

This is a complete transcript of the oral history interview with **Hester Hartzell Withey (CN 418, T10)** for the Billy Graham Center Archives. No spoken words that 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 on the part of the speaker.

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

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

[] Words in brackets are comments by the transcriber.

This transcript was created by Robert Shuster and Suzanne Osborne and was completed in June 2017.

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 418, Tape 10. Oral history interview with Hester Hartzell Withey by Paul Ericksen on June 20, 1989.

WITHEY: Nepali people though, however, were in the majority and to really function in Darjeeling, one needs to use Nepal...Nepali to be understood amongst the village people who come to town. But at first when I was there, I didn't expect to be doing so much with the village people around and the town people (for trade purposes) could understand Hindi quite well. And I didn't feel like starting in on a third language so I just stuck to Hindi. Later on, I did have more contact with the village people through the church work I got involved with. And I wished I'd taken time to learn Nepali when I first went there. But by that time, I was [laughs] so involved, it was impossible to really take time off. So I picked up a certain amount and managed but it...it was...it was not altogether satisfactory. However, I got by. And they...in Darjeeling also (because of its proximity to Sikkim and Tibet) had a lot of Tibetan people. Sikkimese people were a mixture of those of Nepali stock (in the more southern part) and people in the north who called themselves Sikkimese but they really were Tibetans racially. Identical. And then there are the Sherpas who are famous as the Himalayan porters in...in mountaineering expeditions. And they are basically of Tibetan stock, too, but they don't like to be called Tibetans. They think them...of themselves as a special racial group. And I guess they are. They have some customs that are different. But their language is very like Tibetan and they're Buddhists, and very similar. So there were many groups there. The aboriginal groups there were Lepchas, very pale-skinned very mild, gentle people. And they figured very largely in the Christian churches up there in Darjeeling. Darjeeling had had several mission groups working for many years, about a hundred years, rea...almost. Seventy-five to a hundred years. And one was the Church of Scotland (from...from Scotland in the U.K.) and they had a Presbyterian type of church there with many members. It was well-established. I'm not sure how many were really saved people. There was a lot of good doctrine and...but also dead coldness. And there was a...a movement that o...that occurred later, which I'll mention, in which the...the situation changed. But there was also opposition to the real gospel when it moved in. However, then there was the Free Church of Finland that had had work there for many years, and also in Sikkim they'd had work. And they were fo...they were foreign missionaries from Finland that had established the work there and they had converts and a church. Not in Darjeeling itself but in a...a place called Ghoom, just outside of Darjeeling. So there was quite a lot of Christian activity there. The only reason we went there as WEC was because of the Tibetans.

ERICKSEN: Uh-huh.

WITHEY: They had not been moved towards the gospel, it seemed, very much at all. These friends who turned their work over to us had a regular meeting with the Tibetans. But it was maintained really by bribes, you might say [laughs], to come to the meeting. They would...I suppose their idea was, "Well, let's expose them to the gospel by hook or by crook," and they would ask the Tibetans who were carrying loads as coolies from the market to come in. And they would give them the equivalent of a load so that they wouldn't lose out financially if they would come. Well, they thought it was all right to sit still for [Ericksen laughs] the same price as carrying a heavy load up the mountain. So they would come. Well, when we got there and realized that's what it was, we didn't feel we wanted to build anything on that. So we didn't pay

any money to anybody and consequently the meeting fade...faded out. So then we tried house-to-house visitation and they wouldn't even ask us in sometimes. You'd...you'd get your foot in the door practically, like a Fuller Brush Man, [laughs] and to get an hear...a hearing. And we took phonograph records around with us and a phonograph. It was kind of heavy lugging it up the hill, but we did that. And, in order to get a hearing, gave out literature and talked. And they were friendly, as friendly as could be. But we didn't seem to be getting anywhere.

