

This is a complete transcript of the oral history interview **Malcolm Maurice Sawyer (CN 256, T2)** 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 Christopher Easley and Paul Ericksen and was completed in April 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 256, Tape 2. Oral history interview with Malcolm Maurice Sawyer by Robert Shuster on November 14, 1983.**

**SHUSTER:** This is an interview with Mr. Malcolm Sawyer by Robert Shuster for the Billy Graham Center of Wheaton College. This interview took place at Mr. Sawyer's home in Wheaton on November the 14th at 9:30 a.m. Mr. Sawyer, during our last interview, you mentioned that after you left China, you next were for a brief period in Saigon. What was your work there?

**SAWYER:** Yes. Well, we went to Saigon [squeaking noise] from Hong Kong. And we went to Dalat, which is a couple hundred miles to the northeast in the mountains. Five thousand feet above sea level. This was laid out as the Paris of the Indochina.

**SHUSTER:** Deelano [phonetic approximation]?

**SAWYER:** Pardon?

**SHUSTER:** Daylano [phonetic approximation]?

**SAWYER:** No, Dalat.

**SHUSTER:** Dalat.

**SAWYER:** Dalat. D-A-L-A-T. Dalat. And we studied French there. We hadn't had any French before. The French had returned after the war. And the countries had not their independence as yet. And so we had to study French, 'cause all the officials were French. They could speak English, but they s...it was their country. So our mission thought it was wise...everyone had French. So we studied French for nine months. The French were leaving. [Sound distorted due to adjustment of recording speed]...were a bit at that time for a lot of problems with the nationals, Vietnamese and so forth. They weren't appreciated. And so we didn't have, you know, a lot of drive to get French [chuckles]. We enjoyed hunting at night [laughs]...relaxation, and studying French during the day. So we were there for nine months. And then we proceeded to Laos.

**SHUSTER:** But when you were in...in [pauses] Vietnam, and even in China, [pauses] did you have any contacts with the French colonials...

**SAWYER:** Oh, yeah.

**SHUSTER:** ...the officials?

**SAWYER:** We had...we went to different functions around Dalat, and there was some visiting back and forth. There was a big mission school there, also a tribal center, besides a Vietnamese church or two, (there were several in the area, Vietnamese churches). So we did, you know, have contact with the French people. The older missionaries had friends among the French. But most of our contacts were with the Vietnamese Christian community in their church, and also much

more with the tribes of that area because they had a tribal center...a tribal Bible school connected to the Dalat school. And we were actually in between. We had cottages for missionaries. And so that was actually our work, or our activity...day after day was studying French and then going to special functions with the children [laughs] school, and also with the tribal center.

**SHUSTER:** What was the purpose of the tribal center?

**SAWYER:** It was a Bible training school for pastors.

**SHUSTER:** For...

**SAWYER:** For the....

**SHUSTER:** ...Vietnamese or for the...?

**SAWYER:** No, no, for the tribes. See, all the backbone of Indo-China are made up with different tribal la...groups of people. (Over sixty different tribes and they have many different dialects among them.) And so we worked...(as far as in Vietnam) worked all up the ridge, or the corridor next to Laos and Cambodia among the different tribes. And that was a strong work. We even had the Vietnamese (there's a mission field full of them) to work among the tribal people, to learn their language. A lot of the men spoke Vietnamese, but they had their own language. And so we had hundreds and several thousand converts from the different tribes of the area.

**SHUSTER:** Did you have any contact with the [pauses]...with Smiths?

**SAWYER:** Oh yeah, Gordon Smith.

**SHUSTER:** Gordon and Laura Smith.

**SAWYER:** Yeah, Gordon and Laura Smith, yes they were with the Christian Missionary Alliance [Portion which follows is restricted and has therefore been removed from the transcript. This section will be unavailable to researchers without Sawyer's written permission until 11/4/93]....

**SHUSTER:** So it wasn't as in China where in some cases missionaries were held for ransom?

**SAWYER:** No. The.... I don't...I wouldn't want to have this publicized or on the radio or anything, but [pauses]...I mean, the Vietminh were not [pauses] quite as [pauses] aware of world affairs. They're not as...I wouldn't say about their intelligence, but their awareness as far as world political affairs at that time. The Chinese are, you know, some of the top people in the Orient [laughs]. They know what's going on.

**SHUSTER:** When you were in Vietnam, what was the relationship between the colonial government and the Protestant missionaries?



**SAWYER:** Well, in the beginning, in 1911, the missionaries, when they first arrived there were almost under house arrest, because the French were dominated by the Catholic Church. And so there was no thought of any Protestants coming into Vietnam particularly. The French tolerated the Protestants in southern Laos before the turn of the century, but that was in the back woods. But they didn't want them in any way in the front lines as far as Vietnam. But they won...won over the French by being kind to them and always obeying regulations and rules [laughs] to the.... And so they spoke French. That was the reason that we had had to have French, because we tried to...to...to be as polite as possible. And so they...they responded to that. Although, possibly some of the French could speak better English than we...[laughs] than our French. So when I was there, there was...they were always...you know, they...they...well I mean they...they thought that they were better than the...than the Americans. The French; we usually calls them the French colonials [laughs]. They thought...they thought Paris was the capital of the world. And they used to say, "You Americans are the 'grand garcon.' You're just the big boys. That's all. You don't know what's going on." [Laughs]. That was the attitude of the French. And so you always said, "Well, that's...that's OK. That's fine." [Laughs]. "We just want to be in your good graces because our objective is the people here and you are the rulers, and so we ask for your consideration and kindness."

**SHUSTER:** Did you see any evidences in the nine months you were there of the tensions between the French on one hand and the...

**SAWYER:** No.

**SHUSTER:** ...Vietnamese on the other?

**SAWYER:** Not too much, although the Vietcong delighted in killing Frenchmen [laughs], and to discourage them as much as possible. But when we returned in 1955, (yeah '55, or '54), when they were losing their control. That was when Dien Bien Phu and so forth took place in North Vietnam. Then at that time there was terrible hatred for the French and [pauses] a...there was a great respect for the Americans [laughs].

