

This is a complete transcript of the oral history interview with **Harold Adolph (CN 169, T1)** for the Billy Graham Center Archives. No spoken words which were recorded are omitted. In a very few cases, the transcribers could not understand what was said, in which case [unclear] was inserted. Also, grunts and verbal hesitations such as “ah” or “um” are usually omitted. Readers of this transcript should remember that this is a transcript of spoken English, which follows a different rhythm and even rule than written English.

. . . Three dots indicate an interruption or break in the train of thought within the sentence of the speaker.

. . . . Four dots indicate what the transcriber believes to be the end of an incomplete sentence.

( ) Word in parentheses are asides made by the speaker.

[ ] Words in brackets are comments made by the transcriber.

This transcript was created by Paul Ericksen and Christopher Easley and was completed in November 1990.

**Please note:** This oral history interview expresses the personal memories and opinions of the interviewee and does not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Billy Graham Center Archives or Wheaton College.



**Collection 169, Tape 1. Oral history interview with Harold Adolph by Daniel Mercer on January 14, 1981.**

**MERCER:** This is an interview by Dan Mercer with Dr. Adolph, [pauses] who is a surgeon here in Wheaton. Dr. Adolph, I am going to ask you some questions about your personal life in China to begin with [pauses]...some of the things that you experienced there. What was it like being a missionary in China...in pre-war China?

**ADOLPH:** [Pauses, clears throat] When I was in eighth grade, my parents gave me the opportunity to stay in the United States or to go back to China with them. And after making it a matter of prayer, I felt that God wanted me to be in China and to contribute to the family missionary project. And I...I felt greatly blessed by being associated with my father who was involved in medical work. And during summers I would help him in...in his clinic. And [pauses] it was probably during that period of time, along with the study of...of various biographies of great men that I dedicated my life to the Lord.

**MERCER:** That's exciting. What age was that?

**ADOLPH:** I...I was in tenth grade [paper rustling], and it was October 17th, on a Sunday afternoon.

**MERCER:** That's neat. What...what area did you live in in China?

**ADOLPH:** We lived in several areas. We grew up in...in Shansi, and that was the first hospital my father had. It was the place where the book *Thousand Miles of Miracles* had its origin, when the missionaries had to evacuate during the Boxer Rebellion. And this...when I was three years old [ca. 1935] [paper rustling] we had to evacuate because of an invading communist army. And we went back a year later, and I went to missionary boarding school [Chefoo School] in Shandong Province just below Korea.

**MERCER:** Which was a well-known boarding school. A lot of missionary kids went there.

**ADOLPH:** That's right. Wheaton College was filled with them.

**MERCER:** [Laughs] Was it a very poor area where you lived?

**ADOLPH:** All of China was poor. There...of course in any society a few that are rich. And after the Second World War, the poverty was even perhaps more prominent than it was before, because of the devastation of war, and plagues and disease. And it takes a...a big toll.

**MERCER:** That must keep you very busy...your family. What kind of practice did your father have?

**ADOLPH:** My father initially had a sixty-five bed hospital in north China. And then [pauses] in 1938, during the Sino-Japanese War, he was in a place called Kaifeng in the Honan Province,

because he was unable to get back to the other hospital. A single attempt to get back to the hospital resulted in his being involved in a train that was blown up and falling into a deep hole that had been planted in one of the paths and having to treat a fracture himself in an isolated area. In Kaifeng the invading army was constantly shelling the city. It was...that was not a time of peace. I never got there because I was in boarding school and every time I was about to go on vacation something happened.

**MERCER:** That must have been difficult. Was your family together often then or was it rare?

**ADOLPH:** During that particular time, [pauses] on the first vacation I got, I got diphtheria. So I was consigned to the hospital. I wanted to go to my father's hospital, but it wasn't possible. We were then, later on that same year, were instructed to leave China because of worsening American Japanese relations.

**MERCER:** What year was that?

**ADOLPH:** That was in 19...1940, [pauses]. And that would have been around August, September. And we left on the *S.S. Washington* [paper rustling] and escaped the U-boat which was chasing us...

**MERCER:** Wow!

**ADOLPH:** ...through the Aleutian Islands and we landed in California.

**MERCER:** That was an exciting trip.

**ADOLPH:** The waves in the...off the Aleutian Islands were recorded to be 85 feet high. There were a 154 people [paper rustling] when we got to San Francisco who had cast on their arms and legs.

