

China Service Venture November 2006 Xinyang Visit

My name is Arthur Nesse and Xinyang is my Lao Jia (home place). I was born in 1922 at the mission hospital in Kioshan but my parents were soon to be residents of Xinyang and a part of the Nanguan Church in Xinyang. As the most "senior" (chronologically) member of the travel group perhaps some background history would be of interest.

My father's Chinese name was the character "thunder", pronounced "lay" in Chinese. I was baptized by Pastor Wu Ying of the Nanguan church and given the Chinese name of "Ai De" – love/virtue. Except for travel, I was in Xinyang and at school on Jigong for my childhood years. In 1936, at age 14, I went to the United States. My two older brothers have now passed away but children and grandchildren of their families and mine have come to Xinyang both to visit and to teach in the Xinyang area. My niece, Lois Sherwood, spent the summer of 2006 teaching English at Lijazhai near Xinyang. Two of her children, Ann and Kris, have served as English teachers in the Xinyang area.

My wife Dorothy visited Xinyang with me on several occasions from 1987-1996 and two of our sons have visited as well. On this trip I came with China Service Ventures to celebrate the dedication of the new Nanguan Church sanctuary and to visit some of the service activities of CSV in the Xinyang area..

My father (Hans) and my mother (Danielle) met as adults on Jigongshan in the summer of 1912. They both came from the same small fishing village in Norway but came to China by different routes. Hans emigrated from Norway to the U.S. in 1899 at age 18. He worked his way through school and Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota and accepted a call from the Norwegian Lutheran Church to serve as a missionary in China. My mother came to China from Norway in 1909 as a nurse and medical missionary sponsored by the Norwegian Missionary Association of Stavanger, Norway. She was assigned to work at the Tao Hua Lun Norwegian Mission Hospital in Yiyang, Hunan. When they met on Jigong there had been no contact between them for some ten years. They were married in the chapel on Jigong in 1912 and Danielle joined Hans in his work building a new mission station at Suiping.

From 1924 through 1951 Hans made his home in Xinyang. Throughout this time Pastor Wu Ying, who was ordained by the Nanguan Church in 1930, was his close friend and co-worker. Danielle passed away in 1932 and Hans continued his work in Xinyang during the Japanese occupation until war came between U.S. and Japan in 1941. He was interned by the Japanese until the end of the war. After release from internment and a furlough year in the U.S. he returned to Xinyang in 1949. He continued there until 1951 when Chinese government programs discouraged foreign missions and it was judged best that he return to the U.S. On his way back to the U.S. he was visiting his family at his childhood home in Norway and died in the place where he was born 70 years earlier.

In two publications my father reports his experiences from the later years of his life. The book, Under Nippon's New Order, was published in 1947 and describes the period of Japanese occupation in Xinyang and his three years of internment in Wuhan. He also wrote a booklet called Living in Communist China – 1949-1951 about his experiences in Xinyang at that time

On our trip we visited the granite "Moongate" built at a beautiful site on Jigong. The Moongate was built as a program by the former students of the American School on Jigong in cooperation with the Xinyang Foreign Affairs Office. It celebrates the 100 years of Chinese/American friendship and goodwill on the beautiful mountain.

I wish my father could have been here to see how China Service Ventures conducts its service programs. Just as he worked within the framework of the Japanese and the early Communist programs, he would praise how resourcefully and imaginatively CSV functions within China's complicated social and political environment. Each "venture" meets a carefully defined need and is pursued in close cooperation with responsible authorities. Whether it is learning English, helping indigent students pursue education or launching health and sanitation programs, help is provided in a way that will be accepted by existing Chinese activities.. I can think of no other service program where what is offered in the name of Christian service is so effectively amplified and multiplied for the benefit of those serving and those served alike.