**SHUSTER:** Why was that?

**SAWYER:** Pardon?

**SHUSTER:** Why was that?

**SAWYER:** Well, of course, the French were...were not kind to the Vietnamese. They were real colonials and they were treated them harshly. And the Americans they knew were kinder, I guess, I don't know. But they...they appreciated the Americans. I remember they had check points. That was...that was about the end of French rule there. And they had check points on roads where the Vietnamese had taken over. And we'd go up there and they'd [pauses] say, "[Loudly] Oh you are Americans! Go right through!" But the French, they would stop them, you know, and detain them, and you know, really let them know that they were the rulers. That was after actually independence of Vietnam. I guess it 1954, yeah '55. And so we...it felt good at

that point [laughs]. I had a little incident coming out of Dalat. The French...they weren't in charge but they were coming up the mountain. The road was narrow and there's lot of tropical rains and they had a big bus full of soldiers and also different nationals...(Moroccans and so forth). And they stopped on a corner and I was coming down with a jeep and a trailer, and I couldn't stop because the road was slippery. And I...and there was another army vehicle trying to get by them. And so I slammed into the side of the army vehicle and caused some damage to our jeep. And the French were there...it was two French captains in charge of the bus. And so they came up and were...you know, looked at the incident, and.... And I unwisely said, "If you'da pulled your vehicle off the road, we might not have had an accident." They didn't pull their vehicle off. They just thought that they were a ward still. And the French captain struck me [laughs], and he was angered because...you know, they blamed the Americans for everything that happened in Vietnam. And so I had a great...good time to witness to him. I said, "If I wasn't a Christian...." I said, "Do you know anything about Protestants? Do you know anything about the Bible?" And he said he did. I was talking to him in my broken French. I said, "In the Bible there's a story...Christ taught that said that if a man hits you on one side of the cheek you're supposed to turn the other." So I said, "Mister will you please hit me on this side of the cheek?" [Laughs] And he said, "No, no, I will not hit you on that side of the street...the cheek." And then pretty soon he took me away because there was about two hundred people driving that...that cou...cou...cou...arrived there because they cou...cou...the traffic couldn't go. So he took me up into the woods and...and true French fashion he kissed me on both sides of the cheeks and asked for my forgiveness [laughs]. That was quite an incident [laughs].

**SHUSTER:** How did you...how did the Protestants get along with the Catholics in Vietnam [pauses] from your observations?

**SAWYER:** There was great competition. See, the Catholics [pauses] were always a greater [laughs].... I mean, we started from zero in 1911. There wasn't any Protestants at all [pauses] in Vietnam. But the church grew by leaps and bounds, particularly during all the war years because there was such murder and killings and so the hearts of people were very tender. And so people were believing all over the country. And so before we left there in 1975, every small community had a Protestant church, and they grew by leaps and bounds. There was...we probably...we weren't as numerous as the [pauses]...as the Catholics, but we were in great evidence [laughs] everywhere. And so we use to hear reports that, "Oh, the Tinlinh...," as we were called...the Protestant church.

**SHUSTER:** The what?

**SAWYER:** The Tinlinh. T-I-N-L-I-N-H. That's the name of the Protestant church of Vietnam. They were...they were everywhere! We hear that report everywhere. "Everywhere we go, they see a Tinlinh church." So.... And the Vietnamese leaders, they were...they just...just were praying and praying and praying that they would have ten million converts before...before Vietnam fell. The leadership stayed there, and they've increased tremendously. But they've been persecuted. They're second class citizens, Christians are...today among the communists. They aren't...their children aren't allowed to go to higher education. They're rationed as far as food is limited [laughs]. They're paying a price. Many pastors are in jail, and [they're] intimidated in every way,

but the church is still very, very strong. That's the way the church grows in Vietnam. So [pauses] before...before Vietnam fell, that was the strongest church of the Christian Missionary Alliance in the world.

**SHUSTER:** When you say strongest do you mean fastest growing or....?

**SAWYER:** Yeah, fastest growing in numer...as far as numbers. They were greater than any other place that we had in the world.

**SHUSTER:** Did you have co...direct contact with Catholic clergy in Vietnam?

**SAWYER:** Yes, at different functions [pauses] they were represented. See the Catholics always tried to, as far as government, tried to get in the foreground [laughs]. They want to get pictures with the leaders and so forth, and they're always trying to do something publicly so that they can be recognized, they can be in...be in the news. They've always done that [pauses] throughout Vietnam. Throughout Laos we saw this. And so we were also represented. We [laughs]...we were many people. We had more missionaries than anywhere in the world in Vietnam before it fell. The church was very strong, so we were represented at many public functions, the missionaries were.

**SHUSTER:** At the language school, was there...was it just language school? Was there any classes in tribal customs or...?

**SAWYER:** Oh yes, yes. Actually, we didn't have much in those days. We...we'd learn on the spot. The older missionaries took the younger missionaries out [laughs, door slams in background] and just showed them what was going on. And in that day many of the missionaries had studied anthropology and so forth, and so they had different thoughts concerning the people [laughs]. Some of the missionaries had come through Paris, and they'd...they spoke French very well and they would go through the libraries of Paris and read up on the [clanging noise in background] culture of the different peoples. That was...I mean the United States didn't have a lot of materials at that time, but it was mostly in Paris. So the missionaries, my contemporaries, a lot of them that went to Vietnam, and they did study French in those days in Paris, but also they went and studied, you know, in the libraries of Paris concerning the culture of the people. And then they began to lecture to the older missionaries some of the things that should be changed [laughs]. Because in those days colonial fashion, even if you went through the jungles and so forth, you took a great big retinue of people, you...you know, to help you carry all your stuff. You'd eat separately from the people [laughs]. And in my day we just started to change that. We started to live with the people. We started to put a pack on our own back. And, you know, try to be one of them. So the...so the approach changed in my day also. The head of the Christian Missionary Alliance then was an area secretary, and there was no more subsidy [pauses] for churches, as far as church support. And we believed in self-support, self-governing, [laughs] and self-propagation. That came in to focus in those days very strongly. And the people should tithe and take care of their own pastors, although we helped out with building of buildings, church buildings, in central places. [We] put a lot of money into Bible colleges and schools and then turned it over to the national church. That was the way we spent our extra funds and so forth. But



as far as the support of pastors and so forth, that was a...that was spoken against by the new leaders of the Christian Missionary Alliance and it's been a focus ever since throughout the world. And this came into good stead as far as in China, because the national church of China has taken on the name, I mean the new Protestant church: Self Movement Church. You've heard of that. Self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating.

**SHUSTER:** Three Self, yeah.

**SAWYER:** Three selves. And most of our churches in Chi...all of our churches in China were self supporting. So that's why a lot of the churches never get into trouble and they're still exist...in existence in China today.

**SHUSTER:** How did you come after your time in language school to go on to Laos?

**SAWYER:** You mean...whad'ou...pardon.

**SHUSTER:** After you'd been in language school...

**SAWYER:** Yeah...

**SHUSTER:** ...how did you come on to be...?

**SAWYER:** Well, we...we proceeded to Laos, and then were emerged immediately in the Lao language.

**SHUSTER:** How did you come to be assigned to Laos though?

**SAWYER:** Well, when China broke up [ca. 1950] there were ninety missionaries of Christian Missionary Alliance in China. And all the new missionaries were assigned to Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, some to Indonesia and the Philippines. And so they assigned us arbitrarily where there was a need. And so we were assigned to Laos. At that time I didn't even know where Laos was [laughs]. Oddly [laughs] I never heard of it. I was limited in my languages...your...as far as, you know, the different Indo-China states. So, but we soon found out.

