – and I'm avoiding mentioning names here deliberately, but I do know all the names – and the family had liked his girlfriend that he had in college. He had dated her his senior year in college, maybe part of his junior year. She was a beauty queen from one of the sororities. You know, I never won a beauty contest, but she was pretty. Bill and his friend had a green fancy car with a top that was down and they drove around the campus. Bill had gone to school in

Colorado State in Fort Collins, so this girl was in school in Fort Collins. She was a Colorado girl too. And they had dated and she had a diamond and they had scheduled a wedding sometime in the summer after he graduated from college, but he had been more and more thinking about maybe he would like to go to seminary. He had a job in Chicago with the telephone company. He had a very good job. And he went to Chicago with the telephone company after graduating and he told this other girlfriend that he thought he might like to go to seminary but he was going to work for the time being and make some money. And when he started talking about seminary and maybe going to work someplace around the world, she didn't want to do that because her dad had died, she was an only child, and she didn't want to be away from her mother. So she just decided that she shouldn't marry Bill because she didn't want to do what he wanted to do. So two weeks before the wedding, she told him she didn't want to get married. Well, he still had his new wedding suit, the family had been still programmed for this wedding and nobody seemed too upset about it. And when I went to Kansas City and met them all they talked about her and they said, yeah, she was a nice girl, but they didn't, they never made me feel uncomfortable at all.

**Jane:** They were glad he was going to be able to wear that wedding suit.

**Barbara:** Well, and he did, he wore the wedding suit. And they were nice to me, they were very nice to me. And so I felt comfortable and I knew his aunt is the matriarch of the family and I got very well acquainted with his mother, and by then she had had some help with medication and lots of TLC in the family. So she was at home with Bill's dad and as far as she and I were concerned, we communicated very easily. I never had any kind of a problem – her name was Ruth. Ruth and Herb, Herb stuck by her, I mean, he stuck by her through thick and thin and they eventually celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. And I felt – this is ridiculous, but you know, sometimes, even though his dad did not have the education, sure my dad had a lot of education, and my mom certainly had a different life than his mother. And yet my mom and dad sometimes quarreled with each other and his mom and dad somehow figured out how to live. And sometimes the model of their life and his dad was important to me. Maybe on paper it didn't look the same, but when I was with them, I knew that there was a solid core of his dad's heart and my dad had had so much education and he had seen so much of the world, learned how to take care of too many people. So he was quite a different kind of person than my dad. I always respected Bill's family. And Bill always for the rest of my life, Bill always felt uncomfortable about some of his background and his family because they couldn't do for Bill what my dad and mother could do for me. And I had to learn, oh boy, I learned it probably in a lot of different ways, to be careful what I said, because I didn't want Bill to feel bad. And so I tried really, really hard not to let him feel bad.

So at any rate, let's get back to this is Bill's family and this is my family and it's time for this wedding. So here we are, I've visited his family and I know something about his heritage, like I mentioned to you, his Jewish heritage. Bill is an eighth Jewish and my kids are a sixteenth Jewish, if I do the math right. But they didn't know that until, gosh, in the last ten years about any of this contact with the German family. So the wedding is going to be between Christmas and New Year's. And Bill's family are all invited to come to Sterling and we're going to have the wedding in the Presbyterian Church in Sterling, the church which has been very important in my life. And Bill always went to a Presbyterian church in Kansas City too, a church that eventually closed down. But he always was in the Presbyterian Church and his dad always went to church. His mother hardly ever did, but his dad was always at church. He was active in the men's group. And in fact somewhere in conversations recently, we think that had his dad had an opportunity to go to seminary, he would have been the minister.

They all came to Sterling. The whole family. My mother is not socially comfortable at all. But she did it, she planned that wedding. I didn't plan it. I was teaching school in Iowa. I only came home in time for that wedding, and I knew, oh mother. So she came to Ames and we went to Des Moines and picked out a wedding dress for me and picked out dresses for the attendants and she made all the arrangements at the church, her circle group at church where they planned the reception after church. And we had a nice reception in the basement of the church where I had grown up and I knew all the people and of course the people all knew the family. And we had Bill's mother and she was able to do it, she was fine, she was very poised, very nice, and of course Bill's dad and his aunt and his grandmother, Bessie Minkemeier, she was there. She had a fur stole on and she wanted to be properly poised for this wedding. So Libby, oh my gosh, she was in the middle of it and she was excited because Bill was marrying into this doctor's family. Ta da. I didn't really know that at the time. I was too worried about my mother and hoping that my mom would be able to manage all this and then my brother was right there and my sister was 13 and my little sister was five by then. All I could think of was, I hope this family can hang together.

And my dad didn't want me to get married at all. My dad was at the reception, he was over at the side of the reception area and he was crying. My dad walked me down the aisle and mother told me, dad's having a fit. He thinks you should finish teaching for the year and he thinks you should not get married now. Mother says, I'm just trying to keep this thing together. Well dear mother, she did keep it together and my dad just gritted his teeth and let me go ahead and get married. He probably would have sent me off to Europe if he could. But I was determined by then. So was Bill. Oh my gosh, Bill said, we're going to get married and I don't want you to stay in Iowa. I want you to come to Chicago. I want you to quit your job in the middle of the year and come to Chicago to be with me for the last semester. I'm going to graduate from seminary and I want you to get acquainted with my friends at seminary, I want you to see a little bit about seminary life, I want the professors to know you, and I want you to be there, da da da.

## **Being Married, Life in Seminary**

**Jane:** What about your job?

**Barbara:** I had to go to the principal of the school who happened to be the superintendent of the schools too, and I told him I'm going to quit in the middle of the year. And, oh, he had a fit. And my dad had a fit. Well anyway, the principal/superintendent said, you gotta get somebody else to take your place.

**Jane:** You had to?

**Barbara:** Yep, he said it's up to me. So he said, you go back to Ames and you find somebody who has exactly the same education you have that's available and that can take your place. So, ok, I was in such hot water. So at any rate, I went back to Ames to the sorority house and there was one girl that was an Iowa girl that was graduating in the middle of the year and she was available. So I went to her and I said, would you like to have this job? And she went to interview right away and she was happy. She was fine, they were happy at school. They said, fine, we'll just forget you – talking to me – were ever here and she'll just take over. And she did. She stayed there for about three years and she was happy. But at any rate, that got me off the hook and dad survived. So we had the ceremony with all the family there. And Bill's sister was there and she had married previously a couple of years, so her husband, who happened to be the friend of Bill's from college, he was there too. And then a college friend and then Joann, my friend from junior high and high school. So Joann was there, she was the other attendant at the wedding. One college friend and Joann. And Bill had a couple of friends from seminary and we had a very, very nice wedding. It was in the sanctuary of the Presbyterian Church with beautiful green flowers, beautiful green dresses for the girls, I had a nice wedding dress. Of course the sanctuary was all decorated for Christmas. So it all went very well and mother had, I think the caterer came to the house for dinner after the wedding and everybody came over to the house and my mother had it all organized at the house. And none of this is easy for her and I just thought, oh dear mother, I'm sorry. But anyway, we're going to get through this and she did and they had a nice time and they were all having fun at the house when Bill and I left as is customary. We took off and we went for our honeymoon. And that's the beginning of life with Bill.

**Ron:** I have a question, what seminary did Bill attend?

**Barbara:** Oh, McCormick Seminary in Chicago. The way that Bill could afford to go to seminary was he had gotten the GI bill for college. The family didn't have the money to pay for it, but the GI bill had paid for his four years of college, he majored as an electrical engineer.

**Ron:** He was in the military?

**Barbara:** Yeah, he went to the military when he was 18. That would have been in 1945. He joined in, must have been January. Bill was three – let me put it this way – in grade school Bill was too smart for his class, so they promoted him two levels in grade school. He was just too smart for his own good. At any rate, he went from first grade to third grade, so all the way through school he was two years younger than his classmates. So he actually graduated from high school when he was 16 and he couldn't join the military until he was 18, so he went to the junior college in Kansas City, which was right near where they lived, until he turned 18. That would have been January of 1945. And so he went into training. He was in Memphis for his first military training and then he was given the opportunity to go to Annapolis to school and be in the regular Army. And he considered that, so he took all the tests to be in Annapolis. Of course he passed everything with flying colors except history. He was never very good at history in high school. History to him was irrelevant. He came later to realize that wasn't right, but at the time that's how he felt. So then he took this history test to go to Annapolis and he failed it. Well he wasn't that sure he wanted to be in the regular Army anyway, but he'd already been in the training for 18 months and by this time the war is over, 1946. So they said, oh take the test again, you can take it real easily. You'll fit into Annapolis really well. You just take this test, you'll be all right. But Bill thought about it and thought about it and decided, no, he didn't want to go into the regular military. So he decided not to take that test again.

But then he had a GI bill. So he decided to go to school in Colorado. He lived with a cousin that lived in Colorado, so that saved on housing. He worked at the library. That helped pay extra bills. He always figured out how to manage. He could make a penny work like a dollar. So at any rate, he worked and he went to school and he graduated and he had this girlfriend business. And he graduated from Colorado State and then with his electrical engineering degree he went to Chicago. That's how he got into Chicago, because the GI bill was supposed to be finished, and somehow the bookkeeping or he never knows how it happened, but the GI bill was available for him to go to seminary – and it shouldn't have been, but it was. So the smart thing to do is don't ask too many questions. So that freed him and he kept on working at the telephone company until five o'clock in the afternoon, then he'd get on the bus and he'd go to the seminary and he took seminary courses. Then he would study at night and then he'd go back to the telephone company again. While he was in route in Chicago he would see homeless men on the streets. Now these are men maybe that are vets from the war or other people that didn't have enough money to have a roof over their heads. And he would see these fellows and it really haunted him, between the seminary and the work at the electrical company. So that tied in with his own experience of his dad having a limited education and his mother being sick so often when he was growing up. So he

identified probably with the people on the street more than maybe some of the rest of us would have identified. But that pushed him to go to seminary.

**Ron:** That influenced him.

**Barbara:** It pushed him. So from there he was more and more involved and then he heard of Laubach, Do you remember Dr. Frank Laubach, “each one teach one?”

**Ron:** Oh yes.

**Barbara:** And he heard him speak on the campus once. Each one teach one. And Bill was very, very impressed with that particular person and what he had to say. And that got him thinking about student work, and to apply and maybe do student work overseas. And he really wanted to get away from the Kansas City problems. The tension with his family had been difficult, always difficult. So he was interested in then working overseas and he had told me that. It was not a surprise, I knew that. But that didn't threaten me at all. I mean, I thought, oh that's an interesting thing to do.

**Jane:** You'd always been interested in travel.

**Barbara:** Yeah. And I had enough experience myself, and my dad had been overseas and he had come home, so I didn't see it as a bad thing at all. I was just, oh well, that's kind of interesting. I just graduated from college and I've got a college degree, so the timing was right, perfectly right. So as he finished seminary, by then I was there at the seminary. And then he had the applications to fill in to apply to the Board of Foreign Missions as it was listed at that time. Well guess what, by then he's married, so who has to fill out applications too? I had to fill out all those applications. That was his goal from the point of view of career, but I had 30 pages of applications to fill out.

**Ron:** Oh my goodness.

**Barbara:** And they made it clear that you don't hire one without being able to employ the other one. The pair have to be employable. That leads to questions of salary and payments later, but anyway, that's just the way it was at the time. They want you to be employable, but they're not paying you apart from your spouse. So I had to fill out, and this was February. By then we were in Chicago, in an apartment in one of the campus buildings. Any my mother's calling me, writing me, saying Barbara, all our friends are telling

us that they haven't gotten thank you notes yet. And I was totally embarrassed, but I couldn't fill out those 30 pages and write thank you notes. And they had invited every doctor's family in Sterling, every old friend of my mother's in Sterling, everybody. The sanctuary had been filled with people. And my mother had tables in the dining room, all these gifts spread out on three tables in the dining room so that all the relatives could see them and da, da, da. And so all these gifts are sitting there and I'm at the seminary and I'm supposed to say thank you. Well the long end of the story is I wrote every single thank you note, I filled out those 30 pages and I still have my wedding book with everybody's name in it with a check by it. And they said, well Martha – that's my mother – we did get a thank you note from Barbara, but it's not just a note, it's just a little letter. She just wrote real nice. Well that was to get off the hook.

**Jane:** It worked.

**Ron:** That's was nice though, that was nice.

**Barbara:** I did say, I said thank you to everybody. And I filled out all those 30 pages and in the process David was on the way. So by the time Bill graduated from seminary in May I was probably about two and a half months pregnant. So between January and December when we got married up to May when he graduated, I had been a busy girl. Because also I'd gotten acquainted on the seminary grounds and I was real sick at first when I was pregnant, so I ended up going to a doctor in the area in Chicago who happened to be a friend of my dad's. And my dad called the doctor and said do something for my daughter. So between A and B I got through the beginnings of that pregnancy and we graduated from seminary and we didn't know for sure when we graduated if we were going to get a job. And usually for people going overseas the recommendation is that you work in the States for two or three years before you go overseas. And in this case they said, well Barbara and Bill match what we need inside of Lebanon, they need these two teachers right now and we're going to overlook all the protocol and we're going to make it available so they can go in August. So that's what we did.

### **More about the Family**

**Ron:** You've twice mentioned that you work on two levels. You want to explain that?

**Barbara:** In high school at one level I was really torn up by the fact that the baby was born and we had to take care of the baby and I had to do all of that at home. But I was also very involved at school. I was in honor society at school, I was making all the grades at school, I was doing everything. I was what they call a Worthy Advisor in Rainbow, so that was a big responsibility. And I kept carrying all that and the

minute I'd go home there was stuff to do. I had to help my mother, all the stuff I told you about. So that it was two things at the same time. And I really didn't talk very much at school about what was going on at home. The one thing I knew or I know now, when I had a Spanish class in the afternoon at one o'clock, I fell asleep every day. The Spanish teacher was trying to figure out, why was Barbara so tired after lunch. Well, that was one of the symptoms of trying to do too much at once.

**Ron:** Bill Clinton says in his memoir, his mother was abused by his stepfather. They would have violent fights. Once he stood between his mother and stepfather and said, I'm not going to let you touch her. But as soon as he walked out he was this friendly, carefree person, the happiest guy in the world. He led two lives. That's not what you're saying though. You're just saying you had a lot of responsibility at home.

**Barbara:** Well, my dad was never mean, he was never abusive at all. Actually he was really double-nice because he knew that mother had, actually she had matured a lot while he was gone and he had seen a lot of the world. He had taken care of a lot of boys. He learned a lot about medicine while he was in the service. So the two of them had grown a lot, but they had grown apart. So it was not abuse. And it wasn't even sarcasm. There's one member of our family that can be really sarcastic, well actually two members, but at any rate, he was not, he's not capable. He just doesn't think in those terms at all and he would be so patient with mother, but mother would wear out his patience. And I could see what was going on. Sometimes at the table they'd have a discussion. Dad would tell his side of somebody that was sick, somebody has an ache or a pain, so he stays with that person for a couple hours and will hold their hand, listen to them talk. He was convinced that a lot of normal ailments are mentally stimulated illnesses that he thought with a certain amount of TLC he could have them get better. And mother was very impatient with that. She said, when they get well they can go home. So they would start analyzing medicine from two points of view, and I heard that a lot; part the reason that I didn't want to go to nursing school.

**Ron:** Your parents ultimately got a divorce.

**Barbara:** Well, ultimately. They didn't separate until Bill and I had been married. They separated in 1961. They waited until after their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary to get a divorce. So they tried a long time, because when Rebecca was 14 mother finally left Sterling and moved over to Longmont. Dad took over the house and remodeled the ground floor to be an office and remodeled the attached garage to be part of the house. And that story I haven't put into this at all, but I can. I mean, there's a whole lot there.



## Chapter Three

### Off to Lebanon

**Ron:** Tell me about when you got assigned to Lebanon. That must have been very exciting.

**Barbara:** It was. I have read some letters that I wrote to Bill, which I found yesterday. Bill was already commenting on suggestions that he had received from the seminary and from the Board of Foreign Missions for places that he might work. So he was even thinking about it before he was ordained. In May of 1953, he graduated from seminary, went back to Fort Collins where he had gone to college and had developed a very strong relationship with the youth group at the Presbyterian church. They were excited to participate in his ordination and then they gave him a job for a length of time until he might hear from the Board of Foreign Missions. So he accepted the job in Fort Collins and we were just going to be there we thought maybe a year or two in this small little church. When we went up to Highlands, to the camp that I had mentioned before, just for a visit, we got a telegram. It came up there, to Highlands. It didn't come to my home. So there was this telegram and they said, we would like to have you plan to go to Lebanon, we would like to have you participate in the study fellowship and we'd like to have you be in Pennsylvania about, I don't know the time length, but at any rate, not very long from now. It was going to be about a month from first of June, so it must have been about the 1st of July. So we knew from the moment we got that telegram. And that was just a big, big moment, and it was fun because it was up at Highlands. Of course we went back down to Sterling, called Fort Collins and said, we can't take that little church. He'll come and preach for three Sundays. Of course we told our family that we'd gotten this telegram and the family had a lot of mixed feelings about that because that meant that we were going to do what we said.

**Ron:** You can imagine how they felt.

**Barbara:** Yeah. They were actually deeply troubled by all of that. But to me, I'd finished college and I was interested, I wasn't particularly threatened by it at all. I thought, oh, it's exciting.

**Ron:** Very exciting!

**Barbara:** Yeah.

**Ron:** The first time I went to the Middle East it was 1987. Every single person – I went with a group of professors – every single person that I told I was going warned me about terrorism. They said, you're going to be killed or kidnapped. How did people react? I know they were lonely that you were going to be gone to another country.

**Barbara:** Well, the idea of terrorism had no part of the discussions in 1953. The only thing that we ran into right away is the anxiety in Lebanon about the creation of Israel. And it was only five years before that Israel had been created.

**Ron:** 1948.

**Barbara:** It was 1948, and we're there in 1953. So it's like last week. And you know as well as I do how five years ago is like last week,

**Ron:** In terms of history, yes.

**Barbara:** It is in your memory. It was very, very raw, very new and there was lots of anger underneath the surface. So there's a lot of politics that we can talk about. But let me take it a step at a time.

**Ron:** Sure.

**Barbara:** So we went to the study fellowship and I think it was six weeks. And we were there to learn something about what happens in the Middle East and what the background of the Arabic culture is. We had a lecturer there who Bill respected very much. And Bill absorbed a lot of that training program. So we learned a lot in that six weeks from a book point of view, from stories of people that came to talk to us for a few days during that period. We were, I think, in Erie, Pennsylvania. At any rate, we knew we were going to Lebanon and a lot of the other people that were at the study fellowship were going to other places. So they were going to Japan, to Egypt, to France, to Africa. And those people became our friends and until they died, we still had contact with them. And we were all learning what's expected of us in an international community. What to expect in terms of courtesies, a lot of things that they tell business people now. They tell people, don't be an ugly American. We got a lot of that training before we ever left the States. Then we came home, we packed and we got back to New York. And we were in New York City for a couple of weeks. And while we were there, we were taken to Arabic restaurants, we were introduced to a lot of Arabic food especially. And we were introduced to more people that worked out of

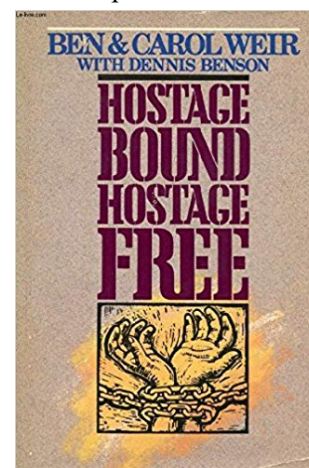
the board offices in New York. This was when the Presbyterian offices were all in New York. We were probably there maybe ten days. There were a lot of things that happened. Our wills had to be written, pictures taken for passports, those kinds of legal things. By the time we actually got on the ship, we had more knowledge of what we were walking into. But certainly very little in terms of the day to day reality. But still it was interesting, it was challenging. And I think Bill was sometimes really overwhelmed. We had to go through some psychiatric evaluations to be sure we were stable enough to do something like that. Well, we passed all of that, but I think Bill was a little nervous about it. At any rate, we survived. And we were on the ship. And then of course people from the board offices helped to get us settled and I can't remember the details.

### The Journey

We were on a Greek ship and it was a ship that had been refitted from carrying troops. So we were in a second class, not high first class, but we were kind of near where we could smell the kitchens. And I can remember hearing "Prosochi, Prosochi." And that's the Greek word for attention. That's the only word I remember. But I still can hear that word. And there we were, we were on the ship and we were really going to do this, and we were sailing out of this harbor. Well, we knew a little bit about going to Lebanon and people said, oh, you're going to Lebanon, you're lucky. You're going to be where there's beaches and city life and, oh my, you call that the mission field? Well, we knew we were going to go to work in the schools, to be teachers. And all the time it was kind of fortunate that we were assigned to this particular appointment. So on the ship, and I'm probably four or five months pregnant by then, we were sailing out past the Statue of Liberty, oh my gosh. I just remembered, I'm going to cry again [Barbara gets emotional] because I remember sailing out past the State of Liberty thinking, oh what have I done. Oh, my gosh. We're really sailing away from America? We really are doing this? And somehow it just overwhelmed me. Well, we were committed, we weren't going to turn back then. So we passed the Statue of Liberty and I can still in my head see it go by and then we were out in the open water. We were on the ship for two weeks. And during that time Ben and Carol Weir and their little girl, she was about 18 months old, were with us. So many people know Ben and Carol Weir. He got a lot of publicity later.

**Ron:** He was one of those people who was kept hostage, wasn't he?

**Barbara:** Yes, he was a hostage for about 18 months. And right here is his book that they wrote together and that's another whole thing.<sup>1</sup>



---

<sup>1</sup> Several Americans were kidnapped and held hostage as leverage against the American government. Ben spent 14 months in solitary confinement. He was released in an agreement which President Reagan

### Letters from Ben Weir

Barbara has in her files some letters from Ben Weir. Two are of particular interest. On October 2, 1982 he wrote that five days earlier he and Carol had returned safely to Western Beirut. They were met by daughter Chris and a colleague, Edwin Hanna. Ben describes seeing the Israeli tanks and troops, slated to pull out that day. He describes the four U.S. navy ships that were unloading marines. [Little did they know what was coming]. He described the presence of the Lebanese army, the only armed forces visible (a great step forward). After extensive bombing of the city by the Israelis, there was “a huge amount of cleaning up and repairing to be done.” The security situation was shaky but Ben was optimistic. But he noted that “There is a sadness too. One of Chris’ nursing students came by her office a few hours ago saying that 27 members of his family and relatives were killed in the Sabra camp massacre 10 days ago.”

In a second letter, on October 21, Ben offers a fuller view of the situation. “I have spent a good part of my time these weeks viewing first-hand the devastations in Beirut and south Lebanon, now that movement is relatively free. The Israeli bombings and shellings from land and sea were ferocious. Some areas have been nearly obliterated, others damaged to various degrees, but some relatively untouched. In addition the ruin of the last eight years of war is now much more evident. On great piles of rubble in the center of the commercial district of Beirut trees have begun to grow. Now steady efforts are being mounted daily to clean up the streets, clear away the rubble, and to prepare the way for building a new Lebanon. Generally there is a spirit of ready support, even enthusiasm, for strengthening Lebanon’s army and internal security forces. Trouble spots of continuing friction and violence in the foothills, the Beqaa Valley, and north Lebanon seem to be subsiding, though overall security in Lebanon and the Middle East will require patience, negotiations and determined effort

I spent three days in south Lebanon, returning four days ago, after seeing at close range three large villages I know well that had been made uninhabitable. Now people are beginning to return to start life over again, to repair or rebuilt their modest homes, and care for their fields and orchards. They want schools and churches to be rebuilt and opened both for their services and as signs of permanence. It was like a dream to be once again in Nabaityeh, where we lived five years, to see the school being repaired for opening Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>, and to talk with the able principal who was in the same kindergarten class with our daughter, Chris, 27 years ago!

What you do not see with the eye are those who mourn loved ones killed or wounded during the past eight years. I was deeply saddened to see the devastations and to talk to inwardly wounded civilians who are still anxious for their safety, in the Palestinian camps of Beirut, Sidon and Tyre. Lasting peace will come from struggle, perseverance, empathy, concern.



**Barbara:** At any rate, Ben and Carol and we and another lady. I think she was going to Iran. They planned times when we’d have what they called little prayer groups and we would reflect some of what we had learned and what we knew about the Middle East. But mostly it was a prayer group kind of fellowship. And I myself, Barbara, came out of a more secular college experience. I didn’t go to seminary, I didn’t have the same pattern of everyday life that they all did, so I kind of brought a new

---

insisted did not involve a hostages for weapons deal. Ben and Carol wrote a joint memoir, alternating their two stories, she working for his release, he in captivity. It is called *Hostage Bound, Hostage Free*. Ben became moderator of the PCUSA in 1985, the highest position in the church.

perspective into the work with Bill, working beside Bill. Actually for all the years, I always learned a lot from him. I learned a lot and I respected a lot and I absorbed a lot. But at that point I wasn't sure I could do all of that. I wasn't sure I was the right person for all of that. I had a much more secular experience in college. Not that I hadn't been part of the church all the time, but it had been more of a secular experience. So always, in whatever I say, there's always this reservation a little bit, because I'm not as confident as other people might have been, especially Carol Weir. She knew the Bible back and forth and she taught Bible classes and she did all kinds of things that I never did do. Well, I respected her very much and she was five years older than I was and they had had a church for a little while, so they had some church background, which Bill and I did not have. After those two weeks we got to Italy. And when we got to Italy.... Let me ask you, is Rome on the west side of Italy or the east side of Italy?

**Ron:** It's pretty much in the middle.

**Barbara:** Ok. I think we landed in Bari. [Note: On the Adriatic, across the peninsula from Naples]. We got all our things off the ship, our trunks, our suitcases. And there was a train nearby. And between the Weirs and this other lady and Bill and I, we had to get all our luggage, all our trunks through the windows of that train to cross Italy to get to where the ship was that we were going to go to Egypt. So we did that, which is a big memory in our lives. That's why we got to Rome on our way to the ship. This time the ship was a brand new Egyptian ship. It had never been used to carry troops. The people in New York in the board offices were afraid it wasn't going to be a very good ship so they put us in first class. Well, I'm telling you. That was a brand new ship, it was beautiful, and we had first class accommodations. It was pretty classy. So we went from Italy across the Mediterranean and we went to Alexandria in Egypt. And we were there for three days, and during that period of time, the political turmoil in Egypt – this is where Bill could tell you all the detail of what was happening in Egypt – but we were there for three days. And we did some touring. Then after those three days in Alexandria we got back on the beautifully lit Egyptian ship and we sailed into Beirut.

**Ron:** I think the coup had occurred in 1952. King Farouk was driven out

**Barbara:** Yes, yes.

**Ron:** And the Free Officers, Nasser and others, had taken power. By 1953, I think they were probably consolidating their power. That may be what you remember.

**Barbara:** Well, it was all happening at the same time and I'm not aware enough what's going on, but I've heard Bill talk about it.

**Ron:** You weren't there long enough that it really made much of an impact.

**Barbara:** No, but we knew this was all going on. And Nasser was -- I'm going to talk about him a little bit later. But at any rate, the political tension was in the air. But we were ok. And we got to Beirut. So then of course there were all kinds of people to meet us in Beirut. And we were told, don't talk to any reporters. Stay with our group, which was a group representing the mission board offices in Beirut, all people we got to know later very well. They said, now just stay with us, we're going to take you straight to Schwer. And I think we were not in Beirut more than a few hours, enough to get off the ship, get all our trunks, suitcases whatever we had. So for Ben and Carol and their little girl, Christine, and Bill and I, we were in Beirut only a very brief period of time and then we were taken up the mountains to Schwer. [Note: Schwer, also called Dhour el Choueir, is 30 kilometers from Beirut in the Shouf Mountains. It is on the highway from Beirut to Damascus. It is a beautiful area favored by local tourists].



In Schwer there was a summer retreat area with main buildings, built all of stone, typical building supplies that are used all through Lebanon. There were lots of people there for the summer retreat, when people come from all over working in Syria, in Lebanon, north and south, and maybe even some people from Jordan. But there's a whole group of people that are there in Schwer when we get there. So of course, we're the newcomers, we just came off the boat. So we're getting acquainted with a group. I

actually found pictures of that group that I didn't even know I had. It's the context of the group that we would know and work with through the ten years we were in Lebanon.

The procedures were to stay in Schwer for a few days, to learn more about Arabic food. We were getting acquainted with the dining room and how the food was prepared in the dining room. And we were also getting used to lots of olive oil. And one fellow made a song about the effects of olive oil, too much for tubule, and we never, ever, ever heard of tubule in America. But by the time we got to Schwer, tabouli was part of almost any meals. And it's always served as a holiday dish, a party dish and very, very Arabic. Very, very carefully prepared. Every village prepares it a little bit differently, every cook does it a little differently. But tubule is tubule.

### **Response to Israel**

At any rate, we got acquainted with the local environment there and we were there long enough to hear all the stories of people that had been evacuated from what turned out to be Israel, but Palestine. Because there were a lot of people that came from – I hesitate to call it Israel, nobody wanted to call it Israel, it was Palestine. And people were there that were very, very aware of Tel Aviv. Many, even the people we worked closely with, spent summers in Tel Aviv. They traveled through the whole area, they were very, very angry about the creation of Israel. Over and over again, and you had to.... Even right now as I'm talking to you, my inclination is to lower my voice because you never know when you might say something and it would be heard and misunderstood. So we learned right then and there how intensely people in Lebanon were angry about the decision to create this new country. And of course, this is 1953 and we haven't had the 1967 conflicts in Israel, Jordan, so none of that's happened yet. But in 1953 there's anger everywhere. Nobody wants to talk about it, everybody is polite to everybody, but everybody's angry. The Americans are angry. There's a lot of British people that are there, and the British people are angry. People that have been there since 1919, the doctor and his wife (who will figure a little later) very angry. Feel like the American support, the French, the British decision to support this creation of Israel was just all wrong. And I don't think that people really thought in that five year period that it would last as long. But the ripple effects were inevitable, just absolutely inevitable. And you got aware of it so quickly. At any rate, we were in Schwer and our main job was to get acquainted with the procedures, how we got paid, all those kind of details.

I think it was either then or one other time when we were in Schwer, but Bill was out walking on the hillside and he ran into Charles Malik. Do you know him?

**Ron:** Yes, the famous diplomat.<sup>2</sup>

**Barbara:** Right. And he and Charles Malik had quite a conversation out there as they were walking around on the hillside walking together. Bill was privileged to talk with Malik. And at that point, well, Malik's points of views at that point are in that book, and I have another book – I didn't bring it out just now – that Malik wrote himself and Bill read that, absorbed it, just absorbed it. Very much impressed. Now I didn't, I wasn't on that walk, Bill was out on his own. But that book was on the shelf, and when Bill first died, I was missing his, just conversation, just everyday thinking, and so I decided the thing to do is pick out a book that he read a lot and that he was impressed by and read it myself, where I never had done that before. So I absorbed all of Malik's book, which is back there in the other room. At any rate, Bill considered that, at that point in Schwer an introduction to what was really the diplomatic problems in Schwer. And we learned right away that the Muslim community and the Christian community were supposed to be divided in Lebanon. There was supposed to be a 50/50 kind of government that works together. Well, the diplomat refers to that a lot, what's the reality of it. Now in Lebanon we learned very quickly Schwer is for instance a Christian village and down the road a little ways there's a Muslim village, and then along the way there's another Christian village. But it's clearly defined: This is the Christian village, this is the Muslim village. You could feel free and very comfortable as a Christian tourist or Christian Presbyterian in a Christian village. You were welcome. But don't make yourself at home in a Muslim village. We probably knew that before we ever left Schwer the first time. Then the next responsibility, school's going to start. We've gotten through the first part of September and we've absorbed a lot of local culture in Schwer. We haven't really gotten acquainted in Beirut a lot. Then we go to Sidon and they take us to Sidon and then we're introduced to the schools. And Bill is going to teach...

