

FEATURE

Yale-in-China and Me - Part 1

—This article is a brief page of the Yale-in-China history from the remembrance of a Chinese boy. My tales are meant not only as archival material for the Yale institution, but also as a belated tribute to the vision of the early missionaries and the Yale alumni.

My association with Yale is still a sparkling jewel in my memories of a life past. Now probably among the last ones who lived through the golden age of Yale-in-China history, I fondly set my tale in writing. —

By Jesse Hwa

The Early Years and The College of Yale-in-China

Yale has had a long romance with China to this day. It started as early as mid-1800s when Yung Wing, the first Chinese student ever to arrive on the East Coast, enrolled at Yale, and got his college degree in 1854, while hordes of Chinese from Toisan arrived in San Francisco for the gold rush and railroad building. It has been said by some that after the American West was won, America's early religious fervor started to redirect Christianity to outside of America. By the turn of the 20th century, the alumni of Yale turned to China as the next fertile soil.

The Yale Foreign Mission Society, as it was first called, was founded in 1901. Based on an expedition by Thurston who scoured China to find a suitable location, the Mission laid the foundation in Changsha, capital of the Hunan Province which was of the size of New York State in the bowels of China. Why Hunan? It was a place of generals including General Tsoi (1812-1885) of the General Tso's Chicken fame; a place in interior China where westerners had not touched; a place steeped in antiforeign sentiment and "heathenism" offering challenge to missionaries. It was the cradle of the communist movement and home of Mao Tze-dong and Hua Guo-feng (probably, but not known to be, related to me). To win the hearts of the Hunan people, the emphasis was not direct missionary work but medicine and education first — and "the Yale Spirit," which invariably was defined as "good sportsmanship

and fair play and a sense of honor and responsibility, honesty and manliness." Religion only came secondarily.

After a succession of planning, organizing, fund raising and language training, the Yale-in-China Association, as it was later called, sent missionaries and educators to Changsha. As most projects went, the Yale-in-China mission started modestly. They first acquired a few houses in the middle of the old Changsha city, and, from 1906-1909, used them as a clinic, school for nurses, dormitory and classrooms for boys in a preparatory school (before college).

In 1910, Yale-in-China acquired a 20-acre land (later doubled and further expanded) just outside of the north Changsha city walls. There began a series of major building projects. First was the building of the Hsiang-Ya Medical Center under a Joint Agreement in 1913 between the Hunan government (Hsiang) and Yale-in-China (Ya). That edifice, tall and striking, was the largest and most advanced medical center south of the famed Union Medical College of Peking. That complex consisted of the Hsiang-Ya Medical College, the 140-bed Hsiang-Ya Hospital and the Hsiang-Ya School of Nursing. The College of Yale-in-China opened in 1914, while the building of the new College campus also began that year until its completion in 1918.

There were many key members of Yale-in-China in the formative years. Names such as

Gage, Williams, Thurston (all Founders), Seabury, Leavens, Hutchins will live on in Yale's history. Some brought their wives and children to live in Changsha. One of the towering figures was Edward Hume, President of the Hsiang-Ya Medical College in 1924. One of his favorite sayings was: "It takes 10 years to plant a tree and it takes 100 years to plant a man." Lin Yutang said: "When I first met Dr. Hume, we talked not only Chinese, but educated Chinese. I was struck by the quality of the men of Yale-in-China: broad-minded, well-read university men." There were also some outstanding Chinese scholars who participated in the building effort. The outstanding one was Dr. Fu-chun Yen (Yen Fuqing), a Yale graduate, whose bi-culture helped significantly in negotiating the Hsiang-Ya Agreement and bridging the understanding between the two worlds. Fu was Dean of the Medical College and played many other important roles in China's history.

