

**The Siddall Family  
Life in China, 1923-1932**

**By**

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**(This chapter is based on my father's unpublished memoir. To supplement his narrative I have included additional historical information, excerpts from my mother's letters, and added several footnotes.)**

In early July, 1923, my parents, Clair and Annette Siddall, left Dayton, Ohio, by train for Chicago. There they changed to the Great Northern, which took them to Seattle, Washington, arriving on July 13. Three days later they set sail on the Japanese steamer, *Shidzuoka Maru*. Also on board were thirty Japanese passengers and one other American. After a stopover in Japan to visit Annette's brother, Dennis, who was teaching English there for two years, they arrived in Hong Kong on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August. From there they took a ferry up the Pearl River for the short trip to Canton (now called Guangzhou), where the harbor was crowded with sampans that were home to over 200,000 people. Upon docking, the ferry was overrun with coolies\* noisily competing to unload the passengers' baggage. Canton would be Clair and Annette's home base.

Clair was twenty-six years old and had graduated the previous year from Western Reserve University Medical School in Cleveland. He was a good-looking man, five feet ten inches tall, slender, with reddish blond hair. Because of his ski jump-nose and receding hairline, it was often said he looked like a combination of Bob Hope and Fred Astaire. Annette, an attractive woman with auburn hair and just over five feet tall, was twenty-eight. Both were outgoing and made friends easily. They had married following Clair's graduation after a two-year courtship. Annette

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\* A coolie is an unskilled laborer in China and throughout the Orient. The name comes from the Indian word, Kuli.

entered into the marriage knowing that Clair was committed to going to China as a medical missionary. However, as he wrote many years later, *I never liked the term missionary, preferring instead to be referred to as a medical representative of the church.*

Clair knew he wanted to be a physician from the age of thirteen, and at twenty-five he had realized that dream. Then, after he completed a year of internship, he was fulfilling another dream of practicing medicine in China. In contrast, at twenty-six I was driving through the Middle East on my way to India and had little idea how I would spend the rest of my life. Yet I found a common thread. My father likened his going to China to joining the Peace Corps, which I joined at the age of sixty-seven.

China in 1923 was a country with overcrowded cities, widespread poverty, pervasive health problems, and political instability. Clair's decision to go to China was based on what he saw as a great need. He had determined that there was one physician for every 724 people in the United States, whereas in China there was one modern-trained doctor for 400,000 of its population. The same ratio would translate to 202 physicians for the entire United States at that time.

During the first year, Clair and Annette lived near Canton in the town of Siu Lam, where they immersed themselves in language study and adjusted to living in a new culture. Annette learned to speak the language more quickly than Clair, yet in time he would be teaching courses to nurses in Cantonese. His practice while in Siu Lam was primarily in a small hospital that served a girls' school, and he also had patients from the community. He worked closely with the Chinese staff of one Chinese doctor and several nurses. His first surgical case was a woman with breast cancer who tolerated the removal of her breast with local anesthetic.

Clair described a grim environment. *We were surrounded by unsanitary conditions, dirty water, filthy canals, piles of foul-smelling rubbish, and chickens living in people's houses. In*

*cool weather people wore as many as six layers of clothing. At night they closed the house up tight before retiring. If the weather was cold, they slept with their heads entirely covered.*

Because most Chinese drank tea, many illnesses were prevented by the practice of boiling the usually contaminated water. Near the hospital was an opium den, where addicts could be seen lying on benches using a wooden block for a pillow, similar to how people slept at home.

Annette and Clair had learned from their language teacher that the Chinese frequently ate dogs, so out of curiosity they asked their newly-hired cook, a young married man, to find a dog for them to eat. The cook baked it, but when it was served, Annette couldn't eat it. Clair could manage only a few bites. He said it tasted like varnish. The cook and his wife were happy to take the dog home for themselves.

In the summer of 1924, Clair and Annette took a trip north with friends to Shanghai, Nanking, and Peking (now Beijing). They went by both ship and train. Peking was a city with wide boulevards, where women could still be seen with bound feet.\* Many of the men wore the long pigtail, or queue, which signified subservience to the Manchu government.