**Ron:** That's a port city in the south.

**Barbara:** Yes, it's a port city, if you hear the biblical term Sidon and Tyre, Tyre and Sidon they always say, well this is Sidon. And it's the original Sidon, it's still the same city.

**Ron:** Jesus visited there. That's a famous site.

---

<sup>2</sup> Charles Malik, *Man in the Struggle for Peace*, 1963. He lived 1906-1987. He was Foreign Minister of Lebanon, Ambassador to the UN, and Ambassador to the US. He was at San Francisco in 1949 when the UN was founded and helped write the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He studied at Harvard under Alfred White Northhead, and in Freiburg under Heidegger. He left Freiburg early because of Nazism. He taught at Harvard, Notre Dame, Dartmouth, and Catholic University in Washington, D. C.



**Barbara:** It's a famous site, very famous. But at any rate, we knew that we were going to Sidon and that was going to be an exciting time. By then I'm acclimated to the idea of being in Lebanon and I'm adjusting. There are lots of little stories that reflect that, good and bad. But at any rate, I did a lot of thinking to myself about being out, far away from my own family. That was very difficult, and it continued to be difficult. But I was fascinated with Bill's ability and being hired. And that was clear from the very beginning, that they wanted me to do what I could do and that they'd hire me for what I could do, so that I should not feel that I couldn't do what needed to be done. As far as the Girls school was concerned, the Girls school was designed for kindergarten through the 12th grade for the girls. The Boys school also, just across the road – now these are Presbyterian mission established schools, but they're prepared with Oxford, Cambridge standards and they're all students that would be eligible to be accepted in colleges either in England or America. English is the second language to be taught and the children from the very beginning learned English as a second language, and then when they're 14, they have to learn everything in English. And part of the reason that we're hired as young people from America is because we're going to speak American proper English.

**Ron:** That's right.<sup>3</sup>

**Barbara:** And probably part of the training program is for those who are hiring us to learn to hear that we're using good English, although we are not aware of that at the time. But at any rate....

**Ron:** About the time you were going there, I was maybe in 7th or 8th grade, and to us missionaries went out into godless places and tried to bring people to Christ. That's not what you were doing.

**Barbara:** Uh, no.

**Ron:** It's a very different...

**Barbara:** It's very different.

**Ron:** Did you have Muslim students or were they all Christians?

---

<sup>3</sup> Ron and Jane taught in Kenya from 1964-1966 when they were about the same age as Barbara and Bill. Many of the things Barbara says about teaching and adjusting to a new culture resonate with them.

**Barbara:** Oh no. The schools were established in the 1920s, and they were established to serve the community as it existed at the time, with Christian principles, knowing that there was a very large Muslim community. There were always established chapel hours, when everybody that comes to the school, applies to the school, knows that they're going to be required to come to chapel, and the chapels are always Christian. But there are many Muslim families, for instance, that are wealthy enough and they have to be able to pay for these private American schools. They're not free schools. They're prestigious schools in the context of the local culture. And they are expecting their children to learn English well enough to go someplace else. And for the Muslim community, they say, well, if they have to go to a Christian chapel service every once in a while, that's not going to hurt them. Christians are good folks, but they'll learn English. So they'll be prepared in mathematics, literature, basic education and they'll be able to do it in English so that they can emigrate. They can go to America, they can go to England. There are also some good French schools, and the families that really wanted their children to learn French as a second language would send their children to the French schools. And it didn't have, if they were Christian, that wasn't the defining factor. The defining factor was the language. So Bill and I really were not qualified to teach anyone younger than 14 years old. So that was the same for him in the Boys School. There's lot of pictures that I found with him and students in the Boys School.

And then in the Girls School, the girls at 14, if they're... They're lucky to get to school even to 14, because you're thinking in the Arab world where women, generally speaking, Christian or Muslim, do not have the same privileges that we have in America, never did. And so the burden on the missionary of even 50, 70 years before we ever got there, was to create a possibility for girls to be educated. And I had just finished graduation in home economics in a school that was preparing young women to take their responsibility in the world. That absolutely matched what was going on in the Sidon Girls School. Where they were preparing girls, assuming that 99% of them will be homemakers and they will learn more about how to take care of children, how to plan meals, how to sew, cook, how to develop family relationships. All these things that were of interest to me were exactly what the curriculum was for the girls apart from the literature and math and the basic stuff. So when we got to Sidon, they were building a new building up the hill and I have to say that there's property that was Presbyterian property that was the Girls School, the Boys School, and way up the hill above the Boys School and that property was available to build another faculty apartment building. So they were building that building and the understanding was that we would have an apartment up there, but it wasn't finished yet. So we stayed down in the school, Bill and I had an apartment where the teachers lived in the Girls School. So we were there and we got acquainted with the teachers, we ate with the teachers, we had Arabic food, we had Arabic breakfasts. And I don't know if you know about Arabic breakfast.

**Ron:** I know about Arabic breakfast.

**Barbara:** Ok, it's got to be olives, if nothing else there's got to be olives. Well, if nothing else, it was a learning experience. And it was a very welcoming kind of experience. Parallel with this, among the students were many students that came from the Palestinian refugee camp. The Palestinian refugee camp was, oh they always said two miles down the road. If you wanted to look at the geography of Sidon, the original Sidon was on the water, down right where the boats landed in the harbor. And then coming from that level would go up about maybe a mile or two, from the downtown city you'd go up the road to go to where the Boys School and the Girls School were across from each other. Well, above the Boys School then was this hill, which took you up higher and built the new building and this was all beautiful landscape, it was all no fighting. [Getting emotional] No fighting, no thought of terrorism, always never say the word Israel out loud. Everybody's still.... [Barbara's voice fades].

So up the top of the hill there's a village and the village is named Miah Miah. And it's a very Christian village. A lot of the people that live in the village have lived there for a long time, many generations, and they have jobs down in the two schools. So you see people coming from the village. This is very Arabic Christian village, and they'd come down to the schools, Boys School and the Girls School. And they were workers in the kitchens, landscape people, workers in the orchard. And people from the village were teachers. Daad Najam was one of the teachers in the Girls School who grew up in the village and had a good education and she kind of took Bill and I, but me particularly, under her wing and that was a good friendship. The Najam family was a very prominent family in Miah Miah, in the village. And the village was important. And if you go back down to the harbor area, the original old Sidon, and if you go north along the road, about two miles, the Palestinian refugee camp is right there. It's also on the water. And it's a big camp.

**Ron:** What was the name of that camp?

**Barbara:** At the time it was just called the Sidon Palestinian refugee camp. [Note: Today it is called Ain el Hilwe camp]. A lot of refugees were there. Well, where are they from? They're refugees from Palestine. All right, and do you think they're angry? Of course. They're very angry. There are little seven year olds, Palestinians that are playing with play guns, marching out on the streets in the Palestinian camps getting ready to go back and take back their land, their homes. The people that are in the refugee camps are often people that have homes that they have just left. I mean, this is only five years ago. So the

homes are still standing. And when you talk about Reema Haugen,<sup>4</sup> she talks about her mother, her family and about how much they lost. Well, this had just happened. It was like last week for a lot of people. And the Palestinian community is one of the best educated communities around the whole Middle East, and has that reputation for a long time. So you've got educated people that are trying to survive in this dilemma that they don't like. So many of those students came to our schools. They could pay the fees, I'm sure there were scholarships available to help, but I don't know the details of it. But the schools were essentially prestige kinds of places to go to school and that meant that they could learn English, which of course they had learned in Palestine also. So then, especially the boys. I don't know that there was many girls from the refugee camp as there were boys, but they came from the camp to school every day. So Bill had many Palestinian students in his classes and he heard a lot from them about how they felt. And he absorbed the emotion of how they felt. And these first experiences for us, we were so young, even Malik himself says people should have some experience in America before they come to the Middle East – well, we didn't. We just got out of school and came. But at any rate, Bill absorbed a lot of the emotion of the Palestinian situation.

So in that period of time, we were getting acquainted in the local area. I was always amazed at how really beautiful it was and undeveloped at that point in time. It changed. But at that point we were very fortunate to be there during those years. So the catch in all this is that I'm now six months pregnant, seven months pregnant, and I'm going to have this baby. It's not going away. And so I said, I don't want to be in the classroom teaching while I'm getting bigger and bigger. And I was kind of tiny, and so the idea of walking around and getting acquainted with people and being the first impressions pregnant, I was very uncomfortable with that. So they were very supportive. They agreed. No Barbara, you don't need to worry about taking a class teaching at this point. So then Bill is learning all kinds of things and then it got to be October, November, and this baby's going to be born about Thanksgiving time in November. And Bill is teaching school. We're not moved into this building yet, our apartment. We're still living down at the school. And we're just getting acquainted and getting ready and talking to people. But absorbing what was going on around them. I don't think that there was a political drama at that moment, that fall of 1953. See, so much had happened, we'd only been married, what, ten months or so. And so we'd gone from 1952 Christmas and here it is 1953 and we're up to October, November of 1953. So we've been all the way through the New York experience and getting acquainted. So I was supposed to have this baby in Tripoli. So here we are.

**Ron:** Tripoli. That's in northern Lebanon. And it's a pretty nice city.

---

<sup>4</sup> Reema is a member of Littlefield Presbyterian Church where Barbara and Ron and Jane attend. Reema is a Palestinian from Ramallah. Her family were 1948 refugees from Lydda and Ramle.

**Barbara:** Well, it's a big city. It's bigger than Sidon and the understanding is, and this is another background story for what ends up in the book. Bill and I, they let us use the car from the school and we went to Beirut. We got acquainted in Beirut, we learned what's going on in the city. We learned that there are different parts in the city, different sections of the city. There's one section that's primarily an Armenian section, there's another section, various different sections of the city. And of course all around American University of Beirut and Beirut Women's College at the time, it changed its name. but we were mostly focused in the area where the universities were to get acquainted and to meet the other people that were also working in education. Our friends were either at Beirut Women's College or they were working with churches that had been established way years before. Very professional. I mean it could be Beirut, it could be New York City, it could be Chicago, it could be Singapore, all the big cities are so similar in terms of the groups of people that live there, you know that. But you didn't know it when you were in the seventh grade, but you know it eventually.

All right, so I went to Tripoli, the American hospital in Tripoli. Dr. and Mrs. Boyes had opened the hospital in 1919 when they were a young doctor and his wife. And I was to have this baby at Thanksgiving time. Well, baby didn't come. So Bill went back to Sidon and he was still staying at the Girls School and I was staying at Dr. Boyes' house. And they took care of me, they protected me, they identified with me a little bit because they knew my background and they never had any children of their own so they kind of adopted me. And I still didn't have this baby. So the girls in Sidon of course and the boys would say to Bill, when are you going to go up to Tripoli and see Barbara and have this baby?

Tripoli is quite a different city than Sidon. Tripoli is very connected politically to what's going on in Syria. Much more than Sidon was. Sidon was more connected to Palestine and further south. Tripoli was much more connected to Syria, Aleppo, the northern edge, all these divisions in the Middle East were arbitrary divisions, so people just work around those Europeans that made these artificial divisions. At any rate, Tripoli was hospitable to Americans. There's American Boys School and Girls School. They were combined more in Tripoli. But the students there went for the same reasons. They went to learn English and they were Presbyterian schools. I don't know for sure when the schools were established but surely around 1910, 1915.

So the baby's going to be born at Thanksgiving, but the baby's not born. And so Bill goes back home again and they say, oh is the baby born? No, the baby's not born. So Bill's learning more about what's going on and I'm getting acquainted with the nurses and the doctors. There are doctors that are Lebanese, doctors that came from Syria that worked with Dr. Boyes. He's the founder of the hospital. He designed the hospital, he has the nursing staff. Some of it comes trained from AUB, the American University of Beirut Nursing School. Some trained from Palestine, trained as nurses. And Mrs. Boyes was kind of chief cook and bottle washer. She managed everything. I have pictures of them too. At any rate,

I'm at the Boyes' house and I'm included for various activities at the hospital. Their home is designed right beside the hospital, so it's all one compound. And it's American kind of compound.

The main part of Tripoli downtown is a cosmopolitan city. The Christian church, the Presbyterian Church is downtown and then there's a long kind of a boulevard that takes you downtown to the Mina, El Mina, that's the harbor. That's what we called out there where the hospital is. So I lived out there with the Boyes and Bill came to see me. And now it's about the middle of December and I'm learning a lot about Tripoli and he's learning more about the political situation, nothing big and dramatic just absorbing what's going on in Lebanon – and the baby's still not born. Well, I was fine and there was a lot of people around that were taking care of me, and they know I was fine. But the fact was, I probably counted wrong and I didn't get pregnant when I thought I was pregnant, so it was a whole month later. So instead of having that baby at Thanksgiving time, I was probably due to have that baby about Christmas time. Which meant that Bill went back to Sidon again and the girls and the teachers would always say, is the baby born, and he'd have to say, no it's not born yet. Poor Bill, he's ready to give up on this young bride and we hadn't even been married a year. He's about to give up on everything. Well, finally, finally, finally Bill is back in Tripoli. It's Christmas time and Christmas Eve, which was actually in America the 23rd, but it was Christmas Eve in Lebanon, and the baby's born. So for us personally, we celebrated our first wedding anniversary when the baby was four days old, in Tripoli. We were there, the baby was there, Bill's had a chance to get better acquainted in Beirut, to go to the Presbyterian offices. He's learned a lot about driving between Sidon and Beirut and Tripoli. There's a beautiful, beautiful, drive along the river.

**Ron:** The Litani.

**Barbara:** Yes. The Litani River. There's pictures along the river, so he has driven up and down the river. He's seen some of the sarcophagi that are planted right there near the river and along in that area. He survived. He learned how to work with the students. And he got along well with the Palestinian students, with the Muslim students, Muslim students from the other villages, I don't know if I said not just Muslims from the refugee camps but Muslims from the other villages nearby, there were Muslim students. I figured, I was thinking about this, there were probably maybe 70% Muslim and 30% Christian. I'm not sure about that but I always knew that a lot of the students were Muslim. We had both Christians and Muslims, both girls and boys. But our focus was at the schools. The Weirs, by comparison, when they came from Schwer after the end of the summer, they went to Nabatiyah, which is another village in the south of Lebanon, but up in the mountains, another Christian village. Nabatiyah is what we'd call a small town, more than just a village. And eventually as the political situation began to break down, a lot of these towns and villages were highly politicized, highly damaged. But at this point none of that had

happened. People were angry. They could sit and have coffee together out on their patios. They just talked. They were not shooting guns. The only time you would see violence would be a natural kind of experience, like a family is angry with another family for a family issue. Bill tells the story about a time when he was in a taxi and the guy was going to this other village and Bill says, why are you going to the other village? Well, I have to kill the guy there because he killed my brother, so I got to go to that village and kill his brother. So those kind of things were going on. But that was...

**Ron:** That was not political, it was personal.

**Barbara:** It's not political, no, it was all personal. And you can see where as the political situation became more and more – how can I say – deep in the psyche of the people saying, this is wrong, this is wrong – then it just made them more angry. So you can see how it evolved. But at that point, and even when we left in 1963, there were political issues, and actually the reason we left has to do with a political issue, but not our issue. It wasn't us, it was at the university. But at any rate, the baby was born in December. Hot dog! Now we can go back to Sidon. Bill can come back with his wife and his baby. We stayed at the school until our apartment was finished. I don't think the apartment was finished until maybe February or March. And that's when Miss Teagarden became such an important person in my life. Now she was important from the very beginning, so I can't separate one from the other. But she was the teacher who had been in Sidon. I read a biography about her written someplace else later.<sup>5</sup> She had maybe been there some 10 or 15 years and she was probably in her late 50s when we got there. And she had been involved in the Home Ec department at the Sidon Girls School and she was the head of the department. And it was very interesting. If you have a school in America, you've got one department, maybe one or two teachers in the department. But in Lebanon, in Sidon in the Girls School under Miss Teagarden's supervision, there were many more teachers and many more categories of subject matter broken down. Because the girls had to, well they were learning in English all the time, so it's hard for them to learn in English so you had to go a little slower from that point of view. At any rate, the subject matter was important for these girls when they would go back home and that's the last they would ever see of any kind of education. And Miss Teagarden thought that my education was super duper, and she helped me, we had the baby by then and she helped get the baby bed set up and she helped fix the bottles for the baby. She was kind of like grandma for the baby. So between the Boyes in Tripoli and Miss Teagarden in the south, they... I was younger than anybody else by five years. All the other newcomers that came – and I can show you pictures – they were all five years older. Bill was young, but Bill was four years older

---

<sup>5</sup> The biography of Irene Teagarden is called *Lost in Translation: Home Economics and the Sidon Girls School of Lebanon, 1924-1932*.

than me. I mean, just barely out of college. But I really loved what I was doing and I loved teaching the school subject matter and I felt it was worthwhile and would give girls a chance to be more confident in the things they were going to have to do anyway, and so why not learn to do it in a better way. I had those thoughts in my head a long time before I went off to Lebanon.

**Ron:** So how many kids were in each class? And how many were in your school?

**Barbara:** Well, I think there were say 20 to 22, something like that in the class. In the grade schools, from the kindergarten up to the eighth grade there probably were, let's say, 500. And that's all the grades together. And then for the 14 to 18 year olds, maybe 300, maybe there was 800 in the school altogether. But it's a good size school.

**Ron:** That's a real little community isn't it?

**Barbara:** Oh yes, oh yes. I mean, it's been there a long time and it's part of the fabric of the area, the schools. And all we are, we are just plugged into what had long been there. And Miss Teagarden had been there long enough, she had gone holidaying in Tel Aviv, all through Palestine. All the families that actually worked in Sidon had gone into Tel Aviv many times. And when that border was set up and they couldn't get into Palestine and into what they called Israel, people said, oh it's too bad, we used to have a really nice time in the lower area of Israel – what's the area?

**Ron:** The Negev Desert?

**Barbara:** No. Where there's been lots and lots of trouble and tunnels underneath.

**Ron:** Gaza.

**Barbara:** The Gaza strip. They used to go down to Gaza a lot and have holidays down there. So they would tell us the experience.

**Ron:** That place was famous for its fruit, its citrus, historically, way back 100 years ago.



**Barbara:** Well, 1000 years ago. There's another book I read that I need to talk about sometime. But at any rate, when that border came and Israel was created... Of course the border is just on the other side of Tyre and it's only 10 miles south of Sidon, it's just right there.

**Ron:** You forget how small these areas are.

**Barbara:** I know.

**Ron:** You drive 20 miles and you're in a very different area.

**Barbara:** Exactly. And so the emotion of the cut off... Well, one day, I think there was some sort of an athletic event at the Boys School, and some of the teachers were at the Boys School to celebrate when they did their races or the ball games or so on, there was some kind of competition. And I was sitting there with Miss Teagarden right beside me and somehow, I said something, lord only knows what it was, something like, well, we won't worry about what's going on, Palestine, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, you know, we won't worry about it. Boy, did that make her mad. She just sat beside me, Barbara, don't you ever say that, don't you ever say that again. I want you to know that it's very serious, it's very difficult and don't you ever say anything like that again. And I'm sitting there, and I remember that, boy. And, you know, she was good support for me and she was very loving, but.

**Ron:** On that issue it was non-negotiable.

**Barbara:** Yes.

## Chapter Four

### Life in Lebanon

**Ron:** So, it's 1954, you're a new mom, and your friend Daad asks if you want to go to the refugee camp.

**Barbara:** Right. We have this bit of time. Bill is now busy teaching classes at Gerard Institute, which is the official name for the boys school. And I'm available. So I say, sure I would like to go. Bill doesn't want to go and I am a little bit surprised by that. I think his image of what I was going to see was very depressing. And it turned out the exact opposite. The organization of the refugee camp was very, very systematic. There were streets, there were shops, there was organized school by UNRWA<sup>6</sup> within the campgrounds. There were divided areas, shelter for the families to live. I walked along the streets, I went into one of the homes that was a friend of Daad's. We were treated very, very courteously. I saw children playing in the streets. It was very well organized. And the plumbing – I can't remember – I know there had to be ditches along the sides of the road for

**Ron:** Drainage.

**Barbara:** refuse. And I really don't remember that specifically at that time. But my overall impression was well organized, well disciplined, much, much better circumstances than I'm sure Bill expected me to see. He thought we'd be looking at people that were homeless and depressed and in a very depressed environment. I didn't see that. Now this is only five years after Israel is created. And we do know that there were seven year olds that got together with their sticks or whatever, and played fighting,

**Ron:** Played soldiers.

**Barbara:** Played guns, played being soldiers, and that mentality, of course, grew up and now they are themselves grandfathers. But at that point it was all something new.

---

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Relief and Works Agency is a special organization to look after Palestinian refugees. The UN has refugee agencies but because the creation of the state of Israel and the refugee situation were the result of UN actions, they decided that this was a unique situation. UNRWA helps run the camps and provide educational and social services for the refugees. In Lebanon there are 15 camps.

**Ron:** Each of those camps tend to be made up of certain villages, so everybody knew each other. They weren't just mixed together, they were from one town or village, and that's probably why they maintained all that social cohesion.

**Barbara:** Right, and I'm glad you mention that, because they did move, and they still do. What is Dearborn? The east part of Dearborn is a community that moved from one village or one area of Lebanon to east Dearborn.

**Ron:** Bint Jbail is heavily represented.

**Barbara:** You hear that all the time, right.

**Ron:** in my neighborhood, yes.

**Barbara:** But at any rate, so we did do that. And by the time David was about a month old, maybe six weeks. The apartment building up at the top of the hill, the new faculty apartment building was completed and we could move in. and then it was all new – and this is important. They dug out of the hillside to make this a very new building, on the hillside. It's still property of the school, but there had not ever been a building in that area before. And in the building besides Bill and I, there was another couple, they were going to be faculty, the Kasparians, an Armenian couple, a young couple. And they lived right beside us in the other apartment. He was a teacher at the school. And down on the ground floor was another couple with a little boy about four years old and they were what we called White Russian. They had left Russia with a political dilemma and he had gotten a job at Gerard Institute. So there were three families that moved into that new building.

And because I was just fresh out of all this high powered home economics background, I had all these ideas about how the floor plan should be and how the plumbing should be, especially in our apartment. Now I don't know if they did this with the other apartments or not, but they were paying attention to what I said. And so instead of having water on one side of the kitchen and then trying to do dishes carrying water from one side of the kitchen to the other, well I said, oh no, it won't work that way. And so they redesigned the plumbing for our apartment. My husband was so embarrassed about that. He said, oh Barbara, you shouldn't talk about it. I said, well, why don't they do it right. At any rate, years later, I have to tell you that people came back and said, we loved to live in that apartment because the design of the water system was good.

**Ron:** He thought you were micro-managing and in fact you were just producing a very much better outcome.

**Barbara:** (*Chuckling*) Yeah. At any rate, that was just a little side point. The apartment we had was a larger apartment on the second floor and we had a big veranda at the front and sitting at that veranda at the front, we looked out and we could see the Mediterranean. We were high enough so that we could look over the city of Sidon and we could see the water. It was very dramatic. Down at the bottom of the hill are the schools, both the boys and girls schools. And at the back of our apartment there's another veranda that was for hanging clothes. At the same time that we moved into our apartment, the powers that be, the faculty, decided that because I was going to be teaching at the girls school we needed a caretaker, a person to take care of the baby while I was at school. Well that was fine with me. And so this was arranged – I think Daad had something to do with this. But anyway, Miss Teagarden and the faculty suggested this girl that came from Miah Miah. So she came down from the village everyday five days a week, she came down at 8 o'clock and she was there until 5, five days a week. And her name was Sabat.

Now Sabat was, it turned out, she was a year older than I, so we were kind of... And she did not read or write Arabic. She had never been to school in her life. And I couldn't read or write Arabic. Well, fortunately I could read and write English. And she started by helping me take care of the baby. I showed her all kinds of ways that I would take care of a baby. Of course, as you know, I had all this experience at home when I was growing up, so I was very comfortable with all this. So she was a wonderful support and then she taught me all kinds of Arabic foods. She made, I can think of stuffed grape leaves. She did all kinds of things. I have Arabic cookbooks here, but I saw most of it from Sabat to start with. And she would cook the main meal and then she would leave it nice and hot. She would go home at 5. Well, Bill and I would come home from teaching and she'd be there until we got there. And she would have taken care of the baby.

We had the veranda's at the back and I have to tell you, the landscaping beside and above our apartment was beautiful. Sometimes camels would walk past our back veranda. We couldn't step off the veranda, but I often stood there and watched them. At that point there was little population but a lot of the people from the village up above would come down to work. And you'd see them walking down the hill. There were often sheep and goats on the hillside. It was a very rural environment... That road from Miah Miah down to the school had been there for a long time. But the fact that we lived halfway up between the school and the village, they would come right by near where we lived and come on down the hill.

So I'm telling you all of this because I want you to feel that Lebanon was beautiful. And we could see the water, we could see the beach. We could get in the car – sometimes the school let us use the car, the school car, because we didn't have a car of our own. But that was no trouble. We didn't have a

telephone of our own. And if we had a telephone message it would come through the school and somebody from the school would come up and tell us there was a telephone message. Well, we never talked to anybody from American until 1963. In these years we didn't talk in America on the phone at all.

**Ron:** Not at all.

**Barbara:** No, not at all. And we got BBC on the radio, so we could actually hear the news if we really wanted. Every evening we loved to have supper, tuck the baby in bed, sit out on that front veranda and watch the world go by, and that's when Bill and I got acquainted with each other, literally. Because so much had happened so fast that we were just going from one thing to the next. So it was in that time, in those three years it was like an extended honeymoon in a way. I don't know that I perceived it that way at the time, but in the long run, 64 years later you look at it and you see that.

**Ron:** That was a wonderful time, for you to get to know each other.

**Barbara:** Yeah. So while we were sitting out there unfortunately, one of the things that happened was this new building, there was of course new soil dug up all around the building. I got mosquito bites really, really bad. Well, all primarily on one side of my face. [Barbara covers the left side of her face with her palm]. And it was so bad that it upset everybody, including me. But at any rate, the mosquito bites, they decided the mosquitoes had come because the soil around the building was disrupted. And the fact was that in the schools at the bottom of the hill they never used screens. They had never felt the need for screens. And even the principal and his wife that were personal friends, as Americans, Dr. and Mrs. White, Dorothy and Bob, Dorothy was almost my mother's generation, and she kept saying, but we never needed screens. We never used screens. And here I am, I'm getting all these bites, especially on one side of my face. Well, they think too that because the refugee camp was so close, within a couple of miles at the bottom of the hill, in front of what you identified as Ein El Hilweh, well the refugee camp was below that. So there was a possibility that mosquitoes came from that area too, which was all disrupted soil, disrupted populations that had never existed before.

**Ron:** The environment is being disrupted for two reasons, construction and the camp.

**Barbara:** Exactly, exactly.

**Barbara:** So Bill got mosquito bites too, but he didn't get as much as I did. Well, in that period of time, I think I was helping to teach in the department where it was childcare and family nutrition. One of the things that Miss Teagarden thought would be great was for me to take David, the baby, and go up to the village and demonstrate how to give a baby a bath.

So I don't know how I took David up there, I don't know if I carried him up, because here I am at this midlevel of the hill and I go to the top of the hill and go to the village. And there was a whole group of women that were there to watch the demonstration, and the American young teacher is going to demonstrate how to take care of her baby. Well my baby has blue eyes. Oh my goodness, that's very unique because not very many Lebanese babies have blue eyes. Well, you know as well as I do that some Lebanese do have blue eyes and do you know why? Because the Crusaders came.

**Ron:** Yes.

**Barbara:** So you know that. All right. So anyway, I have this blue-eyed baby boy and I demonstrate there in the complex. I don't know exactly there I was, but someplace up there and I remember with the baby and everybody cheering around and then they have all the blessings, we want to give him a blessing. I just remember thinking, well this is interesting. I mean, I'm learning all the time because I don't know what I'm doing. I'm just in the middle of this. And so then, for that time I didn't stay in the village for a long time. I was again at the village for another occasion, but not right then.

But I want to say, this is very interesting and people in east Dearborn would not have thought of this. The village is here and at the entrance to the village is where everybody parks their cars. They do not take cars into the village. Everybody can drive up the hill past our house and go to the village, park, and then walk into the village, wherever their house is. And this is a temperate climate, so you're not going to get nine inches of snow on the ground. It's rainy and in January it's cold, but not freezing cold. At any rate, the cars are parked at the entryway.

Well, just by comparison, when families from this village or other villages came to east Dearborn, their children, and they – their parents too – were used to the children running all around in the neighborhood. So it was very hard at the beginning, say 1979, 1980, when the children first were coming from Lebanon.<sup>7</sup> They were not subconsciously disciplined to stay off the streets. And they were not subconsciously disciplined to stay out of other people's yards. So this offended people in Dearborn. But it was just the village. It was what they were used to. And right away I saw that. When we moved to east Dearborn I knew what was going on. And they were cute little kids that were Lebanese. They're all grown up and graduated from college and have families now, but at that point, they were little, they came into

---

<sup>7</sup> Barbara is referring to the influx of refugees in 1975-76 and after the Israeli invasion of 1982.

our yard, they picked all the flowers along the parking lot, they knocked on my door. They wanted to come in and visit and they were just part of the village. Well, at any rate, back to the village in Lebanon.

So we've talked about the house, its apartment, and we've gotten moved in and I had the mosquito bites. Well, I keep on working, but school ends the latter part of June. And by then I just don't feel good at all. I'm not feeling good. But they say, well, the time is to go back to Schwer, because there's no activity in the summer in Sidon. So the understanding is, and this was the plan from the beginning, to go to Schwer. So pack up baby and I think Sabat came with us to be there for a little while with the understanding just to help us get moved and settled. So in Schwer, there's a main older building that had been built there, which is where the dining room is and where the steps are that you'll see pictures where people are all sitting together on the steps, and that's the big building. And there's another building across a tennis court that is with apartments. And then the third area, there are a series of four, five or six two-bedroom apartments in a totally new area of the resort. And that was built by Presbyterian money for some of us that worked there. One family even came from Syria for the summer, and other people came just for the summer. And we had an apartment assigned to us in those new buildings.

Ok, we come up to Schwer and somewhere, whether it was just before we got up to Schwer or just after, I realize I'm pregnant again. So not only do I have all these mosquito bites, I'm pregnant again. So when we got up to Schwer, it had to be about the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, I thought maybe I was maybe two months pregnant, and I was not feeling well at all, just not well. And at first we had a brand new apartment and all the equipment to build these apartments was left in the unit that we were going to have. So fortunately Sabat had come with us and she helped or else they called for her to come, and she helped to clean it up. And then I started turning yellow. I'd begun to get yellow eyes. And they said, my gosh, Barbara's got jaundice, she's really not well.

**Ron:** This is not good.

**Barbara:** Not good. So I'm telling you I'm trying to set the scene of Lebanon, but it gets difficult to separate my own life, Bill's dealing with this problem, his wife and moving and whatever. That's why I wonder how he would tell this story, because we know there's a lot of things that we didn't talk to each other about, we just did it, we just did what we had to do. But at any rate, Dr. and Mrs. Boyes from Tripoli came in and out of Schwer too, along with everybody else. And they said something's really wrong with Barbara. Ok, so Dr. Boyes... I don't know if he was actually there or if other people decided that I needed to go to Tripoli. But Barbara, you got to go to Tripoli. Bill, now your eyes are getting yellow too. So he got what we called at the beginning jaundice, but it was Hepatitis. And we had Hepatitis B.

Hepatitis A is primarily from food, Hepatitis B comes from mosquito bites. Now they talk about Hepatitis C, which is more AIDS and the problems that we've seen since the 1980s.