The first graduation class of the College of Yale-in-China in 1917 was a big milestone in its history. In a formal picture, there sat eight fine-looking Chinese youths in mortarboard and gowns, each having just received a college education. That unprecedented event happened in China just six years after the Qing Dynasty was overthrown by Sun Yat-sen and his followers in 1911. Of the eight graduates one was C. C. Lao, who was good in math. Another was T. S. Hwa, who was good in English and was a soccer star. It was said that his team would not want to play if Hwa were absent. Several classes down there were Ying Kai-shih who later played a major role in the affairs of Yale-in-China. And there was also a T. H. Chen who was the son of a well-to-do family in Changsha. Hwa used to hang around with Chen and frequented his home often. The boys sang Bulldog songs. One time there was a visitor, Sho-May Chen — from Ningpo, Zhejiang province in the East — a shy lass who was T. H. Chen's distant cousin. Just freed from foot binding during the Qing Dynasty, she was charmed by the dashing young Hwa, the soccer star, who sang Yale's Boola Boola and Bulldog

songs. The Chen family thought they were a good match. Sure enough, shortly after T. S. Hwa was graduated, they — my father and mother — were married and settled down in Hankow (now called Wuhan which combines Hankow, the commercial area, Wuchang, the political center, and Hanyang the industrial zone, all situated at the three sides where the Han River met the mighty Yangtze). It was in Hankow that my parents raised five children, me being the third and born in 1924. Hence hereby I lay my legitimate claim to my link to Yale.

Yali Middle School

The pre-college school was renamed as the Yali Middle School in 1924, with Chang Fu-lian, a Yale graduate, serving as Dean of the Middle School. Unfortunately the period 1924-1927 was one of political unrest. It got so bad that all the American staff left Changsha. Then in 1928, the situation improved and some began to return. By 1929 the College of Yale-in-China merged with two other Christian colleges in China and founded the Hua Chung (middle China) University in Wuhan. (I visited that site as a boy in a family outing there. The campus and the student dorms were brand-new. A college student was playing a musical instrument in his room. There were long and heavy javelin spears in the athletic field. Such sight was almost heavenly. My father asked me if I wanted to go to that place for "Big School" [college]. For me it was a dazzling thought.)

By the early 1930s, the campus that was once the campus of the College had already become the Yali Middle School, both a junior and a senior middle school. By that time many earlier graduates of the College became staff. C.C. Lao, my father's classmate, was Principal. The Dean was Ying Kaishi who was a few classes down from the first. Lao and Ying continued to form the backbone of Yali's administration for many years. While it was not an Eaton in UK or an Exeter in U.S., Yali in a sense could be viewed as a prep school; it had the reputation of a fine missionary institution for boys.

Being one of the first eight graduates of the College of Yale-in-China, my father was not my only link to Yale. Have you seen that excellent movie *Good-bye Mr. Chips* whereby Mr. Chips taught three generations of the same family? Well, the second generation of Hwas went to the Yali Middle School. In 1935 my two elder brothers enrolled in the Junior Class 1 of Yali. In 1936, I went there also in Junior Class 1. There the second generation of Hwas were connected with Yale. The happenings in Yali are still vivid in my mind.

Changsha was an overnight train-ride away from Hankow where I was born. I arrived in Changsha in the fall of 1936 at the height of the Yale mission in China. Yali was a boarding school for boys. Yali was on the north side, just outside of the Changsha city walls. From the northern city gate, a wide boulevard led to Yali on the left and the imposing Hsiang-Ya hospital on the right. There was a big entrance gate to Yali. By 1936 the campus was fully developed. There was a zigzag covered corridor that connected my dormitory to the classrooms. On one side of the corridor, there was a tree planted by my father when he was there years earlier, my father told me. There was a big dining hall, as everything appeared to be big to me when I was little. I went into another building — a laboratory — where an upperclassman showed me some chemical that could make blue ink disappear. How fascinating! There was a chapel and an athletic field. Beyond them there were a library and single dwellings for the missionaries and staff.

School Life

On the very first day of my arrival in Yali, I had a fight with another boy, exactly like what was shown in *Good-bye, We* did not speak to each other during the semester. Later we made up and became good friends. We were boys — what do you expect? I must explain that that was the only fight with any one in my life. But it is wonderful to recall the golden years of being a boy.

The daily lives of the boys revolved around the dormitory, the mess hall, the classrooms and the athletic field. Our dorm was one big open hall with beds arranged in rows. Each bed had a small cabinet near the head where clothes must be neatly displayed. The suitcases, often made by weaving Chinese canes, were placed under the beds. There were periodic inspections of how neatly we made our beds and stacked our clothes in the cabinet. One boy, even smaller than me, at times still wetted his bed. I saw the dorm caretaker occasionally dragged his mattress to the outside to dry.