After a year, Clair and Annette moved to a community in Canton called Pak Hak Tung, where a number of missionaries and several English businessmen and their families lived. They had a larger house and bought new furniture in Hong Kong to furnish it, a task that Annette enjoyed. They felt more settled and enjoyed their new friends. My father often spoke of how Annette was a good traveler, adjusted well wherever she went, and never complained. He always said that his and Annette's relationship was a happy one.

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\* This custom was given up in large part due to the influence of missionaries.

Clair began work at Canton Hospital, which would be the center of his medical practice. The hospital was founded by Dr. Peter Parker in 1835, and was the first hospital to bring western medicine to the Orient. Dr. Parker was a native of Massachusetts and a graduate of Yale University. He was trained as a physician and was also an ordained Presbyterian minister. At the time Clair arrived, treatment of diseases still focused on palliative measures. The advent of antibiotics, which we take for granted today, wouldn't occur for another ten years. Clair and his medical colleagues were faced with an enormous range of health problems.

Clair's primary interest was obstetrics and gynecology, and he would serve as head of that department from the time he joined the Canton Hospital staff. It was a 200-bed, modern facility with a well-trained staff of Chinese and American doctors and Chinese nurses. It was the goal of the American physicians to turn over the care of patients to the Chinese as soon as was possible. From Clair's point of view, he couldn't have found a more challenging and fascinating place to work. One of many stories he told was of a beggar woman outside the hospital with a large tumor on her neck. My father and a colleague went to the woman and offered to remove the tumor in the hospital free of charge. She agreed and arrangements were made for her to be admitted the next day. However, she never showed up and was never seen again. No doubt she realized that if her tumor were removed, she would be deprived of her only income.

One day Clair was taken by a messenger to what he said looked like an American saloon. It turned out to be a brothel run by a Chinese, but staffed by young Japanese women. The patient was a beautiful young woman suffering from severe abdominal pain. Clair had her transferred immediately to the hospital, where examination showed she had an acute gonorrheal infection. Clair noted: *With no sulfa or penicillin in those days, we depended on frequent hot douches, bed rest, and pain relief, and waited for mother nature to do the rest.*

Clair made another house call in the middle of the night carried in a sedan chair, which had been sent by a well-to-do family. The patient was suffering from a severe case of typhoid fever, a bacterial infection contracted from contaminated water, milk or food. Clair immediately focused on relieving her high fever and diarrhea, which if not controlled could have led to her death from dehydration. As was the custom in China, no follow-up appointment was made unless requested later by the family. He never heard from the family and wondered if his intervention had been in time.

One of Clair's colleagues requested a consultation at the home of a patient who had been unable to deliver after three days of labor. Examination showed that the infant was hydrocephalic and had been dead for some time. Clair informed the family that the infant's head would have to be perforated, the fluid drained, and forceps used to extract the baby's body. They were also told that the mother was not likely to survive. The family agreed that he should proceed. As he had feared, the mother died. By this time, distressed family members and neighbors were gathering outside the house. The Chinese doctor advised Clair to leave immediately.

Before western medicine arrived in China, infant mortality was high, with fifty percent of newborns dying of tetanus (lockjaw). It was widely believed that hanging a key around a newborn's neck would protect it by warding off evil spirits. The major cause of death, however, was from infection, usually the result of midwives using unclean objects, such as a piece of broken crockery, to cut the umbilical cord. Once women were taught to use a clean knife or scissors, many more children survived.

One of the pioneers in improving children's health care in Canton was an American physician, Dr. Regina Bigler. She practiced there for over forty years and had established her own clinic. She often asked Clair to work with her, and on occasions to take over in her absence.