**Ron:** It's autoimmune.

**Barbara:** Right, but ours was identified as Hepatitis B and it was from the beginning. That was before we even talked about C. So Carol Weir – and I had mentioned Carol and Ben Wier that we traveled with that became famous in their own right. Carol is a trained nurse and she probably was instigating also that I needed to go to the hospital, that I couldn't stay there at Schwer. So if Sabat wasn't brought in at the exact beginning, they sent for Sabat. And they sent the message to the village that said, we need Sabat to come and take care of David, and we need David to stay in Schwer and we need Barbara and Bill to go to Tripoli. So – now I'm having a hard time here because David is only six months old, and I'm really sick, but I loved taking care of the baby. And to be told, no Barbara you cannot take the baby to Tripoli, we can't let you take the baby, we've got to leave the baby in Schwer. So... [Barbara feeling emotion].

**Ron:** So Sabat was good, she would take care of him. But you just didn't want to leave him.

**Barbara:** I didn't want to leave him. No, Sabat, she was practically his mother anyway because she was there with him so much while I was at school.

**Ron:** He would be happy with her.

**Barbara:** Oh yeah, he didn't know the difference between her and me and he knew Arabic and English, he could deal in either one. She talked to him in Arabic all the time and I talked to him in English all the time and he responded to all of it. He was born in December, so he was six months old. And so they told me, we can't take David. So they packed Bill and I up and Sabat stayed in the little apartment, which got fixed up enough so it was livable. And Carol and Ben and their little girl – Carol was also pregnant in the midst of this too. But they lived in another apartment up there. They lived in Nabatiya in the winter months just like we lived in Sidon. But when it came time for the summer months, they came to Schwer also, so they were part of the community in Schwer. And so Carol was the supervisor for Sabat and David, and anything that may come up or any problems Carol was there to supervise. So I was comfortable with all that. It's just that I didn't want to leave my baby behind.

So we got to Tripoli either the last week of July or the first week of August. Well now I'm comfortable in Tripoli and I already described to you a lot about the American hospital and the American



Dr. Boyes and his wife and how they had been excited for me when my baby was born and now I'm pregnant again. Oh dear, and now I've got Hepatitis on top of it. Well, then about the second week of August, I began having cramps and I'm pretty much not thinking about anything except just I'm sick. And Bill, the way the hospital was designed, and this too is not the way it would be in America. But the hospital in the private area was not big, but it was as big as this building here. And they were divided into separate rooms, so each person had a room. So I had a room and Bill had a room right beside me. And so Bill would get out of his room and come over and sit on a hard wooden bench in my room all day long while I'm lying... And they wouldn't even let me go to the bathroom. They wouldn't let me walk at all.

**Ron:** You were a lot sicker than he was.

**Barbara:** Yeah, probably because of the pregnancy. And also I think the bites. I got a lot more bites than he did. So it was about the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August, I started having some pains. Well, it turned out I was having labor pains. So the baby was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August. At that time none of us could believe she was six months developed. So how long had I been pregnant that I didn't even know I was pregnant, I didn't even realize it. So I was pregnant about the same time I got the mosquito bites and it all happened at once.

**Ron:** This is the second time that you miscalculated your pregnancy, right?

**Barbara:** Now you're smart enough to know, you can figure out. I don't have periods regularly. So I can go three months without having a period.

**Ron:** You miscalculated.

**Barbara:** All my life.

**Ron:** Was this Joanna? Which daughter was this?

**Barbara:** Oh no, this baby, six months old. Her name is Sally and she died.

**Ron:** Oh, oh. [Ron responds emotionally].

**Barbara:** I was six months along, but at that point there was no place in Tripoli that could take care of a very preemie baby. And one of the things that they said to me was if she had lived, if I had carried that

baby to term, her liver would have been so damaged that she might not have lived say after four years of age. So the tragedy of it was that there was no choice. So the baby was born and she was crying. I expected the baby to be not that far along. So when I heard her crying, I thought, oh no. Well, I was very, very sick and part of the characteristic of Hepatitis is you become kind of numb. Your emotions are low key, very low key. Not high, very low. So my tolerance level was probably about the best it could be under the circumstances. I knew what was going on. I knew what happened. The delivery of course was very easy because she was small, she was about that big. [Barbara holds hands showing four inches]. So the doctor that happened to be on duty early in the morning – it wasn't Dr. Boyes at that point. It was Dr. Samir Sheb. He was trained in Beirut at the American University Medical Center. His dad was a doctor in Sidon and the Sheb family was a big, well-known, old-time Sidon family. And both Samir his brother were doctors, as their father still was. When we were in Sidon Dr. Sheb had still had his office, but we didn't really know the family until after we went to Tripoli and after the baby was born. It was Dr. Samir who delivered the baby. Dr. Samir was our age and he just finished medical school. Bill had just finished seminary and Dr. Samir was working with Dr. Boyes in the hospital in Tripoli. I don't think he was as an intern anymore. He had finished an internship, but at any rate he was a very young doctor.

And so he said, well Barbara, there's no way we can stop this, you're just going to have to go ahead and have this baby. Ok. So he took care of me and took care of Bill and they made a little box for the baby. Bill was with the baby all day, and right then we named her Sally just because I'd always liked that name just out of story books. Well, Mrs. Boyes and Dr. Boyes by then were kind of emotionally involved in our lives, and Mrs. Boyes said we would like to bury your baby with Mrs. Boyes' mother. Mrs. Boyes' mother had come to Lebanon to stay with her daughter and Dr. Boyes. She had lived in Lebanon in their home until she died and they had buried her in a special room underneath the hospital. So they came to us and said, we would like to bury your baby with our mother. So the baby is there, under the hospital in Amina in Tripoli, and still there. Just as an aside, Bill in the last six months of his life, he started talking about this. He never, ever talked about it before, and that's why I know there's a lot of things that he and I just did not talk about. But he said to me, Barbara, is there any way that you could call people in Louisville that are going back and forth to Lebanon now – because there are executive kinds of people that are going – and can they go to Tripoli and see if there's any way that we can identify the baby. Bring the baby back to America. Now he's never said that before. So how deep in his consciousness.

**Ron:** He always carried that with him.

**Barbara:** Always.

**Ron:** But he never talked about it.

**Barbara:** He never, ever said it before.

**Ron:** I think that was the culture of the time, you know, that you often didn't talk about things.

**Barbara:** Well, it was, and Bill was not used to sharing things. He couldn't share with his own mother, his father didn't really understand him very much, and his aunt was too critical of every situation.

**Ron:** So he just learned to keep everything inside.

**Barbara:** Yeah, he had trained himself to keep everything inside for a long time. And that's one of the big articles that I write to myself now on one of these papers is, that Bill and I have got to get together again because there's a lot of things we need to talk about that we never... He didn't talk to me. He may have talked to other people. I think he talked in a counseling kind of way to other people. And he at one point said, Barbara, you need to go talk to some counselors. But I said, I'm not going to do that, I'm not going to share how I feel to anybody else. So I didn't pick up on it. But at any rate, I suspect that Bill did share some of this to somebody else, but not to me, until this time.

So the baby was gone. She lived about 11 hours. And then I, through that weekend, well they thought I was going to die because I lost too much blood. I was too sick as it was. So up in Schwer, there's David. There's a picture of all the people gathered one time on the steps of one of the main building. And one of the other men is holding David. He's in the picture. And they prayed for me all weekend because they thought I was dying. Well, I just turned over, I looked at the wall, I just thought, well, this is kind of interesting. And that was all the thing I felt.

**Ron:** Did you think you were dying?

**Barbara:** Maybe.

**Ron:** Maybe.

**Barbara:** But if I was dying, my reaction was, well, this is interesting.

**Ron:** This is life, yeah.

**Barbara:** Yeah, I wasn't fighting it at all. I was too sick partly. And if you want to read one of the characteristics of Hepatitis, that you can read about later, this is one of the characteristics of Hepatitis, numbing or passiveness or acceptance of life as it is. This is characteristic. So this is what was happening. So from that point on, Bill was right there on the wooden bench again, and he began getting better, really getting better. But I wasn't getting any better. And there's a test that, bilirubin test, and you have to get your bilirubin back up to a certain level before you can be identified as well. So they didn't have the testing equipment at the hospital in Tripoli, but of course the connections with the American University Medical Center were very real, so they kept sending blood tests in to Beirut to see if they could get my bilirubin up to normal. And all these things I had just forgotten until this week and I've been trying to remember all the names.

**Ron:** It's all coming back.

**Barbara:** So mine just wouldn't normalize. It just wouldn't. And Dr. Boyes was just, his one joke was, the life depends on the liver, we got to, you know, have a good strong liver, life depends on a liver, sort of thing. And he was making this joke about a liver. It was my liver. My life depended on my liver and until they could normalize that count they couldn't let me out of the hospital. And they couldn't let me out of the bed. That's why I couldn't walk, even to the bathroom. I couldn't walk, period. Because they didn't think I could use any energy beyond just lying there to get well. Bill and I would sit there and Dr. Boyes didn't believe in playing cards, no. We had always played cards, from the minute we were together we were playing games.

**Ron:** You and Bill did that always.

**Barbara:** Yes, we were doing it and now we've only been married a year and half, but we've already set up the pattern of playing games. Well anyway, so somewhere Bill got a deck of cards, I don't know where, and we told Dr. Boyes that we were playing Flinch. Well, really we were playing double solitaire or rummy, but those were not games that he approved of, but he approved of Flinch, so we just told him we were playing...

**Ron:** Flinch is a kid's game.

**Barbara:** Yeah. So we, and Bill got much better and he could have gone back to Sidon. But he never left. He was well enough to go, but he never left. I, through September, I think they really worried that I

wasn't going to pull out of it. But you know, Bill is a companion all the time, Dr. and Mrs. Boyes were in and out of that room a lot. Mrs. Boyes, she was a very big woman. She actually came to Detroit. Her connection was here and after a series of events in their lives, she ended up at the senior center, the Presbyterian Center in Redford here, and she died here. But at that point she was very active and she had this big set of keys on her waist and she managed the kitchens and she managed the nurses and any kind of a personal problem, Mrs. Boyes was on top of it. And they had quite a number of activities where the nurses would come up to. There was a main kind of a dining room in the Boyes' house and all the nurses would come over and have tea. Mrs. Boyes would serve tea and I was always included in those things while I was waiting for David to be born. So when I came back again and was sick, why they just already knew me, so it was like I was... And you know what? I wasn't in Sterling, I wasn't home with my family, but they were like a family.

And my mom and dad back in America were having a fit, absolute fit. And my mother started to pretend that I'd died, so that she wouldn't even read the letters. Now I didn't know this at the time, but my dad got in contact with Dr. Boyes somehow. I don't know how, whether he wrote a letter, I don't know how, I didn't know, I was too sick. But Dr. Boyes was somehow communicating with the family. So Bill just stayed by me. And the baby was fine, the baby was all right. I'd say, how's the baby, how's the baby? Fine, he's fine, he's all right. So it was two months from the last of July, all of August, all of September. Sometime, probably about the second week of October, I began to get well enough so that the latter part of October, we went back, Bill and I together, we went back to Sidon. And then Bill, I don't know if he'd missed any school or not, Bill's story is a whole different story of course. He was teaching physics and Bible because of his electrical engineering background and that was what they really wanted.

**Ron:** I keep forgetting that, that was he was trained in the science area.

**Barbara:** Oh he has a degree in electrical engineering and he is really good in math and engineering. It's his story to tell, I wouldn't want to get it distracted here. But they didn't want him to quit working in the electrical engineering jobs in Chicago because they said, you've got a great future here. But he wanted to go to seminary. So he used his electrical engineering training in Gerard, that's part of the reason that he was so eligible so quickly to go to Lebanon.

We probably went through Beirut. We were very much connected to the other families who worked and lived in Beirut, the Antablins, the Fishers, they had other responsibilities. Hal Fisher was a professor at Beirut Women's College, similar to what your job is. And Hal and Elaine were especially good friends. They didn't have any children at the time. And so they were especially good friends. And then the other families in Beirut, the Presbyterian headquarters, the Presbyterian main offices were all in

Beirut. So salary jobs and all those kinds of administrative details. And the church, the protestant church was very active in Beirut. The American Girls School was in Beirut and all those people worked through the Presbytery offices in Beirut. But I'm getting off topic.

So we went through Beirut. They probably helped us a little bit to be sure I was well enough and we went back to Sidon. And then I continued teaching and someplace in there Miss. Teagarden figured out that I was especially good in sewing and fabrics. And how I ever got this idea, I don't know, but because the girls really had no opportunity after they finished school – this was the only kind of education they're going to have and part of it is they need to be learning English better. And part of it is that there were no, oh, like Penny's and Target, regular stores to shop in, so most people had their clothes sewed at home and they did have sewing machines. They were not electric machines at all. Have you ever seen machines that you turn with your arm like this? [Barbara makes rotation motion with hand].

**Ron:** I don't think so. A sewing machine? No, I never have. I've seen those that you move with your foot.

**Barbara:** Yes, that's a pedal machine.

**Ron:** Pedal machine, yes.

**Barbara:** Well, in Lebanon very often, in the villages, and I think in east Dearborn, they sew in their garages sometimes. Well, they would get people to sew their clothes. So I loved flat pattern and I was pretty good at it. So I began teaching at the school, teaching the girls how to make a pattern. And so I demonstrated it and I wrote on the board in English – it's just geometry basically and straight lines and curves and how to measure and use inches. And I was pretty good at that. So they were learning English at the same time as they were learning how to make these simple patterns. And then I got the idea of going into Beirut and there's a big interesting bookstore right across the street from the university. And everybody went in and out of the bookstore all the time. I've got books right there on the shelf that I got from the bookstore, and all kinds of stuff. Well, mine were mostly either about Lebanon or cookbooks about food and how you entertain in the Arabic world. But also they had these big pattern books like we see at all the sewing places in America. And of course they would be out of date. So I somehow – I don't know how I did this – I got some of the pattern books that were a little bit out of date, but they had the pictures of the dress finished and so honestly I really don't know how I did this, but the girls all got pictures. If they were learning how to make a simple blouse. They got a picture of the blouse finished out of one of these pattern books. And so they made a notebook and by the end of that term, after I got better,

they were literally having the English written on the board, learned how to make these patterns. And I'll bet you a nickel there are some of those notebooks still in place someplace in Lebanon.

**Ron:** That the girls wrote down in your class.

**Barbara:** Yeah, that they had in the class. It was in notebooks, in notebook form. And I had one that I made up along with the girls. I had it with me until we were packing up to leave Hong Kong and I had to condense things. And I put that copy of that book ... I gave it away, I threw it out and I regret that to this day because I kept that and I loved the idea a lot. And so at any rate, I'm sure that some place, some place up in the village in Miah Miah or one of the other villages, it could be Muslim or Christian... There's not probably any of my little devotionals that I had to do on certain days when they had the devotionals, when the girls meet in the assembly hall. There are probably none of those that have been saved. [chuckling]. This secular little girl here. [Referring to herself]. I really liked working with the girls and I liked teaching at the school. And just between you and me and the gatepost, I could have stayed there forever. I liked living up on the hill, I liked the rural environment, I liked the academic environment, I liked the staff, I liked being able to go into Sidon. I went down in the city, I went down sometimes by myself. You know what the cities were like. If you've been down in Damascus, you go in and it's like a warren.<sup>8</sup>

**Ron:** That's right.

**Barbara:** Well, I was probably a little bit naïve, but I went, I was all right, I was not afraid.

**Ron:** You were perfectly safe.

**Barbara:** I was perfectly safe.

**Ron:** Nobody's going to bother you.

**Barbara:** No.

**Ron:** And there's probably very little crime there because of the culture and the family structure.

---

<sup>8</sup> Barbara is referring to the Hamadiyya souk (market place) in Damascus and an even larger souk in Aleppo. They are covered and have streets. People describe them in terms of underground rabbit tunnels, i.e., warrens.

**Barbara:** Exactly. And there was none of this super-anxiety about terrorism or all of that. That's way later, way after we leave Lebanon. We don't see that. And I went to Beirut sometimes. The car that we go to Beirut from Sidon, if we didn't use the school car you could also get a *service* and that was like a taxi. And maybe you've seen the same thing, where there's a section where the cars all park

**Ron:** Yes.

**Barbara:** And then you just go up into that area if you want to go into Beirut, you go to where they're going to take people to Beirut and you get in the car and when the car is loaded they take off and you go in on this *service* – that's a French word, I think.

**Ron:** Yes, it is.

**Barbara:** And go in. If you want to go to Ras Beirut – that means the head of Beirut – that's out where the university is. So you can get in the car and go and I did that. David and I, I took my baby and I got in the *service* and we went into Beirut.

**Ron:** So would the drivers be saying, Sidon, Sidon, Sidon, Sidon?

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Ron:** So if you were interested in Sidon, you'd go to that car.

**Barbara:** Yes, yes. From Beirut. And if you were in Beirut, you were shopping or you visited with the Fishers for the day or whatever and then it's time to go home and you'd go to this section of the city where, Sid-, Sid-, Sid-, Sid-. They don't say Sidon, it's Sid-. [Barbara pronounces it the Lebanese way, without the final n]. And you go and get in the first car and you go back. And then I'd say I want to go back to Ein Hilweh and they'd take me all the way up to my house, my apartment. And I probably was in really good shape after I got over all the Hepatitis business because I walked up and down the hill a lot. I'd walk up... Well, I'd have a class, I remember a class at 8 or 9 o'clock. Then I had this schedule of giving David bath and a lunch, so I'd walk up the hill, give him a bath. I always did that. Sabat watched, but I always did it. And fed him and took care of him, and then I'd go back down to the school again for a class. So I walked up and down a lot.



Well – oh geez. And I had liked going to Beirut. I liked the excitement of it. The driving was crazy. It's like if you're in Paris. Nobody follows the rules. And you've experienced that.

**Ron:** Of course.

**Barbara:** You know what it's like.

**Ron:** Yes.

**Barbara:** But, I just kind of watched it, you know. I'm just watching it. I'm not threatened by it or not worried about it. I enjoyed it. And I felt very secure and I loved going up in the mountains, I loved going up to Schwer. We went to the beach, I've a bunch of pictures of the family on the beach. The Lebanese don't go to the beach very much themselves, especially the women because they have to be so covered up. Now that's changed to a certain extent. But I'm trying to talk about what I see in Lebanon, the feel of Lebanon apart from current events. You can't help but feel that the people that have lived in Lebanon all their life miss it, and like to be together and talk to one another about Lebanon. And part of the culture is to sit around together and you'll see a lot of Lebanese families in Dearborn who will just get together in the evenings and they just sit around. And the fact is that they're not really talking very much. You don't really have to talk, you just are together. And another thing you learn, as far as the Arabic community is concerned, is that their physical space is much closer than our American culture's physical space.

**Ron:** Yes.

**Barbara:** We tend to keep people farther away.

**Ron:** Yes.

**Barbara:** Arabic instinct is to keep people closer together. And another thing that I really was very aware of in Lebanon was the rapport between the men. The men were in a fellowship of their own. They discipline each other, they go walking on the path together. They walk maybe sometimes three, four, five together, they walk together. They're more connected to each other. Of course, if there are several brothers, they're connected together. The fathers and the sons are connected. And American families you never see normally on the street just two men walking along the street just in a fellowship kind of way normally. You just don't see it, you don't even expect to see it. But if you're in east Dearborn in 1979,

1980, I saw men walking on the street, sometimes not even not on the sidewalk but out on the street because again they're thinking of it in terms of village.

**Ron:** That doesn't exist, that dies off.

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Ron:** I live in that neighborhood I can tell you, they don't do that anymore.

**Barbara:** They don't do that at all.

**Ron:** No.

**Barbara:** I know, because in America...

**Ron:** Which is a shame, it's lost.

**Barbara:** It's lost.

**Ron:** But, it's a good thing.

**Barbara:** It's a very good thing and I worried about that in relation to my own dad because he needed fellowship and I liked the relationships that were more respectful. I felt in America, well, I got married out of college partly because – this is crazy for me to be saying this to you – but from a point, you ask me from a woman's point of view, sometimes it's... I mean and this is not part of the current discussion going on in the culture. It's a responsibility to take care of yourself in a multi-culture where men and women are together all the time. And I felt in Lebanon a kind of security because men were so disciplined that they were not going to make me feel uncomfortable. And I couldn't even say out loud how I felt, but I knew it. And I knew it even then. I knew I liked the rapport between men and women in Lebanon, I knew it. And that's part of the reason that it is really sad as Western culture kind of breaks down some of that when they come to America. And maybe Western culture has a lot to contribute, I'm not saying it doesn't. But I think that some of the things I saw that I liked in Lebanon were a kind of rapport between men and women that was respectful.

We're way off the subject. But we're talking about Lebanon. So I came back to Sidon, I taught school and Miss Teagarden recommended that I go to Beirut College for Women. So the last six months or so I was teaching a class in Beirut at the college too. The fabric sewing.

**Ron:** You were doing both!

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Ron:** In Sidon *and* Beirut.

**Barbara:** And Beirut. And I don't really know how that developed. I know that they were all thinking that I should be ultimately at the Women's College – it's not called that now, but it was then. But in the meantime, we only agreed to go to Lebanon for three years. It was what they called a short term assignment, three years. We got there in September of 1953 and we're due to go home in June of 1956. So the last year, 1955, 1956, Dr. Boyes in Tripoli says, you've got to take care of yourself Barbara. You can't get pregnant again for at least six months after this Hepatitis. Ok. All right, all right. Well, guess what? Six months and one day and I'm pregnant. Man, I... It didn't take long. So that last six months from about 1955, that's when I'm teaching because I remember going to school and taking Arabic bread and cheese to school with me because I was having morning sickness problems while I was teaching and while I was teaching the flat pattern courses. And another thing I wanted to say about the students, you know the girls had to talk to me in English in the classroom, they were expected to. And I made them talk to me in English. But the minute they walked out the door they switched back to Arabic.

**Ron:** Of course.

**Barbara:** That was so frustrating, because when I was teaching in America, just before Bill and I got married, I could learn as much outside the classroom about the girls and what they were interested in by listening. And dog gone it, they would just switch right into Arabic so fast that I never knew what they were saying. And I had a really hard time with discipline at first. Really hard time. In the midst of my own physical problems. I was really healthy in college.

**Ron:** And suddenly you're not.

**Barbara:** I got married, went and got mosquito bites.

**Ron:** We had the same problem in Kenya where it was English medium, but as with you, it was a residential high school. And out of the classroom the kids would speak Swahili or the local language.

**Barbara:** Sure.

**Ron:** So we asked the students, what do you want to do? Should we require you to speak English? They said yes, because they wanted to learn English. But the fact is, they didn't do it and I wasn't willing to enforce that.

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Ron:** And we the teachers talked about it. Should we have a rule? Should there be punishment for using Swahili? You can't do that. It's their language. They have to be able to use it.

**Barbara:** Yes, they'll go around the corner and speak Swahili or whatever anyway.

**Barbara:** Well, and another thing. Bill in the classroom did not have any trouble. He had a firm hand. That was his aunt. His aunt just was such a tough lady and she was a good teacher, she was a math teacher. So she made her students do their job. Well, Bill just absorbed that. He never took an education class, he never had a methods class. But he got in that classroom and he had those students, those young boys, he had them doing what they were supposed to do.

**Ron:** He was in charge and they were the students.

**Barbara:** Exactly.

**Ron:** That worked for them probably.

**Barbara:** And he, you know, when the teacher walks in the room the students all stand. They all do that. They've just been trained forever to do that.

**Ron:** They do that in Kenya also.

**Barbara:** And so there's Bill, he's getting to teach a Bible – he taught Bible all the time too – so he's getting ready to teach and the students all stand up. And I think at first that took him off guard, he was surprised at that. But he had control of those students. He never came home saying, oh I lost control of the class. When I started teaching in Sidon, I was a basket case. I could not make those girls be quiet. I could not get a hold of the classroom and make it as smooth as I wanted it to be. So I'd come home and I remember being in tears. And now that's apart from all my own physical problems. So then I learned. What I'm trying to say is I learned how to do it. So by the third year I had control of that class. And I felt good about it.

So we're up to six months after the Hepatitis and I'm pregnant again, and that's the end of 1955. I'm going through the latter stages of a pregnancy and I'm teaching in the class and I'm used to the people and they're all used to me. And then the baby's supposed to be born on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, so we go to Beirut. Because for next baby, we're not going to Tripoli, and that's another whole story. It's an Armenian hospital over on the other side of Beirut. It's available to all the Americans that live in Beirut. So the baby was supposed to be born on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January but he wasn't born until...

And in the meantime David got sick and he had a bad, bad, bad cold, infection, because I didn't dress him warm enough for the houses that don't have heat in them, because there was no heat, central heating. We had a kind of a heater in the living area, but central heating we did not have and I didn't dress David warm enough. And he got a lung inflammation and he ended up in an emergency getting into hospital with a kind of pneumonia. So he was in the hospital for a week and then Scott was born. And in the meantime David gets better and Mrs. White, Dorothy White, helped so much in that time while David was sick. And it was just because I didn't take, I didn't do the right thing for him. So at any rate, the baby's born and we're living in our apartment and Sabat is there. And then Sabat is taking care of David and then she gets married. She marries a fellow that is from the village, younger than her, and she invites she invites us to come to the wedding and invites David to be there too. So we go to a very humble place where the wedding was to take place. David sits on her lap the whole time and the process is an Orthodox Christian – well, I'm not even sure it's Christian – but it was a very Orthodox plan where she had to change her clothes seven times, walk around circles. It was, as I say, very humble but meaningful for her, and she wanted David there. So we were in Miah Miah, in the village, for that wedding.

## Chapter Five

### Three Setbacks: Tripoli, Beirut, Colorado

**Barbara:** In June of 1956 we completed our three years obligation as short-termers in Lebanon. So we flew back to New York. That's the first time we ever were on an airplane. It was a prop plane, rather dramatic for Bill and me and these two little babies. But at any rate, we get back to America and went to Boulder. We're in Boulder because Bill has applied to get a Master's degree in education administration, thinking he will probably go back to the Middle East and be involved in the administration of a school, maybe even in Aleppo, in Syria. [Note: The Presbyterians ran a very good international school in Aleppo]. Well, we're in Boulder for a year and a half. He finishes his Master's degree in August of 1957. Completes it very, very well, and then in September 1957 we go through another process of a study fellowship, getting ready to go back to Lebanon again. And we go back to Lebanon, leaving New York on the first day of January 1958. We fly to London and Geneva and into Beirut.

We went from Beirut to Tripoli. We've been reassigned to Tripoli rather than Sidon, thinking that that will be a better place to study language. Because now we are on a different kind of a relationship with the Board of Foreign Missions. Arabic is expected. We weren't obligated to study Arabic when we were in Sidon because we were on a short-term assignment. But in Beirut, and then in Tripoli, we started language study. And I learned a lot about language in Tripoli primarily through Najibi Bashir. She was a very kind, matronly kind of person. She was our teacher. We went to her apartment lots of times. And she came to us sometimes too.

She'd planned the lessons based on a structure that she had, a language program. She talked to us in very simple language. She also taught us quite a bit about foods, entertainment, how to entertain. She always had a great big – I can't remember the name of the big container of charcoal. She would have chestnuts roasting on the charcoal in the living room and she would always have some Arabic bread, which we called *khubas*. She would always have *leban*, which is made out of lemon and yogurt, as we would say in America. She was like a second mother in a way. She helped us sometimes when the babies were getting rambunctious and I felt like I just couldn't leave. Well, she would come to us and the babies would be crawling all over my shoulder. This is David and Scott and they're now two years old and four years old. So they were involved all the time that I was trying to study Arabic.

## The Political Crisis of 1958

**Background Note:** On July 14, 1958 14,000 U. S. troops landed in Beirut. Their goal was to stabilize a complex crisis that had emerged in the Lebanese political system. The cause of this crisis was three-dimensional. Cause One was regional. The Egyptian Arab nationalist Gamal Abdul Nasser had orchestrated a unification of Egypt and Syria and was pressing for more countries to adopt his positions or to join the union. There were also Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, perhaps 10% of the total population. Nasser and his allies were very supportive of them and very confrontation towards the militant Jewish regime in Israel. Many Lebanese sympathized with the Palestinians and felt nothing but bitterness towards that regime. Others felt put upon and even threatened by the large number of refugees in their country. Cause Two was domestic, a sectarian dispute over the distribution of power. This pitted entrenched Maronite (Catholic) Christians against dissenting Muslims. Many (but not all) Muslims looked to Syria or Egypt as allies and many (but not all) Christians looked to the West for support. Cause Three was international. The Cold War was in full bloom. The British had created the Baghdad Pact alliance with Iraq and Jordan as key players. Those who shared Nasser's view of a proud, independent, militant Arab people were bitterly opposed to this development, which they saw as neo-colonialism. The personality of Lebanese President Camille Chamoun was situated in the very middle of this situation. He was strongly pro-Western. He refused to break ties with Britain and France after their attack on Egypt during the 1956 Suez Crisis, and had welcomed the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957 that the U.S. would intervene militarily if there were a "communist" threat to a pro-Western Arab regime. Chamoun's pro-Western foreign minister Charles Malik supported these policies. When Chamoun prepared to defy Lebanese tradition and run for re-election, there were demonstrations in the streets, starting in Tripoli where a dissenting journalist had been assassinated. These appeared to be inspired by Egypt and Syria. General Fuad Shihab, commander of the Lebanese military, refused orders from Chamoun to put down the protests. There was a serious face-off between these two prominent Lebanese leaders, both Maronite Christians. On July 14, when the Iraqi army staged a coup and massacred the royal family, also renouncing the Baghdad Pact, President Eisenhower ordered the military to intervene. There was a very tense standoff between U.S. and Lebanese forces but it was resolved without a clash. In the end, U.S. ambassador Murphy assisted with mediation that led President Chamoun to stand aside and allowed General Shihab to become the next President of Lebanon. Charles Thayer, a career foreign service officer, wrote a memoir entitled *Diplomat* (London: Michael Joseph, 1960). He has a chapter on the Lebanon crisis of 1958. Barbara and Bill, who were in Tripoli at the time, are discussed (without being named) on pages 59 and 68.

**Barbara:** We were there about three months when the tension in Tripoli began to get worse. The politics in Tripoli were very sympathetic to Nasser, very sympathetic to the politics of Syria. As the anxiety developed in the downtown area of Tripoli, groups of men gathered together in an angry way. I hesitate to say it was a riot to start with. But the men wanted to influence the area of the hospital. So they came down

the main highway, a whole group of men, the highway that went to the mina, the Harbor. And it came right by our house. So we were warned, be careful, pull your shades down, don't go outside, don't cause any trouble. So we sat in our living room, pulled our shades down, put a card table up and as usual we were playing a game, and we had a coke that we were drinking there in the living room. And then these men came by – we could see it all and they were on their way to the mina. We stayed there for maybe two or three days. Dr. and Mrs. Boyes were at the hospital, and Mr. and Mrs. Decker were living across the street from us. And Mr. and Mrs. Decker were involved at the Boys School in Tripoli, which is where Bill was working part time along with the language study. So the Deckers called us and said, we're going to have to evacuate. We're going to have to leave and we only have a half hour.

And so here we are, we're sitting in the living room, we're staying pretty calm. The boys are taking a nap, it's after lunch, early afternoon. We have a half hour. And the Deckers are going to come and they're going to pick us up, and the Boyes' are coming and we're going to go to a place where we're going to be picked up and we're going to be taken we don't know where. But they think it's not good for the Americans to be there. So I zoom around the apartment. What can I take in 30 minutes? Well, what did I do? I took a bag, a pillow slip, and got all the powdered milk for the two boys and put that in the pillow slip. And I grabbed enough clothes for however long. Nothing matched. I had the boys' pajamas, one would be one color, and one would be another. And all the time Bill is dashing around getting our passports together. We took a few pictures, but not very many. And 30 minutes goes pretty fast. So of course we had to get the boys and when the Deckers got there to pick us up we were taken through an area, which they thought would be safe to get out to the beach.

