This is a complete transcript of the oral history interview with **Merle Steely (CN 290, 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 Timothy Harder and Janyce Nasgowitz and was completed in December 1995.

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 290, Tape 1. Oral history interview with Merle Steely by Kimberly Smith on November 20, 1984.

[Another voice at a different speed can be heard in the background prior to the beginning and underneath the first part of this tape.]

SMITH: This is an interview with Reverend Merle Steely by Kim Smith for the Missionary Sources Collection of Wheaton College. This interview took place at Reverend Steely's house on November the twentieth, 1984, at 8:30 PM. Okay, Reverend Steely, there are nine children in your family, is that correct?

STEELY: Ten.

SMITH: Ten children.

STEELY: I'm the ninth.

SMITH: Oh, you're the ninth. What was that like, having so many kids in the family?

STEELY: Well, the older ones were grown up and gone by the time I came along to remember anything, but it was nice having a lot of brothers and sisters around. There was always something going on, so there was no dull moments.

SMITH: Then being the youngest, was that... or the next to youngest, was that difficult?

STEELY: Well, my older brother and sister said we had the advantage because the parents weren't as strict with us as they were with the older ones, so I don't know. But it was...being on a farm, that way the more people you have the better you can do your work and other people around for resources, it...it was a good thing, having a large family. I'm sure it's a lot better than if it would have been a small family.

SMITH: And you each had separate chores and...?

STEELY: Yes, a lot of chores like milking because we had quite a lot of dairy cows. Well, a whole bunch of us would be involved at the same time with that.

SMITH: And then when you were a senior in high school, your father passed away. Is that right?

STEELY: Yes. He had tuberculosis, so we knew for two-and-a-half years before he finally died that it was coming, and there was no cure for it because it had gotten too far before it was detected. So the senior...right before my senior year of high school, my older brother was drafted into the service, so it left me in charge of the farm, my mother and I to run the farm, and a younger brother and.... So my senior year of high school I missed one school day out of every four, a quarter of the senior year, and still graduated with the highest honors of any of the boys in

the class. Only the girls did better. So it wasn't...it didn't hurt me too much. We were still able to keep the farm going and do academic work.

SMITH: And then when you left to go into the military, who took over after that?

STEELY: My younger brother took...and my mother ran the farm, the two of them.

SMITH: What was your military experience like? You became a Christian during that time, correct?

STEELY: Yes. I was in the Air Force and was training as a pilot, volunteered for pilot training, volunteered for flight training, which was the pilot training, after I had been drafted into the service. And then we didn't have the casualties in the American Air Force that they had expected, and so they didn't need as many men as they had been training. And when they realized that in March of 1944, they washed out a lot of us for the convenience of the government. So then I left the pilot training and went into training as a crew member, as a radio operator, radio mechanic, and aerial gunner on a B-17 bomber. And while I was in training there that I found Christ as my Savior, sitting in the army chapel, Friday, August the third, 1945, at the Lincoln Air Base, Lincoln, Nebraska.

SMITH: And did you have a Christian friend who was leading you that direction or were you just...?

STEELY: We had three crashes when we were training, airplane crashes when men were killed, three accidents. One...the crew chief on one plane.... On a Saturday night, I was in the USO playing games with this man and his wife, and the ball turret gunman and his wife from my own crew, five of us. The next night, this man took off [clears throat]. He had been crew chief. He had to make sure everybody bailed out first. When he bailed out, it was too close to the ground and he was killed. So that started me to thinking. Here this man...twenty-four hours ago we were laughing, having fun, now he's dead, and it could happen to me. And I knew that I wasn't ready. And the two other crashes there, with people killed, started me thinking. So I went into town at Rapid City Air Base, Rapid City, South Dakota, and bought a Bible and brought it back to the barracks and sat down and started reading it through. I had never read a Bible to any extent in my life. As a kid in Sunday school, we'd have Scripture verses, but never done any reading on my own. I didn't know where to begin and finally decided to begin with Matthew, so I read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and started John. And by that time I was under intense conviction of sin, that I was lost and needed a Savior, and I wasn't saved. And I contacted one man to try to get some help from him. I thought he was a Christian. As it turned out...I found out later he was, but he didn't know how to lead anyone to Christ. So he took me up to his barracks and he opened his Bible and he started teaching me the seven dispensations out of Genesis, instead of sharing verses which would point a person to salvation. So he...he wanted to do something, but he didn't know what to do. And then I was transferred down to Lincoln Air Base, and I went over to chapel as soon as I was free. I was busy the first time he was there, but the second Sunday I was free. I went over to the chapel and heard the chaplain, had a good saved, born-again chaplain, and I met...well, I saw two civilian girls sitting up front of the chapel there, young ladies. I thought

supposedly maybe they were the chaplain's daughters, because we didn't normally have civilians in a...an air base like that. And on Wednesday night of that week, I was introduced to those two girls and they were Bible school students from Northwestern Bible School in Minneapolis. On Friday night I was saved and, on Monday following, they dropped the first atom bomb, and one of those two girls is now my wife, so it was quite a big week. I met her, met the Lord, and they dropped the first atom bomb all the same week. I came over to chapel.... Well, on Sunday I heard they had a mid-week service so I went to the mid-week service, and at the mid-week service I found out they had Friday ser...service whereas the boys had formed a gospel team, saved boys, and they would go out to the barracks and give out tracts, maybe a thousand to twelve hundred tracts. Give every man in the squadron...take a whole squadron, give every man they could find there in the squadron a tract, or go through the barracks, and if a man wasn't there, put a tract on his bed. So when I heard they had that, I came over. I was hungering and searching, and met with those fellows and had prayer with them, and after we distributed the tracts that evening, two of the boys had to go home and had K.P. [army abbreviation for kitchen police] the next day, and the older man (I say older; he was ten years older than the rest of us. He was still in his upper twenties), and he was staying there in the chapel writing letters. And I thought, "This man I want to talk to." I felt that he was a man of God, which he was. He had led...the Lord had used him to lead a number of people to Himself in the service. And so I started talking with him and he realized right away that I wasn't saved. So we got down on our knees and we prayed and I was saved there in the back room of the army chapel, Lincoln Air Base.

SMITH: Did being a Christian have an effect on you being a gunner? Did that...?

STEELY: No, because by the time I got saved I was already off the crew. I was waiting in the pool for B-29's. The war had ended in Europe and the B-17 had too short a range for the Pacific. So they stopped our training on B-17's, sent us down to the pool, awaiting there to get our turn to ship on to B-29's, and then, before I got on B-29's, the war ended in Japan, so the war was over. So I never had any...anything to do with it.

SMITH: Did you think that you wanted to become a missionary, like right after you became a Christian, did that start?

STEELY: No. My desire was to learn the Word of God and I kept right on reading the Bible and read the New Testament through right away and, then later on the Old Testament. And my desire, even before I left the service, was to get into college training and into seminary and become a Bible teacher. I seemed to realize that I had a teaching gift, and I didn't have too much of a preaching gift, but more of a teaching. So my direction from the very start, because I was saved in August and I was discharged in December, so I had just a few months in the service after being saved. And that gospel team kept on...active, and we...we would go out. Seven nights a week we'd be doing something, serving the Lord, in one place or another. And then the chaplain would get us transportation and send the gospel team off of Lincoln Air Base. We would go out forty, fifty miles away to churches and have services. We had two licensed preachers on our gospel team, young men who hadn't had formal training, but had at least been licensed. They had some real good pianists and some singers, a quartet, and then I would give a testimony, lead in prayer, and read Scripture and the other fellows would do that. So we had a

good...good opportunity to grow spiritually, while still in the service, and bear our testimony and witness for the Lord.