**SHUSTER:** How did you travel from...?

**SAWYER:** We traveled by plane. They had DC-3's and they had British planes and we traveled from Saigon to the capital of Laos, Vientiane. And then we went to Luang Prabang, which is two...three hundred miles to the north of...up of Vientiane. We came in September and that was the height of the rainy season. In Laos or...the monsoons of the Indian Ocean brush across there and...and that's just...that's the height of the rainy season. The Mekong has come up twenty feet. You know, that's the big river through Southeast Asia. Like all the rivers.... And at that time the runway in Luang Prabang was not paved. It was grass. And so it was muck and mire [laughs]. The mission had a little [unclear] French aircraft in that day trying to get around more easily.



One of the missionaries was a pilot. So after a few sunny days [laughs], we got into Luang Prabang. And that's where we lived until 1959, and worked. We learned language. We had tutors (there were know language school). We just had a Buddhist priest, who had good education as far as the Lao. And he came to our house every day and we studied six hours with him and then studied on our own afterwards. And so that's how we got our language. They didn't...

**SHUSTER:** Did the priest have any hesitation about teaching Protestant missionaries?

**SAWYER:** No, no. He was...he was appreciative of the money [laughs]. Money became before anything else [laughs]. So he was paid well, you know for him...for that area to be our teacher.

**SHUSTER:** Were you the...how many other CMA [Christian and Missionary Alliance] missionaries were there in Prabang?

**SAWYER:** Luang Prabang. There were two CM couples: Dr. Roffe and his wife, and the Clingens. And then after us there came a couple other couples to set up. We were the only ones in the beginning. So we had our own house. We...they set us up in our own house and got us furniture and we got our few things and started to live. Help was cheap so we had a cook, and we had a boy that worked in the house. We had a fella that worked outside. All of our water was carried. We didn't have a flush toilet or...we had a....carried out the...the utensil every...few times a day. The wash was done by hand. So I mean, it was a lot of work. You went to the market (the fella did) and they brought home hunks of meat and they had to be cleaned up, and you know, and everything had to be prepared. So it was a lot of work. So my wife learned a lot about how to live, as far as market in those days. So we studied language all day and then on weekends we went out to minister with local pastors to the churches. There were no converts among the Lao, because they're strong Buddhists, who would make fun of you and argue with you. There were temples in every corner of the ci...of the city. And so we had very few converts. Maybe you could number 'em on both hands [laughs] in Luang Prabang. But just outside of Luang Prabang, some of the original peoples of Laos.... (I say that because the Lao were immigrants in the times of Christ, the Thai race migrating out of China to the south and into Thailand, and some stayed in Laos and were smaller groups, the Thai, the Black Thai and the White Thai and the Red Thai of north Laos and North Vietnam, and....) But the original peoples were the tribal peoples on that ridge of mountains, as we mentioned before, sixty different tribes extended up into Laos too. And the most northern section of Laos were made up of Khamu. They were original peoples. They were spirit worshippers. And they were the people that responded to the Gospel, particularly a little before we arrived there in the 50's, and afterwards we saw some twenty villages become Christian. They had anywhere from five to ten to twenty houses in every village. That community of Christians are still there today, and they're increasing slowly. There're pastors among them. We had only one or two in that day. Some of them were being paid. But our mission were...changing our program. Some of them left and so forth but a few stuck. And so these were original people that we worked with. Then they were illiterate, but so...a few could read Lao. And so we had converts. We took the few that could read and write. They'd say, "Sunday is a holy day." They'd have services and then they would teach Lao writing to the young people in the afternoon. That was the beginning of our work. And from those young people came people that trained as pastors in years afterwards. And Lao schools were instituted back in the





hills by the U.S. government when they arrived with their aid. That was part of a great program of...of helping the Lao government, was education or the tribal people of many tribes back in the hills.

**SHUSTER:** What was the name of the tribe again?

**SAWYER:** Khamu.

**SHUSTER:** Khamu.

**SAWYER:** Yeah. K-H-A-M-U. And they have...they're not a...they don't have any...all the tribespeople do not have...the to...they're not tonal as far as their language, whereas the Lao has a tonal pattern as well as the Thai and so forth because of the Chinese background. So these people were...have been stepped on by the Lao [laughs] who've come into news. And being among them it's, "Oh, those Lao!" and so forth. But they are closely associated with the Lao. Their buildings and their housing, and...is similar to the Lao, although their language is somewhat different. But all their people speak Lao for the most part.

**SHUSTER:** Why do you think that this group was so responsive to the Gospel?

**SAWYER:** Well, any down trodden peoples respond to the Gospel. Anybody that has problems and have been persecuted, and...and walked upon by other races respond to the Gospel. That's one of the great reasons that Korea today has one of the greatest responses to the Gospel, because they have for centuries been kicked around by the Chinese and by the Japanese. We don't want that publicized either, but there's the honest truth. And that's why the Gospel has penetrated. Because we have a strong church in Vietnam was because that they were kicked around by the French for years and they were...they were in serfdom to the Chinese, (the northern part of North Vietnam), for centuries. And so any race that has problems, any...any small group of people... The Khamu were despised and treated roughly by the Lao, and say, "You're animals!" I mean, that's what they would say. They would rob them of their goods when they would come in...their vegetables and so forth, give them a small price. They would come in and work, and they didn't...couldn't read or write or tell time, hardly.... And they would say, "Oh, you haven't worked long enough. You don't deserve any money," you know. And then they'd have to work another month, same price as two months. But any group of people who are not Christian, there is no mercy throughout the earth. Christianity only has mercy and love. Otherwise no matter who you are or what race you are, you lord it over another weaker brother or people or race. It's...it's...we've seen this, and so that's the reason.... The Lao said, "You're no good! You're animals." But then this big foreigner and this American, or...they don't know who he was, would come and show love to them. We spend...we'd go out among them, even new villages that knew nothing about the Gospel, we'd spend all day treatin' their sick, because there was no...no medical help whatsoever. And if they came to town to ask for medical help, they'd..., "[loudly] Huh, what are you doing here!? You animal, go out there and die!" I mean that was the attitude, even among the French...French colonials the same way. I've taken tribesmen to the French doctor and he said, "What'd you bring that animal in here for?" He'd say it in French and they didn't know what they would say...they were talking about. But [pauses] they're not...they do not



know Christ. See, Christ brings love, consideration and mercy. And so we learned to show some love and consideration and help even as one of ours, and many of them were saved in the hour of sickness and also miracles occurred because we use to pray too for people. And we buried hundreds and thousands of their people, and stood by their biers, you know, when they buried. Their children often died because they...malnutrition, and they didn't have proper food and so forth. So, we cried with them. And so this is the way that the Gospel spread. And preachers were trained the same way. Our children and all are like us, so to speak, and they were like our children. And so these people became Christian, and they have a Christian community today and they have their leaders among them, and we've heard that the church is expanding.