Now we thought, when we got to the beach on the other side of Tripoli, we were going to get on some sort of a ship. We didn't know what it was, we didn't know what the plan was, but we thought we were probably going to go to Cyprus. So it's getting later in the day and it's getting dark, and we're assuming that the Hannas were coming from the mountains, up the road a bit. Well, the Hannas didn't come. So as you can read in the book that we mentioned here, they decided to just take us on. So we, got in a little kind of a canoe, and by then it's dark. We got in the canoe and they rowed us out to a larger kind of a boat, a fishing boat. We crawled out of the canoe onto the fishing boat. And then from the fishing boat we went out further in the harbor and we got on what was another larger boat. And from there, all of us were supposed to settle down for the night.

Now we had to get the two babies on, they had to get Mrs. Boyes on the larger ship. She's very heavy and overweight. And Dr. Boyes had had the stroke, so it was very, very hard for him. But they got all of us on that boat. How, I don't know. I just was scared the whole time. So then all the folks sat at the top of the boat and they were talking and my job was to take care of the two babies. So I went downstairs at the bottom of the boat where we were spending the night and I settled the boys. So I didn't get in on



any of that conversation and I didn't know what was happening next. But I assumed that we were going to Cyprus. Well, overnight we sailed down the Harbor, down the shore, didn't leave the shore very far and went from Tripoli to Beirut and landed in Beirut. We were not in Cyprus, we were in Beirut.

So they got us off the ship, and we got to what was the mission compound. We stayed at the mission compound. The Hannas came in a different route. They got there and the Hannas also stayed at the mission compound. They had three little boys. So our two little boys and their three little boys played together. And at the same time, the Girls School is beside the mission compound and some of the opposing rebels, as you could call them if you want, opposing people, were on the other side of the mission compound. So part of the time, there were bullets flying over the top of the mission compound. Here we are. So they decided that this was not a safe place to be. So they moved our family. The people that are the administrators for the Presbyterian Mission Board in Beirut are the ones making the key decisions. We're still a young couple, even though we've been in Lebanon now from 1953 to 1958. So at any rate, they move us out to Ras Beirut – Ras means head, the head of Beirut – right across the street from the university. And they move us into some American University apartments, a separate apartment building. And there was an apartment available, so we moved into that apartment building. And Bill started working at an Ecumenical Center, working with Paul Dotson. That's another whole story for Bill.

But for me, I just kept thinking, well, this is interesting. So one of the things that happened there was another couple who also worked at the American University and lived in the apartment building had two little girls. And so their two little girls and our two little boys of course got together. And they were a family from Australia. And that family, her name was Narida Branstetter, and they worked at the hospital. He was a doctor. And Narida and I became good friends, our paths have crossed many times since then. In Hong Kong, in California, in Colorado, Narida and her husband. She then had two more children and I had two more children. So at any rate, Narida, our Australian friend always is part of our story. And they are trying to adjust in tension in Beirut and they're managing as long as – we learn – as long as we stay in that part of Beirut, we're all right. Well, that lasted maybe, I don't know how long. Maybe four weeks. And the tension in Beirut got worse. And the groups were, I think they were actually becoming more radical. Where I hesitated to call it riots in Tripoli, it was taking on more of a riot attitude in Beirut.

### **Evacuation to Jerusalem and Back to Beirut**

So they decided that we shouldn't be in Beirut anymore. So we were told we were going to go to Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup> So we got in the airplane and they laughed about this, because Jerusalem is farther away from water, the Mediterranean Ocean, farther away from quick escape than Beirut is. So we all questioned

---

<sup>9</sup> This was East Jerusalem which until 1967 was under Jordanian control.

whether this was the right thing to do. But at any rate there was a conference of some kind that was going on in Jerusalem and we – our family and the Weir family... By then the Weirs were in Beirut from Nabati and they were among those who actually went to Jerusalem. There were other people, one family that had come from Damascus and worked in Syria was in Beirut at that point. So they also came to Jerusalem.

And the tension in Beirut, I'm trying to remember the sequence. I think we had actually gone to Jerusalem before the Americans landed on the shore, before the Americans' military landed on the shore in Beirut. And in Jerusalem, my husband attended a conference. He was busy with people all the time. And we stayed in a *pension*, where we had our two boys and we were not very far from no man's land. That's a division between one side of Jerusalem, which is not Israel, it's actually Jordan, and the Israeli side of that no man's land. So some people really, really didn't understand how serious it was – don't get into that no man's land. Young people don't take it seriously. Young Americans are a little bit naïve. And there was one young man that got into the no man's land and he got into a whole lot of trouble.

Well, at any rate, we were in Jerusalem for about three weeks. I have pictures of us in Jerusalem.

And I really appreciated the time there. We did some sightseeing, we ate the food that was available. We simply survived one way or another for those few weeks in Jerusalem. And then they decided the conference was over, things had calmed down in



Beirut. Still we were thinking we might end up in Cyprus. But we went back to Beirut again. And then from Beirut, we went up into Schwer and we were there in Schwer for about two months. The summer area, which had been just built in the previous time that we lived in Lebanon, was all available. so the Weirs and we and the family, the Davenports from Syria, we all went to Schwer. And we just, as Americans, stayed out of the way, stayed in the background. That may be the time when Bill visited with Mallik, when he went out walking on the road. Again, that's Bill's story.

But we did some shopping in Beirut. There were big huge books of paintings that were in a big bookstore across the street from the university and the bookstore I mentioned before. So both of us went down to the big bookstore one time. Going down means going from Schwer down to Beirut, which is an hour's drive. And we went to the bookstore, we went upstairs and opened up these huge books and we got these glorious paintings that were done in the 1800s, before there were cameras that could take all kinds of landscape pictures. They were authentic Roberts' prints, and on the wall now we have two of them. We had another and I have a whole book of information about the Roberts' prints. And I think that if those prints were taken to DuMouchelles [an antiques evaluation business], I think they're worth quite a lot of money now. But we just got them out of those big books, and we had them framed in Beirut. So that's the original framing in Beirut. But we got them, we could just pull them out of these great big books.

**Ron:** Roberts was an Englishman who drew these paintings.

**Barbara:** Right, Roberts is an English painter, and he painted lots of books so each of us got some. But Bill's aunt also has at least one or two and there may be a third one in the family that we have now.

**Ron:** Did he draw those in the 1700s? I can't remember. I'll check.<sup>10</sup>



**Barbara:** Ok, well at any rate, those pictures were important. We took them back up to Schwer. And it was part of our souvenir of the summer of 1958. In October, after this summer, this goes from May to October, between the mission compound, the faculty apartments, Jerusalem, Schwer, we were in Schwer until October. And then they said it's safe enough to go back to Tripoli. So then we went back to Tripoli in October of 1958, and essentially settled in. At first we had a welcome with the [Lebanese] Christian church. The Christian community in Tripoli was very active. The minister and his wife were very, very helpful for us, along with Najibi Bashir, our Arabic teacher. The church included us in lots of activities, and Bill worked with the young people. I have

---

<sup>10</sup> David Roberts was a *Scots* painter (not English) born near Edinburgh. He went to the Middle East in 1838 and 1839 and returned with drawings of the area. These were produced in magnificent folio collections. The ones shown are the ones Barbara bought, but they were downloaded from the internet.

all kinds of photographs here of Bill with the young people in Tripoli at the church. And then there were visits to go to the cedars with the students because the cedars were here in Tripoli. That was an easy trip. [Note: The cedars of Lebanon are very famous]. There were all kinds of welcoming activities for Americans to come back to Tripoli. The whole community was glad to see that tensions had become much less and that it was safe for the Americans to come back.

Well, so then I decided I should have some kind of an open house. So this must have been the latter part of October or the first of November. I don't know for sure, but at some time in that three months or so at the beginning of the time that we were there, I had this open house. And so I invited all the people from the church. And I invited them from, I guess maybe it was like from 2:00 to 5:00. Well, now we had a nice sized apartment. It was a big central room, a big nice front room, a dining room and all in the center of the apartment and then plenty of space for a good-sized kitchen. Well, so people came a little bit at the first of that afternoon, and they came all dressed up. They had their furs on – oh my goodness. And they were all a Christian community. This is a Christian Arab community. And so then about the middle of this three hour open house, everybody came. And the apartment was jammed with people and I was horrified. There was enough food for everybody because we had planned food, but we didn't plan for it to all be in the middle. So the rooms were jammed and oh, I thought never, ever again I'm going to do that. And I never ever did that again.

**Ron:** This is Arab culture though. If something starts at 1:00, you know that it doesn't start until 2:00.

**Barbara:** It's a mess. Well, we said 2:00, and it started at 3:00. And everybody came, and I know it was a celebration of the fact that the Americans were back. Now I didn't sense that quite so much then as I would sense it now. But at any rate, we were definitely welcomed back. And there's another little story that goes with that. When we came back to Tripoli, we came to our apartment. Now the apartment was out there on the main road from downtown Tripoli out to the mina and the door to our apartment was wired shut, absolutely wired. And the Deckers were with us. So we unwired the door, we got into the apartment, and in the living room was the card table with the coke bottle still sitting on it. We'd been gone from May to October. And there's been nobody living in our apartment that wasn't supposed to be.

**Ron:** They just sealed the room.

**Barbara:** They sealed it. And who sealed the room. Up above, upstairs was the Palestinian family. The Palestinian family, they had enough money so they didn't feel like they needed to be in a refugee camp. But they were in Tripoli. So they, it was the whole family, there were daughters, sons, family members,

and they themselves took the responsibility to wire up our apartment and take care of it. So, of course, we were very grateful for that. That was the Palestinian connection.

And another thing happened, which we heard about later. The people on the second floor right above us were a Muslim family. He was a doctor, with his own clinic just across the street from our apartment building. And the Muslim family of course were very connected to the rebels that were connected to Syria and were supporting Nasser. Well, one time there were a whole group of people supporting this opposition who came to the back of our apartment. In the back of our apartment was an orange grove. And so they were on the back of the apartment and they were ready to come into our apartment. And the doctor stood there, he was up above and he said, "you leave that apartment alone. That apartment is an American apartment, they're here for good reason, you leave that apartment alone." So they went away. So between those two stories that we heard about, our apartment was not vandalized in any way. So between that and then this open house that I put together, we settled down in Tripoli.

So here we are. It's Christmas time. I can't remember much, except going to language study. We picked it up again, Najibi was right there to help us. And we learned quite a bit of Arabic at that point. She carried on conversation with us, she gave us a lot of grammar too. But then we were supposed to work with a tape recorder, repeating Arabic language in the afternoons. Bill was real good at that and Bill could pick up the music of the sound of Arabic and he could pronounce Arabic a thousand times better than I could. But the trick was that I could understand it faster than he could. So lots of times we learned that I would interpret and he would talk. So we got along.

At any rate, then we were expecting another baby and so Joanna was born in 1960 during the period that we're in Tripoli and we were in language study. And Carol Weir helped a lot to be sure that I got through that pregnancy safely. And then in 1961, I'm sure that Bill was beginning to get restless because he could see that the Americans should not or foreigners should not take over the administration of the buildings, of the schools, even though he might have been the one to follow through with Mr. Decker who was at the Boys School because he now met his education administration degree. But at any rate, in January of 1961, Joanna was five months old and I realized I was pregnant again. That was a shock. At any rate, the pregnancy went along, it took care of itself. I just had to do what I had to do.

And so then about April Bill was invited to go to American University in Beirut as the Dean of Students, which meant we would leave Tripoli and move into Beirut. Well, if we were going to do that, we had been in the States with the family in 1957. We had had quite a dramatic time in 1958, 1959, 1960. And here it is 1961. And so it turned out that we chose to go home and the Board paid the way. So we went back to the States from April, about Easter time until the first of July. We were there just visiting family, nothing more than that. And then we came back to Beirut in July of 1961.

Now all this time this fourth baby is coming along and I know the difficulty with pregnancy. So we got to Beirut and again whatever tension was going on in the background lots of discussion going on among different people and different villages, but nobody was really shooting at each other like they did later. But of course by 1961, Israel has been, since 1948, so we've got 13 years added on as far as anger is concerned. But we moved into the faculty apartment building, a different building this time but we were somewhat familiar with the system because we had been there before we went to Jerusalem. Not in the same building, but in the same community. So we were in a lovely building right on the Cornish, which is the drive along the highway. So we had an apartment there. And we moved about the first of August. And this baby is due in about three weeks.

So we've come back to Lebanon. We've figured out how to get moved out of Tripoli into Beirut, into this new apartment. And we have to get settled enough so that I can go to the hospital to have this fourth baby. Now what's happening politically, only the Lord knows. Having a baby was all that was happening to me. Bill started working at the university. He really loved the job and he would have been happy there forever. We were quickly settled. Of course, with a new baby that means all kinds of challenges at home. But Bill was very interested in all the different kinds of students that came from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Egypt, from everywhere to come to the university.

I think I have the first year book that was put together, Bill put that together. That's why Bill and I need another conversation. A long one, because he was working real hard to get settled and to become part of the faculty administration community while I was working real hard trying to settle four children, with a new baby and a little girl who couldn't even walk yet when we got there.

So at any rate, we came up to 1961, 1962, 1963 and then well, the political situation must have had something to do with it. They had hired a new man to be the president of the university. And the president brought his buddy from UNRWA with him and asked his buddy to be the Dean of Students. Now it was purely political. So Bill was given the option of teaching physics or – I don't know if they ever said teach Bible. But he could have gone back to teach physics and be on the faculty and be there. There was no question of whether he could or not. But he was really, really disappointed that they had moved this other fellow into the Dean of Students Office.

### **The Move to Boulder**

And so I thought, ten years overseas, we've got these four children, maybe it's time to go back to the States. Let's don't argue with this anymore. By then, I had been invited to teach at the Beirut College for Women and I was teaching a class there, along with trying to manage all of this, which was a strain and I got sick. And me getting sick and Bill being, suggested that he be in another place on the campus, I think the two of us together just decided enough is enough. So that's why we finally decided that it was a

good time to leave Lebanon. Well, not everybody thought that that was the thing we should do, but we did it. So then as it turned out, Bill had been at a Presbyterian church in Boulder while he was working on his Masters degree and we had been active in the young adult group. We knew a lot of the people in the church. They needed a new associate minister so Bill was hired to take that job sight unseen. They hired a new senior minister and then Bill and the two of them didn't know each other at all. But we came back to the States and Bill went to the job in Boulder. And that's the end of 1963 and our experience in Lebanon.

**Ron:** So after that you went to....

**Barbara:** Well, we came to Boulder, settled in a church home in Boulder, up on a hill in Boulder, which is where I always wanted to live and as far as I was concerned I would have stayed there forever. So the children got involved with activities at the church. Andrea's two by then, Joanna's three, the two boys are that much older, five and seven. So the church activities for us as a family were fulfilling and also the children had a chance to see grandparents and aunts and uncles and so there was a lot of family activity during those two years. And we were all ready to do that for the rest of our lives.

But we were in Boulder and this is 1963, 1964, 1965 when the political tensions in America were getting worse and worse and worse. And we were in a college town. A college town, Boulder, Ann Arbor, Berkeley, all the same thing, just all over the place. And we were a little bit naïve about the tensions in the United States during that period of time because we'd been gone for ten years. But at any rate, Bill represented a newer, younger thinking group. I'm talking a little bit prejudiced at this point, but...

**Ron:** You're allowed to do that.

**Barbara:** The other new minister that was hired was much more conservative than Bill. And to tell my story apart from Bill, my story is that at the church Bill began to feel uncomfortable in the situation. And as it turned out, the other minister also felt very uncomfortable. And they probably would never have ever chosen to work together. He was far more conservative than Bill. I think he heard that Bill was a missionary and reached conclusions about that.

**Ron:** He had a different understanding of what a missionary was.

**Barbara:** Yes. And at one point, just one example, they had quite a large Mexican community living in Boulder. And there was a group of people that would like to have some of the Mexican children using the nursery facilities when the church people were not there, like during the week. Well, the people at the

church got very uneasy about that because they felt that the equipment at the church would be damaged if any Mexican children came into the church, and so the Mexican children were not welcome. And so more and more people either wanted to help the Mexican children to make it available or not. And that was only one sample of all kinds of little things that started to develop through the church.

And to make the two-years-long story short, both men were asked to leave because there was too much tension. And there's now in Boulder the St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church and it evolved with all the people that supported Bill. And it's still there. It's a very, very active church and it evolved around the people that felt that Bill had been totally treated as a scapegoat for that situation. Well, I myself was hurt in the first place because I wanted to stay in Boulder and I had lived in Boulder off and on with my aunts, grandmothers and so on. So Boulder was a home to go home to.

**Ron:** You knew that town very well.

**Barbara:** I knew it, and I felt that if the head minister had just had one conversation and said, let's think over these problems, let's talk about this, let's settle it now. He didn't. He made it worse, he kept saying, Bill is causing a problem, Bill is causing a problem. And a lot of people knew that it was much more than just one person. So Bill, he accepted all of that. He wasn't as committed to the town as I was. And so he began taking a short term course at the university after there was no more job left in the church. And then he went to California to start the program for another degree, which I'll have to think about it for a minute to tell you. The Science of Theology, the degree he got, San Francisco Seminary.

**Ron:** The San Francisco Seminary, yes. A very well-known seminary.

**Barbara:** Yes, he went to the seminary for the summer after this job thing just came to pieces. So what are we going to do for a job? Well, I said... Let me say this, he was interviewed at other jobs in the Presbytery, but I felt it would kill Bill to be a small town pastor in a small church, which would have been a church near Sterling in the Boulder Presbytery. And he was interviewed and we went and he was hired at one of the churches in the Presbytery. But I really felt that was wrong for Bill. Sure, it was close to Sterling, it was close to home, but I just didn't think it was right for Bill.

**Ron:** This was more than just those personal considerations.

**Barbara:** That's right. I really thought Bill had far more strength, he had far more interest in the international community. He was so excited in Beirut by the variety of people that he was working with. This was not right. And of course locally people didn't know that about him, but I knew it. And so then I



got this idea, I said, why don't we call New York board offices and see if there's a job that Bill would be more appropriately fit into. So we called New York, and they must have called us back in 20 minutes, I don't know, it didn't take very long. And they said, what would you like to do? Would you like to go to Hong Kong? Would you like to go to Iran? Well, Bill was really excited by the idea of going to Hong Kong. And I knew that that was going to be the right thing for him.

Now for me, I had to do a whole lot of growing up. I was kind of a broken-hearted young woman at that point. What am I, I've got four little kids, I'm in Boulder, I don't want to go away again, but I know that an international community is a place for Bill and I know I can do it. It's not that I can't do it, because I already had done it. I've gotten ten years behind me in Lebanon. And Lebanon and Hong Kong, it's very interesting that a lot of people had been in Hong Kong before they came to Lebanon to come to the university or do national jobs in Lebanon. So there was contact and I knew, well, from Lebanon to Hong Kong would be the same kind of connection.

So when they offered the job at the Student Center needed a leader, they needed a person to participate in the activities at the Y, this would be a job paid for half by the Presbyterian Board and half by the YMCA. So he thought, he was happy with that. He was happy. And he let go of the conflict in Boulder as a pastor who is trained to speak truth to power. He functioned in that context, with his background in seminary and his own personality. So he could let go of the conflict in Boulder without a lot of personal anxiety. But for me, I had a hard time. I was very angry. I was angry because I felt that the other minister in the situation did not handle it correctly. I felt that a lot of people's feelings were really hurt. People were dropping out of the church all over the place – that's why the other church was created. Those were people that had been friends of ours. We had done all kinds of things together during those two years, plus in the previous time that we were there. So I was angry.

Well, ok. I did what I had to do. We got ourselves packed up, we said goodbye to Boulder. We left about 17<sup>th</sup> of December. I've got pictures. My dad was so upset, everybody was upset because we were leaving again. But I just didn't see any other choice. And I don't know, nowadays women can go one way and men can go another way and families can maybe stay together or not. But I wanted my children to be with their father and I was adamant that they be with their father. So what happens, you know, you just take it a day at a time.

So we got to California. We took this sofa because it was brand new. (Barbara points to sofa)

**Ron:** Oh this one, this sofa right there.

**Barbara:** We bought this sofa in Boulder when we were settling down in Boulder. It's a really good sofa. And so in the midst of



packing to leave, it's not easy, and now you've got four kids and you've got an emotional wife. So we took all this stuff to California. Well, Bill decided that this is totally ridiculous. We did take some dressers to Hong Kong, but he said, we're not going to take that sofa. So he made arrangements in San Francisco to send that sofa back to my mother. So this sofa did not go on to Hong Kong. And my mother had the sofa for about ten years while we were tooting around. At any rate, he kept his head on his shoulders. Not me, but he did. So we had a nice time in San Francisco and I've got pictures of us all getting ready to leave San Francisco, and then we flew to Hong Kong. We flew through Hawaii, through Tokyo and we arrived in Hong Kong on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, two days before Christmas. But that's another whole story.

## Chapter Six

### Life in Hong Kong and a Crushing Defeat. Starting Over

**Barbara:** Before we talk about Hong Kong, I want to talk about the importance of the Dotson family in our lives, and I need to back up a bit in order to start that. When we came back to Lebanon from America in 1958, the Dotsons were there. They had not been there before. They had come to Lebanon in 1957, from the Philippines. He had been a 4-F, so he had never been in the military. [Note: 4-F means not qualified for physical or similar reasons]. They came to Lebanon with their four children. And he was assigned the job of being the director of the Student Center in Beirut. But he was not a very good bookkeeper. So as it turned out, he and Bill clicked just right away when we got there in January 1958. The student center was located not very far from the faculty apartments in Ras Beirut and Paul was connected to the American University of Beirut (AUB) through the student work. And he needed somebody to help with the bookkeeping. Jean, Paul's wife, and the four children lived in an apartment in the same building as the student center. Jean was a very sharp lady – she still is. So she and I made good friends. I only had the two children, she had the four. She had her two girls first and I had my two boys. But at any rate, Paul asked Bill if he would come to the student center and help with the bookkeeping.

So that was what we did in that delay between moving from the mission compound before we went to Jerusalem. Bill learned a little bit about the student center. He helped with the bookkeeping. Paul really needed help. And they made us feel welcome in Beirut, because of course we were not in Tripoli and we were not in Sidon. They were also very much connected to what was going on with the life of the Weirs, Ben Weir and family, and also with the life of the Antablin family. Those personalities were important. We were all about the same age, Bill and I being a bit younger. But all part of the community, as it turned out, in Beirut.

So then we took off and we went on to Jerusalem. I don't think the Dotsons went to Jerusalem with us. I don't remember them being there. But they certainly were involved in Ras Beirut. And then after that, we went back to Tripoli and we were in Tripoli until 1961. Bill was very much interested in what was going on in Beirut as a result of our having been there a short period of time. And Paul knew that there was this opening at the university for the student dean. And so Paul made a contact with Archie Crawford, that I showed you pictures of, and Paul recommended that Bill be the student dean. So Bill was contacted in Tripoli and invited to come to the university. And that was very exciting for Bill. And it all happened because of the connection with Paul. So that stimulated us to decide to leave Tripoli. We had to rearrange our lives a little bit and of course I discovered I was pregnant again and that's part of the story I've already told. But I didn't mention the Dotsons earlier and I felt guilty because they were an important

part of what happened. And why we decided ... we took a break and we came to America for three months. We went back to Lebanon in 1961. We got back to Lebanon by the middle of July and we moved into the faculty apartments at the university. And I've already told you about the fact that we moved in and three weeks later we had the baby, the fourth baby. And all that was happening at the same time.

And as I reflect on this now and I've thought about it in this last few days, I really know that Bill probably would have been vulnerable for being either kidnapped or shot or something as developments came in the political situation. There's one other professor that was in the agriculture department who was kidnapped. I think he was there for four years before he got out. And then of course Ben Weir was kidnapped as another leader in the American community. The key to it is the conflict with American foreign policy and picking out leaders. And then of course the president of AUB himself was shot and that's another whole story. And right now I can't remember his name...

**Ron:** Malcolm Kerr.<sup>11</sup>

**Barbara:** Malcolm Kerr. We're talking about what might have happened

**Ron:** Had you stayed.

**Barbara:** Had Bill been there.

**Ron:** He would have been kidnapped, definitely.

**Barbara:** He was in a position where that might have happened. And sometimes I really honestly never thought it through to that point. All I know is that we were very aware of what was happening in Lebanon but we were not there. And we had another challenge. We had a challenge in Colorado, which I've mentioned, and in Hong Kong we ran into a really bad challenge there. So Bill never was kidnapped, and he was never shot, but many, many times I told myself, uh oh, what he's going to say next is going to make somebody mad and he might get shot. So I've always, always been aware. And he always says truth to power. And so, all right, this is his choice, this is his life. And part of Barbara growing up as a young

---

<sup>11</sup> Malcolm Kerr was a noted professor of political science at UCLA. He wrote a definitive book called *The Arab Cold War: 'Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958-1970*. (Oxford University Press, 1971). He became the President of the American University of Beirut at a very troubled time, during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Against the advice of others, he decided that to lead the university he had to live in Beirut. Showing up early at his office, before others had arrived, he was assassinated. This corresponded to a wave of kidnappings of Western people, many being Americans. Ann Kerr wrote a memoir of their experience. *Come With Me From Lebanon: An American Family Odyssey* (Syracuse University Press, 1984).

adult is to accept who he is, because it was not easy sometimes. And yet he was so irresistible. He was a handsome man, he's a smart man, and he paid all the bills. He made sure he came home. And so, as far as I was concerned, I really respected Bill and who Bill was. So I guess that doesn't all need to be on tape, but the connection with the Dotsons was important and it's going to be important again when I continue this story a little further because their lives intertwined with ours up to now actually.

**Ron:** Let me just say that I thought about this after I got to know you. If you were still in Lebanon, Bill would have definitely been kidnapped. There's no doubt about it. I was aware of this.

**Barbara:** You thought about it.

**Ron:** I did. But you were out by 1963. And these kidnappings didn't start until 1982. So there was no danger at the time you were there was there.

**Barbara:** Well...

**Ron:** Unless you got caught in the middle of a shoot-out.

**Barbara:** Unless we crossed the green line, which was at the middle of the city. [Note: This divided Christian East Beirut from Muslim West Beirut]. But the emotion was there, the sentiment was there. And that's what I was trying to tell you before. There were gunshots because that's why we left the mission compound. Because the guns were crossing over and the girls school was on one side of the compound and those guns were shooting across the compound, that's why we ended up in Ras Beirut.

All right, all these things are, we're all a little bit young and we're all learning what's going on at the same time. Bill and I didn't know anything about the Middle East until we went to the first study fellowship. So it's just coming at us all the time one way or another. At any rate, I'm going to skip now. I'm trying to get us through the Boulder experience. And we left Boulder on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December in 1965. We went by airplane to San Francisco and that's when we had the sofas and all the furniture with us. And then Bill decided this is ridiculous and he sent the sofa back, which was fine with me. So we got into Hong Kong on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December in 1965.

We were moved into an apartment that was available in Kowloon. Kowloon is the main city across from the harbor. Victoria is the island off of the mainland and when they talk about Hong Kong, they're really usually talking about Victoria, the island. But Kowloon is the city on the mainland, and it's the city that is part of mainland China. Originally, there wasn't a border. So the geography of that, a lot

of people don't really realize. But we were in Kowloon, and Kowloon was where the Christian Family Service Center was and the student center that Bill was to be responsible for. He was the director with another fellow. I have a lot of pictures of Bill as the director. Bill was paid half by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions and half by the International YMCA. And there was big YMCA building that's right there, part of the student center. They are together and they're right on a main road in Kowloon.

So Bill was happy to be there, he liked the job. He was connecting to the university people, the refugee colleges from the mainland. And what happened, when the communists took over the mainland,<sup>12</sup> a lot of the professors and leaders from the main universities in Beijing and other parts of China all came out to Hong Kong, so they created refugee university situations in Hong Kong. Chung Chi was the location of one of the main colleges. Other of our colleagues, the Pomerenkis, Frank Wu, other people worked at Chung Chi, as well as being administrators in the mission program in Hong Kong. So because the student center was in Kowloon it was logical for us to live nearby. (And also there's King George V High School, called KGV, and Kowloon Junior School, the elementary school. Both were co-educational.

Our children were all enrolled in those schools actually before we left America. That was part of the reason that they had us come at Christmas time, because they wanted to be sure to get the children into school and they were afraid they might not be admitted because there wouldn't be any places. But there was a place for everybody but Scott. Scott didn't get in until later. But at any rate, that's the key reason that we went at that time of year.

As we got settled, I had a hard time with that. I had a hard time letting go of the problems in the church in Boulder and took a while to settle in to what was happening. And I was so grateful for the four children, because I had to be on my feet for those four children. And I had to have uniforms ready for them, they all had to be properly dressed every day for school and we had to go to the tailors and the shops to buy their clothes. I had to figure out meals, I had to figure out where to go to the store. We had help that came, Chinese ladies came to help, so I had help at home. And for that I stayed on my feet only barely. And then, I decided I needed to go to the doctor and get some help. And the doctor said, I don't think you're going to make it in Hong Kong, you're going to have to go back to America. And I thought to myself, we can't go back to America. We can't afford to do that. And there my husband is. He's getting along fine at the student center, he's doing really well. He's getting acquainted with everybody and he's doing well and I'm thinking, I've got to do something with myself.

At the same time the Church World Service community was trying to help the refugees that came from the mainland. There were so many refugees that they were building the refugee centers in one area outside the main part of Kowloon -- I can't remember the names right this minute -- outside the city. And

---

<sup>12</sup> In 1949 when the communists under Mao Tse-Tung emerged victorious over Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalists, the Nationalist government moved to Taiwan. Probably 600,000 soldiers joined that exodus and over a million civilians. Hundreds of thousands fled into British Hong Kong.

at that point, they didn't have very much food for the refugees that were coming. And the food was not very nutritious and nobody knew what to do. And there were too many people coming in from the mainland and they were living on the hillsides until they got these huge refugee resettlement buildings built. So Church World Service said, we've got to do something about this. So I knew the director of the Church World Service in Hong Kong. Our kids were all the same age, and we were acquainted with them and they knew that I was involved with food and that I knew something about it. So they said, would you like to come to a committee meeting when we're talking about the refugee situation and would you like to make some suggestions. And so I said yes. I went first to an initial meeting with the people that were planning services for the refugees and I listened to what they were saying. There was not very much information from any place that anybody knew and they needed more protein, they needed more fruits and vegetables, they needed to have sources for those various items. And so they said, well, Barbara, what could you do about it? So then I decided, ok, I said if I have a group of people maybe we could make up a separate committee and maybe we could train the social workers that are coming from Church World Service, we could teach the social workers some more so that they know what to do for the refugees.

So the Church World Service committee said, go for it. So then I got together a committee of nine people. I had one Chinese doctor, I had nurses, well they're nurses but also nuns, one or two nuns. I can't remember who else. But anyway there were nine people that would love to work on that committee to plan menus for the refugees. So we got together and it was a sub-committee of the Church World Service and it met routinely. We sat down and we figured out all kinds of suggestions and we figured out what would be very good and very cheap and very accessible to all these, the refugees that were coming. And Church World Service committee people supported this 100%.

So as it turned out, we decided that we would have a conference, we would invite all the social workers and we would have demonstrations. Now I have a video of the main time that we did this and we had bulletin boards all set up with the information and the social workers. It turned out that the social workers all came to this particular training program and even the taxi drivers came in to watch what was going on. And it got bigger than I ever imagined. So we actually put together quite a bit of information and we figured out how to make it simple so the social workers had handouts to take to the various refugee centers. And it made a difference. And I was continuing with the committee meetings to the moment we left Hong Kong. We'd been involved with the food study program for three years by then and I knew that other people could take it over. The nuns from Maryknoll were very, very supportive and they could have taken over. In fact they did, they took over when we left. So the food study committee went on for some length of time.

It was to me a saving grace, because I got involved first with a really interesting group of people, not just the families of the children. We got involved with the families of the children too, but as a

separate activity that was my own, that was better than going back to America, taking a lot of medicine or anything else. It was absolutely the right thing.