SMITH: And then you decided to go to Southwestern Baptist College?

STEELY: My...yes. Southwest Baptist College, a Southern Baptist school. My brother-in-law was a Southern Baptist preacher, so he influenced me to go there. I didn't know where to go and I knew as soon as I got out of the service I wanted to go to a Christian college. And so he directed me in that direction. So I spent two years at Southwest Baptist College, graduated with an A.A. degree. And then, while at Southwest Baptist, I met a boy from Minnesota, and I said, "Where are we going to go when we are finished with junior college?" He says, "Wheaton is the only place." So he is...my good buddy there is the one who influenced me to come to Wheaton. And then he procrastinated and never got his application in, so he never did get here. And so he and I were going to go together, but he never made it, but I did.

SMITH: Did your wife go with you to the Baptist college?

STEELY: I wasn't married yet. See, when I graduated in May from Southwest Baptist College, we got married in June. Then I came up to Wheaton on our honeymoon, came in to look the school over, and was going to come back in the fall. And came into the office and the admission officer said, "You didn't tell us you were married. We've accepted you and we have you a room in the dorm. And he said, "We're so hard up for housing there is no way," and so he said, "Well, I'd recommend, number one, that you go to another school, because we have no housing. Everything that the faculty, staff, or students have used in the past we're planning to use." And so I didn't want to go away. I wanted to come to Wheaton. He said, "All right, if you want to come here, we suggest you send your wife home and you just stay here in the dorm." I think that was a stupid thing to say to a man on his honeymoon, "Send your wife home." Later we became very good friends with this admission officer, but I still think it was very impractical. And then finally he said, "All right, if you're going to stay here you've got to go out and find a place to stay that no one's used before." So we ended up in a trailer house in Winfield and we lived there for the two-and-a-half years while I went to Wheaton College.

SMITH: What was married life like, trying to study and be married at the same time? Was that...?

STEELY: I...it wasn't any particular big problem. My wife worked at the *Sword of the Lord* [periodical published by John R. Rice] and then I went to the college. And we bought a car, our first car. And...so we could get back and forth from Winfield to Wheaton, and living in our own house, that trailer and all, was very nice. We enjoyed that very much [clears throat]. And it didn't create a problem. She realized that I had to study and so we set the trailer up so I had a study area and it worked out very well.

SMITH: Did you have any influences that led you towards the mission field while you were at Wheaton?

STEELY: All right. We lived in Winfield in this trailer house and parked in the backyard of Ross Smith's house. Ross Smith was in the class of '50 with me. And up in the attic of his house...in the upstairs of his house he had a young man, Bill Watkins. Bill had been a missionary child. His parents were missionaries in French West Africa. And he came home when he was seventeen years of age and came to Wheaton College. And he came out of Africa with a burden to build a missionary radio station, and he saw that Liberia was the only place to build it for reaching out across Africa. And that was his burden. And he worked in the electric shop here at Wheaton College, and then I got in at the electric shop as a student electrician, since I'd had electronic training already in the military as a radio operator, radio mechanic. It worked out very well. And so the burden he had, to build a missionary radio station became our burden and we joined with him. And then we went to the little community church in Winfield. I was Sunday school superintendent and he was my song leader in Sunday school. So we worshipped together, we lived in the same place, we worked together, so we had a lot of contact and...and his burden became ours. We had no plans for being a missionary. Our plans were to be a Bible teacher here, go on through and get a Ph.D. and work on this side, but his burden became ours. Then, 1950 I graduated in just a year-and-a-half at Wheaton, graduated in January of 1950 and then the first week February we had our special meetings like we have every...every semester at Wheaton. Each semester has a special meeting. And that year the special meetings turned into the Wheaton revival of 1950. The revival broke and on a Wednesday night.... Dr. Edman has written it up well in his little book, *Not Somehow But Triumphantly*. I wasn't there but Bill was taking care of the microphone, of the PA system for the meetings in Pierce Chapel. And when I came in the next morning, I parked my car there by Pierce Chapel and got out. He came out of the chapel just at that time. The microphone had gone dead. He was going over to the electric shop to get another one. So he called me to go in and take over the PA equipment and stand by while he was gone. And he said that "revival broke here last night. We've been here all night." And they continued all tha...all that night, all the next day, all the next night, until about four or five o'clock the next day before the line of testimonies ceased, so the revival was a real time. And as a direct outgrowth and result of the Wheaton revival of 1950, the week after the revival, on Tuesday morning I came into the electric shop and said, "Bill, we've been talking about this radio station for over two years now, and I think it's time that we did something more. And if it's God's will, then it...it will go, He'll bless it. But if it's just our idea, well, then it will come to nothing." Sort of Gamaliel's advice [Acts 5:38-39], if you remember. He said, "All right, come to my house tonight and we'll...." I...my suggestion was that we start a prayer meeting, praying for missionary radio in Africa and then let the Lord take it from there. He says, "Come to my house tonight." So it was his wife and himself, my wife and I, and then he picked up one other boy, who was a missionary child also like himself, and the five of us met that night. Just before he left the college to go home, late that...when it came quitting time that afternoon, he went into his college post office box and he found a letter there. It was...John 3:16 Rescue Mission in Boston, Massachusetts, had closed down, disposed of their property. And his father-in-law was on the board and persuaded them to send fifty dollars down for a missionary radio in Africa. That check arrived that very afternoon. He brought it to the meeting that night, and we were very enthused and felt that the Lord had given us a sign that He was directing in that direction of building a missionary radio station. Later that week, Bill made an appointment with Dr. Edman and Ernie Hard and Bill and I went in to talk to him and tell him what our burden was, to build a radio station. And Dr. Edman has written that up also in his book, *Not Somehow But Triumphantly: A*

Day of Small Things. So we went in, in our work clothes, to talk to Dr. Edman about building a radio station, and Dr. Edman became very impressed and burdened for the project and gave a lot of counsel and guidance to us. And we got the group organized, got a charter from the state of Illinois, and just kept on growing. After two years, we had a number of people already signed up, we had our...our permits from the Liberian government. Bill flew over and got the permits, very liberal permits that the Liberian government granted us. We formed our group, the West Africa Broadcasting Association, under the Illinois charter. And then, after two years on our own, we found that we weren't getting anywhere in attracting engineers, and getting the money that you need for equipment, that you need to build a radio station, so we merged with the Sudan Interior Mission. And that's how we became a part of it. So originally we formed our own board and went as far as we could and then merged over with SIM.

SMITH: And did you have any special classes or training before you went over there, to train you as to the language and everything like that?

STEELY: You see, Liberia was the ideal spot for a missionary radio station. Liberia was founded by returned Negro slaves, who had been freed in America. [They] were sent back to Liberia, liberty for the slaves, and during the administration of James Monroe, so the capital is Monrovia. And they followed American laws, American money...American dollar is the official money in Liberia, English is the official language. At one time, just...even shortly before we went out to Liberia, the Liberian government wouldn't permit missionaries to learn and do any propagating of the gospel in another language. They wanted all the people in the country to learn English, so they would have one language to unite the country. So it was an English-speaking country, American dollars, American laws in every way, and so American laws prevailed on radio. While in all the other colonies of Africa, the laws there were just like the mother country in Europe, and there they have state-owned radio, and you try to get a private radio station, an independent missionary radio station, a not-for-profit radio station, you would be blocked immediately by the communications department of the country. And so here are...these other mission boards are struggling and trying to get radio stations in different African countries and getting nowhere. Bill Watkins had had the burden and the vision to see that Liberia was the place. We went there, we got the permits, we got started. And so the Lord used some Wheaton College graduates who...not particularly trained, to meet a need that mission leaders seemingly were just blinded to.