**SHUSTER:** You mentioned that they were spirit worshippers.

**SAWYER:** That's right.

**SHUSTER:** What was their spirit religion like?

**SAWYER:** Well, anything in the Orient.... They have the name of religion, as far as Buddhism and so forth. But Buddhism...very few people among the Lao or the Thai know the precepts of Buddha...Buddhist teaching. Seventy-five percent of their worship is spirit worship, appeasing the evil spirits by doing. You'd...blood sacrifices: kill a chicken a certain [day] every month. And if you had sickness, then they wou...then the witch doctor say, "You ought to kill a buffalo,"...make a...make a sacrifice...the buffalo. Then you also had different things in your house to keep the evil spirits out of your house. Up high [laughs] in the corner.... The spirits they thought liked to drink alcohol, so they would put in rice alcohol. And they'd say, "Well..." [banging noise in background] Then they'd put in the mirror or something. (That's Chinese you know. If the spirits see the...see themselves, then they'll run away [laughs]. They get scared.) I mean it's all in their imagination. And so they put it on the edge of their village, they put it in their houses. They would tie strings on them to keep the...to keep the spirit in the body so it wou...wou...wou...wou...wouldn't run away, and so forth. [They] do that particularly for their children. For instance, right here in Warrenville, a Lao family...(we have many Lao that are coming to church now, so they're beginning to understand about Christianity)...and so this young man, just a week ago Saturday night, the wife called me and said, "My child is...was in the hospital eight days." I said, "Why didn't you tell me before?" And well, she said, "I didn't." [Banging noise in background] Well, I said...I said, "Oh, I'll come out to see you right now." So I ran out there about eight o'clock at night, and sat down to talk to them, and we're talking about many things. And he said, "You know [pauses] what happened?" I said, "No." He said, "We were thinking to go to Elgin and have someone tie some strings on our child," (because they had a...she...he had a very high fever). And then my wife...

**SHUSTER:** Is there a ceremony involved?

**SAWYER:** Yeah, there's a ceremony involved with someone else that comes and ties strings on and prays over them or says words of [laughs]...concerning to the evil spirits. And so that's...that's to keep the evil spirits away. So they do that as a part of their program, even right here in the States. You see any strings on...on people, you know that they are not Christian....

And so then they got to talking, wife and husband, and they said, "You know, we've been going to church, and that teacher, Archan Nya [Rev. Nyachew] they've been talking about said, 'You...we pray about our problems and our troubles.' So we said, "We'll try this. Instead of going to Elgin, we'll pray." And so the father and mother just bent, (they'd never prayed hardly before), just uttered a prayer because they'd been in church, "In Jesus name." And they...they were...said, "After a few hours the fever stopped." [laughs] And so they...they wanted me to know that. And so a week ago Sunday they were in our church service in Lombard. I've never seen such attention. They were singing, both of them, they were looking at the Bible and really being con...listening to everything that was said. So that's just a simple thing concerning the tying of strings and what are the...where they've come from, as far as from Laos, [squeaking noise in background] their culture.

**SHUSTER:** But the spirit religion of the Khamu then was...?

**SAWYER:** Same thing.

**SHUSTER:** Same as the Lao?

**SAWYER:** Same as the Lao. The Lao, the...and even the Hmong. And so they put rings around their necks. They put steel and copper woven together around their necks as they grow older. That's supposed to protect them. And [pauses] so when they become Christian, all that stuff is thrown away. The objects in their house are thrown away. They're burned. The altars outside the villages - burned and...and cut down and thrown away. And the strings are cut off. We've cut off many [laughs] hundreds and hundreds and thousands of strings from people and taken the paraphernalia off their necks and so forth. And they become Christian. We found out that a great fear is among them and the only way that they could not do this again and in the time of trouble and death was to have teachers. And so when we got pastors trained, they went back and lived among them. The...the people would say, "What do we do now pastor?" The pastor would turn to the Bible and said, "We have to read. This is what the Scriptures say we should do when we're sick, when we have trouble. We're supposed to pray." So the pastors, even today I'm sure, going from house to house every night at dusk, and they pray where there's trouble or there's sickness. And they sing. They sing hymns now [chuckles] instead of beatin' the gongs [chuckles] like they did before to keep the evil spirits out. They s...they're singing hymns. They still have the culture, see. They need noise [laughs]...the need.... And so...but it's been changed to the singing of hymns.

**SHUSTER:** Did you ever see any evidences of spirit possession?

**SAWYER:** I've never seen it out there as much as here in the United States. I've had occasions here in the United States to cast out evil spirits out of people. But out there I don't think I... We prayed all the time and yet we never...we never felt, seen 'em...the demon possession. We always threw out evil spirit worship in the name of Christ, and prayed constantly. Prayed for those who were ill, prayed for those in trouble, prayed for those who had sinned [laughs], prayed for those who were angry [chuckles]. And [pauses] sometimes they'd become very angry and do harsh

things and we'd tell them we have to forgive one another [chuckles] and live in peace with one another.

**SHUSTER:** When you first were going to a village, an area where the Gospel had not been preached, how did you begin? I mean, how did you start talking about the Gospel?

**SAWYER:** The cul...the culture is this: you always go to the head man. He is...he's the boss. And you make yourself known. You know their language. That's a great...that's why...you know, it's a great inroad, I mean a great in. And so we went to the head man, said who we were, and "we'd like to help you with your proble...." Everybody was sick. I mean, there was malaria. There was dysentery. There was yaws. [Sounds in background: opening door, footsteps crossing floor, door slams.] And [pauses] peop...children were just full of worms, big stomachs and eyes running and all kinds. So we...we always took a whole suitcase of medicine. We weren't trained much in [laughs]...as a medic, but we soon learned. And our missionaries in town used to have...they had...they had nurses among them, and they ran clinics. And so we...we used to take aspirin and quinine and all that and dress sores and penicillin and all like that, because there was no medical help whatsoever. Death upon every hand. And often the family would have ten children, but they might one or two living. Mortality among the children was very high. So we treated people all day long. And in the evening we said, "Now this is what we have to teach you. We're Christian." (They'd never heard about Christ.) And so we'd tell them about the Gospel. We'd say, "Now, we want...we're comin' back maybe in next month or maybe two months and we'll help you again. And we'll tell you more about this." Never urged them to become Christian, throw away their old practices until we'd visited them several times. And then after five or six times.... We always went with a national, never by ourselves, never by ourselves. And so they became...we became higher and higher, you know friends...(we weren't like the Lao who came in and treated them roughly), and showed kindness to them. So we had an in immedi...like that. And they realized...you know, we'd.... Often a lot of..."What are you doin' out there, you...? They give you money?" Because of...often if they treat anybody they say, "OK, give me money!" You know, stuff like that. So after treating their people and helping them with their problems.... And then after a while they would say, "Yes. How do we become Christian?" So they became Christian like we do here. And then we started to set up teachers. Have an elder and then train them for baptism. Wouldn't baptize immediately. Used...there at the end of the...it came to the place at the end of the rice harvest in December, they always had a special meetings, they had a feast, a Christian feast...Christmas. And we often had pageants [laughs, pauses] on the nativity that they really loved. Then we had pictures. We used to have slides in the beginning on the life of Christ with a kerosene carousel...carried it up. And this was a great time. And then we'd have youth meetings. [At] the beginning of youth program we'd bring in youth to the central place in Luang Prabang for a whole week. And that was back in the 50's.