**MERCER:** Just...I'm...I'm curious a little bit now about life of just missionary kids in general, from your experience and from what you saw from your own children. What kind of influence does a missionary...being a missionary have on kids? Would you say it's positive, negative, or neutral.

**ADOLPH:** I think it can be very positive. Through my own experience in boarding school we felt when God gave us children that we wanted to keep our children with us and take full responsibility for their learning. And my wife, through the years in Ethiopia, taught our two children, our son up through eleventh grade and our daughter up through [pauses] seventh grade. And we feel that involving the...our children in our work and presenting to the nationals a Christian family that stayed together was a very positive influence for them and for our family too. Both of our children have dedicated their lives to serve God in needy places, and we think that this is part of the result of their seeing needs that they might not have otherwise seen, and letting God work in their lives.



**MERCER:** What would you say is the result, or the...I mean the cause of the rebellious missionary kid? I'm sure you have seen a lot of them in your...

**ADOLPH:** Yes. Yes, there are...there are lots of reasons for rebellion. Any time that the basic needs of a person are not met adequately (the [pauses]...the need of...of belonging, the need of worth [clears throat], the need of confidence), if those needs aren't met by...by parents, loved ones, then the child will tend to develop rebellion. And it's very easy when a child goes off to school at age seven, before he can completely understand the necessity of miss...of the missionary thrust, to be a little bit upset by that. And there are many stories of children who were just sort of almost snatched from their parents and placed on the missionary aviation plane and taken off to school. And that creates many problems. I think every child is different [clears throat] and their parents have to recognize that some children are not ready to go off to school at six or seven, and some are ready to go at ten, others maybe ready to go at fifteen, but it has to be an individualized matter. And I think that the parent must never assume that they give up their responsibility for their children just because they're missionaries.

**MERCER:** That's interesting. Would you feel that being a missionary kid better adjusts you for life after the mission field, or...or does it have its hindrances or its...?

**ADOLPH:** [Chuckles] It has its advantages from the stand point that you (in your daily life)...you are associated with the giants of the faith. I can list many missionaries who would get up at four o'clock in the morning and pray for several hours before starting their work, and their lives have influenced me immensely, as well as my own parents, who were also very devout and dedicated. And [pauses] that is the very positive aspect, along with getting to know other cultures and other peoples and other languages, [pauses] and recognizing the world as a whole rather one small community in...in one small country. I think, of course, there are disadvantages and maybe we...we know the disadvantages well. The missionary kid will very frequently feel that he is not an American, that he is actually part of the...the country that he grew up in. And the parents have to help him to realize that he is an American, and that he has lived outside the country for a short time but that...and he will be able to understand people of other races better, but that he needs to assimilate and grow...grow as an American with an enlarged vision for the world as a whole.

**MERCER:** How do you think it's best...that's best accomplished?

**ADOLPH:** I think that it has to be something that the parents consciously work at. The Narramore Christian Foundation now has provided a...a service where they get missionary kids just before they're going to start university and...and college in the United States. And they teach them all of the types of things that most Americans learn from the time they're young because they're here, but which missionary kids do not understand. Telephones sometimes [Mercer laughs] are a strange device, and we take them for granted here. I still don't like the telephone.

**MERCER:** Oh my!

**ADOLPH:** And [pauses] they're not used to such things as television. Sometimes some of them have grown up in areas where they have kerosene lamps and...and even electricity is different. So

that [pauses] things like banking which we take for granted, things like going to the store, we take for granted.... I have a...I got a letter from a missionary kid, who went out as a [sound of electric motor or fan starting and continuing] missionary herself, came back to the United States recently after about fifteen years in Zaire, was walking through a store in the United States and passed a barrel full of eighty-nine cent [pauses] screwdrivers and actually just started crying uncontrollably...

**MERCER:** No!

**ADOLPH:** ...because it...its...it seemed to say, you know, here I've come from an area that is absolutely impoverished. And if I found one screwdriver in the whole community that would have been something. And here is a whole barrel of them and they're just trying to get rid of them on a sale. And it just...there are so many things that...that we think are just normal and ordinary, which to somebody else from another culture can be very bothersome.

**MERCER:** Do you think raising the kid in a national school, with only national friends, hinders that, [pauses] or does it actually help the missionary with his becoming...in his work in that country.

**ADOLPH:** I...I don't think most missionary kids...that's the best thing for most missionary kids. I think that they do have to be trained as Americans and take correspondence school. I don't think that it is bad for them to be involved in national schools for a course or two, but not actually go up through their school system.