SMITH: But was there a large culture shock going over there, since everyone seems to be so....

STEELY: Yes, there is. And also one when you come back after you've been there many years. But if you've never been out of this country, and I never had even though I was in the military.... I never got overseas. I was just in training all the while I was here, so this is our first time and the way of life.... Well, I've been on four different continents and thirty some foreign countries and the...the contrast between our country here and all the other countries of the world, more with some, less with others, but the culture shock is a real problem, and some people adapt to it easier than others. I think being a farm boy and not having much, having grown up during the Depression and the dust storms, and those problems, we were better able to handle that than some other people. Some missionaries I have seen have not been able to handle it and had to

come back. I mean, that was just the big factor that threw them. But we grew up with kerosene lanterns, we drew the water out of the well with a bucket and a rope, and under that type of conditions. You go to the missions field and you meet similar things. That's no big deal. It's just a little different, but basically the same in many ways.

SMITH: What exactly were the conditions that you lived in? Who did you live with and...?

STEELY: Well, in Liberia while we were building the radio station, we rented a place called Harris Farm, formerly owned by Senator Harris of...of...of the Liberian Senate. And it had been built with imported American pine, brought over there and built this big mansion three stories high. My wife and I had the top floor, Watkins had the second floor (another family shared that with him for a time), and the bottom floor was storage area. But our conditions were very primitive, had no sanitary facilities, carried the water up from the lake down there, fresh water lake near the ocean. Carried water...well, had a well we used during the rainy season, but as soon as the dry season came on the well went dry, so we had to carry water up from the lake and have it sitting around in tubs and buckets to use for washing clothes, for baths, for cooking, drinking. We had to boil our water and shelter it in a shelter to drink. You didn't dare touch it. You had to wash all your vegetables and fruit very carefully just to make sure you didn't get dysentery, which was very prevalent. So...and used kerosene lights, and just a really primitive way of life.

SMITH: How did your wife feel about all...?

STEELY: Well, it...it's a struggle, but my wife adapted excellently to those things. She came from a small rural community, a farm life. I guess her father had been on a farm part of the time when she grew up, so there again, I think, farm kids who had more primitive conditions found it easier to adapt. I know our mission used to really emphasize very much that they'd like to get farm kids because they made good missionaries as a rule.

SMITH: And then you switched and...and went into Nigeria, is that right?

STEELY: After we got the radio station on the air. See, we went out in 1952, so in 1954 in January the station went on the air, January the 18th, for the first broadcast, and then all I was doing was building, building buildings. The first building that went up at Liberia, I built it, laid the blocks and built it. I built my own house, laid every block, and cut every cut with the saw, and drove every nail with a hammer. Had some laborers helping with lifting, with other things, but I did the carpentry, the plumbing, the electrical, and the masonry work. And so after two years I had hoped to get into a Bible teaching, preaching ministry over the air. But the program director felt that they would be better off to use *Old Fashioned Revival Hour*, *Back to the Bible*, programs like that that came from America rather than...with experienced preachers rather than young preachers like myself. And so there seemed to be no opportunity to branch into a Bible teaching, preaching ministry, as I had hoped. And it looked like all I was going to have was a building ministry. And the mission said, "Well, look we...." Let's see, I had my Master's [degree], all but two hours, I think, two hours of Old Testament introduction and the thesis was all I needed, so I had practically a master's degree and just out there building. And they felt it was a waste, because they needed teachers down in Nigeria. And they were going to open the

higher teachers training center in Kagoro and needed someone to head up the Bible teaching work there. And so they asked me to go. At first I refused, because I'd been co-founder of radio station ELWA and I didn't want to go. But after about a year, the Lord working, I felt that it was the Lord's leading to leave the radio station which we'd helped to found, go down there and get into the type of work that we had actually trained for. See, we weren't trained as an engineer, we weren't trained in programming, so the only thing they could...they could hold out to me in Liberia was continued building work. And there was going to be building for years and years, because it was a new work starting, so it was going to be years and years before the building was over. So I went to Nigeria and they sent me to language school to learn the Hausa language. The Hausa language is the language of about three quarters of the people of Nigeria. Ibo and Yoruba are the east and west smaller sections, but the Hausa is about three quarters of the country. And we went to that, and then went to a bush station, church planting work. And the school which they were going to open, they brought me down, they...it was canceled and they didn't open it. So I went off to regular bush station work, church planting, working with schools and churches. I had twenty-five pastors under me I was supervising. I had thirty-two teachers, had ten schools, over a thousand boys and girls. And so I was working with the church and schools in Nigeria and building again. I had to build a dispensary, build a mission house, build.... I built eight different schools one dry season and one church, and so we didn't get away from the building as we thought we would and we didn't get into the teaching we thought we would. But I think all that's in the Lord's hands. Later, of course, the second, third, and fourth terms we did get into teaching, but the first term was building the whole while.

SMITH: Was there a big change in the life style from Liberia to Nigeria?

STEELY: Yes, quite a difference, even though they're both West Africa, both indigenous people. In Liberia we just had a handful of missionaries on one station, and it was close to the capital and directed toward radio and with electricity and so on. We got into Nigeria, got into more primitive conditions, like we first had in Liberia, and then we worked with a strong church. In Liberia, we had no church at all, just a radio station. But in Nigeria we had a strong African church already accounted, so we moved into the work, moved in with older missionaries. Like at Kagoro, we had thirty missionaries and thirty children on that station, so it was a big center, a big station. And the...in Liberia you had to do everything in English. In Nigeria, you'd learn the language and get into the...with the people, with their own language and get into their culture. So it was for us a great change.

SMITH: And did you have children by this time, the time you went to Nigeria?

STEELY: We had two children when we arrived in Liberia, and then our third one was born in Nigeria. Another thing of the Lord's provision: if we'd been still in Liberia, without much in the way of medical facilities.... Our third daughter was born, she had spina bifida, opening near the spine. And while in Nigeria, we had our own hospital and she was born in our own hospital and they caught that, so my wife and our three-week old daughter were flown to England for surgery in England. And then after the surgery was done, was successful, then my wife and daughter came back. So if we'd still been in Liberia, we would have lost her. There would have been no facilities, and probably wouldn't have been caught by the less trained personnel in the

government hospital in Liberia. So just another little thing of the Lord's provision along the way that's very wonderful.

SMITH: I remember reading in one of your letters that your wife gave birth in a nursing home or something like that.

STEELY: Well, being a memorial nursing home was for all practical purposes a hospital, but the British regulations were that if they didn't have three resident doctors they had to be called a nursing home, it wouldn't be called a hospital. So it was really a hospital.

SMITH: What were the people like to work with?