**SHUSTER:** Was that a camp or....?

**SAWYER:** Yeah, we had a camp. We fed them. We had...brought in special speaker. We played games and we had...you know things like that. And so that became wonderful. They'd go back, you know, and they were the spark of this..of the church in the village. And that was where our preachers came from. And so after a period of...back in the 60's, we started to train people. We



had four years of Bible school, three years in, one year out, see for trial. They'd come back in on the fourth year. Go out with a diploma. And they'd put that up in their houses. He was a big archan now or a big teacher. Appreciated that. And then after a period of time they were ordained, taking full responsibility for the church and deve...developed the church organization. And they had their own leadership, ran their own program.

**SHUSTER:** You mentioned that when you were first beginning to witness you always went with a national.

**SAWYER:** Yeah, we always went with a national.

**SHUSTER:** And the purpose of that was?

**SAWYER:** We never do anything on our own as far as...as foreigners. Never, anywhere. That's our program throughout the world. Some missionaries did that on their own, but that was...that's our chief practice. So that in the end it's not the white man's religion. But it's one of their own, always, with us. He might have his brains washed (according to the communists or something). But on the other hand, he was taught. He was...he was taught at our side and we learned culture that way, what was...what was right, what was wrong; what was suspicious and all like that.

**SHUSTER:** Can you think of some examples [slamming noise in background] of [pauses] as far as culture, what was right or wrong that you learned as you began...?

**SAWYER:** Well, one of the greatest things is you never showed your anger. If you ever showed your anger in any way against anyone, then that's where the witness stopped. They would never listen to you from their...then on. I mean people get angry out there and do terrible things. But they...they've lost face for life, so to speak. So that was one of the greatest things is we were very conscious of that. And [pauses] always eat with them. I mean they appreciate that. That's...eating is a great great thing among them. Last night I stopped in Rockford after a service, and we didn't finish eating until 11:30. And I wanted to come home, because I'd been out all...the whole weekend. But I knew that this is their culture out there. And so after the service they went home and they cooked up a big meal. It took them an hour...an hour and a half. And then they put on the very best that they had. Last night in Rockford. And that...I learned that from Laos. You eat with them. They...they.... And you eat what they serve before you. And you sleep in their houses. I mean, sleep...you know, like they sleep on the floor [laughs]. And you teach them cleanliness and all like that. But, it's...it's part of...part of their living. Then you learn about their planting and so forth. They do certain things [laughs] and planting in harvest time, which has not to do...it's their culture. That's just culture.

**SHUSTER:** What kind of things are planted?

**SAWYER:** Well they plant on a certain day when the sun is this way and that way and when the wind blows and all like that, and.... You learn all these different things as far as...as far as their planting and so forth out there and harvesting of their crops.

**SHUSTER:** How were the first elders for the church chosen? What kind of people were you looking for?

**SAWYER:** Well, the thing is, that was...that was a little bit arbitrary because you had to...you used only people who could read and write and it was so limited and sometimes that wasn't the best thing. [Pauses] Sometimes they weren't good men [pauses] we found out afterwards and so we didn't have the very best of men. But then when...when the teachers got there.... And they changed elders every year. We still do this in this country here with the Hmong and so forth. They change elders every year. Well not every year. You know, they might have a continuation. But if there was any question, then they...they asked them to get out. And usually even here in our church services, you go into a Hmong service or Lao service or a Cambodian service here, who are the head men? They're sitting in the front row. And nobody sits in front of them. Yesterday in Milwaukee, I was in the second row and nobody was in front of me. Respect in a Hmong service, a Lao service, all this. That's...that's part of their cu...part of their culture of showing respect to people. So....

**SHUSTER:** You mentioned also the pageants that they held at the fall harvest...

**SAWYER:** Yeah, or Christmas time. It's actually...

**SHUSTER:** ...or Christmas time.

**SAWYER:** ...it was on the...it was on the birth of Christ, the nativity scene.

**SHUSTER:** What...what went into the pageant? What were some of the elements?

**SAWYER:** Well, we just...we just had the whole story. And we had 'em dressed up. And we had the shepherds coming in dressed up in robes. And...and we had Mary and Joseph and Jesus, the baby Jesus. They just loved those things. See, pageant is a very strong thing in the Orient among all Orientals, and that's the way they learn. The Chinese, they have their big pageants. The Vietnamese have their pageants. They're beautiful things. Went into China in 1981 and you...you see these things even today. Communists have not destroyed that. And it tells different stories. It's...it's beautiful, beautiful. They're dressed beautifully. And they...and this is all through Indochina, even down into Indonesia. Pageants. And so they just love that. And they have their special singing. They sing back and forth, a man and a woman. And they love that, the Lao. They'll sit all night and listen. They have these in their Buddhist moons or...or festivals. They have festivals every month or two and that's part...part of their...the festival is...is this lum or this singing. It's telling a story. The people that are good just...just...really not the story, but its in a half drone and sing-song way. And so the fellow talks and often he has his...his...his bamboo instrument that...wind instrument that has holes in it, you know. It was, you know, it's only two or three octaves, goes back and forth. And so he kind of charms the [laughs]...the girl you know. And then he...then he...and then he goes on without that and he goes [in nasal tone], "Whaaaaaaaaaaaaa!" And then he goes on with afterward [in nasal tone], "Nya-nya-nya-nya-nya-nya." And it tells a story. Well that, those particular things are very lurid, I mean they're...they're not good [laughs]. I mean it's...it's...it's just like what...watching TV and



you know all the different elements. Man is...has got a bad bend everywhere in the world. And so these things...and the people love that stuff [laughs]. But then with the Christian aspect, then we...we go on too with singing like that. We sing the Scriptures. The Hmong here have...have...have the Scriptures wrought in...in their s...s...in their...in their lum or their...their singing. And the Lao have it too. And so we were increasing in that and as we understood more of the culture we had more of this upon cassettes and so forth that were sent out through the countryside.