**MERCER:** That would make them confused as to who they are?

**ADOLPH:** I think it would be more confusing for them. Those who have gone that particular route usually end up so identified with that country that they have a very hard time breaking that without very special help.

**MERCER:** Yeah, I understand. [Pauses, clears throat] Do you feel that furloughs are very important for the missionary's adjustment?

**ADOLPH:** For the missionary or the missionary [unclear]?

**MERCER:** The missionary...well for the family.

**ADOLPH:** In the old days when a missionary went out for nine, ten years, seven years at a time, it was important to maintain family ties and ties for support and to present the work adequately. Now that we are getting terms that are only two and three years at a time, I think it almost breaks up the work too much there, so that the missionary is left never being able to adapt to what...whatever the culture is it is that he is in. It takes at least a year in an area of work to start to understand and to be proficient. And many people in China said that it took seven years to learn the language and seven years to be of [Mercer laughs] any good at all.



**MERCER:** Wow!

**ADOLPH:** So, having spent eight years in Ethiopia, I...I would have...I would say myself that it took me maybe (although I was accepted within six weeks of the time I finally started doing my work after eight months of language study)...it was really six years before I had a...what I would consider a...a more complete understanding of the people and could be really where I wanted to be as far as helping them. And then suddenly, just overnight with the coming of communism, that whole culture that I had learned was completely changed.

**MERCER:** Just disappeared.

**ADOLPH:** Yeah.

**MERCER:** Gone with the wind...

**ADOLPH:** [Chuckles]

**MERCER:** ...so to speak. Have you ever experienced the "pre-furlough blue [sic]," as some people have termed it?

**ADOLPH:** [Clears throat] I think that the adjustment is...is.... I didn't have the pre-adjustment blue [sic] and I have a little trouble understanding the pre-adjustment blue [sic]. I would...

**MERCER:** You have heard of it though?

**ADOLPH:** Yeah. I would plan my trip back to the United States starting two years before it actually happened, in order to help me over the last two years. [Paper rustling] And when people talk about, "I can't die to get back to my people...back to (after furlough)...getting back to my people," I have a hard time relating to that because after knowing what it's like over there, I found it harder to go back, rather than easier. It's true that you love the...you...you like the work and you see its value, but you also see all the problems and the difficulties and you know that only God...by God's grace [paper rustling] and help you will be able to...to do it. Whereas when you first went out you had the feeling that there were a lot of things that you didn't completely understand. I...I think that once you get involved in the work any change is somewhat difficult. And when you don't have a...a...a home in United States to go to and you're going to have to rent someplace somewhere, or you're going to have to travel all around and leave your wife and children someplace, that would definitely be a depressing thing and would certainly not make you want to look forward to a situation like that. As a doctor looking forward to furthering...further studies, and keeping the family together and making it a positive time, I didn't have...we didn't experience that blue [sic]. But anybody who [unidentified noise] sees what is happening to missions today, where the husband has to go off and spend many many weeks away from the family just to get ten or fifteen dollars a month support from different churches makes one wonder whether there couldn't be some improvement.

**MERCER:** That's interesting. Have you ever experienced culture shock and if...if so when was the worst?

**ADOLPH:** Well, having grown up in China, [pauses] I...and not being exposed to the word "culture shock" until [pauses] college days, I didn't feel that I ever really had a...a so called "culture shock."

**MERCER:** That's interesting.

**ADOLPH:** And I think that it's possible to make too much of...of differences in...differences in culture. I think when I was in Africa, we had a missionary...a tribe that our tribe was reaching through missionary outreach, and we brought them to this place and they had clay...red clay in their hair, and they had ashes over their skin of their body. They had little grass skirts and very strange looking outfits. And our tribe, which dressed... which had their own customs which would have been very strange to us, thought these other people were extremely uncouth. And the first thing that they did was to provide them proper clothes [Mercer laughs] which were like their clothes. So when we talk about culture shock, I guess it...it is a very strong thing in anybody's thinking. But if you're raised overseas in...in a underdeveloped country, I think culture shock is less of a...should be less of a factor than it is for somebody who comes from a very [pauses] economically more stable and [pauses] more privileged society.

**MERCER:** That's interesting. Did your family go through it at all, your...your children when they came back to the United States?

**ADOLPH:** I didn't feel that they really...that they really did. They had some kinds of [pauses] problems [pauses] trying to get into groups, like church groups. By the time they're in high school they've become rather cliquish, and it's hard to break into the groups. And I think that our children noticed that, our son more than our daughter.