STEELY: The Nigerian people...see, now we were in the northern part of Nigeria. Kagoro is in the area of former pagans, but the gospel came in. It's one of the areas that responded tremendously, thousands of Christians in that area. They knew the Hausa language because the Moslem Hausa had imposed government upon them. But the people basically are very friendly, and...and very hospitable. I mean, you come along [and], if they're eating, they'd share anything they had with you, and their hospitality and their kindness is...is something that was just a tremendous asset on their part. Whereas in our culture we're what you'd say honesty orientated, you're expected to tell the truth, and in business you're expected to tell the truth, and all those things. They would bend the truth a lot more, I mean, it...I mean, if it wasn't kind. So being kind, and being friendly, and being hospitable was more important to them than being strictly honest. I mean, just in the culture. So you had to get used to that, and so not accuse a person of lying when he bent it [the truth]. I mean, that was just his cultural way to respond, and then learn from him because his kindness and hospitality is...is something. We are so prone in our American way of life to see someone, "Good morning," and then star...immediately start talking about business, whatever is there. They'll meet one another and talk and greet one another for a long time before they ever get into it. So we seem impolite and rude in carrying out our culture in their environment, so you need to learn to be a little more friendly, learn to take a little more time, learn to value people and not just the job that you have to do.

SMITH: Did you see other differences between the way the Americans relate and the way the Nigerians related?

STEELY: To...?

SMITH: As in time, you know, time...sense of time, did they...?

STEELY: Oh, yes, a great deal. I mean, we are really time orientated and I'd say honesty orientated, on those two things, and to be unkind but to be honest is no sin to us but it's a great sin to them. To lose your temper would be to them worse than stealing, worse than a lot of other things you could do. Losing your temper, losing your cool, would be a very hideous sin in their sight. Well, we have lot of people who, in their business [when] things go wrong, would act vexed, and so on, and that would be a stumbling block to them. And so you have to learn those things. You make mistakes and you learn from your mistakes. And there again older missionaries

can counsel you, point these things out and keep you from making a lot of mistakes that could...could hinder your testimony. So those older missionaries were most useful and helpful.

SMITH: Did you have a particular missionary who kind of took you under his wing and discipled you?

STEELY: No, I'm afraid I didn't. That would have been nice. I'd have appreciated that. It would have been a good thing to do, but we first went to Nigeria to language school and then to Zonkwa station, where we were filling in for a lady who went home for furlough. And then another missionary went home, health reasons, so we had to be transferred from Zonkwa to Kafanchan. Kafanchan is a railroad center, telephone center, and then there's two single girls who carried on in Zonkwa. So my wife and I were transferred to Kafanchan and we still continued our building work, church and school work, but we didn't have anyone else. I was missionary in charge of station, a probationer...probationer. The first five years you're a probationer, then you move up to junior missionary for two years, then after that become a senior missionary. So here I am a probationer missionary in charge of the station, in charge of the church work, in charge of school. Because of the shortage of personnel, it had to be that way. And it would have been better if I could have.... See, then the second term we went to Kagoro and there is where we were with thirty missionaries and had older missionaries in the school where we taught to work with and that was very good. But it'd been nicer if I could have had that sooner.

SMITH: Did the Hausa language school...how'd the language go? Did that help you a lot or did you still have lots of trouble communicating?

STEELY: Well, my wife and I have no musical ability, and it's a tonal language, so we were at a disadvantage. Some people pick it up a lot faster and better than we did. So we struggled with the language all the way through and never really became proficient with it. Well, what Hausa we did learn, we used and used it a lot. It was a great help to have a language. Whereas in Liberia no one learned a native language. They just depended on English. But in Nigeria with that language, it was a life saver, in a sense, many times. If you would need it, you're traveling and so on, being able to talk to the people and make your needs known, get information when there's a bridge out and [you] need to find a detour, a way to get around, or if you can talk you can get somewhere. And then, of course, for the communicating the gospel it's very essential.

SMITH: And you were saying that you moved from Kagoro to [unclear] and all these different places. Did you see a difference in the way people...in their life style in each of the places or a difference in the territory, [that] type of thing?

STEELY: There'd be a difference from tribe to tribe, but the difference would be minor compared to the difference between them and us. As white people, foreigners over there, and their being indigenous people.... I mean, being among the Kagoro tribe isn't too different from being among the Karib [?], or the Kaji tribe or the others. So, yes, there are some differences but they wouldn't be nearly as major as the difference between the indigenous West Africa black man and the...the foreign white man who comes in. There was a reason for each of these moves,

like from Zamphua [Zonkwa ?] to Kafanchan, on to Kagoro. Well, when we got to Kagoro, then we were into teaching and we stayed in teaching then the rest of our time in Nigeria. For eighteen years we taught in various schools. And then at Kagoro we hit a bad time. I transferred from the teachers' college after one year to the Bible college. That's what I wanted. Finally, I got into a Bible teaching ministry, which I'd been trained for, and we enjoyed that very much. I became vice-principal of the Bible college, but then our enrollment went down to only twenty students, when it had been a hundred. Just hit a bad time, and we had too many teachers so somebody had to be moved. They couldn't move the principal, and they couldn't move one man who was sick quite a bit and needed to be there for medical reasons. So I was the only one that was left to be moved. So we were transferred to Kaduna and it was a hard move, leaving the mission station where we had been and the area we'd been in fourteen years, and going up to Kaduna which was the capital of the north of Nigeria. But as we look back on it now, we see that was one of the greatest blessings we got out of the mission field. We went to Kaduna to teach Bible in government schools, go to the government school, the government college, to the technical school, to the federal training center, to the police college, and to the air base, and I'd teach or preach in all of those places. So in Kaduna we had a ministry very parallel to what a pastor would have in this country. I taught over nine hundred Bible classes a year, preached over three hundred times in a year, and carried on as unofficial chaplain for the air base. They had no chaplain so I held their services, and took care of the Lord's Supper, baptism, show films, and counsel with the stu...with the airmen. Do the same for the police college and for the federal training center, so it was a tremendous spiritual ministry, so different from the bush station work out among the indigenous people in a little community, because this was the capital. And we were there when the military coup came in 1966. The prime minister, and the premier, and the general of the army, all those were killed that night when the men brought their military coup. We woke up next morning to a city that was quiet, no vehicles on the street, and it was just completely different from the normal. We wondered, "What's happened?" You couldn't see anything different but you could feel it. People weren't out on the street, no vehicles, and normally on a Saturday morning there would have been plenty of traffic. And so we sent our boy to go up and find out. He came back and he said that the premier's house has been burnt down. He's been killed. And the military coup was on, the military vehicles up and down the street, planes from the air base circling overhead. The radio had been taken over by the rebels, and people were warned to stay inside, stay off the street, not to discharge a firearm, and many different things. "You do this you'll be shot, you do this, you'll be shot." So we were pretty well confined to our quarters and this carried on for a few days until they were finally able to straighten out and the military government took over. And it was a very scary and touchy time.

SMITH: What...how did your wife and family react to this? Did they want to go home or...?