He described his work: *Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday I spent the whole day in Dr. Bigler's dispensary, starting at 8:00 A.M. and working until all the patients were seen. The usual load was 250 to 300 patients a day. I followed Dr. Bigler's routine because she did not want me to change anything. I stood behind a long table where the mothers, one at a time, would bring their babies and children. After a few questions, a quick examination was made. I turned to my assistant and told her what to give the patient. Most were infants with skin infections, ringworm, impetigo, eczema, chicken pox, whooping cough, and pneumonia. There were also a few women patients with problems such as breast abscesses, which I opened without any anesthesia, postpartum bleeding, and uterine infections.... Without fail three or four coolies would come to the clinic with severe toothaches. Each was sent to an adjacent room where I would extract the tooth as he whooped and hollered. At noon we had a break of half an hour when I sat down with my three assistants and enjoyed a bowl of excellent soup followed by some fruit.... By four o'clock in the afternoon when we finished the day, I was exhausted by the effort and the tropical heat.*

Westerners were not immune to the myriad diseases of tuberculosis, cholera, typhoid fever, intestinal parasites, dysentery, and malaria. However, with inoculations and careful hygiene, the incidence of illness among them was low. In spite of precautions, Annette came down with malaria. It is a tropical parasitic disease spread by mosquitoes, with symptoms of chills, fever, and sweating. She responded well to treatment and fully recovered. Several months later, however, she contracted dengue fever (pronounced deng'-gee), another tropical disease transmitted by mosquitoes, characterized by fever, rash, and painful joints. Because of the latter it is also called breakbone fever. After a few days of high fever, her discomfort subsided. Her case was mild, Clair wrote.

During an outbreak of cholera, Clair developed a fever along with vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pains. His symptoms began at the end of a work day and he became so weak that he wasn't sure he could make it home. When he finally arrived, he instructed Annette to contact an American colleague if he didn't improve or if he should he pass out. Cholera could be treated successfully in the beginning stages by giving an intravenous saline solution. Otherwise, victims died within thirty-six hours. It turned out that Clair had a severe case of gastroenteritis.

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My oldest brother, Clair Jr., was born at home on February 26, 1925, with Dr. Bigler in attendance. My father assisted with the anesthetic. Annette's delivery was uneventful and she required only a moderate amount of chloroform, the preferred drug because it was less volatile than ether in the hot climate.

Since my brother was named after my father, he began life being called Junior. Over the years, within the family he would also be called J.R., Jay, or Clair. Outside the family he was called Clair or Sid. His full name, as with my father, was Alcines Clair Siddall. The Alcines came from our grandfather, whose name was Al Cines Siddall. We've never been able to determine where the Cines came from. It's one of the more unusual names in the family records, though my father's grandmother had the delightful name of Phidema Litzenger.

Annette's father also had the unusual name of Commodore I. B. Brane. He was born in Maryland in 1848, married at the age of thirty-seven, and was forty-six when Annette was born, one of five children. As a young man during the Civil War, he lived in Washington, D.C., and it was there in 1892, as a minister in the United Brethren denomination, that he founded a congregation and built a church on the corner of R and North Capital Streets. (I have yet to visit the site.) By the early 1900s, Commodore Brane and his family were living in Dayton, Ohio,

where he was now editor of the denomination's monthly publication called the *Religious Telescope*. He worked in the denomination's central office building in Dayton, and it was here that he became well acquainted with Clair's father, Al Cines Siddall, who after a career as a clergyman, was now an administrator overseeing the building of new churches. It was always a source of amusement when, as youngsters, our father would mention that grandfather Siddall had been Secretary of the Church Erection Society.

Both Clair and Annette graduated from Steele High School in Dayton, and thereafter attended Otterbein College in Westerville, Ohio. However, they were in different social circles because she was older and two classes ahead. It wasn't until Clair's third year in medical school that their courtship began. Annette taught school for a year after graduating from college, and then enrolled in a private school for the performing arts in Columbus. In the first year of their marriage, while Clair was completing his medical residency, Annette traveled around Ohio helping communities put on pageants, which were popular at the time. Within a year they were on their way to China.

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When Clair and Annette first arrived in China in 1923, the political situation was in turmoil. Between 1916 and 1927, the country was ruled by regional warlords, mostly army generals who were trying to maintain control over their provinces in the absence of an effective central government. The collapse of the government began in 1908 with the death of the Empress Dowager Ci Xi, who had ruled the country for forty years. Taking her place on the throne was the two-year-old Pu Yi. He was the last emperor of the Qing dynasty, which essentially came to



an end in 1911, though he remained on the throne as an ineffective ruler for several more years.\* Events were now developing that would drastically change China and eventually lead to a communist government in 1949.