**SHUSTER:** Did you use Gospel Recording or was this your own...

**SAWYER:** Yes,...

**SHUSTER:** ...recordings?

**SAWYER:** ...we...we used...we used...we used our own. We had Gospel Recording that came out of southern California...has worked the world. They came out in long periods of time and...and taped this. First it was put upon the disks [laughs]. And we used to sell...get small (not recorders)...but you know the [pauses] gramophone or so forth that was put out. And they went all through the hills and [unclear] the records by the hundreds and by the thousands. We used to distribute them. And then there came the tape recorder. I don't know if any of them are left now out there or not. They might be in disrepair. But this is another method of spreading the Gospel: that the elders would do...that they couldn't witness, they would take this record and all the tape to another village and that's how the Gospel spread among them. And we couldn't even go. We taught them to propagate. See, this was part of their equipment of propagation.

**SHUSTER:** What was a service like, a worship service?

**SAWYER:** Worship service, first of all was in a bamboo hut. Wasn't any church building. You sat cross-legged on the bamboo floor. We had our hymnals. In the beginning we didn't have too many national hymns, songs and so forth. We had mostly hymns translated...our hymns translated into the Lao language. And so we just taught them. Many of them couldn't sing but the children would pick up immediately. So we taught the young people and the children these things. And they taught their...taught their older folks [laughs]. And so it was just made up like church services here. I mean they...they sang, they prayed, they preached, so forth. Sometimes they would sing one. And in the beginning they'd sing the tune of one song to another [laughs]. They didn't know the difference. There wasn't any music and they couldn't read music. And so that was a great thing. But then, that was one of our great strong points as far a training the...the pastors. We trained them so that they could sing every hymn in the hymnal. And they loved to sing. And I've been on trips in three or four hours and they'd sing the whole hymnal as we'd go in a jeep or somewhere. It was beautiful, beautiful. Even they'd travel at night. And they would just sing. I think of an older man in California who knows all these hymns, and a pastor now over seventy years of age living in Stockton. And he knows...he knows that hymnal from...from the front to the back and he can sing every...every hymn by heart [laughs]. Every...every verse almost. I have great memories. So this is how the hymnology developed. Then we got into some of their music and their...their mu...their...because, I mean, our music and...is harsh on the ears,

whereas their music too is...is not so [laughs] melodious to us, we...we learn it. For instance over the weekend I used...we used several of the Lao tunes with the Lao people here. And they loved it. It really speaks to their hearts. The music and the words. We put Christian words to these tunes and it means a lot to them, it speaks to their hearts.

**SHUSTER:** How...how long do the services usually last, the worship service?

**SAWYER:** Well, over there, time meant nothing. They lived by the sun. They didn't have watches. We used to treat people there with malaria and with many things, with...with pills. And you'd s...I'd say, "You see the sun coming up now? Here's are these piled, we want these separate. You eat those when the sun is coming up. And when the sun is over you, like this right over the top of you, this is...these amount of pills, quinine and aspirin. And then when the sun is getting down over here, then you...then you eat this group. Then if you have to wake up in the middle of the night, and you sh...this is another." And so this is how we used to lead them and it's how we used to treat people [laughs]. Not having watches, they'd...they'd live by the sun. And, so.... Now the services, they weren't...now what I was getting at was this: their services would begin according to the height of the sun [laughs]. In the f...in the...when the sun was low, then the service used to begin in the morning at eig...nine o'clock. But by December, the sun would come up slow or late, so you wouldn't get services going until eleven or ele...twelve, see [laughs]. And the services sometimes are very long. In China used to preach for a whole hour, hour and a half. You'd almost fall asleep. And so out there time didn't mean anything. We had...we had quite a time in the capital in the 60's and 70's because we had many congregations in one church. We had a Lao congregation, we had a Vietnamese service, we had a French service, we had an English service. An American aide would come and we were the only church in town, even the capital those days. And so we wanted an American service. So first of all the Lao would start, you know, and even had Vietnamese. We had four or five services all day long [laughs]. Six services in one little...the chapel. It only seats sixty people [chuckles]. And so, but time, we had the...missionaries had to be...had to watch it on time and say, "Now, you've gotta finish now, right now, you know. And you can't go over this, and.... Some of you've got watches, will you tell us" And then when the Americans came in sometimes, it wasn't clean, and because [pauses] their culture's different than ours, I mean, you know, the babies and all like that, they didn't have diapers and all like that, so [laughs], that's how that they...the West and the East met [laughs]. And that's part of my work even today in going into churches because Hmong and Vietnamese and Cambodians and Lao and do not have their own buildings. So we have to use the buildings of...of our people around here. And sometimes they say, "Oh!" You know. [laughs] "They haven't left this place very clean!" [laughs]. So we have to be go-betweens [laughs] even here in this country.

**SHUSTER:** Ambassadors to both cultures.

**SAWYER:** Right. And so I remind even the Lao here and the Hmong, you know, I said, "Well, you...you have to be considerate." And I said to the Americans, I said, "Don't you love your brothers?" [laughs] Can't you give a little consideration? Don't you have...we have all the pl...." "Well, it's my church!" They don't say that, but [laughs] it's what they believe. So you say, well you know, "Missions has come home" [chuckles].



**SHUSTER:** What...what were the sermons like? What were the topics usually of sermons?

**SAWYER:** It was topical [laughs]. They preach on sin a lot. And preach on alcohol, should...you know, in the beginning, it's all they talked about. On adultery. And [pauses] on fining people. If they did wrong, you...you know, arbitrarily just fined them. That's the way they lived...their culture lived...was. If you did wrong, if you cheated somebody, then they would fine you double or...or the headman. And then, they didn't know....