STEELY: Well, our children were away at boarding school, several hundred miles away, so it was...just my wife and I were there. And, well, we had the American consul there in Kaduna, so we kept in touch with them. And they said, "If there is any necessity to flee the country, we'll get your children out from down there. You go with our party from here, and leave the country." And they had plans. And they came around...they started a given time...they divided.... Oh, there were lots of Americans there, so they divided them up into groups, into sections, and we were in a certain section. The man would come around and we'd sign [on] the clipboard the time he

came. He'd go to the next people. They wanted to see how long it would take them to reach every American and get the message across to them. So our American consul was...our American government was well organized. The British High Commission who looked after the British people was doing nothing, and British men on the stations said, "Keep me informed. I'll flee with you Americans." He wasn't going to wait on his people. So they did a superb job of having us ready. I had guns and had a military rifle, one like Sergeant York used in the First World War, quite a lot of ammunition, and a shotgun. So I said, "What will I do with these guns?" And the consulate said, "Bring them with us. We may need them." So there [laughs] we were. We had to pack one little suitcase. We lived for years there during that military situation from [unclear]. Well, I guess we had a crisis before the coup, had a crisis, so we lived for years with one little suitcase packed with very...essentials. We had to live for several years with...under this strain and just having one suitcase we're to grab and be able to flee and just leave everything else. Lock your house and go. And then this checking like the consulate did was part of that preparation that was made so we could be evacuated. You see, we had the experience of the Congo, which had happened down there and the terrible things there, and so people were a little wiser here and were planning for these things and were ready. And...and the mission and the United States government both, we have nothing but highest praise for the preparation they made and the readiness they had to take care of the personnel.

SMITH: You mentioned the experience in the Congo, which...what was...?

STEELY: The 1960...the Congo got its independence. The minute they got independence, the people just revolted. Anarchy broke out, people were beaten, and women were raped, and lot of things was carried on by the Congo people. Missionaries...Helen Roseveare, who was here just a few months ago, gave her testimony, some of the things she experienced there. And so in Nigeria we were prepared so, when they got their independence a little after Congo, nothing happened. Things went smoothly. Then after this military coup came.... Several years later, then all those crisis situations which happened in other countries were thrust at us. But they didn't become as bad as we expected that they might. And we...our government and our mission were ready and we made preparation.

SMITH: And you said your children were away at boarding school during this time?

STEELY: Yes.

SMITH: What was that like, having your children...?

STEELY: That is the worst thing about missionary work, sending your children away when they're six years of age to go to a boarding school in September. You don't see them again till Christmas, they're home at Christmas, then they go away again. You don't see them until the spring. My wife likes to say, "Well, it doesn't matter too much what people you're living with, what language you're speaking, what work you're doing, what food you're eating, and so on, however strange it may be. But losing your children, having them gone, that is the greatest sacrifice and the worst part of the mission work." [Beep in background] And I think that's right.

SMITH: Did it affect the kids in any way?

STEELY: Yes. Every one of them came up with problems, not out there but after they got home and into college in this country, because most of them went to college while we were overseas yet. And problems developed in crisis situations, some worse than others. We...our kids...we believe in good strong family discipline. That's the way we were brought up. That's the way we brought our kids up, and so they respected that. And they got the name of being "holy mollies" and so on because they couldn't indulge in some of the things that some of the other kids did. So our kids had a good testimony, were respected by the leaders of the schools where they were, and we thought maybe we'd escape those problems, but after they got home then the problems showed up here, whereas a lot of the other kids rebel and cause problems out there. Some had to be disciplined, sent home from school, and then the parents would have to leave the mission field and come back home to the homeland, so the kids could go to school, all those things. But a lot of those kids who were real brats out there and caused trouble, came back here, went off to Bible school, got straightened away, and are really going on serving the Lord now so.... Our kids endured that situation on the field quite well, but then they ran into some problems here. We have two that are in the Lord's service now, and three that aren't. I mean, they're not...the older one is really backslidden away from the Lord. The other two are living a rather normal American Christian life, not really what we'd like to see. But only one out of the five that didn't...that isn't walking with the Lord at all, and that we trace largely to this separation and being reared in a boarding school for all those years. Our youngest daughter...well, when we finally left the mission field and came home, it was time for her to go to college, and she said, "I will not live in the dormitory." She'd been in the dormitory since she was six and she didn't want it. So we got a house here in Wheaton so she could go to the College of DuPage. And we had four adult children living with us, because we'd missed a lot of family life there. So we got a mission home here and they stayed right with us and we caught up on some of those things that we felt we had need of. And that's one reason I did not want a teaching or preaching job when we first came home from the field after twenty-five years, after we retired. I wanted to be at home with them every night and so I took an electrical job at the College as electrician, electronic technician because this was my training too, as well as being a preacher and teacher. So we're still staying in one of our fields, but it left us free with the family. And that we had for two years until they graduated and then they wanted to branch off on their own. Then I went off into the pastorate.

SMITH: How did your children relate to the black children around them? Did they see them as other children or was there any...?

STEELY: Um, they would play with the African kids and share their toys with them and so on, and play around, but there'd be difference with they way they'd play with other missionary kids and with the African kids, and I think for good reason, we didn't encourage them just to go freely mingling with the African kids. There are quite a lot of things in their culture that we did not want our kids exposes to, so we had some limits there, and so though they did play with them some, and had some friends among them, our kids weren't allowed to be as free associating as some other mission families did their kids.

SMITH: What were the differences in the culture that you thought they might not be exposed to, they shouldn't be exposed to?

STEELY: Well, there was a lot of sexual perversion in their culture, an African kid would want to play with your dog, he didn't want to just pet its head, I mean he'd rub the animal in other places and so on, I mean there's a lot of things in their culture that way that was just really raw and we didn't really want our kids exposed to those things.

SMITH: Did children have superstitions and different...?

STEELY: African kids?

SMITH: Uh-huh.

STEELY: Oh, very much so, and the adults as well. My students...on one occasion was talking to them about a Yoruba pastor who cracked down on the people of his church because they were doing something, and so they got a picture of him and stuck pins in the eyes to make him go blind. And so he quit right away because he was afraid. He didn't want this. That's working their black magic on him. My boys in the classroom there at Kagoro at the teachers' training college laughed. "That wouldn't bother us." Less than a week later another team came to play soccer with them, and on the other team somebody went over and started digging around the goal post, and they said, "Oh, he is putting magic in there. We could never score a goal." Our boys wouldn't even go on the field to play. So they...they were still gripped by that. They had a lot of old wives' tales, old superstitions passed on. They will tell you that a crow never lays eggs and hatches out young. The crow will go and take a bird out of some other's nest, go take a grasshopper, another large insect, and bring it over and raise up for a crow. And you couldn't convince them that the crow laid eggs and hatched it. And they believe that their hunters have magic, and so, if a lion would charge their hunter, he'd use his magic and just disappear and the lion couldn't hurt him. They believe the thieves had magic. They could just go through walls. You could shoot a gun at a thief and it wouldn't hurt him. His magic would protect him. And when they want to pass an examination, they'd go to the...the person who would sell this and buy these charms to help them pass their exam. Or they want to get a job, pass an interview, they would go and pay for this magic to help them to do those things and they're just gripped in the bondage of that. At the radio station in Liberia, one of the boys stole the billfold of a Lebanese man who worked temporarily for us helping build the radio station. The Lebanese man was supposedly a Christian, but he was a young Christian. So he came by and said...he...he...he looked at those boys and he figured which one he thought had it. He said, "What are you going to do if I tell you I got medicine on you and you're going to die." Well, the boy took him over and showed him the billfold and he got it back. Well, I mean that...that is superstition. That bondage is there and very real. You never had to convince an African that there is demons. He...he knows all about that. I mean, you...even...they'd come into class and say, "Pray for me. I...the demons were troubling me last night in the dorm," and so it's...it was a real thing.

SMITH: So did the effect of the gospel have anything changing...?