**MERCER:** Getting back to your...your family in China, just really briefly, what was your family unit like and what was your ancestry too?

**ADOLPH:** My grandfather on my father's [pauses]...father's side was an engraver and he came from the Black Forest area of Germany and immigrated to the United States. And so my father knew German. On my mother...my mother's parents came from Scotland, and her father died at the age of five of pneumonia, and she was sent off to boarding school. She was saved by...through the ministry of Pocket Testament League, and...and then took Bible studies in New York City and was led to go to China where my parents met. Not met for the first time, but they met in candidate school, and...and then [pauses] developed a relationship there.

**MERCER:** What mission was this with?

**ADOLPH:** It was with the China Inland Mission, which is now the Overseas Missionary Fellowship.

**MERCER:** That's interesting. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

**ADOLPH:** I had one brother and he is a missionary in Bangladesh.

**MERCER:** Oh, that's interesting. Do you hear from him much these days or....?

**ADOLPH:** Yes, we...we had his [pauses] son here in our home. He's...was a sophomore here at Wheaton Christian [High School]. [He] stayed here during the soccer season [Mercer laughs] and left at Christmas time when the season was over.

**MERCER:** Oh no [laughs]. Did he go back to Bangladesh?

**ADOLPH:** Yes.

**MERCER:** Oh, how interesting. And your...when did your...your...your parents die?

**ADOLPH:** My mother died our...our first year out in Ethiopia, of cancer. And my father came out [pauses] with us our second term, and he died exactly one year after arriving in Ethiopia. He helped my brother for six months and worked with me for six months, and it was after doing that work.

**MERCER:** My next question pertains to World War II. [Unidentified sound] Now I know you left China right...right at the very beginning or...or towards the [pauses] somewhere in the beginning of World War II. But do you remember [pauses] China preparing for war or do you remember any particulars?

**ADOLPH:** Yes, I remember that period of time. I [sound of electric motor or fan starting and continuing]...my father was sick with tuberculosis for one year, just after we went back to China the second time, and that was in 1938. And I commuted to school (that is walked) by walking. When we say "commuted" in the United States we think of getting on a bus or [pauses].... And we would have to pass the Japanese sentry, and stand in a...a circle, and get frisked and then go on. And I use to watch the little bayonets as they stuck up from the [pauses]...the pill boxes, and wonder whether the guns would go off. There were battleships out in the bay. There were dive bombers all the time [pauses] and [pauses] there was obvious evidence in the community of...of shelling. So it was not a time of peace.

**MERCER:** Did you have any friends or many missionaries who you knew later on who became part of the internment camps of the Japanese?

**ADOLPH:** Yes, most of the people in my class in school and upperclassmen...

**MERCER:** Really!

**ADOLPH:** ...were interned in concentration camp, and came home on the *Gripsolm* [repatriation vessel], which was the...that took them. They came out over the Burma Road, and then left from

India on the *Gripsolm* and were rehabilitated. A lot of them when they came back [pauses]...every time they heard a plane would...would just automatically dive under the bed. And that hospital where my father worked at one of the doctors was killed from the...a bomb landing over him and...and pinching him under rubble.

**MERCER:** Did...did most of these people lose their possessions...lose all that they had?

**ADOLPH:** Yes, we'd lost all of our furnishings three times in China.

**MERCER:** Three times! Wow! What was that like to all of a sudden realize that you have nothing?

**ADOLPH:** Well, I think it makes one realize something that we should have realized long before. That everything we have belongs to God and he can take care of it and supply more as necessary. Having grown up realizing that God takes care of his children has made it easier many times, and you can have things otherwise and be financially unstable.

**MERCER:** That's a nice perspective to have. So many people get scared that [pauses] what if we lose everything.

**ADOLPH:** I think that the American tends to not want to be supported as a missionary and wants to be self-supporting and doesn't like the whole ideal and looks for [unclear, noises in the background] to try and support his position. But [pauses] in relationship to that, when we went to Africa, after we were accepted by the Sudan Interior Mission, we were in maybe for two years in Taiwan because I believe that a person should serve his country well, and not use missionary service to get out of serving. And...so now we left for Africa from Taiwan, and we didn't go around and speaking to different churches like so many did. We said, "If God really wants us to go to Africa it's not hard for him to raise the necessary funds and we will leave from Taiwan." And by the time we were to leave, God had all of our support in a very miraculous way, and it helped us while we were in Africa, to realize that it was a miracle that had done it and not something that we could have ever done ourselves.