We were also associated with a...a inter-group, inter-mission Tibetan fellowship of workers, workers who were interested in Tibetan people from all over India. It's now changed its form. It was mostly workers in those days and foreigners were leading it. But now there's a sister group that's taken on the whole thing and its composed of people who consider themselves Christian Tibetans. Some of them are distantly related to something Tibetan. They're not that...they're not straight from Tibet. But they have some connection and they maintain certain activities of a joint nature and it has quite a bit of value. They meet every year, once a year for a conference in different places. But at that time in Darjeeling, there didn't seem to be any real Tibe...Tibetan Christians at all. And the question was how to go about the work. There were Nepalis. We had contacts with the Nepalis and the.... The Nepalis were the ones that were the...in the Christian churches. They were the ones that were really alive spiritually, if there was anything. And shortly...well, so...maybe the some years before we went there, there had been this move that I referred to of the Spirit of God among the people there. And they...there was an evangelist who had been associated with Bakht Singh in India. You kn...probably know about him. Well, it...his work has been very much blessed of the Lord in India and he has been very much a spreader of the doctrine that a Christian church is supposed to be composed of people that have been saved, not just people who are interested hangers-on. And you can't take communion in their churches or consider yourself part of it unless you have...are saved. They make that very clear. You can attend meetings but, you know, you have to get it straight that you're not a Christian yet. And they...they...they've contributed a lot, really, to spiritual life and the impact of the gospel in the country. They're a bit legal. Legalism is quite evident there too. And I think some of the Christians have had a...a...a problem trying to learn how to live the Christian life without more teaching on the deeper levels of...of living a Christian life. And they have sometimes backslidden or gotten annoyed over something and left. But nevertheless, it's been a very valuable work.

Well, anyhow, the...the...Jordan Kahn, who was an associate for a number of years with Bakht Singh and he's...I don't think he's directly connected with him right now but he is associated as a co-worker for a good many years. Anyway, he came up to have some special meetings at the invitation of this Presbyterian group. And they had a real move of the Spirit of God in...in Kalimpong first of all, which is a smaller town nearer the Sikkim border than...than Darjeeling. And about seventy-five percent of the congregation were saved for the first time, and alive and excited and thrilled with what the Lord was doing. And that was fine. I mean, the church was very happy about that for some time. But then this brother coming in talked about baptism by immersion, believer's baptism. And the roots of this church had been Presbyterian from Scotland with infant baptism. And then the fat was in the fire and there was no end of trouble and from the church about this. So eventually the new believers left the church and mo...started in a...in a group of their own. And they were part of the Bakht Singh movement, really. He doesn't like to have it called that, of course. But there's no other name that they give themselves so what do



you...what to say to identify them. But that work went on with a very dynamic influence in the area for the gospel. And many were saved and it was a clear cut distinction between sin and righteousness and being saved or unsaved. And the...they don't have a church membership but you knew [laughs] whether you were in or out. I mean, they don't have any written membership, but you knew whether you belonged or didn't belong. And they had various features in their church life that were different, less westernized. They didn't have pews and Gothic churches like the others had had. They were meeting in halls that they b...either renovated from other buildings and...and bought or rented. And they sat on mats on the ground, which was on the floor, which was like the Indian people do. And they...their church life was quite dynamic. [Pauses] We...we...I...when I first went to Darjeeling, I didn't start a dispensary there because it...the mission folks think...we all consulted together and we realized that it wasn't needed in Darjeeling. They had government hospitals. They...Tea Planters Association had a very, very good hospital with surgery and properly trained doctors and good service. And then there were government hospitals that were not ver...very well run but they at least provided some help. So instead of running any dispensary work ourselves, we would help people go to the hospitals and maybe interpret for them...

ERICKSEN: Uh-huh.

WITHEY: ...or get some attention for them when they.... If they were poor people or Tibetans, the authorities in the hospital would rather rush them off, ignore them, they...they weren't important, and they were busy people. And if we were along, they would give them a little more respect and good treatment. So anybody that needed medical help, we would do that. But I was trying for direct Tibetan evangelism in that area. And some of our folks were experts in Nepali and the...they were working with the Nepalis. But I identified first with this same Church of Scotland in Darjeeling because that's where the other Nepali workers were. And we had a campaign with another evangelist who came up, nothing...not to do with the Bakht Singh work at all, but he came up as a separate evangelist. And there was a move of the Spirit of God then too and I had been on...in on all the committees and things for the arranging for this. And then when the [unclear word] thing was over, the church wouldn't let me visit anybody because they weren't sure whether we were going to be sheep stealers or not.