STEELY: Yes, the gospel would have an effect on changing that and our pastors, I think, were freed of a lot of those bondages. At least it made a real difference, but it took time for that to grow so that the younger ones didn't have it yet. But the pastors that I worked with, I worked with them closely, traveled around with them a lot and itinerating out in those first terms and I was very impressed by the change that the gospel made, freeing them from those bondages of the past.

SMITH: What was the general reaction of the people to the gospel? Were they very receptive or did it take quite a while?

STEELY: At Kagoro, which was a pagan area, the Kagoro people were head-hunters and cannibals when the first missionary came in. A little Scotsman came, and he had an awful time getting into that tribe. And finally the thing that opened the way was pulling teeth. He had his forceps, he'd had some training at a dental school in London, missionary dental school, and he pulled bad teeth for them. And they'd have to bring him some eggs or a chicken or something in payment. And that's were the gospel started at Kagoro and Kagoro is one of the biggest responsive areas in Nigeria from out of the pagan tribes. By the way, Billy Graham came out and visited Nigeria in the early sixties and held a campaign there in Jos, Nigeria. And I was with a Scotsman, Mr. Archibald, when he came and was introduced to Billy Graham. Graham was up at the big hotel there eating and they called him out from his meal so he could meet the Scotsman. And later when he came back he said three missionaries that impressed him most, of all his time in Africa, was this Scotsman, Mr. Archibald, and another lady from New Zealand, and I forgot who the third one was. But I was with him and met Billy Graham the same time Archibald did. Archibald was the one that opened that Kagoro tribe with pulling teeth.

SMITH: You mention in one of your letters a big revival that took place over there.

STEELY: All right.

SMITH: Was that around the same time or...?

STEELY: That was in 1954...in November 1954 in Jos. And it just followed along the same lines of the Wheaton revival in 1950, and the revival started in me. I...the Lord did a work in my heart in language school, cause I was a bit bitter when I came from Liberia to Nigeria. After all, I'd founded the radio station and then when we left it and came down there, the Lord had to do work in me. And I gave a testimony there in the language school before I left that shook things up, and went to Jos and they were having some special meetings. And I talked with them and this speaker and he had me go out and give my testimony there. And then it followed on. Others broke down, gave their testimony, and the Lord did a real work. And then it's interesting to see how the devil gets in when the Lord is working. A demon controversy, casting demons out of Christians, rose up and sort of negated a lot of the work of the revival and kept it from going bigger than...than it did. It could have...I mean, the potential was there for it to grow, but a lot of good was done, lasting good in people's hearts and it...it's good to have seen two revivals in my life time.

SMITH: What was the effect of other religions, like Islam and Catholicism? Did that affect the ministry? Was it a very strong influence?

STEELY: In the early days, when we were in Nigeria, the Moslem religion was dominant in the northern part of Nigeria and down into the west among the Yorubas, but it hadn't done much in the east with the Ibo people. When the Sardauna, the premier of northern Nigeria, was there, he adopted the methods of Christian evangelism, of going out to a village and speaking and...and giving an altar call, having people to come...leave their paganism and become Moslems, and is estimated to have won a million people over to the Moslem religion. So he was the government head, the prime minister of the country was his right hand man, so he was real power in Nigeria, Tofeh Balowah [?], the Sardauna of Sokoto, who was the premier of northern Nigeria. His ambition was to become sultan of Sokoto, to become the religious...the Moslem head over Nigeria, the head Moslem. That was a job that he really wanted. And that's his aggressiveness in using the police force in curbing the Tiv people, and then using the police and military in curbing some opposition in the Yoruba areas of northern Nigeria, were the thing that caused the military to rise up and kill him and put him out. They felt he was just getting too much power. But during his time, the Moslem was very aggressive and very dominant, but after his death it simmered down. And then the Christians had such a vital part in the civil war, helping to win it, and then the...the leader of the Nigerian government, the military governor over Nigeria, was a Christian. And so it kind of changed things a bit. And then in the last more recent years, oh, the last ten years we were on the field, the Christian missions everywhere and the indigenous churches established were becoming very aggressive in winning people, and the Moslem had lost their edge and the edge had passed across to the Christians. And the...when we came home in the 70's, the indigenous church was strong and was doing a tremendous job in Nigeria, perhaps one of the most effective areas in the world of what missions have...have done, and then the indigenous church raised up through missions, I think Nigeria would be a prime example.

SMITH: What was the Nigerian church like as in comparison to an American church, like the church form?

STEELY: The missionaries pretty well brought the forms that we use here over there, and they adopted.... There would be some modification on their own. For instance, one of the things they love most was the announcements, and to be called upon to get up and give the announcements was a prominent job and you could drag it out for ten, fifteen minutes, you see, and so you were sort of exalting yourself in a way. And so we were kind of used to that, how they took something that we like to get over with as quick as you can and stick it wherever you can in the service and not have it where it breaks in. Yet that was the dominant thing, at least in the services I've been in. Often you'd have to have a translator, interpreter. If you had a guest speaker that didn't know the language, you'd have to have an interpreter. And then when you get into the cities with the big churches, you'd have people of different languages there so no one language would be enough. The older people would not know English. See, the schooling in Nigeria is all in English, all the schooling, so all the younger people are all learning English but their parents wouldn't know. And younger kids may be well educated and the parents still illiterate. It becomes a problem. One word about the effectiveness of the indigenous church. In Kaduna in 1962, I went up to the printing press to get our yearbook printed for the Bible college and we had

one church in Kaduna shared by the SIM and the SUM [Sudan United Mission], two mission groups sharing one church. When we went back there and were stationed there in '67, we had ten churches there and the SUM had gone on their own and we were on our own. We had ten different churches of our own and today in Kaduna there's about fifteen or seventeen different churches just of our own group, the West...the Evangelical Church of West Africa [ELWA], and on any given Sunday there will be between eight and ten thousand people worshipping in the churches that the SIM started, so that's a tremendous growth and response.

SMITH: When you gave messages to the church, did you adapt the message to the people, try to fit it into their culture, like that?

STEELY: I'd make some changes from what I used here at home to make it fit in and, of course, change your illustrations, try to get illustrations that would be apt for their culture, but basically I'd use the same messages that I had used here at home but with just some slight modification to make them more acceptable.

SMITH: Was anyone openly hostile to the message? Were there...?

STEELY: There...there's a lot more respect. You come in this country, you find a lot of people very hostile to the gospel and they'll sneer at you. And you go down on the street corner and preach like I have done with the Bible school students from Northwestern and with the gospel team from Lincoln air base on the street corner of Lincoln, Nebraska, you'll find people who sneer and are very hostile and heckle and so on like that. But I didn't run into that out there and if you say, "Let's pray," I never saw a black who wouldn't bow his head and be quiet and reverent and pray with you. But in this country there are a lot of people who wouldn't even take off their hat and would keep on talking, so in that regard they had a lot more respect for things than you'd find here.

SMITH: And getting back to the Moslem and the Catholic influence....