**MERCER:** That is exciting. When did you return to China?

**ADOLPH:** After the war, we returned in 1946. We left from Pensacola, Florida, on a freighter with the Waterman Line, and when we got to San Diego after going through the Panama Canal, our ship mutinied, and we had a lot of...a lot of excitement for the war. We made the remainder of the five week trip to China with the crew that were waiting court-martial when they arrived in Japan. So the occasion of our trip was more eventful than we had planned.

**MERCER:** Sounds like you have had some really interesting experiences going back and forth between the seas.

**ADOLPH:** Yes [laughs].

**MERCER:** How did you find...find China after the war? Was it in total disarray?

**MERCER:** China after the war was in need of rehabilitation and help and such organizations as UNICEF and a lot of agencies went back with [pauses] can food materials, and these were all very helpful and very necessary. I think that as I look back on what I had saw, I wish America had been involved even more in trying to help the Chinese, and [pauses] to possibly make it possible for them not to have been overcome by the invading armies from Manchurian China.

**MERCER:** So you feel that...the American [pauses] efforts weren't...weren't sufficient?

**ADOLPH:** They were very inadequate, and too little too late, which might...which I might characterize [laughs] most of [unusual noise] America's overseas commitment. I think if you start too late and your not really committed, you don't help anybody. And I think what we are seeing now with famines all over the world, and giving small amounts of grain in different places. We are still trying to put out fires that we needed to start to work on a long time ago. And I know there are a lot of agencies that are working very hard on...on preventative type steps, and steps that will help the people help themselves over difficult problems. I think in the case of China, we didn't help them as much as we should have.

**MERCER:** I know that feeling. I've seen pictures of China [pauses] being run over by the communist and it gets me inside. I want to scream or do something... "Why didn't you do more." I think, I guess retrospect is always easier than [unclear].

**ADOLPH:** Yes it is.

**MERCER:** What was the spiritual atmosphere on China, right before you...when you came back the second time? Were people more open to the gospel after World War II or were they the same?

**ADOLPH:** Well, I'm having to speak as a...a freshman at my school, and possibly my perspective on the conditions are more influenced by what...[Mercer laughs] by what my elders thought it was than my own evaluation. I was [pauses]...I...I would accompany great evangelists to the meeting...to meetings, and I was always greatly inspired by them. Lots of them such as Rev. Morgan Mitchell, World Vision's Bob Pierce, were personal friends and had a great influence on my life. And I saw the...the great crowds in evangelistic meetings accepting Christ. And so I was [pauses]...I had the feeling that God was working mightily in the time of...of great need, physical and spiritual needs. And I think the missionary movement, although it has been greatly criticized, it was used of God in a...in a great way. Now when I went back to China, I went back voluntarily, so to speak, and as...and asked God to put...to use me as a witness, not just as a high school student, and our young peoples group was...was very active in Shanghai.

**MERCER:** That's good. Have you kept any contacts with the Christians there? You've heard nothing after that?

**ADOLPH:** No I don't have any personal contacts at this time. I was going back to make a visit in September for the Christian Medical Society to investigate...



**MERCER:** Oh, wow.

**ADOLPH:** ...how Christian doctors here in the United States could help our counterpart Christian doctors in China.

**MERCER:** That's interesting. There are Christian doctors in China?

**ADOLPH:** There are Christian doctors in China and there are strong Christians in China.

**MERCER:** Wow! Praise the Lord.

**ADOLPH:** And [pauses] they need Bibles and they need our prayers. And it is possible now for the first time to actually write people in China without it hurting them. So we are hoping to take up that ministry very soon.

**MERCER:** I just heard that [pauses] the first non-stop flight from Peking to Los Angeles has been established on a daily basis, I think. How does that make you feel?

**ADOLPH:** I'm very happy about that, and I'm [pauses]...I have actually sent off for the Chinese language tapes from Yale University because I want to be involved more in the ministries to...to China, as a fri...as a friend of China...

**MERCER:** That's exciting.

**ADOLPH:** ...in anyway that I can.

**MERCER:** That's really exciting. We are going to take a quick break right now.

**MERCER:** [Unidentified sounds of movement and rustling papers] When did you finally leave China for the last time?

**ADOLPH:** We left in May of 1949 two weeks before Shanghai was taken by the Communist armies.

**MERCER:** Wow! That must have been a lot of excitement going on then.

**ADOLPH:** The...many of our instructors in the Shanghai American school were leaving, and my father had the feeling of staying on until he was forced to leave. And I'm afraid I was influential in...in helping to change his mind. A feeling that [pauses] the time for missionaries had come to an end.