**Ron:** In a sense, it was therapy.



The family in Hong Kong

**Barbara:** It was the right thing to do and it needed to be done. And the excitement of learning to live in Hong Kong finally got through to me so that I was quite comfortable as it turned out. The director of Church World Service at that point was Paul Webb, and his wife Irma, and they had four children. Paul and Irma were friends, kind of like Paul and Jean Dotson. They were anchor people at that point. They had three boys and one girl, and their boys were especially good friends with Scott. And when we first had our problems, when we left Hong Kong, probably it would have been a good idea if Scott had stayed with the Webbs at least for the rest of the year until he finished school. Well, KGV, King George V, was the high school and it was a British school. And they were in forms. [Note: This is a British term for high school grades]. They had all the system of the British school system. And Scott and David both thrived in Hong Kong. They did very, very well in school. Scott is the more academic of the two, but they were very



involved in activities that were patterned after what happens in England and a lot of the teachers are from the England. The professor, the principal was from England. And they were people that came to Hong Kong on – like you and Jane when you worked in Kenya, they came to Hong Kong to work for any length of time and then they would go back to England.

And then a lot of the students were people that were children of the other families that were there. A lot of business families are there. All the embassy people, their families were there. And it wasn't long before they really needed an American high school, so then the American high school was created. Well, that affected us only the last year. David finished his forms at KGV, King George V school, and so he was enrolled to go to Hong Kong International School for his last year. So he went his, actually his senior year to Hong Kong International School which was fine, that part was fine. He had to get on the ferry every day and he had to cross the island. I don't think he went up and down, he went around the island, because the school was on the other side of the island.

But in Hong Kong along with these activities that I got involved in, of course, the Vietnam war was getting worse and worse. And so there are more and more of our boys coming from Vietnam to Hong Kong and then some of them coming to the student center. They would come to the student center and there were a lot of books to read, so they could read. And they also shared with Bill what was going on, so Bill was very much more informed about some of the activity in Vietnam than some of the other mission activity people were. But at any rate, there were a lot of, there were Congregational church, Methodist church folks. The Webb family were Methodists. We all knew what was going on in Vietnam, but Bill was probably closer to it. And we all went to the Kowloon Union church – I hadn't even thought about that. And these various same families that were various different denominations went to church together. It was what you would call a Protestant community. There was a Lutheran church and a very active Lutheran community and another one of the friends, which I still communicate with all the time was Lutheran. But the rest of us were more involved in this Union church.

So none of them – let me say this. They knew enough about what was going on and they did not agree with the fighting in Vietnam. And it got to the point where there were demonstrations at the embassy. Not the embassy, it's a consulate. It was not an embassy in Hong Kong, there's a consulate in Hong Kong.<sup>13</sup> So there were demonstrations. Demonstrating in Hong Kong among the American community was part of a support of what was going on in America, [Note: There were large anti-war demonstrations in America at the time, some violent] but not with the violence of some, which I've seen

---

<sup>13</sup> Until 1999, Hong Kong was a Chinese city on long term lease to Britain. This colonial arrangement dated back to the 1800s. The British had a Governor General there. The U.S. diplomatic mission was called the Consul General. To call it an Embassy would have meant the U.S. was viewing Hong Kong as an independent entity. This would have violated America's One China policy, that China was one country but until 1971 we did not recognize the government in Beijing as legitimate.

on TV since. It was not as – I don't know how to say it, but anyway – the violence wasn't there but the concern was there. And the consciousness of what was going on.

**Ron:** These were demonstrations by Americans.

**Barbara:** Yeah.

**Ron:** Were there also demonstrations by Chinese?

**Barbara:** No, I don't think so. This is all American. Now I don't know for sure, but I don't think so. I know the soldiers that came from Vietnam, that were American soldiers that were on R&R [Note: Rest and Recreation leave] were very much involved. I know at one point, and I probably shouldn't have known this, but Bill had a whole bunch of information that was coming out about the Vietnam situation in the back of his car – our car. And at one point he decided that he better not have that in the back of his car, so he put it someplace else, he got rid of it. But coming in and out of the student center, he was vulnerable. And at one point, he with two or three other people, went to the Pan Am building downtown and they got together a coffin. And they carried the coffin into the lounge, the center area of the Pan Am building. And what they were doing was pointing out to the media that Pan Am was making a lot of money shipping bodies back to America.

**Ron:** Oh my.

**Barbara:** So Bill definitely, he was there, he wanted to do that, he was part of it and he came home and, of course, and he told me what was going on, so I knew everything that was going on.

**Ron:** So how many people would have been at that demonstration, do you have any idea?

**Barbara:** You mean at the Consulate?

**Ron:** Yeah, the one when Bill demonstrated at Pan Am?

**Barbara:** Well, oh, that may have been four or five.

**Ron:** Just a few.

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Ron:** But at the Consulate?

**Barbara:** At the Consulate, there were probably 35 people.

**Ron:** Larger.

**Barbara:** All a group. And of course I was there. Bill and I, he wanted me to be with him and I went with him and I was there. I'm always a little bit hesitant when Bill is going forward. And I do what he wants to do because he wants me to do it, but I'm always a little scared inside myself. I'm not the one that's going to go out and demonstrate in the streets. Not by myself and certainly not at that stage in my life, but as far as running a food study and being in the video and being part of that publicly, that's ok.

**Ron:** You're not really an activist, in the same sense.

**Barbara:** Not in the same sense that Bill is. I'm too hesitant because I'm... You know what, part of it comes out of medical background, where you're taking care of people on every side, so you don't take sides, you take care of the people that are hurt.

**Ron:** Yes, I understand.

**Barbara:** So that comes way down deep in my DNA. So I'm always a little bit uneasy about being in a position where I'm... – it's not danger – I'm just not sure to take one side for sure, and that's one of the reasons I think that Bill would get upset with me sometimes because I tended to stand on the fence and he didn't like that. And I know he didn't like that, but I couldn't help it. No matter where I was. And I reflected in the Boulder situation, I felt like somebody could work the situation out so it wouldn't need to be so violent. And that's just who I am. So apologies to poor Bill.

Back on the subject, so there were cameras at that demonstration all over the place. You can figure out, whether you knew the cameras were there or not. In the meantime, let's just think that we were very well acquainted in Hong Kong at this point. We had gone on a tour to the border, we had gone as far as we could to mainland China. And we visited there. I have some pictures taken there of us with the Brandstetter family that had come to Hong Kong to visit. We all went to the border. So we were there and

we were in Chong Chi, the Pomerrenki family live there. We had Christmas parties and all kinds of occasions with the Pomerrenkis.

**Barbara:** Chong Chow is an island off of the mainland where there's a resort cottage. The Presbyterians have a house and so we could take a ferry and we could go to Chong Chow island and we did that two or three times. There was a lady that lived there at the Presbyterian house all the time and she cooked the meals. But we could go for holiday. We'd go for three days, four days, we took all the kids and I've got really nice pictures of Chong Chow and the island. And then from the place you had to walk up a hill to this house and then you could see over the harbor. Chong Chow harbor is very beautiful and we could actually go down to the village that was near the sea, and we could go shopping in the village. The lady that lived there did a lot of the shopping for us, but we could go down. But we had quite a nice time in Chong Chow on the holidays.

And another thing that we did was go to Lantau. That's another island that we went to and we went for three weeks at a time. And then it was quite exciting, we learned how to do this. We got metal boxes about that big and about that high (Barbara uses hands to show 18x 24 inches). We had four of them. And then we took all the things we needed for all of us for three weeks and we got them over to the island a day ahead of time. And then the ferry would meet with the coolies. And the coolies would take these metal boxes up to the top of Lantau. This is entirely another island. And there at the top of Lantau, through the years the mission families, not just Presbyterian – there's Methodist and Congregational and all kinds of groups – and there are 25 little houses up at the top of Lantau and goes down into a little valley and then back up again. And at the bottom of the valley there's a nice swimming pool, a natural pool, and a dining room. And all the people would put in their boxes, swimming suits and hiking boots and whatever. For us it was always Andrea's birthday, so there always had to be birthday presents in those boxes. And then we get up to the top of our hill, the Presbyterian cottage. And we'd have it for the whole three weeks, it was really nice. We had breakfast food up at the cottage, but then we had two meals down in this dining room that was near where the swimming pool was.

And it was all, the dining room menu was all planned. People had to cook in the dining room, but I didn't want to cook in the dining room, I didn't want to do the large quantity cookery. I run away from large quantity cookery if I can run away from it. And so I volunteered to be the organizer of the reservations. So all through the year, actually starting the first of January, I would take the reservations for everybody in these cottages and make arrangements when there would be time for somebody, A, B or C. And so I managed that and I did that hardly, it didn't even bother me at all, it just was an easy thing to do on the side. I remember I had a schedule sitting on the dining room table and I was working on the schedules. But I don't remember that being a difficulty at all and I don't remember anybody getting too

upset about it, so I guess it worked all right. But that was another activity that we were doing. So what I'm saying here, we were really involved in the life in Hong Kong.

**Ron:** You had really settled in.

**Barbara:** We had really settled in.

**Ron:** And you seemed to be happy there, you were enjoying what you were doing.

### **Trouble in Hong Kong**

**Barbara:** Yeah. And then coming – I'm trying to tell you everything before we get to September of 1970. Bill came home really hurt, shocked because he'd gotten this call from the government in Hong Kong saying that you've lost your visa and your family has to leave in two weeks. Now we've got four kids in school, all this activity for Bill. I'm doing all this stuff. How can I do all this, let me just add, there's always somebody at home to cook, to do the housework kind of thing, so that freed me up. Otherwise I couldn't do some of these other things. But in the midst of this, we get this call and he's just shocked. So he goes into the government offices [Note: Chinese and British] and he says, what's wrong here? And they say, we don't know. We've just gotten this call. And I don't know if it was at that point... At any rate, the people from the YMCA come to Bill and take his keys for the student center. He's just shocked and he doesn't know, he has no explanation. So he told the government, I can't disrupt this family now, I can't stop all this. And so the people in the government said, we don't know what the problem is, we can't tell you what the problem is. So let the visa go until Christmas. You stay until Christmas and you get ready to leave at Christmas time.

Well, Bill thought this is wrong. He's going to figure out what the problem is. Well, of course, there's a lot of mistrust beginning to develop because the people at the Y – well, what did Bill do, did he steal a lot of money, has he been caught in drugs, something like that. And I knew inside myself, I knew that he did not do any of those things. I knew that, I knew him well enough. And one day a lady came to the door, very British kind of a prim, maybe in her 40s, a kind of person who would be designated by the British government to come. And she's English. She knocked on the door and she said, may I visit with you. Well, yeah. So I let her come in and we sat in the living room. At the same time, the dining room table has been set and supper's getting ready, the children are coming in and out and she's just sitting there. How are you, oh we're fine, we're making just chatter conversation. And I knew she was there to

figure out what was going on with this family that had lost their visa. And so I just sat there. And probably our telephone was hacked.

**Ron:** Wiretapped.

**Barbara:** Yeah, wiretapped. And I knew that could be happening too. But we lived with that. Now, I've got to back up. I've got to back up here. We went to Hong Kong in 1965. Well, 1968 there was so much conflict in America that they decided in New York that some of these people that have been "missionaries" or arbitrators of conflict or whatever you want to call it, from overseas, might do better to come back to the United States. I'm backing up because I've backed up to 1968. So Bill gets this invitation from New York to come back to America. [*Getting something to look at – documents, photos*] He accepts the invitation to come back. So we come back to America in summertime of 1968. And we come to Colorado almost directly. And we visit in Boulder for maybe a week or ten days. Bill is in Boulder with the family. And then the first of July he goes to New York and he's in New York for a training program for these people. And the people that came are, this is the team that came to New York. And then they were all assigned to major cities across the country and Bill was assigned to Cleveland.

So he went to Cleveland about the third week of July and I stayed in Colorado with the kids. I stayed at my mother's house in Longmont. And Bill began visiting the people in Cleveland, it turns out in an area where Andrea's in-laws had lived. But they were going around trying to get Black people to vote. And they were, let's see, is that more of that situation right there? No, I think that we're going back to Hong Kong. But this is more of what's happened while he's in Cleveland. And he stays in Cleveland until December. He came back just in time for Christmas in December. That was the longest we were ever separated, period. We left in June and I came back to Hong Kong in September, so I could get the children back in school. So the apartment was waiting for us in Hong Kong, we had a young person that was living in the apartment while we were gone. And so it was secure and safe. It was an apartment owned by a Chinese lady. Another Chinese family and a White Russian family, and an Indian family lived nearby, oh my gosh, all in that apartment building.

We came back to get the kids back in school and school started, must have been the first week in September. I think that's in Hong Kong after we get back. But there's a lot of stuff in there too. Another family I need to talk about are the Collins family. There are things that the kids did, reported in newspaper articles. This is a band that Scott got involved with, well Scott and David both, because both of them were involved in music.

So the time that Bill was in Cleveland, he really enjoyed that, but he was on a leave of absence from the student center while he was in the States. Again, that's another check mark in Bill's dossier. So he came back to Hong Kong in December of 1968 and after that he was invited to go to the Philippines to lead a two week seminar for the YMCA in the Philippines. So I went with him for that. It was quite an interesting experience. We were not just in Manila. We went someplace else in the city and I wrote a little story about that, but I don't know where that story is now. At any rate, we were there for a couple of weeks and that was a really good experience to see. I don't know if that's... This is more of things that Hong Kong kids did. Well, this is pretty much family life. But we came back from the Manila visit, that would be 1969. And in that period of time with the food study committee, I had made a – gosh I forgot about this – I had made friends with a lady when we were in Boulder, her name was Kittu Riddle.<sup>14</sup>

And the Riddle family, we have first met them when we were first in Boulder in 1956, 1957. Well Kittu was very much involved with primarily nutrition. And she, her husband was a professor and that's another big story. But at any rate, she ended up in New York working with another organization in New York in nutrition. And she knew between my conversation and hers, and she came to Hong Kong so knew what we were doing in Hong Kong with the food study committee. She probably was sending me information and I was telling her what was happening in Hong Kong. And she was very excited by that. So she organized a group of people and her organization, it's all written down, this is the story of her life. She organized a group from New York, and it's not Church World Service. It's there, but at any rate, she organized a group that were about, must have been 20, 25 of us that went first to Lebanon. They got to Lebanon and I wasn't there. Well, then they went from Lebanon and they came to Hong Kong and that whole group was in Hong Kong for about four days and I was the hostess for the group during that four days. And I took them all over Hong Kong area where they were making rugs, you know, big, big looms. I took this group on a bus and took them to the looms, took them to the refugee centers and food centers, took them all over, places that would be of interest in Hong Kong and arranged and put all that together.

I was a hostess and then I was invited to go with the group. So we went to India and I was in India for, I think three weeks. We flew into Calcutta in the middle of the night and took buses to our hotel in downtown Calcutta. Saw people on the streets and saw faucets coming up out of the floor, out of the sidewalks where people who slept on the streets could wash. And we went in India to villages, to the big hospital, the famous hospital in India. We never went, well we were mostly in the south of India, but we went to a lot of homes. And one time I stayed with a family in India for a night and I really enjoyed the fact that they had a whole room built on their house to just be for food, big containers of food and it was in their home, it wasn't a warehouse, it was their home. They had designed it. And I think I stayed there

---

<sup>14</sup> She wrote a book on her experiences. Katherine Parker Riddle, *A Nourishing Life* (Pentland Press, England, 1999).

with maybe one other person but we were dispersed around in the various family homes. And we were staying in – I need to sit and think this through because I'm losing... There's one city that is very well known now in India because there's so much technology that's developed in the city. So a lot of people that have worked in India have come to America or they've come to America and work in India. It's...

**Ron:** Is this Bangalore?

**Barbara:** Bangalore, yeah, exactly. So we actually lived in Bangalore for it may have been three weeks maybe, maybe only two weeks. I had a lot of this material that I didn't throw away until we moved into this apartment now. So I didn't want to throw it away, but I just had to. At any rate, we were in Bangalore and I went out walking on the streets. It's a very calm environment in Bangalore as compared to Hong Kong. And by then we had been, what, in Hong Kong three or four years. And then I was fascinated by walking in the streets. I'd see the little *primuses* we called them, the little cooking stoves that would be out in the back yards. And they'd be cooking outside, you'd hear the animals outside. And it was quiet. It was a quietness that you never, ever saw in the city in Hong Kong. Anyway, I really, really, really liked it in India. I really, really liked it. It calmed your soul. The difference in India from Hong Kong was drastic.

Then we went to Thailand and I was in Thailand over a three day period. We did a lot of touring. I saw the monks in the orange robes, the Buddhist worship centers in Thailand. And again, the politics of east Asia have emerged to such an extent now, but when we were there and this is in the 1960s, it wasn't so dramatic. It was quieter background where part of the reason for instance that Bill actually went to the Philippines where they were trying to build up connections. The tension between Chinese and Hong Kong and the Filipinos was very great, very bad. And they were trying to build bridges where all the bridges during the Second World War had been broken.

So all those things that Bill was involved in at the time were exactly what needed to be done, but under the surface. At any rate, I came back from India. In that period of time Bill took care of the kids all the time. He was very responsible for all their care and getting them to school on time and whatever needed to be done, he did. Besides somebody was there to do the cooking, he didn't need to worry about that. And the person that cooked did whatever housekeeping needed to be done, which wasn't a lot, changing the sheets, running the laundry. We had a washing machine, so she could do that. Then the lady that did the cleaning hung all the laundry up on the roof. The roofs were all flat and they were all, clothes lines were on the roof, so most of the clothes went on the roof.



## **The Final Blow**

At any rate, this is all in 1969 and so much involvement that when Bill is confronted with this loss of a visa, it's stunning, it's not right. It's as if somebody suddenly was alive and had a heart attack and died on the spot. So it got through Christmas, to back up to that story again. And here we're hanging in there and we have Christmas in Hong Kong. And Bill's thinking, he's going back to the government and saying, our children are in school, I'm not going to take the children out of school, they do not need to be uprooted, this is not right. So the government offices said, we don't know what the problem is, we can't explain it. We don't know, we're very sorry. We don't see any problem, we don't know what the problem is. So everybody hoped, and even the board offices in New York, they figured we're going to get this sorted out. So then they said, well you can stay until March. Well, by then, I figured we're going to get through the year. I really didn't ever worry about March, but I started thinking what Bill was getting, the information was that there was no way that he was going to be able to push this visa beyond June. That the kids would get out of school, but we had to make reservations to leave

**Ron:** Yes. You couldn't just assume that everything would work out.

**Barbara:** No. So I began making arrangements to break up housekeeping. We had a piano, we had this and that and the girls were in piano lessons and dancing lessons. They learned a lot about Chinese dances. And Andrea went on in piano until even the college professor couldn't teach her anymore. They said she should go to the Julliard school in New York and we couldn't afford to do that. So at any rate, all that happened in Hong Kong. And so I began packing up little by little, making the arrangements. We shipped things back. By then you can ship in a huge container, not just separate boxes but in a huge container. So we had enough experience with that, maybe we even went to Hong Kong with the use of a container. But at any rate, we got everything together and then, you know, they come with a big truck and put everything in a container and then they ship it. And school finishes, the girls finish, and in the meantime Bill is invited to go to the mainland of China.

He's invited that Spring to go to a variety of the churches in the mainland, because there's a team – I don't know if it's Hong Kong Council of Churches – they had put together this team and they wanted Bill to go with the group. And Bill really, really wanted to go, but he was scared to go because he was afraid he might not get back into Hong Kong again, with the visa question what it was. And so he debated it and he decided that he better go home with the family. So he said, no, he won't go to mainland.

**Ron:** That was an amazing opportunity. In those days they didn't let Americans in.

**Barbara:** No, see and it was before Nixon actually opened the doors. But there was all this stuff going on under the surface trying to open the door.

**Ron:** That may have been a part of secret diplomacy, to try to let some Americans in.

**Barbara:** Exactly, exactly. Well, at any rate, so Bill decided... Now this is, we're up to 1971. And I guess the Kent State shooting was May of 1970, because it was after the Kent State shooting that Bill first had his visa challenged, and that was September of 1970. So thinking, it's interesting that Nixon plus Hoover [Note: J. Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI] putting themselves in the position of pulling key people from key cities around the world in order to stop these demonstrations. And here's Bill with all this collective background, vulnerable. So between the shooting in May and September, then getting up to... It's interesting, he's been invited to go to China even at the same time that it's Nixon-Hoover that have decided to pull these visas, so it's two things happening in opposition of each other.

**Ron:** Doesn't make sense, does it.

**Barbara:** Well, it's the Hong Kong Council of Churches that decided that they could get some people in to the mainland and that may be at a lower level politically than Nixon and Hoover in Washington. But some place in there, there's no connect. So you would not believe – this is an aside actually – Bill is sitting here in this chair now, six weeks before he dies and one of the things he consistently says, all through the last two years really, is I wish I had accepted the invitation to go to China. I should have gone, I should have gone. He never forgot that. He wished he'd gone.

**Ron:** Did he think it would have made a difference? Did he think they might have let him stay, or what?

**Barbara:** I don't know if he thought it would have made a difference or it would make a difference to his understanding of mainland China, just his own experience.

**Ron:** Yes, it would have made a big difference.

**Barbara:** I think it would have. And assuming that this visa thing would get straightened out he would build a link with the mainland churches. And he could build a link whatever happened. So at any rate, he decided not to go. And to me, I didn't worry about it because I thought, well there's no way that we're going to get out of this. If he had told me that he's going to go to mainland China and that he would meet

me in San Francisco in two weeks or something like that I would have not been surprised. But he was afraid, because he was afraid that his visa would make a difference, would be a problem. So at that point he didn't go and we got packed up and we said goodbye. And we got on the ship June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1971. We had our children with us and there were lots, especially the teenagers from KGV were there in the harbor to say goodbye. And there were all kinds of adults there to say goodbye and we sailed away. The streamers broke. That's always a dramatic moment. We have pictures, I have pictures either on the mobile or colored wherever of the streams breaking as we sailed out of Hong Kong.

Now for me it was almost six years in Hong Kong and it was a very interesting experience. And I myself was ready to say, ok that's enough. I'm ready to come back to America because we've been now overseas over the total of 18 years and I myself, I Barbara, was all right. And David was then, he had finished that last year in Hong Kong International School, so he was ready to go to college. So it was all right for him. And the two girls were 10 and 11 when we came back, so they were ok. But Bill felt really, really bad and so did Scott. Because Scott was just in his junior year at what we would say his third form at KGV. He had been president of the class two years in a row, he was a super great, strong young person. And I'm not just saying that because of me, because he's my son, but that was the potential and he needed to stay there long enough to see that through. That's why I said later I thought it might have been better if Scott had gone back and stayed with the Webbs.

**Ron:** Stayed with someone else.

**Barbara:** But at any rate, also another thing that happened that I need to tell you about, while we were in Hong Kong, and we'd probably been there only maybe, this would have been 1967. Paul Dotson and Jean were given a sabbatical from the work in Beirut and they had gone to Iran. They had been in Iran for something like three months, in Tehran. I think to observe student work, I'm not really sure. I never knew for sure what they were in Iran for. But then from Iran they came to Hong Kong, and so they were in Hong Kong visiting us after of course we had left Beirut. In the meantime, Paul ran into conflicts with the powers that be. Those are more inter-dynamics between the Weirs, the Antablins, Dotsons, da da, and they didn't all agree with Paul. So he had been advised to leave Beirut and I never did know all that problem. But Paul and Jean, after they were in Hong Kong with us, they came back and he was invited to come to Ann Arbor. So he was then the director at the Ecumenical Center in Ann Arbor. And he was there until Alzheimer's caught up with him and he had to retire.

**Ron:** I knew him. I remember when Paul headed that place.

**Barbara:** Ok, you remember Paul. All right, so then after Paul and Jean left Hong Kong, I'm not sure of the time interval, but from Hong Kong they came back to the States and then they went to Ann Arbor. Moved into Ann Arbor and she still lives in the same house. And of course we got to the point where we were sailing out of Hong Kong in 1971 and we... Also in Hong Kong the Brandstetters came. We have wonderful pictures of the Brandstetters in Hong Kong.

**Ron:** You told me Bill took that pretty hard on the way back, on the boat ride back.

**Barbara:** Oh, so ok, yeah. On the trip coming back from Hong Kong, Bill just felt really terrible. Scott didn't realize the implications of what was going to happen in his life, but Bill knew and Bill was scared. He didn't know what kind of a job he'd get when he got back to America. He knew that he was leaving a challenging situation in Hong Kong. He did not want to leave Hong Kong and he still didn't know for sure why he had lost his visa.

**Ron:** They would never tell him.

**Barbara:** They would not tell him. They would not tell him.

**Barbara:** And even the British government said, we don't know. Now what the Chinese, whether the American government told the Chinese government or whether they didn't, we don't know. But at any rate, Bill, his question was what did I do wrong? And he kept thinking, what did I do wrong? I was working with the students, I know the students didn't want to be in the Vietnam war, I know the Vietnam war is wrong. But he, I don't think he really thought that it had to do with the Vietnam demonstrations as much as oh, maybe somebody stealing something from the building and him not catching it. That had happened previously in Sidon, years before. Or whatever, what could have happened that would make him lose the keys to the student center, that the YMCA authority figures would feel that that was necessary? Why? So what have I done wrong and where can I get a job and what kind of a job can I get, how can I support this family? He was scared. He was just really scared. And I saw him just curl up on a ball on the deck, just like that. [Barbara puts her hands over her face].

**Ron:** Put his hands over his face.

**Barbara:** Yeah, and we finally, we went to Yokohama and we stayed in Yokohama for three days and we did a lot of sightseeing and he went with us in Tokyo. We saw the bullet train and I have some nice

pictures of us in Tokyo. And then we went to Hawaii, Honolulu. In Honolulu there were opportunities to visit and I had college friends that worked in Honolulu and we visited with them a little bit. Then we were going to go on a tour in Honolulu and go see the birds, something about the birds. And Bill just couldn't go. He just didn't want to leave the ship.

**Ron:** He was losing his, yeah...

**Barbara:** He did get off the ship in Tokyo, but by the time it got to Honolulu he just couldn't get off the ship.

**Ron:** It sounds like he had some kind of a depression, a reaction to the... I mean, he lost his job, he was on the verge of losing his career as an overseas missionary and he didn't know how he was going to feed his family. I mean, it's like multiple failures. Everything was crashing down.

**Barbara:** Just crashing. And why?

**Ron:** And you never knew. But in retrospect you think it was probably...

**Barbara:** Well, I know, we know now, but. We know the connections. But at any rate, at the time. See, we didn't know that from New York they were pulling people out from all over, from London, from Buenos Aires, from Singapore. They were pulling leaders from all around the world, taking the key leaders, the anti-Vietnam reaction, trying to slow down these demonstrations, because Nixon didn't want to lose his job. And so he and Hoover together were trying to blacklist, blackball, whatever you used to say, key leaders and they were doing it in the States too. They were doing it all over the place. But we didn't know that at the time. We didn't know the depth of the emotion that was visible. Actually I didn't even see some of it until I watched the TV here.

**Ron:** What was happening in this country.

**Barbara:** In the States, yeah.

**Ron:** It was so intense.

**Barbara:** Yeah.

**Ron:** Yeah, I was here at the time. It was terrible.

**Barbara:** It was terrible, right. I mean, we knew...

**Ron:** You couldn't talk to each other sometimes. Families were falling apart.

**Barbara:** Well, if we had been in the States, his family would have fallen apart. That's another story too. But at any rate, we didn't realize the depth of what was happening in the States. And as far as Bill was concerned, he was demonstrating in Hong Kong because he thought it was the right thing to do.

**Ron:** He was a citizen and he had a right to say his opinions.

**Barbara:** Right, and because he was at student center he heard lots of stories from Vietnam from the R&R boys and he knew he was on the front lines so to speak, he knew what was going on. But he did not know that anybody would pull his visa because of that.

**Ron:** You showed me this book about COINTELPRO, how they were crushing their own citizens.

**Barbara:** Exactly. They were crush-... And when you saw the movie, *The Post*<sup>15</sup>

**Ron:** *The Post*, yes. We saw it.

**Barbara:** Ok, you saw that one scene where, I can't remember who, I think it's Tom Hanks who says, "Nixon is cruel. He will do anything. He will crush. He will crush. And if we publish this, he may crush us." That one scene in the movie, that's exactly what happened, exactly what happened, and exactly what happened to Bill.



---

<sup>15</sup> *The Post* was an academy award nominated film at the time of the interview. It was about the decision of Katharine Graham, played by Meryl Streep, and Ben Bradlee, played by Tom Hanks, to publish the Pentagon papers even though the Nixon administration had a pending court order against the New York Times and was threatening to prosecute any newspaper that followed suit. In the end the Supreme Court backed the Times in a historic judgment.

**Ron:** Yes. He got targeted by the FBI. Probably by some illegal organization within the FBI, because they weren't allowed to be doing this.

**Barbara:** Yes. So at any rate, the government in Hong Kong was not given any permission to tell Bill what happened or why. Just, sir, we know that your visa has been pulled.

**Ron:** So the British government might have played a role in this.

**Barbara:** I don't think... Well, British government, it was very British, of course. But as you read the book, the book that I have given you, it gets the background of how they got the Pentagon papers, how they found them. And how they copied them all and what happened. The drama of that in *The Post*, in the movie, *The Post*, all you see is a very few clips in the beginning of the movie when they're copying.

**Ron:** How they actually got the Pentagon papers, yes.

## COINTELPRO

### A Note from Ron

Barbara lent me a book to read for background on what happened in Hong Kong. It was *The Burglary. The Discovery of J. Edgar Hoover's Secret FBI* (New York: Knopf, 2014) by Betty Medsger. It tells the story of how a group of anti-war activists broke into an FBI office Media, Pennsylvania in 1971 and stole documents that revealed the existence of secret surveillance programs, mostly illegal, to monitor anyone who was resistant to government policy. The author emphasizes that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover did not distinguish between protestors, hard-core radicals, critics of government policy, social reformers, or those engaging in violence. There were provisional plans to lock up 20,000 security threats, not defined, and put them in detention centers. *Habeus corpus* would be suspended. They set up a special plan called COINTELPRO (counter-intelligence program). It constituted a potential police state, beyond and above the law. Hoover believed that if you could take down key dissidents, it would change the outcome. The goal was to discredit, destabilize, and demoralize individuals and groups. Hoover was particularly concerned about civil rights organizations, antiwar activists, Black power groups, student activists, anti-draft protestors, and conscientious objectors. There was a disregard for the law or the first Amendment rights of citizens to speak, protest, and "petition for redress of grievance." They had files on 300,000 individuals and 1,000 organizations, and detailed profiles of 7,000 persons. Many thousands were on watch lists. By way of examples, there was a 2,937 page file on John Kerry, Vietnam veteran, war hero,

and founder of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, which had its own 19,978 page file. “Hoover had concluded it was all right for him to use against American dissenters tactics of espionage normally reserved for use against foreign enemies -- without regard for the legality of his approach for the legal protection of American’s dissent required by the Constitution.” P. 533.

In our conversations, it was obvious that this book had opened Barbara’s eyes in a sense that she saw in print what she had instinctively known but now saw confirmed. She and Bill were caught up in a vast structure of criminal abuse by the FBI, a preemptive strike against the rights of American citizens. She had carefully marked the pages in this book with annotations. She was especially attentive to references to monitoring, disrupting, and marginalizing those with religious credentials or motives. Perhaps quoting some things she marked would show what she had seen. Hoover’s goal was to “enhance paranoia” by making citizens wonder if there was an FBI agent behind every mail box (p. 108). “Anyone who had been photographed at an anti-war rally instantly became a suspect...” (p. 136). Hoover was convinced that there was “foreign influence” behind American protests (p. 230). His attacks targeted academic and cross-cultural exchanges, campus newspapers, any who were involved in any way with the Soviets or Chinese, especially news media, entertainment, and “religious organizations and education” (p. 237). They targeted professors, artists, scientists, and the clergy (p. 353) and academic disciplines such as social sciences, anthropology, and sociology. They recruited informants at conferences and on campuses (p. 358). Their goal was to “secretly harass and suppress” (p. 532). Their actions “harmed and were intended to harm” (p. 247). Hoover refused to differentiate “between various types of dissenters. In his mind, all dissenters were equally dangerous whether they advocated violence or nonviolence” (p. 312). People “lost their jobs and were shunned by their communities” (p. 351). One statement on page 274 was that “In fact, many such operations were conducted against individuals and organizations throughout the mid-1970s.” In the margin, Barbara had written “Gepford 9/10/71 HK [Hong Kong].”