STEELY: The Catholic mission was strong throughout Nigeria. The SIM would be the largest Protestant mission in Nigeria, I guess. Well, Church of England, which is a state church in England, the CMS [Church Missionary Society] was large but not too Evangelical in most cases, so the SIM would have been the largest Evangelical group in Nigeria. Catholic was strong and in a lot of places we had opposition, clashing with them in educational matters. Other areas we...we get along reasonably well with them. But the Catholics were there. Then when I started teaching Bible in government schools, they didn't have any Moslem *mullah* [Moslem teacher of the law] who was qualified to teach the Moslem students and so we couldn't get credit...our kids couldn't get credit for it. I'd teach them the Bible, teach them the course like it would be taught for credit, except they wouldn't get credit because the Moslem...they didn't have a Moslem to give the comparable part to the them. That would have given the advantage to the Christian and so it wasn't allowed. But there was no Catholic to take them so I had the Catholics as well as the Protestants, all the Christians, in my classes. Now, some other schools would have a Catholic...trained Catholic person there to teach the Catholics. See, the British feel that every school boy and girl ought to have moral training as well as training in geography, in history, in

arithmetic, and all those things. And they felt the best way to get the moral training was to train them in their religion. So they had a syllabus drawn up and school credit for religious training and carried hours of credit just like any other subject. And where they had qualified personnel, then the people would teach the Bible. And they had a syllabus set out that you were to teach, and the Moslem had a syllabus, and I guess the Catholics had a syllabus. But in some areas, where there weren't qualified people to teach, then that made a hindrance that the other people...you might have a qualified person there but they wouldn't get any credit because that would be unfair giving the Christian the advantage. Now, when we went to Katsina...Katsina was an old walled city one of the big emirates of...one of the five emirates of northern Nigeria. Back before the white man came, these five emirates controlled the whole of northern Nigeria, big areas, and they were slave traders. They'd go down and get slaves out of the pagan tribes and then ship them down the coast. You see, the white men never went into Africa to get the slaves. The black slave-trading chiefs would bring the slaves and sell them to the white people to bring across and slavery continued there in Africa until Lord Lugard [Frederick John Dealtry Lugard, First Baron Lugard, 1858-1945] came into Nigeria in 1900, 1901 and defeated those Moslem emirs and put a stop to the slave trade. And...and I have seen people there who had the marks on them, old people who had been slaves in their youth. Well, this Katsina was one of those old Moslem emirates, a walled town. And we were there for two years and not one indigenous Katsina person has ever received the gospel. They were one hundred percent Moslem. Now there are Christians there in town but they were Christians from other areas that came in for government work, for police, for army, for post and telegraph, for the electric company, all those things, and the teachers, and lawyers, and bankers, different people, trained, from other tribes who were there who were Christians. So we had a church there, but we didn't reach...and we never in the two years I was there, and the years before I came, never ever reached the indigenous Katsina people themselves.

SMITH: I remember reading in one of your letters where you were saying that you were working in a school and the Moslem principal of the school was hostile that you were teaching something about some part of the religion to the students.

STEELY: All right. That would have been the Federal Training Center in Kaduna and that was training people for different federal jobs, jobs with the government. And I taught a class there and preached there every Sunday. And one of the boys graduated, and he was a favorite boy of this Moslem principal, and then he went down to Lagos and got a job. And he got tired of that job and, after he put in a year, then he came back to Kaduna and he was toying with two jobs, one with a tobacco company and one with an oil company. And he came to me and wanted to know what I would advise him, since he had been the head Christian boy in the Christian group at that school. I said, "You don't want anything do with tobacco, pushing that, helping that. Even if it pays less, you take the other job. I mean, the other job is an honorable work for an oil company." And so he took my advice over against the advice of the principal and made the principal very angry. So the principal terminated my teaching there and I was not allowed to come back and...because I had had more influence on this boy than he was able to have and it really angered him. Now, we didn't lose the job. The bookstore manager moved in and took over and kept on with the teaching there, but at least I was banned. So I went to the principal of government [unclear word]. Well, I didn't get to see the principal. I got to see the vice-principal

and told him what had happened here. He said, "If you have convictions on these things you give the boys, you advise them the way you see it." So he upheld it, because I had one of the boys there who was thinking of taking a job with, I think, maybe for this tobacco or beer company, and I pointed out, "If you mean anything with your Christian testimony, you won't honor those. You will go with something else." And so the British vice-principal at the school said, "By all means, share your conviction with the boys." And so there it was appreciated, giving advice on moral grounds to the boys, but [at] the other school it wasn't.

SMITH: Did you develop close relationships with many of your students?

STEELY: At Katsina there was 575 students and only twenty were Christians and the rest were Moslems, so the Christians really felt isolated and...and, in a sense, put down. I don't know whether actually persecuted or not, but at least put down. So when you came there to help them, they were open and friendly and you was able...were able to just move in and really have a...a ministry among those boys in the secondary school and in the teachers' training college in Katsina. Now, in some of our own mission's secondary schools and teachers' training colleges, the boys were rather bitter and turned off, and you had a very unwholesome attitude among them. But here with these boys in a government school, Christian boys in a government school, from the same area they came up from around Kafanchan, Kagoro, where we had been, yet they were so...in such a hostile environment that anyone, even a white man, who was there to help them, they appreciated it. And so we were able to form some good friendships there. And then again in the Bible college we were able to form some good ones and in the seminary. But I didn't form any close contacts with any of the mission secondary or teachers' training college boys, but with the Bible college seminary and then those boys in the government school down in the Moslem area.

SMITH: What did your wife do during this time? Was she...?

STEELY: In the early days in...well, in Liberia she would drive the jeep and haul the cement and the blocks and the water and the sand to the sites, building sites, so she helped out very much there. In the early days in Nigeria, we had three and four little kids, so she was pretty well confined at home so she started being bookkeeper for the teachers' training college. Then she branched over and helped the bookkeeping with the Bible college and finally bookkeeping with the...had a big dispensary, big medical work, in Kagoro. So she helped in the bookkeeping on all of those and was able to do that, take the books there and do the work at our home and look after our kids and still get her work done. When we got to Katsina, then she started teaching Bible because our children were all away at boarding school by that time. So she started teaching Bible in the government school, grade school. She had thirty-five Bible classes a week, had a tremendous ministry. [When] she came to Igbaja, she was librarian and doing work in the library, and then second term they asked her to start a school for the women. And there is where she did her greatest work in Nigeria. Started a women's school, Bible school, to train the wives of the seminary and Bible college students who were there. And she was founder and principal for that school, principal for four years until we came home. That work is still going today. We got a letter just recently from someone there, just thanking her for what she did with that school.

[Recording is stopped and restarted.]

STEELY: An African man would rather eat his meal with his other friends and the women and children eat back behind, sit around together. I mean, there isn't that harmony and that fellowship between husband and wife that we know here. It just isn't there.

SMITH: And so your wife was teaching the women....