**MERCER:** What did you do between [pauses] when you came back to the United States up until college? Where were you?

**ADOLPH:** My father took a position in Appalachia, in southeastern Kentucky...



**MERCER:** Wow!

**ADOLPH:** ...and we...I drove the jeep for him on house calls into the countryside. Most of the homes we visited were log cabins up on branches of small streams. And a lot of the people were very much like pioneers of Daniel...of Daniel Boone's time, log cabins. And [pauses, sound of movement in seat] it was very...actually it was a very fascinating community to be involved in.

**MERCER:** Was...did it take long for your father to get acceptance there as an outsider?

**ADOLPH:** No not really, he was very well accepted. The hospital was very busy from the very beginning.

**MERCER:** Well that's great. [Adolph clears throat] How much time was there between then and...and...and college?

**ADOLPH:** I was there for just the...my senior year of high school.

**MERCER:** Wow.

**ADOLPH:** And then I went on to Wheaton College.

**MERCER:** What...what was the decision to go...why...why Wheaton, in particular?

**ADOLPH:** I had...I had always wanted...I had always thought, and wanted and felt that God was leading me to Wheaton College. My father had graduated from Wheaton College, and so I knew a great deal about the college, and I felt that was...that that's possible preparation for my [pauses]...towards the goal of which I thought God was leading me toward as a medical missionary.

**MERCER:** That's interesting. Well, getting into your time at Wheaton, what sort of activities were you involved with at the school?

**ADOLPH:** Because I wanted to try and improve my speaking ability in English and not Chinese [Mercer laughs], I [pauses] went out for WETN [College radio station], and took [pauses] maybe two years [pauses] with Morrison [?] and Huntser [?] and disc jockeyed.

**MERCER:** Wow.

**ADOLPH:** And I was active in Foreign Missions Fellowship, and in the Sunday school work down in Chicago. I...it was a little bit tiring to spend all day Sunday in Chicago, and then get ready [Mercer laughs] for classes [laughs] for the next day. But I think that it was actually a...a time of growing and a preparation time that was very helpful.

**MERCER:** What sort of clubs were you involved with?

**ADOLPH:** I was involved with Chefoo...Wheaton's Chefoo Association, because I wanted to see missionary kids helped as much as possible, recognizing that a lot of us were sort of misfits [Mercer laughs] in a strange society...

**MERCER:** That's interesting.

**ADOLPH:** ...that we weren't really used to. [Clears throat] I was sort of opposed to being cliquish. I felt that we should try and mix with other people and get as much from them to change our...our bad [sound of electric motor or fan starting and continuing] ways as possible. And so that was really the purpose of that group. I was also a Beltonian [member of a campus literary society], and I felt that was very helpful in trying to overcome my hesitancy for speaking, which perhaps developed in the period of time when I was an American in an English mission boarding school.

**MERCER:** That's interesting. What sort of...what sort of things do you remember particularly about Wheaton? Anything in particular that stands out in your mind?

**ADOLPH:** The [pauses] special services twice a year, and times of prayer were outstanding periods to me. And I can remember [rustling paper] my first year rededicating myself to the...to the cause that I thought God had called me to. There was all kinds of things to...reasons to become discouraged. Everybody was telling how hard the pre-med courses were [Mercer chuckles] and I was finding out [sound of squeaking chair] they were all true [Mercer laughs] and I didn't.... And I was always hearing the long stories about people who didn't make it. So it was a...plenty of time to trust God. And then during that first year my father had a...an almost fatal heart attack and was in the hospital for essentially the rest of the year. And suddenly we were...we were lacking in...in necessary support for tuition and for food. And so there was a time of trusting God which I wouldn't have had otherwise. And [pauses] there was a choice of whether to continue studies or...and trust God or to earn as you...keep studying and...and work as much as possible. And I elected the former. Just one incidence in that first year which points out the time of testing and the time of faith was we had actually emptied out completely as far as any food in the refrigerator, any food in the pantry. There was absolutely nothing when we finished breakfast, and so we prayed definitely that God would supply for our next meal. And I went to the college and checked the post office box, and I had one little tiny envelope in there and it had come from the chemistry department and they had stated that because I didn't break the usual amount of glassware [Mercer laughs], they were giving me my ten dollar deposit back.