At around 6:30 in the morning the caretaker of the dorm walked by the aisle of beds and swung that bell so loudly that no one could sleep through that wake-up call. It was hard for me to get up. (In recent years I read that young people do need extra sleep, not because they are lazy.) So hurriedly, we put on our boy-scout uniform and ran to the big soccer field where all the junior and senior boys were gathered in separate groups like in a troop review. Principal Lao always biked in from his residence nearby just seconds before 7 AM sharp. The captains of the juniors and the seniors, facing us, simultaneously shouted out roll call. We replied 1,2,3....

After that was completed, they (my eldest brother George once held that distinguished position of being the captain of the juniors) turned around, facing Lao, saluted and shouted out the attendance. Lao returned the salute, himself now turned around and faced the flagpole. Then a big firecracker was thrown into the sky — BANG. The bugle man then blasted out the morning reveille, as the flag of China was raised slowly and majestically to the top of the pole. Every one of the over 300 boys saluted until the end of the flag-raising. Such daily schedule instilled a nationalistic feeling to the boys and allowed the local residents nearby to check their clocks.

Immediately after the flag-raising, all the boys started to run in formation on the gritty track

which enclosed the soccer field, the highest senior class boys first and the lowest junior class boys last. It was two full rounds of running followed by one round of walking to cool off. When I was there as Junior Class 1, I was among the little potatoes at the end. I remember during the first few days, I was out of breath and could not keep up the pace of the steady rhythmic steps of the upper class men. Now thinking back it was a funny sight to see those little boys straggling behind and trying to keep up. But after several days, we gained our breath and could finish all that two rounds of running.

After the running we went back to our dorms, washed up, made our beds, and went to the dining room for breakfast. We had a bowl of soy milk, two big steaming hot buns and shee-fang (congee). Perhaps we were young, food tasted so good.

After breakfast, we gathered in the big assembly hall where the big senior boys sat at front and us small ones, at usual, at the back. There were usually some announcements or remarks. At times, some seniors at front stood up, either replied or asked questions. We little boys sitting in the back were very afraid of standing up and talking to the teachers.

One noteworthy "practice" was that whenever the head person, whether it was Principal Lao or a guest speaker, spoke the word "Gue Fu (country father) or Tsong-Li (Sun Yat-Sen) or Generalissimo (Chiang Kai-Shek)," the entire body of students instantly and simultaneously stood up from their seats in full attention, until dismissed. The big bang throughout the hall was a sharp reflex of the students who were trained to honor their leaders. This outburst of behavior reflected nationalism and discipline in schools in that era.

Now it was almost time for morning classes. Everyone walked through the zigzag corridors to the classrooms. There was a brief period before the classes started when students could optionally go to the Christian chapel for prayers. But not many went.

There were classes in the morning and afternoon, followed by recess for athletics and leisure, until dinner. In Junior Class 1, I remember I had math and Chinese history using a textbook written by Tzo Fu, also a graduate of the College. A sure question at final exam: Describe the "gin tien zhe (well field system)" in xxx dynasty. Answer: The fanners each tilted the land on the eight outer squares of land (as in the drawing of a tick-ta-toe). They together tilted the land in the middle square and the produce from that square was given to the government as taxes. Thinking back, that was the only time I remember studying Chinese history, as in my later years in St. John's Middle School and University I did not have it. We had beginning English, taught by Oscar Rand, a Yale graduate called "Bachelor" (more later), where we were to pronounce some basic vowel sounds in English. It was rather elementary for me as I already had some English in my grade school in Hankow.

After dinner there were study hours in the same classrooms. Light went out in the dorm at around 10, I believe. It was a regimented life, but the boys were brought up to study and play. Weekend started at Saturday noon.



Toward the end of the school year, a new, perhaps 25-yards long, swimming pool was opened. I enjoyed swimming in it as I just learned how to float in water in Kuling the previous summer. (Kuling was a well-known summer retreat for foreigners, including many Yale missionary families, and for the Nationalist high command where they had a political training center there.) In the pool, they placed a slab of wood as float. It seemed practical in place of rubber tubes.

One day several classmates playfully roughed me up. They tickled my genital. As I got up crying, I went to see Mr. Ying, the Dean, wiping my tears. He was angry and came to the classroom, yanked out several boys that I pointed out (one wrongfully), and gave them a stern scolding. That was a school scene for boys that became more treasured as years went by.