ERICKSEN: Uh-huh.

WITHEY: See, I was from WEC and they...we...I was never a member of their church and they weren't very happy with this idea of anybody being a worker among them if they weren't going to be fully identified. Well, one could understand it. They were afraid. And they knew there'd already been this problem over this other group, which was purely a national group (it was nothing to do with any westerners). And so I felt, "Well, here there are the...the...these two established churches in the area. I better throw my lot in with these nationals. I'm certainly getting nowhere with the others." And so as a church base—even though I was trying to do Tibetan evangelism, I needed some church identification—so I went to...started going to the...the Bakht Singh groups in...in Kalimpong and later in Darjeeling. I spent some years in both. I first went to Darjeeling in '56, but within just a few months, I went on furlough and when I came back, I went to Kalimpong. [Pauses] That was my first furlough in fif... '57. The reason for the

long period (it was nearly ten years) was because when I first got to India a...coming directly from China through Hong Kong, I found that a...a rule was put in in India to say if you hadn't been there five years, you couldn't get a "no re...no objection to return" endorsement. So I was stuck there. If I wanted to come back to India, I had to wait for that endorsement. So I had to wait mostly...most of five years, then, fill out the time for five years before I could go on furlough. But I didn't have...I was all right physically and we didn't have any urgent family reasons to get back so it didn't matter. I decided just to stay on. So then I went on furlough, '57, '58. Yeah. Is that what it says there?

ERICKSEN: Uh-huh.

WITHEY: Yeah, that's right. And then when I came back, I went to Kalimpong and there were other WEC workers and some others who were working with Tibetans, too. This Edith, who had been with me on the China border, she'd come out by that time. And she was married to Ernie Shingler [?], who had been a British soldier in India. He was a Christian, and he had been called to Tibetans and he had to go...at the end of the war, go through Bible School and headquarters training and eventually come out. But then they were married there in...in Mussoorie, in the Landour Mussoorie area, not Darjeeling area. But they were working in Kalimpong during a good part of the time I was there. And because we were all involved with Tibetans, we had quite a lot to do with each other. Part of the time, I lived in a part of the same apartment where they were, had some meals with them, and so on. [Pauses] Anyway, the...I started in then fellowshiping with this other group. And it took a while to get...gain their confidence and so on, but I...I had a...a good time with them. And they...especially with the women who were full-time workers. There was some very precious, spiritually-minded Nepali women who were full-time workers in that group. And they lived very self-effacing lives in their church headquarters and were quite...quite simple in their way of life. And very often they were lacking in basic medical services and even food things. I used to feel so sorry. And sometimes I'd try and help, you know, and these kind of things. In the meantime, trying to reach Tibetans in the plain evangelism method. And it was hard going li...there like it had been in...in Darjeeling earlier with the old-timers who were very hardened to the gospel. But then, of course, we had more responsive people among the Nepalis and I was able to do things among...among the church women...

ERICKSEN: Uh-huh.

WITHEY: ...helping with their...getting their flannel graph things going and teaching them how to use flannel graph and joining in on all their meetings and sitting on the mats for hours and hours. But it was very good. I enjoyed that part of the church life.

ERICKSEN: How much did they look to you to...to do leadership kinds of things and how much...?

WITHEY: Not too much, except in things that they weren't doing like...like those. Fla...visual aids and flannel graph and [pauses] they...the church elders kept the management of everything in their own hands.

ERICKSEN: Uh-huh.

WITHEY: And women really didn't have any part at all. Even their full...their own full-time women, they were consulted on things to do with the women but all leadership was in the hands of the elders, really [coughs]. If I hadn't had the Tibetan outreach as well in the area, I would have been very frustrated.

ERICKSEN: Uh-huh.