Barbara had written the following on the flyleaf: “I read it many times, too overwhelmed to read more for days – then back to it, again. Now in tears, again, for all the loss of talent, opportunities, creative lives – even our own. BBG January 2014 to November 11, 2014.”

### **Back in the United States**

**Barbara:** And all that is part of what happened to Bill. And so at any rate, we got back and the board offices in New York were handling this with cotton and kid gloves and everything. There was a Missionary Compound in Berkeley where there was apartment available for us. And they were really thinking from New York that this visa thing would be cleared by December, by Christmas time. And so they said, well you come to Berkeley, stay in Berkeley, we’ll get this thing sorted out.



**Ron:** They didn't have the slightest idea what an ominous situation they were facing.

**Barbara:** And all the key people in New York were very upset and knew that, they knew Bill well enough to know that this had to be something. So we settled into this apartment in Berkeley and we were in a compound where there were other mission families that were coming and going – not necessarily with the same history, but coming and going. And the kids got acquainted with other children in this compound, there were several apartments there. And we linked up with the local church. That was kind of a good experience for us during that year. But Bill had planned to finish writing his papers that he had started for the science of theology degree that he had started when he went to San Francisco in 1965, in the summertime. He had been writing papers all the time we were in Hong Kong and I have I think all those papers here. But he was writing those papers and the understanding was that he would write a thesis while we were in Berkeley during that year and complete that degree. So Berkeley right near the seminary, the San Francisco seminary was the logical thing to do. But he just couldn't do it. We went to where the, all the stuff from Hong Kong were stored at the warehouse in Oakland. And we went over to Oakland. We got the warehouse opened up. We got to one of the – it must have been more than one – a big container that had all his books. And we got a lot of his books out so he could finish writing that paper. And so he had the books. We didn't get anything else, except I think we got David's clarinet out. That's another whole story. But at any rate, we got Bill's books back to Berkeley and he was going to write his thesis. But he just couldn't concentrate on it.

**Ron:** Couldn't concentrate at all.

**Barbara:** He just couldn't. You know, the board offices in New York were so concerned and it wasn't like they were just going to let him die under the bridge. They weren't going to let that happen. In the meantime, very soon after we got to Berkeley, there came an invitation from New York for me because they have every year a plan that some of the people that are home for furlough come to New York. They call them mission advocates. And they come to New York and visit with the staff people to tell the staff people what's going on in the area where they were. And it happens each year for those who are on furlough. So they said, well, you're not exactly on furlough, but you're here, and you know the whole situation in Hong Kong, so we would... The reason they invited me was because of the women's movement, and I had gotten very excited by the first of the women's movement in the 1960s in Hong Kong. And I had visited, we had group meetings in Hong Kong. And we had meetings when they'd be eight or ten, fifteen women that were all, mostly westerners. But we were all excited by the things that

they were doing in the women's movement. And we were sharing some of our most frustrated feelings about having to follow our husbands all the time when we couldn't do any of our own things.

**Ron:** Your own careers, yes.

**Barbara:** So all of that. You know, I was proud of that. I was not ashamed of that at all.

**Ron:** Yes, right.

**Barbara:** I couldn't be ashamed because that's who I was. So at any rate it was really that reason that they said, ok we'll invite Barbara to be the mission advocate to come to New York. And I think that was not too easy for Bill to swallow, but he knew...

**Ron:** Because you were the one chosen.

**Barbara:** Yeah. He knew, he didn't ever say anything. But he took me to the airplane, he got me on the airplane. He took care of the kids and I'd be gone, I probably was gone four days at a time. And I would fly into New York. I went back and forth five times that year. I was thinking the other day – oh my gosh, I forgot about that. But I went into New York and then I told them what was going on in Hong Kong, and what we were doing. And all the time they're trying to figure out how to get Bill's visa sorted out.

Well, came up January about, this would be 1972, January, they said in New York, you know, it just looks hopeless. Bill is never going to get back his visa. Not now. It just looks hopeless. So Barbara, there are some jobs available. What do you think might be a good job for Bill in the States? So one of the other people that was on the committee was Hutchison and he was a faculty member in New Concord at Muskingum College. And so he said, right now the chaplain at Muskingum College is going to Edinburgh for a couple of years and would Bill like to come to Muskingum and take that job for a couple of years?

**Ron:** This is in Ohio.

**Barbara:** Yeah, this is New Concord, Ohio, Muskingum College. And because, you know, this would be a job for him in the States. Well, there was also another job at another Presbyterian school in Ohio, it's

bigger than Muskingum. It's more United Church. Muskingum is more the other church, when the two churches were split before they got together in 1983.<sup>16</sup>

**Ron:** Right, the two Presbyterian churches.

**Barbara:** Yeah. Muskingum is the more conservative of the two. The other one is a bigger school. Well, they knew that Bill was available and they offered Bill a job there. Bill had somehow in a matter of days, or hours practically, he had accepted the job at Muskingum. And Mr. Hutchison invited me to come to Muskingum, and so I was actually the first one there and I saw the school.

**Ron:** You saw Muskingum before Bill did.

**Barbara:** Uh huh. And again, Bill's in California, theoretically finishing his thesis and he's taking care of the children while I'm... Hutchison said, why don't you stop in Columbus and I'll drive you to Muskingum. You can see the school and you go tell Bill. Because he didn't accept it at that point, but he just took me. So instead of flying from New York straight to Oakland, I flew into Columbus and went to Muskingum and saw the city. And at that point I didn't know the other one was even offered yet, so I knew Bill was concerned and he had to have some kind of a job and this was a chaplain at Muskingum, which would be appropriate for him. And it would be a job, not paying very much, but it was a job. And so I went back to Columbus and then flew on to California. And Bill by then knew that he wasn't going to get back to Hong Kong. It was just reality. And Scott knew that he wasn't going to get back to Hong Kong and Scott had a very difficult year. And then at the end of that year in Berkeley, the decision was to go to New Concord, so we made arrangements for all the things to be shipped from the warehouse to a house in New Concord, which we arranged for. And we drove the car and we went to New Concord.

**Ron:** All the way across country.

**Barbara:** Well, I will say that after we got to New Concord and Bill settled in he did finish the thesis and he did get the degree. But he didn't do it until after we got to New Concord. And while he was working at the Chapel. Then of course he knew he had a job. He didn't know why he lost the visa in Hong Kong, he still didn't know that. But he had a job and we were ok. And I was glad to be back in America. That's

---

<sup>16</sup> During the Civil War, the Presbyterian Church broke into two denominations. The northern denomination was called the United Presbyterian Church. The southern was the Presbyterian Church in the United States. In 1983 the two denominations merged into the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

when we bought our first house. We never had bought a house before, we never were in the States long enough to ever do any more than just have a rental property.

**Ron:** So you bought a house in Muskingum.

**Barbara:** In New Concord.

**Ron:** In New Concord. How big is that town?

**Barbara:** The town is a college town, so it's a town, maybe, I don't know, 3000 or something like that, but it doubles when the students are there. I'm really not sure now. I've got some stuff about New Concord right down there and I could answer those questions.

**Ron:** I was thinking it's a small town.

**Barbara:** Yeah, it's a small town and I think there's one stop light down the center of town.

**Ron:** Well, there you go.

**Barbara:** And one Dairy Queen.

**Ron:** Well, a stop light and a Dairy Queen. That's all you need, right?

**Barbara:** The closest town nearby was Cambridge on one side going into West Virginia and on the other side was Zanesville. So a lot of people highway 70 will from Columbus to Zanesville, you go past New Concord, you go on to Cambridge and go on east from there. And there's a lot of stories I could tell about that, because we were in New Concord for seven years.

**Ron:** Oh I didn't realize that. You were there seven years.

**Barbara:** And after the two years of the chaplaincy were over, they asked him to be the director of the student center. Not the student dean, but the director at the center. So that was all the student activities. So he started working with the students and I think he had a personality change. He could manage the bands, all the bands that came for the students. He knew how to work with the bands to get them settled up and

then to deal with the money. He could handle the money, he could pay the bands, he could stay with the band until 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and he could do it as if he'd been doing it all his life.

**Ron:** He had never done anything like this before

**Barbara:** Never done that.

**Ron:** And suddenly he found...

**Barbara:** He just could do it.

**Ron:** An ability.

**Barbara:** Yeah. He really, and he had a lot of student activity and then of course he was smart about knowing that if, I don't know if this is when he discovered that they were stealing meat out of the freezers, but he figured that out. He figured that out in Sidon too. Nobody else believed him, but he told them. Ten years later he had people come back and say, Bill you were right. But anyway, he managed the student center until he came to Dearborn.

I'll tell you what. A lot of things happened in New Concord. It was almost like he went back to college himself. He had a chance to be involved with student activities and even though he was the director, he was still in his mid-40s. So it was almost like he had a chance to do some of the things at that level at the college that he never had to do when he was in college himself because he was just too much caught up in family trouble and financial problems. But in New Concord, he had a family, he had a house, he had a home, he had all these activities going on. And many times I had the feeling, he's having his college experience. It was like also he got acquainted with America there. He learned what people were thinking about in America. He came home, he paid the bills, he took care of the income tax.

At the same time, I got the job at the fabric store in Cambridge and I was working with fabric. And I loved that job at the fabric store and we needed some extra money. When we first got to New Concord, I didn't have enough money to go to the J.C. Penny store to buy things for the kids that I normally could buy in Hong Kong, no trouble at all. So very quickly I got a bill from Penny's for \$300 and I was just totally shocked because we didn't have enough money to pay for that. So I said, well I've got to get a job, so I went to the fabric store and got a job as a manager at the fabric store and I worked there for a little bit more than a year. And then got a job on the campus and didn't have to drive to Cambridge. So I worked as a telephone lady at the administration building. And when it was snowing so

bad and people couldn't get into the administration offices I substituted wherever they needed because I had a house right there on campus, near the campus, across the street from the campus.

So then I wanted to work at the library, so I asked if there's ever an opening at the library, I'd like to work in the library. So they said, well yeah. So I went to the library then and I was the circulation desk supervisor at the Muskingum College library until we came to Dearborn. And I put together a notebook of all the directions of how to run the circulation desk. And I worked and I straightened up the stacks in the basement. Oh my gosh, the stacks were all messed up, I got them all straight. And so, then when I left somebody else's wife took over the job. And he came to me later when we went back for a reunion thing and he came to me and he said, Barbara did you do that directory, did you put all that together? I said, yes. He didn't think I could do that. He thought his wife was as smart as me, but no, I was smarter.

**Ron:** She was not, no, no.

**Barbara:** Before we talk about Dearborn, I need to mention that I was on the session of the College Drive Presbyterian Church in New Concord. I was involved with the education committee. I learned a lot about how the church functions while I was on that session. And the other thing that we needed to talk about was the Ohio Mother of the Year. My daughter Andrea wrote a nomination letter to the Ohio Mother of the Year Committee and recommended that I be chosen. And I was honored as Ohio Mother of the Year, but it was mixed blessings. The reason is because the Ohio Mother of the Year not too many years before had been John Glenn's wife and everybody was excited because she grew up in New Concord and she was well known because John Glenn was an astronaut and he had gone around the globe. So they had a parade for her downtown in New Concord. And they were so excited. So when the same group of people, New Concord people, found that somebody else received the same honor, the wife of a local administrator at the college, I was embarrassed. I felt I couldn't compare to Mrs. John Glenn in any case. But Andrea wrote a very, very nice nominating letter and so it was on the basis of her letter that I got that honor.<sup>17</sup> And I just thought, I guess we should mention that before we close out New Concord.

---

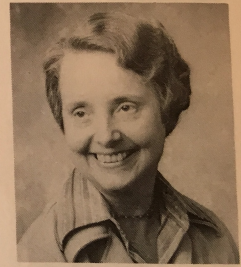
<sup>17</sup> Andrea looked for the nomination letter but it is lost.



**BARBARA BEEBE GEPFORD — of New Concord, OHIO**

Barbara Beebe Gepford is a member of the Session and Chairman of Christian Education at the College Drive United Presbyterian Church. She is a graduate of the Iowa State University in Home Economics. For ten years she served under the Mission Agency of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., teaching Home Economics in Lebanon and Beirut. In Hong Kong she served in the Food Development Program. She participated in a study-action project in Berkeley, California, under the joint auspices of the church and the Y.W.C.A. Currently, she is supervisor of student library assistants, secretary of the College Wives and Chairman of the Women's Association at Muskingum College, where her husband, William C. Gepford, is Associate Dean of Students. She is manager of Lila's Fabric Store in Cambridge, Ohio. The Gepford's have two sons; David, a graduate assistant in Geology at Wright State University; Scott, graduated in 1978 from Ohio State University, majoring in Television Production, and International Studies and Political Science. Two daughters, Joanne and Andrea, are still in high school, both active in Y-Teens.

College Drive United Presbyterian Church



**OHIO MOTHER OF THE YEAR** — Members of Mrs. Barbara Gepford's family were all smiles after learning the Ohio American Mothers Committee had chosen her as Ohio Mother of the Year for 1978. From left are daughter Joanne, husband, William, Mrs. Gepford, and daughter Andrea. The Gepfords also have two sons. Mrs. Gepford will represent Ohio mothers at a Mothers Conference in Des Moines, Iowa, May 7-11 when the American Mother of the Year will be chosen.

### New Concord Woman Named Ohio Mother of Year for 1978

A leader in education, church and civic work in the community. A successful mother and homemaker whose characteristics include love, courage, cheerfulness, patience, compassion and understanding. That's a tall order, but Andrea Gepford was sure her mother fit the description of the woman the Ohio American Mothers Committee was looking for. The committee agreed with her and last week chose Mrs. Barbara Beebe Gepford, 168 Highland Ave., New Concord, a former home economics teacher and mother of four, as Ohio Mother of the Year for 1978. She will represent Ohio mothers at a Mothers Conference in Des Moines, Iowa, May 7-11, when the American Mother of the year will be chosen. During the conference she will make a three-minute presentation on "High Points in Your Life as a Mother." Mrs. Gepford is the second

New Concord woman to be chosen for the honor. In 1962, Mrs. John H. Glenn Sr., whose son, John H. Glenn, now a U.S. senator, had just become the first American astronaut to orbit the earth, was Ohio Mother of the Year and later American Mother of the Year. Assessing her own role as a mother, Mrs. Gepford said, "I don't think you can fit me into any category. I do think it's important children feel they have a supportive family unit . . . that we support each other whether we make fools of ourselves or star." Andrea's nomination of her mother was endorsed by the College Drive United Presbyterian Church, where Mrs. Gepford is a member of the session and chairman of the Christian education committee. A graduate of Iowa State University in home economics, Mrs. Gepford and her husband, the Rev. William G. Gepford, served 16 years with the mission agency of the United Presbyterian Church USA first

in Lebanon and later Hong Kong. Mrs. Gepford taught home economics at Beirut University College while the family was in Lebanon and was chairman of a food study committee supervised by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service during their stay in Hong Kong. The Gepfords returned to the United States in 1971 and came to New Concord when the Rev. Mr. Gepford became associated with Muskingum College. He is currently associate dean of students and director of the Student-Faculty Center. Mrs. Gepford is circulation librarian at the Muskingum College library and supervisor of student assistants at the library. In addition, she has been secretary of Faculty Wives at the college and chairman of the Women's Association of the College Drive church. The Gepfords are the parents of two sons, David, a graduate assistant in geology at Wright State University, and Scott, a

graduate of Ohio State University with majors in television production, international studies and political science; and two daughters, Andrea and Joanne, both students at John Glenn High School. Joanne, a senior, is a soloist, librarian and secretary of the varsity choir. A junior, Andrea is a class officer, a former majorette, and an award-winning pianist. **Nine Receive Ratings at S** Three John Glenn High School freshmen, Doug Adams, Janet Carmosky, and Rickie Bates, received superior ratings on their science projects at district Science Day in Marietta Saturday. Adams' project dealt with bees, their anatomy and life cycle. Much of his information was gathered by observing his own hives of bees.

## Chapter Seven

### Life in Dearborn

**Barbara:** In 1979, Bill was invited to come to Michigan. He candidated in August and came to visit the Littlefield Presbyterian Church committee on selection for ministers. I came along, I was part of it. And one of the things that was interesting about all this was Paul Dotson. He was our friend in Beirut and had visited us in Hong Kong had ultimately went to Ann Arbor to be the director of the ecumenical center in Ann Arbor. When he heard that Bill was being considered for the job at Littlefield church in Dearborn, he supported Bill and recommended Bill. So again, Paul Dotson figured in Bill's career. And Paul was excited about that. He was very encouraging. Bill was excited because of that. And ultimately when the installation was planned for Bill at Littlefield, Paul participated in that installation.

So Bill came to Dearborn the very first of October. I came a few days later. And people made us feel welcome. First I have to mention the Geisingers. He was the head minister at Littlefield, Harry Geisinger and his wife Elizabeth. They were such good friends. Harry took us around the city, introduced us to a variety of members at the church, and helped people to get acquainted with the idea that they needed another person on the staff. And in order to do that, Harry recommended that Bill particularly be active with the young people. He had done that in the previous jobs that he had so he would help develop the young people's program at Littlefield. And people were very receptive of that. Harry didn't talk very much about the Arab-American ministry or the ideas that he and some of the other people at the Presbytery had for developing a program to make the Arab community in east Dearborn feel comfortable.

But at any rate, I don't think a lot of the people in the Littlefield congregation were aware of what Harry had in his mind. But at any rate, we came and I have to say that one of the first things that really, really shocked me about Dearborn was their attitude toward the Arabic community. I really, really couldn't believe how hostile people were. I didn't know anything about Dearborn. Bill and I had never been to Dearborn before, we didn't know anything about the history of Henry Ford. We should have known something about the fact that they built Henry Ford cars in Dearborn, but we weren't paying any attention to it. So when we first got here and realized that most of the people were offended by the presence of the Arabic community and more and more offended because the Arabic community was coming. So many of them were following their family members because of the war in Lebanon and the hostility in Lebanon had broken out into civil war the latter part of the 1970s in Lebanon. And so many, many families were coming to America as a result of the hostilities in Lebanon. Well, people in Dearborn and then especially in east Dearborn weren't aware of what was going on in the Middle East, were not aware of the reasons why people came.



### Note on Lebanon

The arrival of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, perhaps 10% of the population by the 1970s, created fear and a buildup of militias by the various religio-ethnic groups. In 1975-76 Lebanon experienced what it calls its civil war. Many refugees began fleeing, many to Dearborn. These were especially Shia from the south and the poor neighborhoods of Beirut. The Israelis struck into Lebanon in 1978, creating a puppet, Christian-dominated army in the south, the Southern Lebanese Army. Then in 1982 they invaded with full force, occupying Beirut. The Americans got involved in this war and ended up suffering great casualties when the Marine Barracks were blown up with 241 fatalities. Even more refugees came into Dearborn. The Lebanese government says that 144,000 people died during that extended conflict, from 1975 to 2000 (when Hezbollah drove the Israeli army out of Lebanon). During this time, Dearborn experienced a large influx of Arab, mostly Lebanese immigrants. The number of Dearborn students in bi-lingual education, for example, increased from 218 in 1975 to 1,720 in 1983. In 1984, Mayoral candidate Mike Guido produced an inflammatory flyer entitled "Let's Talk about the Arab Problem." He won, but it took him years to heal the damage he had caused.

**Barbara:** So at first, when I would talk to people or meet with people I was very, actually I was disgusted because to us, our experience in Lebanon was that the Lebanese were very hospitable, very kind, very interested in what was happening around the world and very well educated. And we had worked with the university education community, so we definitely respected the Arabic community in Lebanon. So to see this in east Dearborn and west Dearborn... Across the metro area in Detroit people are still, even to this day, not really aware of the tension in Dearborn and how difficult it was for the people that had lived in Dearborn all the time. But when you look at it from two points of view, you can see why people were offended to have the new, all the new comers all coming almost at the same time and buying houses in the area, particularly in east Dearborn. And people that had been long term residents of Dearborn wanted to move out. They moved away from east Dearborn. And when I would talk to people they would say to me, where are you going to live. And I would say east Dearborn. What? You're going to go live in east Dearborn?! Well, it didn't make any difference to me, I didn't know east from west at that point.

So I decided, well we're going to have to get acquainted so I'm just going to do the best I can. And so I joined a women's circle [Note: Presbyterian women's group] at first and they were very nice, very polite. And I appreciated the hospitality. People like Nancy Hess and her sister, May Eix, Carol Hylkema, and Grace Colwell and Nancy Dassow. I could mention any number of people that were very, very nice. I was comfortable with them. But I have to say, at the same time, I was very uneasy. I was on the defensive, because here we were again, working directly with a specific congregation, a specific church. Not a larger church, but the specific church. And I started reacting as I felt about the situation in Boulder, in Colorado. I was so much afraid of what people might say or do that I have to say that I know in the very beginning I was very defensive. But people that knew me a little bit didn't know why or didn't

know any background about it, so they weren't conscious of it. But I attended the women's meetings and I decided that I wanted to get a little bit more comfortable with them.

So I invited the circle that I participated in. At that time there were five circles and this was the older women's circle, and so I invited them to my house for a little afternoon tea. And I decided to have some Arabic food, thinking, now this will be interesting. And so I've had all the recipes and I decided to prepare a dish that you call *mughlie*. And *mughlie* is like a rice pudding with nuts and it's always served when new babies are born. And you go to a call on a family, you're expected to call on the families when they have a new baby, and always it's going to be *mughlie* served. The way it's served usually is to put pudding into little cups, saucers, bowls. And people will make a big batch of *mughlie* and have it all in the refrigerator so when people come to call, they just pull out one little bowl of *mughlie* and put some, probably some sliced almonds or pine nuts on the top and serve it with Arabic coffee or tea, depending on what people choose. And this is customary in Lebanon. Well, the ladies, the circle women were not very impressed with that. They didn't like it very well. They didn't really want to learn about it, they didn't really want to have that particular experience. They were very nice to me, they didn't say anything negative. But I knew that to have an Arabic meal or to make a big effort to make some kind of a hospitality of that sort again, I didn't want to do. So that was the only time I ever did that.

**Ron:** So I'm thinking, what happened in Colorado, where Bill brought some progressive ideas into a church that wasn't ready for that.

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Ron:** Were you afraid there would be a repetition of this?

**Barbara:** Yes. Well, I was afraid that... The answer is yes, I was definitely afraid. And I was afraid that it would mean that very soon they would say that they didn't want to talk about this subject and they didn't want his leadership and very soon he would not have a job. And at this point, he wanted the job and he was excited with the metro area. He was very restless in New Concord, at the small town, the small university. He had survived for seven years, but he was very restless. So to be invited to come into the city was exciting to him. And I didn't want that to backfire. I really, I was very hurt by the situation in Boulder, personally hurt and, of course, that's in one of the parts of the articles that we've already done, so I don't want to talk about it anymore. But I was afraid and I was definitely on the defensive.

And gradually, you know what. I remember just watching people like oh, Bob and Jean Lennox. And they were so nice. And then Grace Colwell and then some of the other people I mentioned would be

so respectful. And gradually I thought, well this congregation is different. I don't think they are in exactly the same as some of the people at the large church in Boulder. This might be different. And so I decided gradually, maybe within a year and a half or two years, I was much better. And then people like Betty Toth, for instance, invited me to the Presbyterian meetings, and that's Presbyterian Women of the Presbytery of Detroit but it was still called Presbyterial when we first got here. And so she invited me to attend enough meetings so if somebody invited me to be on a committee... I have a list here of some of the committee that I was on when I first went to those various meetings. I was on, I think, the committee that advises education, it was always some form of education.

I then became, oh they called it the Mission Interpretation Committee, and I was on that committee for awhile, and then I became a moderator of that. But the fact was I was getting acquainted with a variety of people at the Presbytery level. And when it became Presbyterian Women in the Presbytery of Detroit, you always hear it now mentioned as PWPD, they had a variety of activities that I got involved in right away. And I actually became what they called an enabler, and that was when people went to the various different churches and helped with programming in the different churches and that helped me to get acquainted with them. And then I went to a national Presbyterian women's meeting in Purdue, and that's where I learned about the ecumenical decade, Churches in Solidarity with Women. That was 1988. So I'd gone through these early opportunities of getting acquainted with the churches in the Detroit Presbytery.

And in the meantime, I had also continued active in the church at Littlefield and got better acquainted. And finally somebody came to me and said, Barbara, would you like to be moderator of the Littlefield women's organization. And at first I said, oh, you don't want me to do that. And then they said, oh yeah, you do that. So I thought, well, you know I'm kind of half way connected to staff and usually the people that are connected to staff don't take the leadership roles. But Bill's role was a little bit different. He wasn't the head minister. So then I talked to Jean Lennox one day in the coffee hour room. I said, Jean, what do you think about... Oh yeah, just go ahead and do it. Ok. So then I was moderator of the group at Littlefield and I liked it. I found I really liked working with the people and planning whatever occasions were coming up. And so it was fun. And finally they said, Barbara you've been moderator for two and half years, that's enough. Just as an aside now, May Eix has been the moderator for about 20 years and nobody else wants the job.

**Ron:** Yeah, I was going to say, after two years you were probably happy to let someone else do it. But I also want to say something about organizations, because I think about this and I've studied it. I think in every organization there's a big range of people and when you try to introduce a progressive thought or something new, there are going to be people who support that and people who resist it. And I think the

strategy that works is for those people who are in favor of something to go with it without challenging or confronting those who have doubts about it or who have a different approach. So within a church, within a given congregation you'll have people who want to have an Arab ministry, other people will want to have prayer groups or choir or Bible readings or whatever it may be. Those look like they might be inconsistent, but they're not. They're just different branches of an organization. And it looks to me as if you and Bill had developed real skills along the way at doing what you wanted to do and needed to be done without irritating other people. You were able to stay in good connection with those who had a different vision of what a congregation should do.

**Barbara:** Well, I think you have to give credit to Littlefield church for that, because it might not have been so comfortable in other situations. But Littlefield church are a congregation that are, they have developed – I don't know how – but the people that really didn't want to relate to the Arab community, didn't want to live in east Dearborn left. They moved away. So the ones that stayed were interested. So what happened grew out of that soil, that you want to say, that grew out of that set of circumstances. Gradually you come to appreciate this group of people, even though it's not a huge number of people, it's people that are responsive to what's going on in the community and they seem to want to do something about it. You know, you can take people like, I'll mention Trudy McCreedy. Now when we talk about the YWCA, Trudy participated in that early on, but she found out that she likes drama and she likes all kinds of community activity and she's very good at drama. So her contribution was a little different. She herself said she didn't like to be so much in the structure of it on a daily level, but she liked doing these other things. So she was young when she came, she was only in her 30s and when I first got to Littlefield I was 49, and so Trudy's a good, what, 20 years almost younger than I.

**Ron:** You know, what you just said is what I observed. As you know, I was in a previous congregation many times larger than Littlefield. And there was a group of us that were a social justice group. We were very small in numbers, but there was a group that thought we should not be doing that. They resisted us. When I came to Littlefield I just thought this is a really good congregation. They're open to different ideas, they're not fighting each other, there's no effort to drive anyone out or to force a given definition on the congregation. So I think there may be a culture here. You may have hit on something there that I wouldn't have put into quite those words, but I noticed the same thing once you describe it.

**Barbara:** Remember, the people that didn't want to stay there, either they didn't want to live in that area anymore, they didn't want to talk about these social justice issues, they left. And sometimes it kind of hurt people's feelings because somebody in the family wanted to stay and somebody didn't. You talk about Al

Henry. Al Henry wants to stay at Littlefield, but his wife didn't. So what they have done is make a compromise and she attends a different church and he goes with her sometimes and then he stays at Littlefield sometimes. But all those kinds of experiences set it up so that when Bill and I came along, it was not a hostile environment. It was good. And if you want to compare that, go back again to Boulder, In Boulder we talk about as a high steeple church and there are a lot of people that were offended by social justice issues. And that's where they got into conflict with Bill. The head minister appealed to the people that did not want to talk about social issues. And the end result of that is that the church literally split in Boulder and there is a second church. The church is called the St. Andrews Presbyterian Church and that grew out of that exact situation at that time and that was 1965. And that church still stands and still has all the built in memory.

I have to add that my brother has been a member of the First Church for a long time and this is the church, First Presbyterian Church in Boulder, where we ended up leaving and incidentally so did the head minister, but never mind. And then people went to St. Andrews Church, created another church and have maintained a kind of ministry there. My brother just visited there not long ago. He wants to go back. He's not able now to get around very much. But at any rate, he's highly aware of the situation. So if you want to compare it to the church you were a member of before, that was part of the problem. There were these two sets of people. And now maybe all these personality changes have gotten even more and more separated because of the conflicts in the country now. So what we were seeing in the 1960s were beginnings of what are really serious problems generally in the society where they were coming, just surfacing when we were dealing with it at that point.

Well, where we are here, I am talking that I had gone to the PWPDP meetings enough so that, and I was on the committees there. And then after I had been the moderator at Littlefield, then they asked me to be the moderator at the PWPDP, at the Presbytery level. So I said yes. I'm not very good at saying no. [Barbara laughs]. So I said yes. And so I did that job from 1997 to 1999 and at that point I was invited to be on the church wide coordinating team. So I went to synod meetings. And that's the synod that covers Ohio, Michigan and a little bit of Kentucky. So I had a chance, because I had been the moderator at PWPDP, to get acquainted at the synod level and I met people that I really, really enjoyed. Sometimes now you think about the people that have scattered, some of them have died. And you think about the things that you did together some 20 or 25 years ago and it's almost like it was just last week. But one of the national meetings that I went to in 1988 was in Purdue, a national Presbyterian meeting for women from all across the country. And one of the seminars that they held at that particular meeting was one about the ecumenical decade, Churches in Solidarity with Women, which was the decade 1988-1998.

So I learned quite a bit about what the plans were, what were the challenges, and how to approach the churches. And when we're talking about this we're talking about congregational sessions that are

primarily male, elders that are primarily unaware of women's issues, literally. And how they can be unaware of women's issues and live with women all the time, only the Lord himself knows. But at any rate, the issues are there and it seemed to me that as a Christian responsibility to humanity, to people, just people, the church should be more responsible for women in all differently kinds of situations. And I'm thinking about women who don't have clean water. Women around the world, not just in America, women that carry loads on their shoulders all the time, women that walk 14 miles to get to a store. There are women's issues all around the world and not just in America. Well, the church is all around the world theoretically. So why aren't some of the people taking more initiative to do something about it? So this really, really spoke to my heart. And I wanted to interpret that so I came to Littlefield church and I talked there. And then, by then I was at the Presbytery level and I talked there. At one time I was in the coffee hour room at Littlefield and one of the men said to me, but Barbara, I don't know about this, being interested in the women. And I said, look, I'm not talking about people taking off their bras, that's not the point. The point is to be concerned for the basic issues that women need to be concerned about. They need some help in a whole variety of ways.

**Ron:** I think some of us guys were a bit slow in understanding how women saw certain issues. I remember once in my previous congregation one Sunday when Jane and I were supposed to report on some event that had happened. I can't even remember now what it was. I was assumed to be the person who would do the speaking but I happened to be drained that day and asked Jane if she would do it. And of course she did it quite well, as she always does. But what surprised me was that one of the women in the congregation came up to me afterwards and told me how wonderful she thought it was that I had let Jane make the presentation. For her, that was really significant, that a woman was standing in front of the group speaking while her husband sat in the audience. I had just been tired or whatever, but she saw me as a champion of women's rights. That exchange taught me something.