**SHUSTER:** This was the elders of the churches would fine?

**SAWYER:** Yeah, that's right. The elders of the community. It has the same word in...in...they borrowed it for the church too [chuckles], but for the community they had...they had the village elders, who were the last word. Their services were long and the topics of their sermons.... We had to...we had to...we had to suggest in the beginning what they would preach on, and then verses that they would..., you know. Well, sometimes they were far afield [laughs]...had the wrong interpretation, or as we said they had the wrong tunes on the hymns and so forth. And so they didn't have much to say in the beginning and they always looked forward to when we came to give them more, and also the pastor, or the one pastor for the community of twenty churches in that day. So...then we encouraged them. We...we had Sunday school teaching. We started Sunday schools with pictures for the kids and then we started writing small things. And that's how it developed [chuckles] as far as Christian education. And then when the pastors.... Then the students used to go out weekends from the Bible school to areas where there were no pastors, only elders, and they preached, and so they were a great blessing and great benefit to the new budding churches. And then when they came out to live among them, their spirit worship stopped altogether. Fear stopped of the evil spirits (carried over many years). But the answer to all spirit worship and changing culture that was definitely [child's voice in background] not biblical or Christian came through the pastors when they went out as preachers in the communities after their training in Bible school. Because they had the last word. What...what...before they'd had the spirit doctor. He'd say, "You have to do this, do this, make this sacrifice." But when the pastors came, the...the pastor said, "This is what the Bible teaches, and this what you do. This is what God taught us. This is what Jesus Christ taught us to do. So we practice what he says. That's the last word." And so they would pray. For instance, polygamy. You prosper in the Orient, so you get an extra wife, particularly in sedentary [?] culture, that's like a hired help. You know, you need fields to be wider. And so you get an extra wife. And you have greater family and all like that. But [pauses] we struggled with this in the early years as far a polygamy. And how....[interruption, mumbled woman's voice background]. Just a minute. ...Polygamy [chuckles]. We realized that you can't change culture. That's part of the culture of the Orient. And the Scriptures say, particularly about elders, that he should be the husband...have one wife and all like that and have the respect of the wife as the husband, and so forth, and should be a teacher and given to hospitality. That's part of it. They had all this, but they had plural marriages. So they...anybody that had a...had a wife, that's two or three wives, they were never asked to give 'em up, because the Scriptures don't say you've got to throw your wife out. Nowhere. But they couldn't serve as elders. For instance, last night in Rockford, there's a man that I've known since 1956, a Hmong fellow. He's been a Christian since that time or before. He had two wives in the early days. In the 50's he tried to throw out one wife. Well, she'd become a



harlot if..., you know, if she was thrown out and then some of the people said, "Oh what are you doing with our culture. You're trying to break it up," some believers said, you know, to us as missionaries. And so we came to this conclusion that he couldn't serve as an elder. But he became a great witness. He was always church with his two wives. He had twenty-five children. They're...they're all in church. A lot of them are in the ministry today here in the States. They're all over the States. One...one of the head men at the Hmong community in Chicago has...he's...he's a son [laughs]. He lives in Rockford. And so whatever state you're in, as far as in Corinthians says, you know, that you abide in that. And so they live that way, but they were harsh, as we.... This is not our regulations, but afterwards it was kind of...to stop this thing. When some of the young people prospered, and they wanted to carry on the same culture, then the church leaders said, "If you take a second wife, your second wife and yourself will not be served communion and we will stand as policemen over you, and we will not dedicate the children of your second wives. You understand that?" Like slapping them on the wrist, you know. I mean that was strong, but that kind of kept things in line as far as practicing, you know today, not polygamy [laughs]. So this is...it's a beautiful thing...way the thing worked out, as far as polygamy and all like that, and different things as far as culture. As part of the culture, do you change it? Well it's not quite scriptural.

**SHUSTER:** What happened to...when some of the Lao came...to refugees to the United States with more than one wife?

**SAWYER:** I...

**SHUSTER:** Was there a problem with the US laws?

**SAWYER:** Well, I think the American government has overlooked that because the head Hmong general, he had four wives, one from every race. And I think they came at different times and they're probably still living in different houses in Montana. But I think he's probably [laughs] still living in the same way in even California, and so forth. Well they live that way, and so.... For instance, there was a [pauses]...a fellow living in...near Philadelphia [unidentified noise in background] who was a Bible school student and yet had to be dismissed, not because of that, because some other things. But after he got dismissed he went back to live...he wasn't living quite right: he took a second wife. And I knew that he was in...near Philadelphia. So [pauses] I knew the set up, knew the sponsors and all. And then one day the sponsors called us from that area, (that was back in '77, I think), and said, "This man is going to leave!" and "Right in the middle of winter! We've bought a house for him! We've set him up in every way and he just said he's going to leave. He says he is going to go to Carbondale, Pennsylvania!" So, "Carbondale, Illinois," coming here, Carbondale. So, we knew him like a book 'cause I kicked him out of Bible school when I was on the.... And I told him in no uncertain terms, you know, certain things and...and he went out angry and mad [laughs]. But you could do that if things weren't right. And so the brother of the second wife, we knew that he lived in North Carolina. He was a teacher in Vientiane, the capital, so we knew his telephone. So we called him and said, "Hey, is your sister over here?" And he said, "Yes." We said, "Where is she?" He says, "She's in Carbondale, Illinois" [laughs]. So what and how, you know, they...they get around it. So we call back to the sponsor and said...you know, we talked to the...we said, "Lets put...put this fellow on" [laughs].

You know, he was...he was like a...like a book. So he said, he said to him, he said, "Vangpao, why are you going to Carbondale? Is your Meai Nouie, your small wife living there?" He said, "Who told you?" [Laughs] They said, "You know in this country, you're not supposed to have...." And they said, "You want us to call the police, and call the leaders of the community up there and tell them what your doing?" He said, "You'd better watch out!" [Laughs] So I, how they're doing here in this country, I don't know [laughs]. That's part of their culture [laughs].

**SHUSTER:** When a village did begin to have many conversions to Christianity, was there conflict between Christians and non-Christians?

**SAWYER:** Right, right, right.

**SHUSTER:** How did that express itself or how did that show itself?

**SAWYER:** Well, there was persecution and they expected them to participate in the community affairs. And this is one reason why the Lao never became Christians, because they would really be persecuted terribly, and, you know, even to the point of death. So that's why...that they never did believe. But in the...in the Khamu and the Hmong or the Meo villages there were...often people were angry because they'd become Christians. Sometimes they would move to anoth...new community...new community because it was so rough. Others would re...recant and go back to live. Others wouldn't become Christian because their parents would be so...so rough on them. There's a lot of people that never became Christians because of that. So...so there is a strong.... But then after awhile they were broken down because in opposition that's the Spirit of God working many times.

**SHUSTER:** What kind of...what kind of persecutions were there?

**SAWYER:** Tongue lashing and... to point of death, and also.... I mean, they...you know, they would ostracize him terribly, wouldn't give him advantages and treat him like and outcast. And [pauses] it was really rough. You had to pay a price. [laughs] Anything, you know, that you...they could think of to...to cause it rough on them, the whole community. Like the...like the communists of Vietnam today. They give Christians only sixty percent of the food, and...you know, they would get...they'd get children...could not go any farther than grade school. And you'd have no opportunity for education. You have no...you have no opportunities to work in this locality, in this area. You'll have a...work the fields, something like that. And the same thing happens...has happened today in...in Thailand. The Vietnamese have been restricted in the same way. They can't run taxis, they can't own this, they can't own that, and so forth. They've been along the border of Laos for years and the Thai government has kept them in check like that.

**SHUSTER:** Did any of the restrictions or persecutions apply to missionaries?

**SAWYER:** No, because...before the communists came we were always in...in good graces with the government and so forth, all the governments. And they wouldn't appreciate us and might hate us and might talk against us behind our backs and so forth, but we...we haven't...we had no great problems that way.