**MERCER:** Oh no! [Laughs].

**ADOLPH:** Actually, I didn't understand it at all because I am sure I broke more [Mercer laughs] glassware than...than the...the...than many of my counterpart [sic]. When we got...when I got home, there was two large sacks of homegrown groceries on the front porch. And so God supplied over and abundantly, and that was the story of the rest of my life.

**MERCER:** Wow, that's exciting. What memories do you have of Dr. Edman or "prexy" as you called him.

**ADOLPH:** He was a [pauses]...a very great spiritual leader. I have all of his books and have enjoyed them. *The Disciplines of Life, The Storms*. I didn't completely appreciate his devotions at the time I was in college because I wasn't having those storms and I wasn't having some of the bad troubles that...that I afterwards found myself in. But having had his teaching and having it available to look at later, made it possible to come through much better than we would have otherwise. The statements that he frequently made about "Never...it's always too soon to quit" were very helpful because there are many times as a missionary overseas that one is very tempted to give up and come home. He was able to call me by my name. I thought at first that was because I attended Deer Foot Lodge, a Christian camp up in Speculator, New York, with his son Dave. But afterwards I realized that he knew everybody's name, [Mercer laughs, sound of fan or motor discontinued] like that.

**MERCER:** Remarkable.

**ADOLPH:** And I think that is a...that's an indication of love for students which [pauses] is really unsurpassed when you will take the time to actually learn [chuckles] and rec...be able to recognize somebody and know a little bit about them. I learned later that he got up very early in the morning to pray for all the students in the college.

**MERCER:** Wow!

**ADOLPH:** And I hadn't realized that before.

**MERCER:** One by one, or...?

**ADOLPH:** Yeah, one by one. [Mercer laughs] I imagine he used the [Mercer laughs]...he must have used the yearbook or something.

**MERCER:** That's remarkable.

**ADOLPH:** So I was greatly influenced by his life and also by the life of my math teacher, Mrs. [Angeline] Brandt, who was a very godly woman. And her devotions stood out above any other teachers' that I had at Wheaton College. They were always deep...deeply spiritual and very uplifting. And she was a very godly...godly woman that was a great help.

**MERCER:** That's exciting. Having gone back to Wheaton [sound of squeaking chair], how has the school changed for better and for worse?

**ADOLPH:** [Clears throat] As a member of the Wheaton alumni board, and having had my son in for four years, I'm more exposed to...to Wheaton College than I would be if I was just in the community. I have enjoyed seeing the leadership of Dr. Armerding and...and think he is...his...his spiritual direction for the College has been very great, and I've always enjoyed listening to him and his devotional talks. I...I think that the College is just sort of maybe breaking out of the difficulties of the 60's in some respects. And I was a little bit upset with last year's yearbook, and [laughs] maybe this is a time to express those feelings. I would have liked to have seen more pages devoted

to some of the great programs of Wheaton College, such as the HUNGR program, such as the overseas ministries involvement, inner city with the young people, and all the super great things that...that Wheaton College students do, which is very exciting. But instead they had [laughs]...they...large pictures of some people that gave some musical [laughs] presentations, which I really didn't think represented the College. They were just people who were there for a few hours on one particular day [laughs] during the year. And a lot of the pictures in the yearbook this time were making fun of people, whether they were professors or whether they were students. And I think that it gave a bad feeling to look at that and think that everybody is just making fun of everybody else. I...I think that wasn't the tone of the year. The tone had...there were many great things that happened on campus: the prayer...the prayer day was a great thing, the [squeaking of chair]...and some of the special meetings were great. There were some great chapel services. And there were some great feelings of unity. And I don't think that the true spirit of the year was portrayed in the yearbook.

**MERCER:** That's interesting. Well [clears throat], pertaining to your time at Wheaton, was there anything in particular which solidified your feelings for missions? I know you'd already been very interested in them at that time. But was there anything that gave you particular direction to Ethiopia or...?

**ADOLPH:** When I came to Wheaton College, I was assigned to...a student was assigned to live with me, who was going with the Sudan Interior Mission. I knew a bit about the mission but that was, number one, a little bit of direction. I ended up going with Sudan Interior Mission and the other fellow who was [Mercer laughs] planning to go with Sudan Interior Mission never went.