One of the most prominent figures to advocate for political and social reforms was Dr. Sun Yatsen. He was a medical doctor from south China who had studied in Hawaii and Hong Kong, and as a young physician had been associated with Canton Hospital. In 1905 he founded the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance while he was in Japan, where there were many Chinese in exile. In 1911, following an uprising against the central Chinese government over the issue of foreigners financing the building of a railroad, Dr. Sun established the Provisional Republican Government of China. To force the abdication of the emperor, a general in the imperial army was drafted to apply pressure. He promptly proclaimed himself emperor and dissolved Dr. Sun's new government. However, the general died soon after and his short reign came to an end.

Dr. Sun and his supporters continued their campaign for reform and founded the Nationalist Party, known as the Kuomintang. By 1920, this party would be the dominant political movement in eastern China by.

The Chinese Communist Party was founded in Shanghai in 1921, with the assistance of Russian communists. A young Mao Zedong was also involved. In the beginning, the Kuomintang allied themselves with the communists to provide a united front in working toward political reform. One of the advisors to the Kuomintang was a Russian by the name of Mikhail Borodin, who along with other communists, often took instructions from Stalin himself. It was

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\* When Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931, they installed Pu Yi as the emperor of their puppet government. His story is told in the film, *The Last Emperor*.

hoped that the Russian revolution of 1917 would be repeated in China. Russia was also the major supplier of weapons and ammunition to China.

Following the death of Dr. Sun in 1925, a fierce split developed within the Kuomintang over its affiliation with the communists. Leading those against this alliance was a young general, Chiang Kaishek, who was more disposed to a military-led government of a capitalist state. In one of his most drastic attempts to neutralize the communist influence, Chiang ordered the massacre of 5,000 communists and union members in Shanghai in 1926. His Northern Expedition continued his efforts to eradicate the communists and gain control over warlords. By 1928 Chiang had reached Peking and established a national government, with himself as political and military leader. Yet the Kuomintang controlled only about half of the country; the other half was still controlled by warlords, who were dreaded by the people because of the high taxes they exacted, looting by their soldiers, and the impressing of young men off the street to serve in their armies.

Along with these events was China's increasing resentment of foreign influence, especially of Great Britain, France, Germany, and Japan.\* These countries had long-established business interests, mainly in coastal cities such as Hong Kong, Canton and Shanghai, but many trade treaties were unfavorable to China.

Clair wrote that when he and Annette arrived in China in 1923, the prestige of the United States was high and they had no difficulty traveling. But this soon changed as growing anti-foreign and anti-Christian feeling was building as a result of the national reform movement. Demonstrations and strikes throughout the country became commonplace. In the summer of

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\* The first foreign traders in China were the Portuguese, who came in 1514. They were soon followed by the Spanish and the Dutch. Great Britain established a foothold in 1637.

1925, demonstrators in Shanghai were fired upon by British and French police, leaving more than fifty people dead. This set off nation-wide strikes and boycotts that led to sporadic street fighting, much of it provoked by communist agitators. Clair once passed four men lying in the street, three of whom were dead and one severely wounded. He reported it to the hospital and was told not to touch the men because they were considered the enemy. On several occasions Clair was accosted on the street by soldiers and roving gangs. On the advice of a Chinese friend he was able to obtain a document certifying that he was a member of the provincial warlord's army, which gave him some protection.

In June of 1925, the American Consul in Canton advised all Americans to leave the city until the political climate improved. As a result, Clair, Annette, Clair Jr., and several other missionary families left Canton for the Philippines. Soon after their departure, the "Canton Incident" occurred in which British and French soldiers fired on a student demonstration held in sympathy for Chinese killed in Shanghai, an event that only exacerbated hostility toward foreigners.