**SHUSTER:** Did the independence of Laos in '49 affect your work in any way?

**SAWYER:** No, I don't think so [pauses] because we had...we had missionaries of long standing in the communities who were.... We...we associated with the highest officials of government, and we were on a par with them because we had as good an education or better than they had. We traveled more extensively than they'd...any of them had traveled...had more experience. So when we knew their culture and their language, they would invite us to many official functions. Boat races...we sat in...right in the front with the king, and high officials, and different festivals and so forth. They allowed us at their fall festival to have big stands of advertisement of our literature. For instance, I found two or three men recently here. They became Christians because they would see the tract, where we use to pass our hundreds and thousands of tracts at the fall festival fairs in the cities. So.... But then they'd...they would show their wrath sometimes after we'd...we'd just saturate them with literature, and they would just tear it up before us, and try to show their spite. And they would talk against us. The Lao were the...were the rulers of the country, and...and often they would argue with us and insult us right in the service. They'd be sitting there, get up, you know, talk, but then we could, knew their culture and their language. We'd be kind to them, but answer them straight [laughs]. We knew their culture very well. For instance, last year in...in Elmbrook church we had a meeting with the Lao and a man there got up and went like they do in Laos. But he was trying to be kind here. He said, "I'm a Buddhist and I'm going to be a Christian too!" And my wife, she knows their culture very well too. And she said, "Oh, you're a two headed bird are you?" [Laughs] And that's a saying they have among them, you know, and everybody clapped, you know, and he lost. So [laughs] he lost his battle.

**SHUSTER:** What were...what was the relationship between the missionaries of various missions? Did you work together on projects?

**SAWYER:** Oh, yeah, it was great. It was good cooperation. Because missionaries throughout the world have one objective and that is to win people for Christ. I mean, you don't have any liberals among them hardly. You do in bigger cities and so forth in educational institutions and we didn't associate with them too much, and.... But as far as missions, there's great cooperation. In China, when we were there, and in Lao.... We...we were the sole missions in Vietnam, you know in Indochina for years. Then after the war many came in. Of course [pauses] the Jehovah's Witness and stuff like that. They didn't make any impression upon us and they...they didn't associate with us. They were... you know, they were sheep stealers. And sometimes we'd have the opportunity of knowing government officials who'd say, "They don't need visas." [Laughs] You know, on a couple of occasions they never got in. Then some...

**SHUSTER:** What...?

**SAWYER:** Go ahead.

**SHUSTER:** No. Okay, go ahead.

**SAWYER:** Then another time they came and started to proselyte with our students and stuff in the capital city, and giving literature out. So I got the literature and took it back, and we said,

"You know, if you're interested.... Please do not come. We want...we want to be friends, but [pauses] this is not quite the right thing to do. You know that" [laughs].

**SHUSTER:** How'd they respond to that?

**SAWYER:** They responded. They respected it. And then they...they had their own services and they had their own meetings. Then some missions, for instance, Southern Baptists, thought they had...knew everything, you know, and they didn't start propagating missions until later, and they came into Vietnam and so forth. And they thought they knew more than anybody else and had the answers. And they started to throw money away...around, you know, and dish it out [banging noise] right and left [laughs] because they have an abundance of money. But then they became very cooperative. They came in as a group into...into Laos in the early 70's and worked beautifully. Great, great. I have great...many good friends among them. They're working in Thailand today and Malaysia and stuff. And they're great, great. I mean their just like us...part of us [laughs].

**SAWYER:** Well what caused the change from when they first came in and worked?

**SAWYER:** Well they...I think that they...in Vietnam they realized that, you know, this wasn't quite the right...right approach, and.... I mean, some of their own came in and said, "Now, we aren't better than anybody else. We haven't been on the scene [laughs]. We'd better...we'd better listen a little bit [laughs]. We'd better cooperate." And so that was the attitude [banging noise] as...ever since those early days. And there's a hundred percent cooperation and respect [laughs] among....

**SHUSTER:** There was no sheep stealing then among different Protestant...

**SAWYER:** No, no...

**SHUSTER:** ...denominations?

**SAWYER:** ...no, no, no. They...they...they respected that. They had their avenues. For instance, the Southern Baptists came in. We helped them to get set up, you know, and stuff. And even the Overseas Missionary Fellowship came into southern Laos and I had the opportunity in '55 in Saigon to...to acquaint them with Laos and get them in contact with work in Laos and they worked with the Swiss Brethren Church in southern Laos beautifully, so.... There's beautiful cooperation. And when the Southern Baptists came into Vientiane, capital, you know, we helped them to get set up and get housing. They had their program of literature and so forth, and.... But then they came to our services, [laughs] worked with us, but they had their separate work. So it was...it was a wonderful relationship.

**SHUSTER:** Would...how about with the Catholic missionaries? Did you have any kind of working relationship with them?

**SAWYER:** On language sometimes. We fit into translation, and so we've worked with them on translation. Otherwise there wasn't too much association. But I mean that, sometimes we'd...they'd try to be ecumenical with...even with the Buddhists. Try to have a...have a...have a round program. Then we kind of balked at that [laughs]. But sometimes they had services together, maybe on Easter or something...that we had on occasion. But there wasn't too close associated. They had their own work. They were there before us. They had their institutions. There was no overlapping. Although when we had thousands of converts in [pauses]...up-country among the Hmong in 1950, there was a...a little jealousy. And so they changed their way, because the Hmong would say, "The Catholics come to my village and..." (We threw away their spirit worship around their necks. They would come with a crucifix and want to put that around there. "We don't want that. We got...we got...just got rid of that." That type of...of teaching.) And so the Catholics in those days, in Laos among particularly the tribes people, they started to teach repentance [laughs]. Whereas before there's good works: "Do this, do that." But then they...they...because we had thousands of converts and they only had a few, you know, so they beca...it was jealousy. Well there use to be, you know, have the numerical lead to be [laughs] greater than anybody else. But in the...in the...in the hills and the tribes where, of the hills of Laos, we...we had thousands against their [laughs] tens. But then...then they got more.

**SHUSTER:** Would you say that there was between the Catholic and Protestant missionaries a friendly...

**SAWYER:** Oh yeah, oh yeah...

**SHUSTER:** ...relationship?

**SAWYER:** ...yeah. There were...a lot of them were French people and we spoke French with them and we would invite them into our houses and stuff. We wouldn't agree with them in every way, you know. They knew where our differences were so there was no problem.

**SHUSTER:** Well I see we're almost out of tape, so...

**SAWYER:** Yeah.

**SHUSTER:** ...why don't we stop there for today.

**SAWYER:** Yeah, fine.

**END OF TAPE**