**MERCER:** Oh no!

**ADOLPH:** But [pauses] I think [pauses] the whole...there was a very strong [pauses]...a strong feeling throughout my years and maybe reinforcement of the importance of dedicating one's life to God for whatever purpose, whether it meant marriage or no marriage, whether it meant to the ends of the earth. That was the important thing, to do what God wanted. I had the...one of the things that was a very strong leading thing was that in my class, I was the first one to get confirmation of my acceptance into medical school, and I felt that was just a...a way that God was saying, "I have...you have recognized that you couldn't do this by yourself and your friends have frequently told you that you would never get into medical school." And I would frequently tell them that I will get there by God's goodness and he knows all about my struggles [laughs] and since I know what he wants me to do he's...he's going to show in some way that he's stronger than [laughs]...than anybody else. And as a result of that, that was one of the things that God used as confirmation in my own heart because as I compared some of the things that medical schools look at (such as grades) to some of my friends who were not so sure [high pitched unidentified noise] that they were going to get into medical school, I could easily see their position. [Pauses] Another thing that I had a feeling of when I was at Wheaton College was that God would lead me to a life partner that would be a helpmeet for my work in Africa, and God led me to my wife from a very dedicated [sound of electric motor or fan starting and continuing] Christian family, and I was very grateful to God for that.

**MERCER:** That's great. Leaving Wheaton College [rustling papers], where did you go to med. school?

**ADOLPH:** I went to the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. My father had...had gone there before me. And one of the reasons we...I chose the University of Pennsylvania, was that it was a...is the oldest medical school in the United States. It's very well known overseas and since I planned to work overseas, I felt that coming [rustling papers] from that school would help better...it might be a better credential than any other ones.

**MERCER:** Did you find it as difficult as people say med. school is?

**ADOLPH:** Yeah, I would say that I found it...I found it difficult. I found it more difficult my first year, possibly than the other years, but there.... When I was a freshman at Wheaton College, I developed chronic sinusitis, and anytime that I stayed up more than...more than ten o'clock [Mercer laughs] I would become sick.

**MERCER:** Wow.

**ADOLPH:** And so throughout my college and medical school, I always went to bed at ten o'clock. My friends stayed up many [Mercer laughs] hours later than that, and so that they made competing a little bit harder. However God [pauses] gave me the strength and just helped me to learn it faster. And although it seemed to be a handicap in a way, it helped me depend on God more.

**MERCER:** [Ongoing high pitched noise from tape recorder continuing intermittently until the end of the interview] You also got more sleep than those people did [Adolph laughs] [pauses], which is something most college students.... [Tape stopped and restarted] How did you feel Wheaton prepared you for med. school?

**ADOLPH:** I think Wheaton College was hard enough that it helped me develop good study habits and helped me realize areas that I would have to work harder in. I...when I was in medical school, knowing my goal, I...I tended to study everything a little bit harder, especially if I thought it related to diseases that I would find overseas. So I always knew the...the tropical diseases better than the chemical.

**MERCER:** How did you [rustling papers] come upon choosing the...the mission that you did, and how do you feel is a good way for a young inspiring missionary to go about picking a mission field?

**ADOLPH:** I think now that there is an organization such as InterCristo, I think it makes the choosing of a...a mission and a position much easier. In my particular case, my father took a trip to Ethiopia to conduct a...a medical missionary conference for missionary doctors, and was able to visit the hospital that we eventually went to. And his encouragement was a strong factor in my eventually going to Ethiopia with Sudan Interior Mission.



**MERCER:** That's good. Do you feel it's important for the...the...the missionary to have support from the mission board, in that they pay you a salary or do you feel that it is better for you to raise your own salary going to different churches?

**ADOLPH:** I think there are advantages in...in both ways. If I were to...if I were to ch...choose at this particular point what I think is best, I would say that it is better for the mission board to pay a...a salary and to let the missionary have his time on furlough as a time of recouping and regrouping for miss...for missionary service, and not to be divisive time for the family. I think that emphasis has to be on helping Christian families stay together and work together and become stronger, and not the...I don't like to see the present system, where missionaries are actually torn apart [chair squeaking] rather than coheased [sic] together.

**MERCER:** Do you feel that you had the proper preparation for the mission field?

**ADOLPH:** I think that [pauses] I can answer that question best by saying that I...I wrote down all the courses that I would have taken after my eight years in Ethiopia at Wheaton College had I know all the different things that I would have been responsible for. However, if I had taken all those courses, I would have had to have been in college for approximately twelve years to take them all, and that of course is not possible. I think that the missionary doctor, for example, needs course...needs at least one course in business administration and in finance. He needs at least one course in...in employee relationships and anthropology and of course there...there are many others that I could list.

**MERCER:** Uh....

**END OF TAPE**