**Barbara:** And incidentally this article in the most recent *Free Press* lists and itemizes some of things that have been accomplished, but there's still a lot more to do. At any rate, this decade, I see somewhere here in my files that I actually spoke 15 places through the two synods, through the two states, Ohio and Michigan. I used to be able to speak and I had every word at the tip of my tongue and now I can never remember what I want to say. So frustrating. But at any rate, at the same time and because Littlefield was located in east Dearborn, the YWCA of Inkster in the metro Detroit area, west of Dearborn, wanted to help their community in some way. And they wanted some sort of a contact, some place to do something. So with the leadership of Corrine Vincent, who was the director at the time, she thought maybe coming to Littlefield, maybe having a nursery available in Dearborn would be a way to reach the families in east

Dearborn and provide them with some support as they adjusted to American life. So somebody asked me if I would help with that. Corrine Vincent asked me if I would come to committee meetings at YWCA and learn a little bit more about what was happening there. And so I said yes and I went first to committee meetings and then I provided a bridge between the Littlefield administration and congregation to make arrangements to have the nursery school.

And that was hard on Littlefield for a while because it was a part of the building, the basement of the new building [education wing] at Littlefield and they had always used that for other things. So at first they weren't really sure they wanted to give up that facility, but on the other hand the Y would be willing to pay for the use of it and it would be good for the budget as far as Littlefield was concerned, so Littlefield people agreed to it gradually, with Corinne Vincent's leadership. She encouraged it and the people came. She had it organized. I didn't do the organization of it, she did it. I just was a bridge between the two places, so I could come to Littlefield and I could go back to the Y. And I went to the Y for a lot of other programs too. And gradually I got more and more acquainted at the Y. And I ended up being the president of the board of directors for the YWCA. So I learned a lot, oh my goodness. Maybe 40 percent of the Y serves the black community in Inkster. And so that was my first real contact with members of the black community that took a lot of responsibility at the Y. They are very intelligent. I knew a few people also at the Presbytery and in the Presbyterian women. But I got acquainted with a different group of people at the YWCA. And I learned there that I didn't know how much I didn't know.

**Ron:** So you're dealing with two groups now, Arabs and the African Americans.

**Barbara:** And the African Americans.

**Ron:** So what do you see about the two, they're very different, aren't they.

**Barbara:** Well, what do I see? All right, we talked about this. The Arabic community, and you and I know, when they came to America they came as a group. They came as families, they came ready to support one another. They managed their money together, they live in the same buildings together, they develop a life that is a community life within their own family groups, and then family groups are friends with one another. But if you want to carry back to the Middle East it's really tribal groups that have turned into family units, and the family units move as units as immigrants. The other hand, the Black community has been diversified so badly because of slavery. Because people came to America, kidnapped from Africa, sold on the . . .

**Ron:** Market.

**Barbara:** On the market. Separated. Men and women from their families, from their children. You couldn't get anything more opposite than the way that the Black community came to America compared to the Arabic community. And we've got 400 years later the absolute results of all this. It's absolutely obvious what happens. And how people can't see that... I keep wondering why everybody can't see it, because really and truly, the Black community has overcome incredible odds to develop and be a part of a community as much as they have been.

**Ron:** The whole logic of slavery I think was to break down community

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Ron:** And isolate people from each other. Even within families. But I think this is – let me just say that I live in Aviation neighborhood where our church is and I was the president of the neighborhood association for two years. And when we moved to this neighborhood about the time you and Bill were arriving, Fordson High School, our local high school was probably 50 percent Arab and many of those families had been here two or three generations. Their parents and grandparents had come seeking a better life, and these were highly integrated families, very integrated into America. They were very American. And then in the 1970s and 1980s you saw this massive influx of refugees. And this neighborhood, many of these people are from southern Lebanon, from the town of Bint Jbeil, for example, which is right on the Israeli border. That town was under Israeli occupation for 18 years. And so it's a very different dynamic. These people were refugees. They were traumatized. When those people started coming in there was tension between basically the two elements of the Arab community. Today probably 90 percent of Fordson is Arab and you have not only Lebanese but you also have an element of Yemenis, who are the poorest of all the Arabs in terms of the Middle East. So you have this amazing complexity of, it's not a single community. And yet, as you say, each of these groups has kept some sense of identify and family cohesion, which has really served them well in adjusting to this country.

**Ron:** Now let me go back to something I meant to ask when you were talking about coming here. What exactly was the Arab ministry supposed to achieve? Do you have a sense of exactly what its goal was?

**Barbara:** I think. Now remember, you're not asking Bill.



**Ron:** I know, Bill would be the one to answer this, right.

**Barbara:** Yes, because this, I feel extremely uncomfortable sometimes because I know that Bill could answer a lot of these questions better.

**Ron:** Yes.

**Barbara:** But I think from Harry Geisinger's point of view and some of the people at the Presbytery, simply to help the Arabic community that was coming in to east Dearborn to feel more comfortable. Now there were parties that were planned to include both local members and new immigrants or people that had even lived there a long time but hadn't mixed very well in the community. So those parties occurred. And I want to remember that there was a clothes closet, so that people who came could get primarily warm coats, warm mittens, warm hats. Because in Lebanon it's not as cold as it is in Michigan and they really needed warm clothes the minute they got here. So the church provided that. And then the church provided the English [as a ] Second Language classes to help the people, especially women did not know English at all. And the men would come with the women to the church, but they would allow the women to come to learn English. At least enough English to go to the grocery store, to understand their children as they were growing.

There were enough different varieties of people that, at one point they counted I think 270 something different language groups that were attending the English Second Language classes. And the Dearborn public school system supported this, helped to pay for it, and that was also another source of income for Littlefield. For a while, they dropped out of it, but I think they're back again with the English Second Language classes now. So all those different projects were what I think were examples of what was Harry Geisinger's vision of what might be able to happen in the area. And at the same time Bill was going to the mosques, because there was one in south Dearborn and then there's one that's the Iraqi mosque on Michigan Avenue and the big new mosque, and then one was one Joy Road. Well, Bill went to each of those mosques and got acquainted with the imams there and attended some of the festivals, the holy days at the mosques. And I think that was a part of helping the congregation at Littlefield and maybe the larger group to feel comfortable with this new community.

The irony of it is that here we are in 2018 and there are people now just going to the mosque for the first time and this has been happening since the 1970s, and what are we, we're 50 years past it now. And still people are just barely able to learn something about Islam. Just learn about it, don't be afraid of it. So at any rate, don't get me started.

**Ron:** Ok, I have to mention one thing which I think is really important and I think this happened when you and Bill were here. Littlefield sent a proposal to the denomination and got \$50,000 to help ACCESS get organized. [Note: This was the Development of People program that the denomination had]. Now for anybody who knows anything about southeast Michigan, you know that ACCESS is a dynamo. It's a major social services organization and provides a remarkable range of services. At the time, it was just two people and some boxes in the back of someone's room. And by getting this money they were able to turn Ishmael Ahmed into a full time organizer, which created this organization. And I think the Littlefield church played a remarkable role in changing this from a group of individuals to an organized community which was able to speak for itself.



Presentation of Ecumenical Service Award to Littlefield Church in 1991. Left to right, Harry and Elizabeth Geisinger, Scott Gepford, Barbara and Bill Gepford, Reverend Del Meester of Littlefield, Carol Hylkema, GA Moderator Herbert Valentine at podium, Reverend David Ramage Jr. to right.

**Barbara:** Well, I have pictures, which I'm not going to go to dig out right now, but that was the first time that a national organization had given a \$50,000 grant to a local agency, so that was first in several directions. But Bill was key in the middle of that. And it's interesting because you know Ish's grandmother, who was really very instrumental in starting ACCESS in the very beginning. [Ishmael Ahmed and his grandmother Alia Hassan. The grant was to make Ishmael a full time organizer]. Well the group here from Oakwood Common went to tour of the Arab American Museum about three weeks

ago. [This museum is a creation of ACCESS]. And among all the people in one area that they show that are influential in Arabic background, Ish's grandmother is up there on the wall. So it grew with time. It was the right time and Bill seemed to be the right person at that time. And so, and he was so challenged by it. He really enjoyed getting acquainted with the variety of people that he talked to, both Muslim and Christian. A lot of the people came to him, called him on the phone. He helped with marriages. And that's his story, that's why I'm trying to stay away from his story. But I was proud of Bill. All the time I was, I considered myself lucky to be an observer as he was able to do that.

I was, you know what, when I first started going to Presbytery meetings – and I wanted to say this before – not necessarily the Presbytery, but the women, the Presbyterian women. What I did in the beginning, I just wanted something to do, because the kids were all in college or out of school and here I am in a town where I didn't know anybody, didn't know anything about the town. And I couldn't just sit in my house and do nothing. And so when they started asking me if I'd like to go to the meetings of the Presbyterian women, I said, sure I'll go, just literally for something to do. And one thing led to another. Another thing that happened was that Marge Eckert who was a key person at the beginning of all this, she invited me to go to a meeting with the American University Women, AAUW. And so I went to primarily the book group meetings, because that seemed to be the place where I felt the most comfortable. I also went to some Bridge meetings too, a lot of times. And did in fact really because I just wanted to get acquainted with other people in Dearborn. I wanted to hear what's going on.

So I got to one of the early book group meetings and there were maybe ten people in the room. One was Jenny Grush, she was kind of the leader of the group. And then there were about three other women that were participating. And a couple of them among the ten were very negative. What do you think you can do here, what do you think your husband can do. This is ridiculous, you can't do anything about this, this is a big mess. And you're never going to be able to do anything here. It was very negative. And I thought, whew. Well, ok. So at least they revealed to themselves to me how serious the situation was. I mean, if you're looking for a challenge, holy cow. I mean, it was really serious. I was just observing it. I really, really didn't take it personally in a personal way, because my reaction was, ha, you don't know my Bill. And you don't know what he's already been through, so this is not going to stop him.

There's one lady among those three that I recall now who became more and more interested in what Bill was doing and she actually – I don't know where she is now, but she actually led some AAUW groups to come to listen to Bill, to talk to Bill. So her attitude was probably receptive in the beginning but not totally negative. But she was one of three at the first that I thought, ooh, I'm going to stay away from them. But she, if I saw through all the names I could pick it out, but I can't right now.

**Ron:** She turned around. That was interesting, wasn't it?

**Barbara:** She really did. So with the AAUW group, I have continued to stay with that group and with the Bridge group until I moved here. And there's a deal. One of the ladies in the AAUW group had been at Littlefield because her daughter was participating in some activity at the church and she had gotten a little bit acquainted with us through the church. She's Catholic, so she's very, very Catholic. Most, actually, a lot of them are Catholic. But at any rate, I said, ok, if I go to this group, we're never going to talk about the Arabic community. I don't want to hear any single word about how negative the Arabic community feels to them. I don't want to hear a single word. Don't let anybody say anything in front of me. And Mary Ellen Matrice. Mary Ellen was the one that kind of pushed me. She wanted me to be a big, good Bridge player. I failed. But at any rate, she understood. I said, I'll be there, but let's just don't talk about it. So if anybody in any group, any time, we'd be sitting there playing cards and somebody would start to say something about those Arabs that were living down the street, Mary Ellen would say, Barbara it's time to vote or Barbara, go out and get some coffee. She'd change the subject right away. And she literally told people behind my back, don't talk about it in front of Barbara.

And so, through the years, they just knew, don't say anything negative in front of Barbara. And that's, and I really, I was very clear about that. I couldn't stand it. I still can't. I still get upset. If somebody says something that's really negative around here, I'll walk away. You know, I know there's a lot of trouble, I know it's been hard, but the Arabic community has contributed financially to Dearborn, they have cleaned up the Warren Avenue on the east side. They have made all kinds of good business decisions. They have supported the educational systems. There are Arab families that are lawyers, they're businessmen. And somebody will say, oh I have this neighbor and who's really nice, she brought me over some food the other day. Like totally shocked. Well, it's what they would have been doing all the time if you had been nice to them.

**Ron:** And open to them, yes.

**Barbara:** Well, anyway.

**Ron:** Yes, exactly. I think the Arab community saved this neighborhood. It was in danger and people began moving in. Chain migration. Someone who lived here would learn that his relatives back home were exposed to war and would bring them out and help them get started. People mostly as you said, they're mostly related to each other or at least from similar villages and towns. And so that's really stabilized this neighborhood and done really wonderful things.

**Barbara:** Yes, it has.

**Barbara:** I did go to the national church as far as the Presbyterian women are concerned. At the national level they invited me as a synod representative to be on the national coordinating team from the synod of the covenant. And so I went to those meetings and those meetings are every two months or so all across the country. And there's about 25 women that are on the church-wide coordinating team. And very soon after I'd maybe been there, I'd started in 1999 into 2000. And by the end of 2000 the director of the national organization came to me and she said Barbara, we want you to be the leader of the group to go to Africa. I've never been to Africa. I've been to Lebanon, I've been to Hong Kong, but I've never been to Africa. How can I be the leader to go to Africa? She said, you know how to do it, you be responsible. You have to plan the plans for two years before the trip. So from that moment on, 2000, then we had special committee meetings. Whenever there were larger meetings the smaller committee met to plan the trip to Africa. And I had to go to the national headquarters, by then it's Louisville, and talk with the representatives on the African mission projects and find out where to go and what to do and who to contact. And there was another person that also helped me. She was supposedly in the office and she was supposed to help, but that's another story.

Anyway, we planned from 2000-2002 and by then I learned a lot about Africa, a lot that I didn't know before. And we went October of 2002, there were 24 of us, 25 with administrators and 26 as it turned out, I think. And we went from Detroit, everybody from across the country came to Detroit and we had a selection committee. So we had selected the group. So we had to review a lot of nominations before we chose the group of people that went. They had to apply and that was a process in itself, just the selection process. It's different than we talked about Face to Face and the projects that the Presbytery did. Well, here you are trying to determine or affect people's lives by giving some people the opportunity for a travel trip like this. And then, of course, you have to say no to some people and you don't like to say no.

But at any rate, the group got together and they met here in the metro Detroit area and we flew from there to New York to Amsterdam to Ghana. And, of course, I didn't know anything before that two years about Ghana, Kenya. We stayed in Ghana for four days and, all the group together and it was quite interesting to learn a lot about what's going on there. And then we split up and half of the group stayed in Ghana for another ten days – because we were gone for three weeks altogether – and stayed for ten days in Ghana and the other half went on to Kenya. You have to think about this. Why didn't they go by car, why didn't they get a bus? Why didn't they do something to travel to get from Ghana to Kenya. Well, you can't, you can't build roads because the soil across much of Africa is too spongy. It won't absorb roads. And so to build a road between Ghana and Kenya as far as the world knows right now is impossible. Maybe in 100 years they'll figure out a way to do it. But at this point...

**Ron:** So how many stayed ... and you went on with them to Kenya.

**Barbara:** No, I stayed in Ghana and that was a huge privilege as it turned out. Because in Ghana we had a chance to be taken around the area. We went to Accra, all these towns I didn't know anything about, I didn't even know how to pronounce them. And we had experiences at the churches. I have lots of pictures of some of the activities that we participated in in Ghana. And I learned a lot about the castles, the slave castles. We went to the slave castles. We walked all around the main floors of the castles where the black people would be collected. And then we walked through the whole area where you go to the last point where they're separated out. Women are separated from men and they're separated in little rooms until there's just room for one person to go through the doorway to get to the ship. All of that's designed to keep control of the black people that they've kidnapped. And it used to be for the slave castles the water came up to the shores of the castles, but the water has receded. But it used to be the ships could get all the way up to the castle, so that when they stepped out of that last door and got onto the ship that was right there. And then, of course, they were controlled on the ships.

**Ron:** That was your last contact with Africa. Once you walked out of there you got on a ship, that was it.

**Barbara:** Yeah.

**Ron:** It's the reverse of the Statue of Liberty, which is where you come in. This is where you go out.

**Barbara:** This is where you go out. At any rate, and these people are in chains or whatever, mistreated to the extreme. It leaves you speechless, absolutely speechless. And most of this happened 400 years ago. All right, but the remnants are there. And it was a great privilege to do that, to go. I have a book right here that talks about the slave ships and describes the architecture of the ships and how life was managed on the ships after they left Africa. Or even other middle eastern countries too, but primarily when they left from the Ivory coast in the southern part of Africa, in that, what do we call it, the hump of Africa, the bottom part of it. Because the Ivory Coast, that's where most of it is. And when they sail out and go to America. Well, at any rate that was another thing that we got to do, because we stayed in Ghana. Our group. And then after those few days we got on the airplane and joined the rest of the group in Kenya.

**Ron:** Oh, you did get to Kenya.

**Barbara:** Yes. After the first whatever, week or ten days, then we joined the group in Kenya.

**Ron:** Oh, wonderful.

**Barbara:** And then we had quite an interesting experience because Kenya was going through – now this is 2002 – and it was going through political tensions, severe tensions at the time. So a lot of the things that they had planned to do in Kenya they couldn't do. So we got to do everything in Ghana. And the character of Kenya is more, from our point of view – I know you've been there too, so I don't know how to say this. But anyway, more politically controversial in Kenya. In Ghana it's much more laid back as a personality of the country, in Ghana. So when we got to Kenya a lot of things that they had planned, we couldn't do. I have some really good pictures and very good memories of things that we did in the city. Nairobi. But we didn't go out of Nairobi nearly as much as they had hoped we would. In Accra, we went outside Accra, we saw a lot more. So I considered myself very lucky.

We got along in our group of 13, we got along so well together, but in Kenya, they were arguing with each other all the time.

**Ron:** That's terrible. Ghana had its own political problems, but you were spared. They were over by the time you were there, I guess. And Kenya's still got tensions.

**Barbara:** That's right.

**Ron:** I love that country, I lived there three years

**Barbara:** I know you did.

**Ron:** I love that place but you can't deny that they have very serious problems.

**Barbara:** That's how I feel about Lebanon.

**Ron:** Exactly.

**Barbara:** You can't... I mean, I know the place is all torn up, but you can't let go from what really, really is the country when they're not squabbling with each other.

**Ron:** Now you mentioned Face to Face. Tell me what that is.

**Barbara:** Ok. Face to Face is an organization by the synod of the covenant and I think other synods have or used to have the same kind of organization. But that is a time when committee on ministry people from a whole variety of churches in the synod can come to one place and also people that want a new job, ministers that are looking for a job can come to the same place over a two-day period. One minister can visit with five different churches because their committees and ministers are all there, also the committees can visit with the various different candidates. So they can see five candidates. So it's a...

**Ron:** You helped organize that?

**Barbara:** Oh yes. First I was just asked to be on it because I was on a committee on ministry. Me and one other fellow went. If I remember names. And we went and I just kind of learned how to do it. But before very long, it turned out that I could just see how to structure it. I don't know how come, but I could set it up so that the committees all had a chance to meet with the candidates. It was set up so that, it's just south of the border in Ohio, it's not Bowling Green, there's another town. But at any rate, we were at the church. So first we had a central meeting where everybody's together and set the tone for the days and then it's all functions. It functions very well and people tend to plan to stay overnight and come back the next day and have a chance to visit with other Presbyterys or other groups, other committees. And out of that it works out that maybe two, three, four of the candidates will get jobs. They'll be invited back to their churches to go candidating at the churches, but they have the initial contact at Face to Face and it saves a lot of time and effort. And if you find that you don't like a candidate you just mark that one off, null, not interested in that one. And if you find one candidate that you think is really, really, really good then you call him in and see if you can – or her – hire them.

I love to do that. I don't know how many years. But it was a good number of years that I did it. And finally they added another young man from one of the other churches to be on the committee on ministry and he learned how to do it on the computer, so he could push a button and the computer did all this planning. And he came to me and he said, Barbara, I don't really mean to hurt your feelings, but I can do it on the computer in about 15 minutes and it might take you an hour or so.

**Ron:** That's funny.

**Barbara:** So I said, that's ok.

**Ron:** Yes, that's good. Now you mentioned being on the Committee on Ministry. Tell me what that involved, because that's a very important committee.



**Barbara:** Well, I think I was on that committee as a stair step from being the moderator of Presbyterian Women at the Presbytery level. So I probably was available when they needed a few women to be on the committee. So then I sat on the committee. But I learned that on the Committee on Ministry (CM) there may be, what, 15 people on that committee, but there's about four of them that make all the decisions. And it's not the women. The women sit there and we can hear it all, I mean, we can hear... Sometimes the committees are broken up into smaller groups, so you don't hear every problem, you just hear one or two problems, but they're spread out so that the whole group doesn't have to hear everybody's problems. But there's two people and I, three of us that were women that we kind of thought that there were a few of the men that made most all the decisions. I always felt some of the decisions were unsolvable. I felt very inadequate because I hadn't been to seminary. I didn't know polity. I didn't even know that word.

**Ron:** That is very complex. Presbyterians have a very complex constitution.

**Barbara:** And so a lot of times I felt unprepared for that job. And honestly, part of the reason that I kind of enjoyed Face to Face, it was something I could do. Another thing that I did not like to do but I did was to go to visit with various different churches, because when they had a session meeting they had to invite a member of the committee of ministry once a year to come and just observe the session meeting. Well, I did that sometimes, but I didn't know what I was looking at. Because I had been on the session in New Concord and I did learn a lot there and I was on a Presbytery, Muskingum Valley Presbytery, and I was sensitive to what was going on, and Bill was not in the Presbytery politics at all, because he was at the campus. But I think that, I don't know, I guess I just have a big mouth. I just didn't understand sometimes the polity. And now maybe I'd know more – well, not now –let's say ten years ago, I might have known more about what was going on in the church ultimately. But at the time I felt obviously many times inadequate, like what am I doing here.

**Ron:** So if a church was having a problem, that would go to the Committee on Ministry...

**Barbara:** Mm hm. [yes]

**Ron:** Ok, do you have any advice at the end, without going into details of specific cases, do you have any philosophy of how to deal with church... those church conflicts tear congregations apart, especially if they're not handled quickly.

**Barbara:** Ok. First place, the congregation that I observed directly was the congregation in Boulder. All right, so I saw that congregation tear itself apart. And I knew particularly one person that was on the Committee on Ministry and he was the minister of Longmont and he had been a minister at Longmont First Church when Bill and I were getting acquainted, so he had known us from day one. And when my mother moved over to Longmont, she was a member and two of my sisters were married in Longmont. So he knew the family, the minister from Longmont. So he was on the Committee on Ministry when this thing flared up and he knew Bill very well. But he was, I think, confounded. I think he heard so much negativeness in that Presbytery at that point about the situation in Boulder that he couldn't save Bill's job, no matter what. And I think probably, although we never said directly, oh he and somebody else apologized later, but at the time, I think it was unsolvable. You couldn't... It had deadlocked, so the only solution was for both men to go.

**Ron:** In retrospect that sort of makes sense, doesn't it?

**Barbara:** Yes. I mean, what can you do? You've got too many people.

**Ron:** Once it gets out of control it's really hard to resolve, isn't it.

**Barbara:** You can't. And even when you and I were talking about the situation that you experienced, I felt that you were right. And I felt how to help the other people involved to see that. And I could see that, again, it was deadlocked primarily because of some primary support from not very many people, but support. And I also always questioned one of the other men in the Presbytery, one of the other ministers, and why they had tried to sort things out after all this happened. And I just finally had to close my ears, because I think, you know, it's a matter of faith and belief and philosophy and theology, as separate from faith. I just want to ask you – did you read the articles about the Jehovah's Witnesses that were in the newspaper, I think it was last week's newspaper that I had here?

**Ron:** I did not.

**Barbara:** Well, the Jehovah's Witnesses had a situation where a young woman, very active in their community, had killed herself, her husband and her children because of a reaction to what had happened in the church because of shunning. There's a three, four page article about this. And it's truly tragic, but apparently among the Jehovah's Witnesses they feel like they're authentic Christian, that they're worshipping Jehovah God, and that they're doing the right thing, and that they're following the rules of the

Bible down to the gnat's eyebrow, as they used to say. And in that situation if people step away from the moral standards of the church, they are shunned. And then if they correct their ways, they are accepted back into the community again. But in the meantime, they're shunned. Now some people leave because of shunning and they never come back, but they leave with scars. Serious scars. So the stories that were coming out that were spotlighted in this article – it was long, it was front page and then two big pages on the inside – and other people that have felt that the shunning was wrong, that it was cruel, that it was destroying people's lives. But again, so many people think it's right, that they're doing the right thing.

So when you talk about people with theology, faith, you're talking all different kinds of places, you're not all in the same place. So if you go to a Committee on Ministry meeting – that's what we're talking about now – you can listen for so long, but after a while, you're hearing negative on both sides. You're hearing so much negative that you just have to look at the people involved and decide the basic character of the people and decide what is the best thing to do for those people involved. Just make a decision there. And in the case of our experience in Boulder, the best thing to do was for both personalities that had a lot to contribute, let's just stop this. Now some of it's gone on and on and on and my brother and I just talked, I just called him about, what, three days ago and said, Bob, I'm doing all this and I need some answers. But in the reference to that he said he wanted to go back to First Church, he wanted to go in the back without anybody noticing he's there to see what's going on right now, because strange things have been happening at First Church.

**Ron:** All these decades later?

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Ron:** That's like a spirit that keeps there, doesn't it. It goes on for generation to generation.

**Barbara:** Right, if you're in a college town, you've got some people that absolutely sure it's the way it should be, one side of the story. And then, of course, in the case in Boulder the other church, St. Andrews, he did go to that church not too long ago, but he's really not well himself so he can't function as well as he used to. And for a long time after Bill and I left, he still was in the choir and he would do like I do and just if he heard the wrong people or heard the wrong things he walked away from it, just walked away. And he stayed there anyway.

**Ron:** Well, you know, I was involved in a church conflict. I did a book on it, I did a real analysis of it.<sup>18</sup> I like the Presbyterian polity, I think basically it's a good polity. When a problem emerges in a congregation I think you have to deal with it very quickly. Within weeks it could be out of control. And I think it has to be dealt with personally. *The Book of Order* is to structure polity, but in the end it has to be people trying to salvage a situation and trying to work out things. So I don't know, I think quick intervention and a compassionate spirit are the two things that will make the polity work. If you don't have those two things the polity malfunctions.

**Barbara:** Ok, and quick intervention, from the point of view of the Committee on Ministry, it might not happen, because...

**Ron:** Yes, they're cautious, aren't they?

**Barbara:** Well, not only that, but they have too many different things to worry about. Literally it is just like the kid that makes the most noise gets the attention. So you'll have one that you're talking about every single time you're together and three others that are popping up in the background. So part of it is human frailty. And when you get into a Committee on Ministry it might be something in Grosse Pointe Woods that's coming to pieces and so Cherry Hill is smart, they can take care of themselves. And then da da da da.. it just goes on and on and on. And you can sit on it. I think I was on the Committee of Ministry eight or nine years. I don't know, honestly I sometimes I cannot believe all the stuff I've written down here, because I can't even, I can remember it when I see it on paper, but I can't figure out how we did it all. We didn't have any housekeepers, from the time we got to Dearborn Bill never wanted to have any housekeepers anymore. He never wanted anybody else in the house. He was tired of people in and out of the house all the time. So he just said from the very beginning, nobody. Ok, I was all right with that.

---

<sup>18</sup> Ron was involved as an elder in a conflict in a high-steeple church. A new minister, lacking experience or interpersonal skills, began to malfunction. The matter was taken to the session and the Committee on Ministry. There was ecclesiastical litigation involving accusations of pastoral misconduct, and counter-accusations against those raising complaints. The matter ended up in the civil courts. Barbara was on the Committee on Ministry at the time so her insights are particularly valuable. Ron wrote a scholarly, participant observer case study analysis of the conflict. The book is *Decent and in Order. Conflict, Christianity and Policy in a Presbyterian Congregation*. (Praeger, 2000).

## Chapter Eight

### Reflections on a Life Well Lived

**Ron:** You were on the Session in Dearborn, weren't you?

**Barbara:** The years that we were at Littlefield Presbyterian Church began in 1979. I wasn't on the session at the beginning, but some years later they asked me to be on the session. I have already talked about being part of the women's organization and of getting more and more acquainted with the people at Littlefield and feeling more comfortable there. So it was a privilege to be on the session and that's why I wanted to be sure to mention it. I'm not sure that I contributed particularly to the decisions that were being made, but I was glad to be part of it and to hear how people struggled to keep the church going and to encourage it.<sup>19</sup> So I liked the years that I was on the session.

**Barbara:** One of the things that I wanted to comment to about the women's organization was the fact that I had been given the honorary membership. Now this is not particularly significant in the larger picture because lots of people get an honorary membership eventually. But I wanted to call attention to the tribute that was given to me. And I think it's Jane Stockton that wrote this particular tribute. She gave two honorary memberships at the same time, and when she came to my particular honor, she wrote part of it – this is only part of it, but I think this is important. Skipping in the middle of the paragraph: “Barbara, she has been a very special friend for many of us and she's challenged us to grow and learn in ways we had not thought possible. So it is with such joy that I present one of our Littlefield 1992 honorary life memberships to Barbara Gepford.” Now I just thought that was important because it says “we had not thought possible.” That's what I thought was important, which is why I wanted to include it. And again, let me say, it was Jane Stockton who's responsible for giving those sponsorships every year, that I think she wrote that. So I appreciated that.

**Ron:** And she's sitting right here.

**Barbara:** And she's sitting right here, but I was going to say that anyway. And now another thing that we talked about was the church-wide coordinating team and the fact that I was asked to be first synod

---

<sup>19</sup> In the 1960s, the congregation had over a thousand members. But the neighborhood began to change in terms of its ethnic and religious makeup, and the children of the congregation began to move away. At the point of the interviews, it had 51 members, but was still vigorous in its activities.

representative and then from there to the church-wide coordinating team. And then I mentioned in the previous interview that I was asked to be the leader for the group of women that went to Africa, went to Ghana and Kenya. And we talked about that a little bit.

But then I did not mention that the next year, in 2003, people that had been our hosts in Africa came back to the United States, to the annual church-wide meeting and they were our international guests for that annual meeting. It was a very special time for these guests. They had to travel overseas to get to the meetings. I think the meetings that I was the hostess for were in Louisville. But I was then responsible to be sure that the guests were cared for, that they were in the right places at the right times. And they were available for interviews during the time they were there. They got meals at the right time, they stayed in the right places. So I was very busy during that tri-annual meeting in 2003, when the international guests came. There were some that came from places other than Africa too, but they were all grouped into one group and we took care of all of them.

So when Ron asks me during these interviews, what are the goals of some of this, I think about it and I think, well it's one thing to be asked to do a job and the other thing is to talk about what you did in that job. Did you do anything? Did you just sit like a lump on a log in a chair? Well, maybe that's what I did sometimes, but I tried not to waste all my time.

### **The Reimagining Conference**

**Ron:** Tell me about the Reimagining Conference. That created a lot of tension. I know you attended.

**Barbara:** I attended from the second day through the rest of the conference, so I did not get there for the very beginning. But it was not nearly as controversial in experience as it was in the after effects. Some people were very threatened by the idea that the women were interpreting the role of God in the world. And I can't even remember all the details. I know that women were speaking out about how they felt the Scriptures spoke to women. And in many cases they were accurate, they were right. Sometimes I didn't agree with the interpretations. A lot of times I didn't always agree. But I went to a lot of missionary conferences when Bill and I were together, and a lot of times I didn't agree with everything that was said. But I listened to all of it and I didn't feel threatened by any of it. And I did not feel threatened at all by the interpretations of the leaders that were the effective planning members of all the planning committees. I knew them personally, I knew they were just trying to look at things in new ways. And it was exciting, it was interesting. I remember a conversation with one of Littlefield's elders during coffee hour. He was very upset. I told him that it was not threatening, that we should just let them talk.