WITHEY: But as it was, I was appreciative of what link I had with the church. It was good. And in along the line, I had...I'd had a talk with Bakht Singh himself when he was up there at one time, and he began to explain their ideas about the church and the Lord really applied that to my heart, that it's important to be part of his church, and...in ministry. I think in a way, we may have gone so far in that that we missed the idea of having a separate Tibetan church. That's another subject we can get on to a little later when we can to the...came to the refugees that came out of Tibet. But I knew that the Lord worked through his church in a very special way. And Bakht Singh had the...the...the idea that you shouldn't be a Christian worker as an oddment floating around here and there doing your own thing. But you should be part of the church even if you had to wait for the church to see the vision that the Lord had given you. Now in this case it would be the Tibetans. The church...Nepali church couldn't care less about Tibetans in those days. Now but he said, "You pray, and wait and...and expect the Lord to awaken a vision." Well, the elders heard that this was my problem and they began religiously praying [laughs] for the Tibetans, bless him, and the neighboring countries. And eventually they had quite an outreach in Sikkim and Nepal...not Nepal very much, a little bit. But Sikkim and...in the area. And they prayed lots in their prayer meetings for Tibet and the Central Asian areas. So I'm sure that all had a b...bearing on the...the...the spiritual impact on...for the country.

ERICKSEN: What was your impression of Bakht Singh from your meeting with him?

WITHEY: He was a...a very interesting person many ways. He [pauses] he had a whimsical little way of explaining things and so on which was quite interesting. As far as the group goes, to me the...the main lack...well, he himself you asked, he's obviously a very intelligent and spiritually minded man, obviously expect that. And he had very clear things that he felt the Lord had showed about how they should run their work and what the church, the nature of the church.... And I...I felt I'd learned quite a lot from him fro...in the scriptural expositions that he gave. I was glad of that. But it seemed to me the great lack was this t...some teaching on how to get personal victory. And I suppose I noticed it because of the struggle I'd had in China, personally. But I could see other believers in the same predicament. They would come with great joy and get saved and be alive, you know, for so...some months or years. And then the elder would do something that they didn't like and they get huffed about it and hike off somewhere else. And there weren't that many good places to go. It wasn't like the church around every corner. So it wasn't very...very good for them spiritually. Or...and the second generation, too, was not getting much. The...there was a real problem they had with the second generation. They'd run off, elope with Hindus and that kind of thing. And the people would be very upset about that. They even disciplined the parents when that happened on the basis that an elder must

be able to control his own family. And there was quite a bit of difficulty with those things. But it got...he was a...he...his testimony, you know, was a very wonderful testimony and God certainly used him. And he was a good leader in many ways, but he did keep things in his own hands, very much. And I think it's made problems since then. He never appointed a successor. And now he's very ill, I believe, with Parkinson's. And there's quite a power struggle among the leaders in Hyderabad, his center. At least, that's what I heard from those who are in the inside. But nevertheless, you don't want to belittle the fact that God did do a wonderful work through him. And I learned to love a lot of those people there in Darjeeling. But we still weren't getting much of anywhere with the Tibetans. And then around 1959, '60, the whole picture changed. And the Dalai Lama fled from Tibet following a skirmish in [Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. In 1950, the Communists had swept in and taken over the whole of Tibet...

ERICKSEN: Uh-huh.