STEELY: Teaching them a lot of things that would help them be able to enter in to what their husband was training in the seminary, to be a pastor or to be a teacher. And then also she had an eye to training them because she knew a lot of these fellows would be going overseas. Now, since the seven years we've been home, twenty of my former students from Evangel Seminary have come to Wheaton College. There's three here now. And so she knew some of these women would be coming over and she wanted them to be able to use a gas stove and to have some recipes and be able to go to the supermarket and buy the things you need and cook. One wife she heard of came over here and got three stones and set it on the floor of her apartment and tried to cook and set it on fire. So that's all she'd ever known all her life, cooking on three stones. So her idea was to...and she made sure they had quite a number of recipes and that in the class that they cooked and could handle those things. So it was...I'd say that what she was doing with those women was more important than any of the teaching I did at the seminary, I mean as far as the contribution to the church and to the nation. It was just a tremendous ministry that she had. I remember some of those girls had secondary schooling. Very few, one or two would have [schooling] in a class and some would have some primary schooling and then there'd be some with no education at all. And then in addition to having the women's school, if you're going to have the women in class, then she had to start a nursery so that the children up to about two years of age would come on the mother's back and be there in the classroom. So here you're teaching six or eight women in a class and you've got three or four kids crawling around on the floor or on the mother's back. So you have to learn to teach right above all the noise and interruptions and disturbances. You just go right on with your teaching. Then she had the nursery so when they got about two or a little under two, when they get big enough to be too wiggly to stay with the mother, then they'd go to the nursery and take care of them there until they became school age and could go into school. So the nursery set the mother free so the mother could come to the classroom and learn. Then she started a...a children's library. She got school books from here in America and fixed them into little pamphlets, small, not a whole big book, and had them in there and took the kids and taught them remedial reading, helped them with their problems so they could read. And there's a number of boys who passed their entrance exam to get into higher education who come and thanked her. "The help you gave is what made the difference to my getting there and not getting there." And so she held those children's classes of different age groups, and worked with each child, each session, and that did a tremendous thing for the kids. So it was...in the early days, she didn't have too much of a ministry among the people but in the last...our last years there on the field, after her children were all up in boarding school, then she did have a tremendous ministry.

SMITH: Didn't you teach child care to the mothers too?

STEELY: Yes. Oh, yes.

SMITH: Weren't they very good with that?

STEELY: Yes, child care, cooking, sewing, and Bible, and English. They all loved to learn English. All those people wanted to learn English and for good reasons. It's the key to a lot of things. The degrees at the university have to be in English and there's no way that you could teach a degree course in Hausa.

STEELY: *Hanu* [?] from here to here [probably gestures to indicate arm], your whole arm is *hanu*, one word. Well, you know you've got the ulna, radius, you've got the phalanges, you've got all the bones and the muscles and everything in English. But there is nothing in their language for those scientific things. So there is no way any scientific, medical thing could be trained [for] in their language.

SMITH: What was the average student like? Would they tend to be more from the upper class in society?

STEELY: No. Like at Katsina, I had twenty students. Nineteen of them were from farm families and one was from a pastor's family, and the pastor, of course, was farm people but he had become a pastor and wasn't farming any longer. So we didn't reach any upper class. I mean, ours were poor farm people that we had in most all of our schools. Now, when it got to the seminary, we perhaps had some who were children of traders or merchants or something, would have other occupations. But up until the seminary, I would say very near a hundred percent of our students were from farm families.

SMITH: How did the parents feel about sending their kids to school?

STEELY: Oh, they loved...well see, when I was working at Kafanchan, Zonkwa, first came to Nigeria...the first two years in Nigeria (Our terms are four years. We spent two years in Liberia, then the next two in Nigeria), I started two new schools. Built schools in areas where there had never been a school before. And opening day of school seventy-five children came to go to school. We had to thin them down and only take thirty. Thirty-five I guess is what we were allowed, and if you had more than that the inspector throw them out when they come and inspect the school, the government inspector, so you would have to thin it down. And a thing about the Africans, they lost so many children, infant mortality was so high. Maybe they would have had ten children, only two that lived out of the ten. And so they never recorded when the child was born. There was no way they would know what year, what month, what day the child was born. So when you come to school, the government says they have to be five or six when they enter school. So all that we could do is have the child to reach his hand over his head and come down and see where he could touch his ear. A small child's head is big proportionate to his body, so if a kid could only get like that [gesture?], you'd say, "Come back next year." If he could completely overlap, you know he's older. And so that was only way we could gauge their age, because they had no record of the year of their birth, the date of their birth. And so a little simple physical check we would use and weed out those that were two young, too old, and keep those that could. In a class of thirty-five, you would probably have thirty-two, thirty-three boys and two or three girls. And then in 1965 I got the government figures on it. Of boys and girls who

were high school age, secondary school age, in northern Nigeria...in the extreme northern part of Nigeria, less than two percent of high school age were actually in secondary school. Over ninety-eight percent who were of age to be in secondary school were not in school. So, you see, just a few get into school. I had nine junior primary schools feeding into one senior primary; then you'd have three or four or five senior primaries feeding into one secondary school. So you keep just...only a few get to school and you keep weeding them out at each level. After junior primary, you weed out, and senior primary get more, and secondary more, and so only a few of your people actually get training. Now, it's not that way so much now. They're trying to get universal primary education now, but your average student then would be one who, depending on which level you tap into, you've got the secondary school.... He would be one out of many who had started school. And just a few of the very best ever got that far. And so when you bring those over here they look pretty good in our schools because they were the very best that they had there.

SMITH: When you were teaching in Katsina, did you have a special method that you would do something very different?

STEELY: I never did teach primary school. I never did teach to read. My wife did do some of that and she had phonics books from here at home and had to use American material. And that at times wouldn't be the best, because of the nouns you'd be using, association wouldn't necessarily fit with their way of life. But that's all you had. Now, I did use the Iowa Standardized Reading Test to test the reading. And the California Standardized Test, used that with Bible college students and with teachers' training college students. And again, that's culturally irrelevant but it was all we had so we did use it.

SMITH: So students that come from Africa to here, do they fit in pretty well then with the schools here? Do they have...?

STEELY: They have culture shock and they have those problems but they have done very well here. Most all of our students...I don't know of any of our students that has ever flunked out here and had to go back without it, any of my former students. They've all...but there again, it's usually the better students that get here, better down to about median. But the lower ones that we just got through, it really wouldn't be very worthwhile sending them here to this country because of the cultural problems.

[Recording is stopped and restarted]

SMITH: Then during your time in Africa, you were on furlough and you came back to finish your Master's degree, or you finished it before you left?

STEELY: I finished it when I came back. Took Old Testament Introduction which...the College...the grad school changed their course they'd been teaching, I think Old Testament and New Testament at the same time, introduction, and they decided, "Hey, let's have one in the fall, one in the spring, balance our load." And they made that change right when I was in school, so it wasn't taught either semester that I was here, so I couldn't finish off before I went to Africa. So

I came back, picked that up and picked up a refresher course in Hebrew, and wrote my thesis, and got my master's in January 1958 [clock strikes in background].

SMITH: And you were telling me about your thesis?

STEELY: Yes. [The] thesis is done on the significance of the laws of clean and unclean and the law of Moses. And we thought perhaps we might find some correlation between the taboo laws that we run into various African tribes and the food laws, clean and unclean laws, of the Hebrews. That's what was the thought we had when we started, but as we searched through we found no correlation, no relationship at all. In fact, the taboo laws that we find in other tribes, studying the various literatures as well as what we saw there, was not nearly as wholesome as the Hebrew laws. The Hebrew laws were very good and designed for a definite purpose and so it wasn't particularly helpful along that line, but it was an interesting subject.

SMITH: And then they put your thesis on file for....

STEELY: It's in the library and, when one of my friends was here a few years later, he said the teacher was recommending it very highly for the bibliography. And so I went down and checked one time just to see and it had been checked out a number of times by people to use it for that particular section which was singled out as being a good part of it.

SMITH: What was the change like, the culture shock like, coming back in to the United States?

STEELY: There again, it wasn't as severe as going to Africa. Going to Africa, getting into it, was much more severe. But I know that our kids experienced the same thing and then when we came back in '77 to stay here and deal with some family problems and be with our kids, that...there was a bit of restlessness.

END OF TAPE