One thing that I do remember particularly at one point when there were 2,000 women, they asked all the women that would like to come out as lesbian in one way or another, would they like to come out

in the this conference. And so the environment was very comforting and very open. And so some people across the whole 2,000 in the room looked at each other and some people came forward. And it turned out that I was very surprised, there were about 200 people that came forward out of 2,000. And if you take 200 out of 2,000 that's about 10 percent of the group that was there and they said that this is clearly parallel to our entire society. It's about 10 percent of the society that would identify themselves as lesbian. So that in itself is one thing that I remember. I'm sorry that I don't have more to say about that. But I did feel that some people at Littlefield were very threatened by the idea of such a conference. And I told them, don't worry about it, nothing's going to be that different. It's just new ideas, it's just new ideas. And then they asked me to do interpretation at the Presbytery meeting and I did it there and I said the same thing and told people, don't worry about it, just listen, just learn. It's not that serious. So at any rate, calmed that one down.

**Ron:** I remember the dispute over the word Sophia, which is Greek for wisdom. But it is also a female name, so showing respect for "wisdom," even if it is the wisdom of God, was portrayed as idolatry.

**Barbara:** Yes, it's the word for wisdom, and again, if you read all kinds of interpretation of Scripture, you read them in all kinds of places, you see the word Sophia used often. But somehow it became an issue at that conference. I've learned a lot and I've become aware of it more since that conference, but it was a word and a term that had always been there, it just had not been emphasized.

**Jane:** How did that conference get planned? Who was in charge?

**Barbara:** The planning came out of the women's program department of Louisville of the Presbyterian church at the planning level. The lady that was chair of the planning committee had worked with a group, but because of the threat over this particular conference she lost her job. And this is totally inadequate because I need to have names and I know most of these people personally, but I just can't tell you names. But she did lose her job. But it was planned carefully, anticipating that it would be a challenge to people, but had no anticipation that it was going to become so controversial. That was a very big surprise.

**Ron:** You know at the time there was an organized resistance group within the Presbyterian denomination associated with right wing ministers. They had their own newspapers, their own outlets. I'm sure they stirred this up a lot, because this was the kind of thing that would be very threatening to them.

**Barbara:** It was very threatening and I had many of those newspapers and Carol Hylkema has saved a lot of the material that was published as a result of the conference. She's kept it in order well enough so that she sent it to the Presbyterian archives and they accepted her whole set of papers, the whole collection.

**Ron:** That's wonderful.

**Barbara:** So it's there. I didn't keep it as consistently as she did, but I had many different copies of it. But she kept it very well organized. She really did very well as far as organization and presentation and memory. She would be able to remember a lot of things that I can't remember. She's also ten years younger than I am, 12 years younger, so it made a big difference.

I think that as far as some of the other things I remember, one of the persons that was important during the years from probably about 1982 until 2016 was Barbara Smith. Barbara was a member at another church in the metro area, but she and I got acquainted at Presbyterian Women in Detroit, the PWPD group, and we were on a committee together and found that we were both interested in women's issues. So she and I worked together on many different plans for conferences or seminars about women's issues. And after that was more or less finished, then we also often had breakfast together, sometimes once a month, sometimes twice a month. But we always had lots of things to talk about and she was very, very active in the Presbytery. So she was concerned for what was happening in the whole church. And now she's moved away, so I don't see her so much anymore. But she was important along the way.

### **The Family**

**Barbara:** I do have on this little list here that we had our family coming in and out of all these different activities all the time. We found letters that Bill wrote. He was writing to our larger family and listing all the variety of visits that children were having or we were going to them. And just to summarize here, first wedding in the family was in 1977, while we were still in New Concord. And then after we got to Littlefield Church we had a wedding in 1983 and another one in 1984 and another one in 1985. So I was busy. Those weddings, the 1984 and 1985, were our two daughters. So you know mothers of daughters, they have to work pretty hard to get through those days. With all the in-laws coming in and out. And then we have now eight grandchildren.

So I need to tell you first the grandchildren. The marriage in 1983 was David and Judy, and that's also a broken marriage now, but their children are Michael and Dan and Katie. And then in 1984 the marriages are Bill and Andrea and their children are Rachel and Matthew. And then in 1985 the marriage is Joanna and Jeff and their children are Sarah and Lisa and Brian. Now I'm old enough, so I got more to talk about. So we have two, let's see... Joanna's family, Lisa, child number two, has her baby who is



Raley. He was just born in August of 2017. And then we have of the marriage in 1983, Dan. Dan has two little girls that were born in 2014 and 2016. And their little girls' names are Taryn and Chandler, but we call her CC. and then there's Jayden. Jayden is now six years old and he's Sarah's son. So Sarah and Nathan were married eventually. But at the time that Jayden was born they weren't married yet. But Jayden is now in kindergarten, the cutest little boy you ever saw. He's a very appealing child.

So at any rate, there we are. That's our children, our grandchildren, and our great-grandchildren.

**Ron:** So you have four kids, eight grandkids,

**Barbara:** And four great-grandchildren.

**Barbara:** The 1977 marriage, there's no children, no. But 1983, that's the three children. And then 1984 and 1985. And our Scott – we haven't talked about Scott. And Scott was married to Katrina in 1996, some years after the others were married. And they have no children. So the four, our four children are David and Scott and Joanna and Andrea.



### Church Activities

**Jane:** I have a question that is not very informed. But you did a lot of things for the Presbytery. You were on committees, at least one that I know of. And you were on committees for the General Assembly, however that's interpreted. I'm assuming that's correct terminology.

**Barbara:** Yes, we talked mostly about that in the last interview.

**Jane:** Well, I want to know though, because of me.

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Jane:** Did you have a goal or did you just, you got asked and you served? Did you have anything you were trying to accomplish on those committees?

**Barbara:** No, not particularly. As I told Ron, when I first started getting involved with Presbyterian women in the beginning it was because the people at Littlefield asked me to take a job. And then gradually people said, would you like to go to a Presbytery meeting or Presbyterian women's activities. And, you know, I went for something to do, because Bill was busy all the time. I was kind of stuck at home and I didn't know anybody in town. I was a little bit overwhelmed by the city and life here, which did not include me at all. So just to go, I just went for something to do. And then I would go, and then I knew enough about the larger church, so I knew enough and then I went to Presbytery meetings all the time, because he just wanted me to go with him. So I would just go and then somebody would say, Barbara, could you help me with this or this, and that's how it happened.

**Jane:** That's amazing to hear that, because you seem to be so involved. And the idea that.... That's such an interesting aspect of your life.

**Barbara:** Well, because I really, really enjoyed and gotten acquainted with a lot of people in Lebanon that came and went from the church in the America. And then in Hong Kong there were people coming in and out all the time, which a lot of it I haven't even mentioned and I go back and I read something someplace where people wrote thank you notes later and said, thank you for your hospitality in Hong Kong. Well, those were American people that were working in the Louisville offices or in New York offices. So I knew from that point of view what people were talking about at the Presbytery. So when

somebody came, I knew where they were coming from. And so I felt comfortable at that level. I just didn't know Detroit.

One of the things that's interesting about this, you know, I was chair of the Month of Mission here in the Detroit Presbytery for, I think maybe four years. And why, because they said that I would know the people that were coming in that were coming to interpret what they were doing in their country. Ok. So I saw that from the person coming back, let's say the person coming back from the Philippines. They know a lot about the Philippines, but they don't know anything about what's going on in Detroit. They don't anything about the influx of Arab community in Detroit, they don't know anything about what's going on locally. So I decided that we should have this breakfast. Nobody...

**Jane:** You started the mission breakfasts.

**Barbara:** Nobody remembers that.

**Ron:** Wow! That was a major activity.

**Barbara:** But I said, listen, we need to have a time when all the missionaries – I don't even like to use that word – but at any rate, when all the missionaries came to the city, we need to have a time when the people from the city can tell the missionaries what is going on in their country, here in Dearborn and Detroit. And I said, this story in Detroit is so interesting and it's so good, and the people from the Philippines or from Timbuktu ought to know what's going on in Detroit. Ok. So we did that and maybe for one or two years it worked. But people here did not catch it. They did not get the idea, and what they wanted to do was come at a breakfast and then they wanted to have the missionaries tell their story in the whole breakfast time. So did the missionary ever hear the story of what was going on in Detroit? No. So years and years I kept waiting for somebody to catch this, and then I gave up. And then I was always at the breakfast after that, and I always saw what was happening, and I always thought they still don't know what's going on in Detroit.

And, you know, for me, Detroit was very interesting. Very, very interesting. Once I got enough used to it to see. And then Bill was making all these initial contacts with a variety of people and he was also making the contacts with the other churches, downtown churches. And he was making contacts with the Black community and he was trying to mix people up. So the influx of the Arabic community that were coming out of Lebanon and Syria was so dramatic that I thought the people that are working other places in the world should know about it. And the fact is that even people in Birmingham and Bloomfield

Hills, they don't know what's happening in Detroit either. They don't know what's happening in Dearborn particularly. Don't get me started.

**Ron:** Jane and I were very lucky because we became the drop off place for those missionaries.

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Ron:** Because we have a nice big house, and you know. And so when they would come and spend the night, almost every year. We had five or six of them over the years, and we loved it.

**Barbara:** I know you did.

**Ron:** These people from all these different places, and we would take them out and take them to Al-Amer restaurant for a nice Arabic meal.

**Barbara:** And down to ACCESS.

**Ron:** Yes, and if we ever had a chance, we would tell them about the Arabic community.

**Barbara:** What's going on here.

**Ron:** Yes, a few of them picked it up from sitting in our living room and talking about this. Because they were interested.

**Barbara:** Sure. Interested in a kind of a creative way, because they can see the larger picture here. They're not being threatened by what's happening here, they're simply learning about it.

**Jane:** We met some missionaries in Kenya when we were there, and one of them, and the woman said, you know, one reason we're missionaries is that we like new things. We like to travel, we like to learn things. And so I just find missionaries to be incredibly interesting and willing to talk about just about everything, because they're encountered a lot.

**Barbara:** Yes. As I was growing up in a small town, I knew I couldn't stay. It was much too...

**Jane:** Small.

**Barbara:** Quiet for me. And then as I began to meet people, first with Bill and at seminary and then in New York, before we went to Lebanon, these were really interesting people. And I didn't want to marry a doctor. That was on the list. So I had a chance to meet people. And then when we got to Lebanon, I've talked about some of the people that were important to us. But they were just interesting. And so even though I myself didn't feel prepared to do this at all, I felt inadequate in many ways. But I found that I had a contribution that I could make in terms of who I am and what I learned. And so I felt more comfortable. And I just enjoyed it all the time. The only thing, the only thing that was wrong with going to Lebanon in the first place was it was 9,000 miles away from home, and we couldn't get home as often as we would if we were in the States going home for Christmas or whatever. And I really, really did miss family. But other than that, I was fine. So I got used to it eventually.

**Jane:** Were you scared – I mean, you talk a little bit, the first time we talked to you – were you scared of the different things that were going on in the Middle East? I mean, it sounds like you just moved on with whatever ...

**Barbara:** Well, see it wasn't at the level of intensity. You know, we got to Sidon, which is, what, ten miles above the border in 1953. All right, Israel is created in 1948. And the first shock of people being forced out of parts of what had been Palestine and forced into the refugee camps in Lebanon was all so new. And everybody was angry under the surface, and they were all talking among themselves. And I very quickly learned how wrong this was from the point of view of the local community in Lebanon. But they hadn't come to the point of shooting at each other. They were just unhappy. And then groups began to surface. And I just saw in one of these that I just got, a mention of Hezbollah. Well, we heard about that as a small little group. And all of this has grown way beyond the original perspective. Way worse. And then the actual fighting itself didn't evolve until 1978, 1979. And we had left Lebanon in 1963, because we were there ten years, 1953 to 1963.

**Jane:** Oh ok.

**Barbara:** So we were gone before it got past this. They were beginning to shoot at people and of course Ben Weir was kidnapped and the agriculture professor and the president of the university. But it was happening after we left. Mostly in the 1980s.

**Ron:** [Ron picks up a magazine]. This is the American University of Beirut Student...

**Barbara:** Alumni magazine.

**Ron:** *The Main Gate*, it's called.

**Barbara:** The main gate is the gate that they step out of to get on to Rue Homra, and they just named this the whole alumni. And that's the new one, it just came in the last few days. I get it all the time. And it's really, really, really interesting. I read it from cover to cover and I have, I probably have some other copies. The work that's going on, the effort to keep the university going. And, of course, I have quite a little bit about the university in New York City that's the American University of Beirut in New York and whatever's going on there.

**Jane:** There was a time when you were evacuated. Were you scared?

**Barbara:** Was I scared? Not really scared from the point of view of having somebody just look at me with a gun aiming at me. But I was certainly uneasy. First place, I think I'm with, I'm always with Bill in these situations and we're with other mission families. In this case in Tripoli we're with the Boises and the Deckers, the two families. So we're never alone. I'm never isolated in the garage with somebody just pointing... But I know the circumstances are not good. I know there are guards nearby that are going to help us get through the crowds. In Hong Kong too, we were sometimes in the middle of a riot. I can tell you stories that I never, ever put on the tape. When Bill and I came out of a theater one night, there was a riot developing over the amount of money that was going to be charged for the Star Ferry, the ferry that goes from the mainland to Hong Kong Island. And so they didn't think that the rate should be raised, so there were a lot of people that are everyday workers that didn't want the prices to be raised at the Star Ferry. So there was a big riot going on and we had – we got to our car, but we had to drive through back roads and back roads and back roads to get around where could get to the main road to get home to our kids, and our kids were alone at home.

We often left the two boys that were older kind of supervising the girls. Well, they're not totally alone, because we're in an apartment building where there are other people in the building, but the boys often took care of the girls when we'd go out just like to a movie, and that's how we got caught in that riot. David was caught in a riot on the bus one time in downtown Hong Kong where he, there was a group of people that were moving again toward the Star Ferry and the bus just worked its way through and got through the people that were in the riot. And then David got home all right. And he stayed calm. The kids

were not stupid, they could take care of themselves enough. So they were never in a situation where it was going to be really, really bad. It could have been, but it wasn't.

### **Bill's Retirement**

**Barbara:** So the other thing to talk about would be things that Bill reflected as he retired and how he felt about life. First place, he officially retired in 1992 and that was when he was, I think, 65. And when he officially retired, he went to work one day the next week in a more casual plaid shirt and they told him in the office, if you're going to come to the office, you gotta dress up. We know you're officially retired, but you got to dress up like an ordained minister. You can't come to work in your plaid shirt.

**Ron:** That's funny.

**Barbara:** So the next day he came dressed up and after that he always was dressed up, even though he was officially retired. And he continued doing what he was doing, he continued all his committee meetings and so on. Until we moved to Livonia. And we moved to Livonia partly because he was concerned that we wouldn't be so near the church anymore, because the church should grow and get a new minister and the new minister should live near the church and it shouldn't be us. And so he wanted to find a place away from the local environment, for the sake of the Presbytery perspective. So at any rate.

**Ron:** What year was that?

**Barbara:** We moved in 1995, December. We spent a couple years trying to decide where we're going to move. 1994, 1995 we were looking around and we thought about a lot of different things. But at any rate, in 1995 we moved to Livonia. And that turned out to be very, very good, except it was hard on Bill to drive home. He was used to coming home at noon and then going back. So he decided to stay at the office until say 1:30 or 2:00 and then come home for the rest of the day. And obviously he's retired so he's flexible. But he was coming home one day and he came to an intersection and he fell asleep at the intersection. And it was only because everybody coming and going stopped and let him get through, otherwise there would have been a big mess in the intersection. And every time we cross that intersection he always says, this is where I fell asleep. Well, he was tired at the end of a day at work and this happened along the way sometime about 1998, in some place in there. He even earlier, after we'd only been maybe a year, 1996, 1997, he said it would sure be a lot easier if we had lived closer to the church. Well, it was his idea in the first place and he said, it's getting really hard to drive. And I said, I just can't move again.

We just can't turn around and go back, I just can't do it. Well, he accepted that, that was all right. He understood that. But it was hard for him to make that trip.

Then when he was still getting telephone calls all the time for committee meetings in 2001 and at the same time I was going to church wide meetings. I started going away a lot in 1999 when I first got on the church wide coordinating team and I was going across the country, going to Pennsylvania and going to California and going everywhere. I'd be gone for three or four days and he managed everything. And still managing his committee meetings. Until maybe 2004, 2005. And now as we reflect on all of this, he was beginning to show some hesitation about going, for instance, for committee meetings that were going to be in the evenings, because he began to be afraid to drive in the dark. And then he still, we were thinking that it was just aging. And then in 2003, David came to live with us all the time because his relationship with his wife was breaking down very bad. And at first we worked together on that, and I think it was very hard on Bill. Maybe it was ok to have David there a couple of years, but it got harder because David was so troubled by his own problems that we were trying to help him all the time. So it was a strain. And Bill, he wanted to be at the church, he wanted to go, but he did not feel like he should be on the committee meetings anymore. So he just said, Barbara, I just can't go. And I thought it was mostly because he couldn't hear very well. Because he wasn't hearing what people were saying, it wasn't that he couldn't make decisions, but he couldn't hear very well.

**Ron:** I noticed this, that there were times he couldn't really understand what I was saying. He was good at faking it but he was having trouble hearing.

**Barbara:** Yes. He was getting to be what, 83, 84, 85 and his dad had died when he was 80. So it's all part of what we know now to be the early stages of Parkinson's. As it became obvious, he was far more aware of his limitations. He was hiding a lot and as we look back all the children and I remember things that happened that would indicate more than just aging. I don't know how much you want on the tape.

**Ron:** Whatever you feel comfortable discussing.

**Barbara:** But it was a, there were a series of little incidents that indicated that he wasn't able to do what he used to do. And it came up 2014, he had major surgery in 2011 and that was prostate surgery and after that he thought he'd be ok, but a lot more effects of Parkinson's were doubled up with the effects of the surgery. And all of which, as amateurs, we didn't realize.

But at any rate, 2014, when the national Presbyterians General Assembly came here, there were people at General Assembly that really wanted to talk to Bill about things in the Middle East, issues of the



Middle East. And they asked to see Bill. First they wanted him in committees downtown and then one particular person was going to be at Littlefield to be there for the lunch when the Littlefield people entertained everybody for General Assembly. And particularly Bill was hoping that he, they were hoping he'd be there. And he was scared to even drive to Littlefield. And I was out of town. I went to North Carolina to be a grandson's high school graduation. So in the dilemma of knowing that General Assembly was going to be on at exactly the same time, I just, ok, I can't go to General Assembly, I've got to go to North Carolina. So Bill was home and if I had been there to drive the car, he would have been able to manage to get to the church. But he didn't even want to do that by himself. He didn't want to drive the car. So I think he drove the car the last time in March.

And he was getting himself to go over to the recreation center and walk and he walked around. And he pushed himself to do that until the latter part of March 2015. And by then we were going to see the neurological medical people and we were making arrangements to move in here and he was adamant that we get here as quickly as possible. And to be fair to him, he wanted to move into a senior center in 2007. He really wanted to do it. And we looked in North Carolina at a place that I'm still negotiating with. I just got more information in the mail this week about that. But at any rate, we decided not to go in 2007 because he wanted to stay here where the action was with the Arabic community. And he chose to stay. So that was all right. But someplace between 2007 and 2010, 2011 he wanted to move into a senior center. And he kept saying, we've got to move, and I kept saying, no I don't want to move. And we made the down payment at Fox Run. And then we went to talk in the office and they said you have to condense everything down to two rooms and you can have maybe two store rooms. And I thought, all the stuff in this condo, two storerooms. I can't do it. And so I said, I just can't do it.

And Bill really wanted to do it then and I think he wanted to do it because he knew that his limitations were coming and he couldn't, he never said to me out loud, but he was trying to say it, and I couldn't see it from his point of view. Maybe I've told you already, you know, one time in the car, Bill was driving home from Littlefield on a Sunday morning and he said, I feel like I'm dying. And I said, Bill, you have a good heart rate, you have a normal temperature, normal blood pressure. You're not dying. And so I am taking the kind of a role that I should not have taken. Scott says, well mom did you ever ask dad why he felt that way. What was his experience, why was he saying that. No, I just kept saying, you're all right. And so then, now, all the kids have said, mom, why didn't you ask dad. So I'm in trouble. I'm in trouble with the kids. Why didn't you ask dad. Well, I just tried to talk him out of it. And so all those kinds of little incidents let us know that... And I don't know, the Parkinson's characteristically is many illusions that, and you see the advertisements. Even on the TV now, they will stage it where the illusions are coming in the door, they show the illusions.

**Ron:** They do, yes. I've seen those advertisements.

**Barbara:** That's exactly what Bill was experiencing. And he would sit here and he'd watch the door and he would be sure that somebody is coming in the door. Then he said, now we're going to go to London and the group is all ready to go to London, so you better call them, because I don't feel very well tonight, so I don't think we're going to be able to go to London. So you call all the people, be sure that you tell them that we can't go, so they can cancel their trips, cancel their tickets. Ok, honey, I'll call. So a little while later he'll say, have you called all the people that were going to go to London. And I say, yes, I've called everybody, everybody knows. So that would make him feel better. Another time even while he was in the hospital, and this is just about 20 days before he dies, he's at the hospital. And he's saying, now we're going to have a two day conference in Alma College and we need to have the markers and the big sheets of white paper, because we're going to be writing things on the white paper. So you've got to be sure when we get ready to go tomorrow to have the markers and the white big sheets of paper. So Joanna was there at that time and she said, ok dad, we'll have the markers and we'll have the papers. So the next day we were sure that he was going to ask us if we had the markers ready. Well he forgot about it, so he didn't answer. But part of him was still organizing talks.

Sometimes he talked about family, he talked about the children. He worried about David, always worried about David. I said, now David's going to be ok, we'll be all right. So we had that conversation. But he was very glad to have the children here when they were all coming. He knew everybody. He knew all the grandchildren, he knew everybody that was here. He never ever forgot.

**Jane:** Always.

**Barbara:** Always, he knew everybody in the family, yeah. And he even knew all the grandchildren. He knew Jayden, Jayden was so, the one that's now six years old. He knew him along with everybody else. And Jayden was so impressed with grandpa, grandpa's in the hospital bed in the other room, Jayden would just look at him and he sat on the edge of the bed and he just looked at him. And then when Jayden came back for the memorial service, well, where's grandpa. Grandpa's not there, he's gone. And Jayden just went into the room and he just stood there and just looked and looked. Yes, this is where grandpa was, but he's gone. And then again, just that little five year old mind is trying to absorb all this. It was so touching. But that's the end of our story.

**Jane:** I'm glad you've done this. I missed a lot of it but Ron and I have always thought that you had a life to talk about it

**Barbara:** Yes, I know that.

**Ron:** Do you want to tell the story you told us about Bill's last minutes?

**Barbara:** He was in the hospital bed in the other room and the last day the hospice people were all here and they were keeping track of him and being very supportive of him. And as he was obviously still aware of everything that was going on, but his lungs would stop and then they'd start again. And then they'd stop and start again, and that went all day. And the other fellow, who's worked with a lot of people in this set of circumstances, he said he's never seen in his life anybody that totally stopped and then his lungs started again. And so that went on through part of the day. And there were people coming and going all day long. And then it got to be evening time and everything was set up assuming that he might, you know, be through the night, be with us. And then around about 8 o'clock he was getting obviously slower and I was right beside him. The only thing that I could think of to say at that moment was, honey, don't worry, everything's going to be all right, the bills are all paid. And it's all I could think was, honey, the bills are all paid, everything's going to be all right, the bills are all paid. He always paid the bills and I wanted him to know I could handle that. And he looked up at me and he had a tear in his eye. I think that was the first time he realized this was the end. And then I thought, oh what a... That's all I could think of, and I could hear his, I was right there, I could feel his heart, you could feel it just going down inch by inch by inch. And it was so quiet, it was so comfortable, it was so real, it was so normal. It wasn't frightening, he wasn't having any severe pain. And he just kind of went away.

**Jane:** And the bills were paid.

**Barbara:** The bills were all paid. Andrea had been in the other room, she was talking to a friend that had just gone through the same thing with that friend's father, and so why Andrea called at that moment, we don't know, but at any rate, she ran back in, and she wasn't there just as Bill was leaving. But he triggered her to say the Lord's Prayer and she could remember it more than I could, and so she said some of the more scripturally effective meaningful things that you think that you'd be able to say. But I couldn't, I couldn't even remember, for months I couldn't remember afterward the difference between the Lord's Prayer and the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. Still to this day, I have them propped up in there so I can separate one from the other. Well, Andrea was able to do that and

**Jane:** But Barb, you're a very practical person.

**Barbara:** Yes. It was just...

**Jane:** I mean, that – he lived with you all those years, he knew what you were like.

**Barbara:** He knew I wasn't too good on the Scriptural end of life. He knew that to start with and he probably thought, oh Barbara. But at any rate. I was just going to say, oh I can't remember what I was going to say, but at any rate. One of the things in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, the shadow of death, the phrase, the shadow of death. That phrase I've been saying all my life and until that day, that time, all that day, I kept thinking of the phrase, the shadow of death. And that's what was happening that day, it was exactly right, that was exactly the right words. And it isn't death yet, but it's the shadow of death. And those words were very meaningful. So since then I've gone through that so many times. The difference between the two are still shaky.

### **Last Thoughts**

**Ron:** Do you have any last reflections here? This has been a pretty good project and it's almost finished.

**Barbara:** Well, this project for me has in some ways been very healing, very comforting in many ways. It's kind of fun to sit here and have somebody listening so that you're not just talking to yourself. And I've really appreciated the time that he's been willing to give because it's taking time out of a professor's life to come tooting over here. And so I very much appreciated the opportunity to dwell on it. But on the other hand, sometimes some of the memories that I've pulled up are memories that I tried to block, I tried not to think about anymore. And so to make myself say some of the things that we lived with before we came to Dearborn were hard to remember. They were hard. One time it took me three days, speaking of losing sleep, over those three days and after that one interview, it was very hard.

And you think back over how you reacted in those circumstances and the results of some of those experiences. But I'm absolutely sure and always was that we were able to, I don't want the word survive, but almost that's the right word, in Dearborn in the early years when the Arabic community was very much misunderstood. I think because of what we had lived through before we ever got to Dearborn it made us see enough from observers' point of view so it didn't intimidate us. It didn't, it just challenged us. We thought, well, you got trouble here folks, but let's get with it and let's figure it out. We knew, we were very aware of what was going on in Lebanon while we were in Hong Kong, but we weren't in the middle of it, in Lebanon. And in Hong Kong we were very aware of the refugees that were coming out of the mainland in droves all the time, we were very aware of what was happening in the Vietnam war conflict and the soldiers, the military there. So it was another conflict.

So when you come into Dearborn and see the conflict here in this area, it was just more of the same, in a sense. It was just different personalities and the issues somewhat different. But we were very aware of it. So from that point of view, the privilege actually of coming to Dearborn was – and I've always said, it was God's plan not ours, that's for sure, because we never had any knowledge of Dearborn, we had never been here, we had never been to Michigan, we had nobody that we knew here. We had no background for the Detroit Presbytery, except for Mrs. Boise, who came from the Detroit Presbytery. And it was all a plan that wasn't ours. And Bill was at just the right age, because he was just 52. So he'd had all these previous years while he was 25, 26 up to 52 with his background and then he came here and he had a whole lifetime here.

**Ron:** You said to me, I don't remember if it was on tape or off, but you said, by the time we got to Dearborn we'd had so many setbacks that we were very tough and we were not going to be defeated by this situation.

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Ron:** And I think you can see that, in the both of you.

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Ron:** You know, Bill was the high profile person. He was the one on the committees and he did all the speaking and he was the one on the stage all the time. But I realized that you had contributions you made, and that's why I was so happy to do these interviews. By the way, I'm going to put this on my resume.

*[Jane and Barbara laugh]*

**Ron:** As far as I'm concerned this is oral history.

**Jane:** So it doesn't sound like you would change a thing in your life.

**Barbara:** Well, that's a good question. How could I change it? I've never really thought of changing anything. I considered it utter privilege – I just said something to Joanna earlier today that Bill was a knockout when I first met him. I mean, here I am, I'm just out of college and I'm 20, 21 and he's just in the middle of seminary and he is tall, handsome, he's an engineer and I, of course, knew all kinds of

engineers from Iowa State. So he had the engineer, he had the science background, but he was really caring about people. I mean, he really wanted to go to seminary. He really wanted to care about people. How could I get this in one package? How could you possibly find a package? And I thought I was not nearly attractive enough to have him pay any attention to me.

**Jane:** Because he was as cute as could be, is that what you...

**Barbara:** Well, you've seen pictures. At any rate, the situation, it was described in one of those interviews. So I felt that he would never pay any attention to me. And when he started paying attention to me, I was highly complimented, flattered. And so gradually, of course, through the years I learned a lot more about the human nature of Bill, but in the process, I very much respected him. So the privilege of living with him. At one time and there was one group at Littlefield, people from the Louisville and I can't remember what this was for, but in the lounge, all around the room there were people and they were talking about the project of the Arab ministry in the Littlefield area. And they went around the circle asking people, because there were several people that were from the mosque there. So they were asking people how they felt about it, what did they learn or what did they feel was the contribution. And then it came around to me and I thought, oh, I don't know what to say. But I did say, I've just been very grateful for the opportunity to have been with Bill and watched all of this happen through the years. And that's the main important thing was I was so grateful that I was able to be with Bill during this period of time. Afterwards Bill said, why did you say that? And I said, well, because that's how I feel. I mean it's your story, it's your stimulation, it's your perspectives, it's your personality and I just got to watch it.

**Jane:** Do you think the Dearborn era was the best part of your life?

**Barbara:** I don't know if I... Well, it was a fulfilling. It was very fulfilling.

**Jane:** Most interesting or whatever.

**Barbara:** Yeah, I was very ready to come home when we left Hong Kong, because I thought we'd been overseas long enough, that we needed to come back to America and we needed to be part of life in America. And so the timing for me was perfect. Now it was not good for Bill or Scott. It was the wrong time for them. But for me, my feeling was that the whole experience was fulfilling, in Hong Kong you can read the story about what I was able to learn and do there and in Lebanon, it was... You know, at one point in Lebanon I could have easily stayed there the rest of my life if it hadn't been for all the tension.

But if it had been like it was when we first got there and we were involved in the schools and then I was going to the university and teaching there, I could have easily stayed there the rest of my life. It was very nice. And once you got used to going back and forth between America and Colorado and Lebanon, why it would have been a good experience no matter what. So I liked all of it.



Scott, David, Barbara, Bill, Andrea, Joanna



David, Joanna, Andrea, Scott



## Profile of Ron Stockton

Ronald R. Stockton is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan-Dearborn and a Research Associate at the University of Michigan Center for Middle East and North African Studies. He is co-author of *A Time of Turmoil*, a book on public opinion, and the author of *Decent and in Order*, a book on conflict within religious organizations. He has a long-standing interest in the Arab-American community and was one of two Principle Investigators on the Detroit Arab American Study, a landmark study of 1,016 Arab Americans and Chaldeans in southeast Michigan. That project produced a team-authored book, *Citizenship and Crisis, Arab Detroit After 9/11*. He has written articles for *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *The Middle East Journal*, *Middle East Policy*, *The Journal of Palestine Studies*, and *The Armenian Review*, among others. His 173-page curriculum unit, *The Israel-Palestinian Conflict* was used in classrooms around the country. He teaches comparative non-western politics, including a course on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. The university has awarded him its Distinguished Service Award, its Distinguished Teaching Award, and its Distinguished Research Award.

Ron makes frequent media appearances. He has been on CNN with Anderson Cooper, CNN with Paula Zahn, Fox News with Brit Hume, MSNBC, ABC, CBS, PBS, IRN FourMore (UK), Israeli television, and Fars news (Iran). He is often heard on local radio and television and has written for the *Detroit Free Press* and *Detroit News*.

He has most recently conducted a multi-year study of Muslim gravestones in southeast Michigan and produced a photographic exhibit, conference papers, a formal lecture, and an academic article on that subject.