WITHEY: ...all the way to the Kashmir border in the west. And there was talk of...among the Tibetans that the Chinese were planning to take the Dalai Lama to Peking (or Beijing), and that they didn't know whether they would, you know, be fair with him or would they do him di...dirty and kill him off or make a prisoner of him. And they were furious 'cause he...they really adore and idolize him. The...even when we were there in...in '85, the adoration that they have for the Dalai Lama is just terrific. After twenty-five or thirty years of Communism hadn't dented them at all, and really worship him. He's not supposed to be a god in the ordinary sense 'because their Buddhism doesn't allow for that. But they mi...it might as just as well be from the way they regard him. So anyway he...they decided he...that he should leave Lhasa because he was in danger. And so many of the eastern Tibetans who are the best fighters, the Khampas from the area where we used to be, they staged a fight against the Chinese to enable him to flee and get beyond the reach of what the so...so Chinese soldiers could...could do to him. So he f...was...I remember there were about two weeks when nobody knew where he was in the...nobody in the world knew and a great stir about this. And then he turned up in India in the...the Assam area to the east of Bhutan. And he came down through the mountains, just to the east of Bhutan into...on the India side through what is called the Northeast Frontier Provinces. It's now called Aran... Arunachal Pradesh but it was N.E.F.A., N-E-F-A, Northeast Frontier Provinces Administration, or whatever, yes, Administration. Anyway, now it's Ne...it's A... Arunachal Pradesh. And he turned up on the borders of the Brahmaputra River, which it circled around from Lhasa right around on its way down, and in a place...near a place called Tezpur at a camp called Missamari. And anyway, he was met with great ceremony by Tibetan and In...Indian officials. And he was taken from there to Mussourie, this place where we had the language school, way over on the other side. And he was there wi...with his sort of government in exile for some time, and then was eventually moved to Dharamshala, which was further west and further north in Himachal Pradesh, is another section of India near the...near the Punjab, and south of Kashmir. Well, with him came what is variously figured at eighty to a hundred thousand Tibetans. They'd fled the country. They figured if he was going, then they should go. And many of them had already suffered terribly in the atrocities from the Chinese. We had Tibetan friends of ours who fled at that time. And they said they had come all the way from the east from very nea...near where we had been. In fact, not far from this town of Qamdo that we were all aiming for. And they had come down through Lhasa and then fled south again. And some of the time they were traveling



in winter and their little caravans would show up on the snow, the white snow, and they'd be bombed from the air and people would be killed, mutilated. Then they would notify the ground forces and they would attack them. And they had...they lost so many and terrible atrocities if they were caught and punished. Very much the way the Chinese are behaving now with their own people and the...the way they behaved at the beginnings of Communism. In the early days too.

ERICKSEN: Did the escape of the Dalai Lama intensify things?

WITHEY: Probably. I don't...I don't have any statistics on that but I imagine it did. They were probably fed up that they hadn't got him. What they would have done to him, I don't know, whether they would have just put him in...they certainly would have put him in isolation. Of course, years later, when there was talk of his going back, they wouldn't think of his going to Lhasa. They knew he would be the center of a great insurrection. And so they would have kept him in a wealthy kind of a prison, you might say.

ERICKSEN: Have you ever gotten a chance to see him?

WITHEY: Yes. Before the...he fled like this, earlier there was the 2,500th anniversary of Buddha's birth, I think it was [coughs]. And he...he came by arrangement between the Buddhist authorities in...religious authorities of the world. And the Indian government and the Chinese government, he was allowed to come on a sort of pilgrimage into India to share in these celebrations. And the Panchen Lama came with him. Now the Panchen Lama is regarded as equal or superior to him by some Tibetans. And they both actually come from the Qinghai area way over in the...in west...west China and which was eastern Tibet originally from, sort of up in this part [points on map].

ERICKSEN: Uh-huh.

WITHEY: It's hardly on the map. But they...that's where they both came from. But the Panchen Lama was still retained in the center...on...in the west China side, whereas the Dalai Lama was brought to Lhasa. And theoretically, he is superior to the Panchen Lama, but some people highly regard the Panchen Lama too. Anyway, they both came together to...to celebrate. And they came with pomp and ceremony and beautiful, sort of gold type of...of clothing. No longer the red robe that he usually wore as a...as a priest. But very elaborate get-up. And he was honored and taken to all the Buddhist shrines in India. And there was some talk then of whether he would ever go back. But the agreement had been that he would go back. And at that time he was still hoping to be able to work with the Chinese to get some kind of liberty for his people and he did go back. And then later it was...he had to flee in '59.

ERICKSEN: In the course of that trip, was he...did he go to Darjeeling or...?

WITHEY: Oh yes, you'd ask me if I'd seen him. Yeah, that's where I saw him. Well, in Kalimpong actually, in the adjoining town. Was not adjoining, it's about fifty miles away, but anyway, not very far. Yes, on this...in the course of this trip, he was taken to visit the...Dr. Graham's homes in Kalimpong. And the...these homes are a boarding school for Anglo-Indian

children. They were established because of the terrible need of a...a good education for the children of tea planters by their Nepali consorts. These tea planters would sometimes come out to India to make a fortune. They'd leave their families back in England but they would pick up with some Nepali coolie woman and have children who didn't know who they were. Their...they would be one time up...up in the...pa ...the big house with the manager of the tea estate and then the next time they'd be shooed down to the mother down in the servants quarters. And they didn't know where they belonged and they weren't getting proper education and help. And so Dr. Graham, a Christian minister of the Church of Scotland, established these homes, orphanages. Well, not really orphanages, school more. But there were many orphans who were there as well, but mostly it was a school and anybody else who went there had to pay very heavily for the privilege of being there. It was a good school and they had more or less an English education like they would get in a good school in England. So if these Anglo-Indian children ever wanted to go for further study to England, they could have a basic education to start them off. [Coughs] So the Dalai Lama was being shown this school. They had several buildings they went on the cottage system, family style. And that very day, the members of this Tibetan fellowship group, inter-church group, were going to have...or, inter-mission group were [sneezes] (excuse me)...were having a prayer time up there in that...that place. And they shut out the public that so they couldn't come in. Police cordoned it off and wouldn't let anybody from the general public of the town come into the place. And so the...those who were shut in there with him, they got quite close quarters.

ERICKSEN: Uh-huh.

WITHEY: And so he got out of his car and we were all standing around, just a small group of us and we could see him as close as from here to that chair over there. And....

ERICKSEN: Ten feet?

WITHEY: Yeah, something like that. And yeah, about ten feet or so, maybe less than that. In fact, near enough so Ernie Shingler greeted him in Tibetan. [Laughs] He smiled and answered back again. So we saw him very close up. He's...and he has always, from every contact we've heard of, he seems to really care about his people, very altruistic viewpoint. And if anything, he has disclaimed some of the things that have been attributed to him. In other words, there was a time that really rocked the Tibetans in Darjeeling when he was addressing them and hordes and hordes of them came from all around the countryside to hear him. And he said [pauses], "You mustn't worship me. I am not a...a...a god. I am only here to show you the way." The way of Buddhism. And he obviously believed in the Buddhist path still, but he didn't want to be regarded as a deity himself. He's tried to adapt to the modern world too in his breadth of thinking. He's really, really done very well, really, to mix...well, he's become a world figure, as you know.

ERICKSEN: Uh-huh.

WITHEY: Whereas he would have been very isolated before. Anyway, he eventually was moved from Mussoorie to Dharamshala and, of course, he still has his headquarters there. But

these refugees who came out, they were very different from the local Tibetans. They were suffering people, they had been displaced, they'd lost everything. They didn't know anything about how to live in India and they figured that they had to adapt to everything they found. So they were still strongly Buddhist but they began to wonder, I think, if they had to take on any other religion in this new country. And consequently they were much more willing to listen to the gospel, at any rate. And so we had a hey-day then. And the Lord had just worked it so that in Kalimpong and Darjeeling at that time, there were ex-China missionaries who knew the eastern dialects and there were those there who knew the central dialect (they learned it in India) and we had literature, phonograph records, everything laid out to meet these people. And we didn't know...have any idea they were coming. But the Lord had arranged that and it was such a good thing.

ERICKSEN: What was the feeling among the missionaries as the refugees started to pour into the area?

WITHEY: Well, we felt that God had brought them to hear the gospel. It was...we couldn't get into the country and so He'd turn the thing around and brought them out to where they could hear the gospel. And we really [laughs] expected great things to happen, bigger I think than really did happen. But at least they had a chance to hear and their...the certain...the gospel was making an impact more than it had ever done before in that area. The [pauses]...some of them were just feeling their way, wondering, you know, "How much do we have to change?" Some were very, very thrilled with things they heard in the gospel, but they were not sure. [Pauses] We also had committees for taking care of their physical needs. Some of them were a combination of civic people s...were not Christian. In Darjeeling that was the case. And in Kalimpong it was almost all a Christian committee. And we were able to get supplies from various relief agencies around the world. In fact, the whole world was trying to help the Tibetans, they were so sorry for them at that time. Medical supplies came and food supplies from U.S. Aid and CARE and all sorts of other agencies. And so we organized the committees to distribute this powdered milk and cheese. Tibetans love cheese so they...the Indians didn't so much but the Tibetans did. They make their own cheese from yak milk. So they were thrilled with that, even though it was a bit different. And powdered milk was a big thing. They used to talk about the Jesus powdered milk because the Christians were so associated with these relief programs.

ERICKSEN: Huh.

WITHEY: So that was nice. It was the Jesus milk. But how much they got of the Jesus [Ericksen laughs] salvation, I don't know. But because of...of that link with them, we were able to announce meetings. We didn't have meetings at the time of the distribution because it would be regarded as bribery by the government, and what they call "incentives." They...that's one thing the Indian government is dead against, any incentives to get people to change religion. And rightly so. And we didn't want that kind of Christian anyway, ourselves, rice Christians. So we announced meetings though at the time of the committees and then the meet...meetings were held at a different time. So they could either come or not come as they wanted. But they did pour in to begin with. And quite a few kept on for some time. And we hit on the idea of showing them the slides from the old field where we had been, which was genuine Tibetan country although it was

in...under Chinese government. And using that as a jumping off point for a gospel message. We...the idea was, "You...if...if...we...you all want to get back to your country. Now we would like to go with you when you go back, if you can get back. And how would we know the way to go? You'd have to show us the way. You all want to go to a good eternal home." Of course, nirvana's what they're thinking of, but anyhow we tried to describe heaven as a...a...a place that you want to go to. "And you don't know the way and we wouldn't know the way. But somebody came from there to show us the way."

ERICKSEN: Uh-huh.

WITHEY: And then, bring in the story of Jesus, that He came from heaven and shows us the way to go back and said He Himself was the way, the truth and the life, and so on. And when we had those showings, they just about mobbed us. Something from the old country, you know. They...so thrilled. They'd for...they were suffering so as a displaced people. In fact, we had to have three showings at...one after the other to take care of the crowd. And when they...until they knew we were going to have three showings, they all tried to crowd in and nearly swamped us and the projector and everything [laughs]. It was such a stampede to see these pictures. So we used that as a jumping off point. Well, we eventually...established a regular meeting with those who were interested. And we did that and had those meetings going on oh, for a long time, several years, until they began to scatter [unclear] Tibetans began to scatter to other centers and there wasn't the same demand or need. And we took a lot of them along who were interested too to the church where we were going to which was the...related to the Bakht Singh work. And they were...the elders were very cooperative. Ernie Shingler was involved too. They were more...more able to...they let him share more in the leadership being a man than they would we womenfolk. And so they...we the...had the Tibetans in the meetings. The Nepalis didn't like them because they smelt badly...because they still were wearing their hot clothes in the hot climate of India...

ERICKSEN: Uh-huh [laughs].

WITHEY: ...which was most unsuitable and made smells a bit worse. But they...they tried very hard to be generous to them. But I could see they would never have let any Tibetans share in the leadership of the church no matter what kind of a Christian you became.

ERICKSEN: Uh-huh.

WITHEY: Unless he had changed and become a real Nepali as well. And I'm not sure but what we should have maybe had a separate group altogether. But there again the Tibetans are jealous and fight among themselves too. The different areas, that's one reason Tibet has been weak all the...the hi...during history is that the...the northerners and the central people or the...that is the northerners on the east and the southerners in the east and then the central people, they all fight with each other. They won't agree, even though they're all Tibetans. And we found that even in this little group that was beginning to form of people who were interested. I don't think they could have had a...a...a group by themselves at that stage until there had been more maturity.

Anyway, that era went on and we began to find there were...the Tibetans were much more a part of the society in general all around. Want to change [the tape]?

END OF TAPE