It was during this three-month stay in the Philippines that Clair and a colleague visited a leper colony of 5,000, where he found that, in spite of their disfiguring disease, the internees were allowed to marry and have children. (Leprosy, a communicable disease, can be cured today with antibiotics, specifically sulfa drugs.)

Upon returning to Canton in the fall of 1925, Clair and Annette found that hostility toward foreigners had increased. Workers throughout the city were being harassed. One frightening incident occurred on March 24, 1926, when communist agitators stood outside the gate of Canton Hospital and screamed at the workers inside, "Come out or we will kill you." The workers had no choice but to leave and the hospital was all but shut down. Many Chinese

servants were also forced to leave their employers, including two who worked for Clair and Annette.

With the safety of foreigners at risk and the future of missionary work in Canton in doubt, Clair and Annette were granted an early leave. In October of 1926, they departed with my brother, Clair, Jr., who was one and a half, for Hong Kong, and there they embarked on the Japanese ship, *Taiyo Maru*. Traveling second class, they arrived in San Francisco on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November, and from there went by train to Dayton, where they were welcomed home by their families.

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In January, 1927, Clair, Annette, and Clair, Jr. moved to Cleveland. For the next year and a half Clair worked with his former professor of pathology at Western Reserve University Medical School, where he would do research on an idea that had formulated in his mind while in China.

He had frequently observed that the breasts of newborn babies were enlarged and milk could be easily expressed. On the assumption that the breast enlargement was due to the mother's hormones in the infant's bloodstream, he hypothesized that if the blood from a pregnant woman were injected into a test animal, a similar result would occur. He thought that this could be a test for pregnancy. Proof came after he performed this experiment using a female mouse. He found that the mouse's uterus became enlarged after being injected with serum from a pregnant woman. After several trials (that also used blood from non-pregnant women, and one sample of his own, as controls), Clair wrote up his research and published the results in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (February, 1928). It was the first report of a pregnancy test in the medical literature published in English. His exhilaration over this discovery was tempered after learning that the results of a similar experiment had been published in Germany several months

before. The Siddall Pregnancy Test was listed in the *Gould Medical Dictionary* for many years. When Clair first performed his test in the laboratory, the blood he injected into a mouse came from Annette, who was pregnant with my brother John.

During this time, Clair considered accepting an offer to be an instructor at the medical school. One day he told his professor that he had received an urgent request from Canton Hospital to return. His professor replied, "Siddall, you are a fool if you go back to China."

No letters from Annette survive from the family's first years in China, so it is not possible to know her feelings about being there and what it was like for her. In his written accounts, Clair focused mostly on events. However, I have a letter written to me in 1967 from her sister, Jessie, in response to my inquiring about Annette. Jessie and her family were living in Cleveland at the time my parents were there during their leave. She wrote in part: *First of all, your mother was a charming person, lovely to look at and fun to be with. Your parents' marriage was a happy one. She was most devoted to her family and had many friends.... I kept the package market very busy during your years in China. I selected and sent most of the clothing you needed, except your father's, of course. Your mother and I wore the same size, even in shoes, and we liked the same style of things.*

*The summer John was born [August 18, 1927], your family lived in a furnished house near Western Reserve University. I went every Tuesday to spend the day and took something I made for their evening dinner. Your mother didn't have much time to make extra things with the active Junior and a new baby....Your mother inherited a sense of humor from our father, and I always enjoyed your father, so we really had fun during that time.*

Clair didn't take his professor's advice. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, 1928, Clair, Annette, Clair, Jr., and John left Cleveland by train for Vancouver, Washington. There they boarded the *Empress of Canada* and set sail for Canton.

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Not long after they returned to China, Clair and the family moved to the campus of Lingnan College, located down the Pearl River from Canton Hospital. One entrance to the college faced the river, with its constant boat traffic. Clair described the campus having a broad, central open space around which were the college buildings, residents' homes, a farm, and a small hospital. The walkways were shaded by palm, lychee, and banyan trees. Here and there were clumps of bamboo reaching up as high as two stories. Eating lychees was always a delight, my father recalled. When ripe they were red and the size of golf balls. Inside the thin shell was a white, sweet juicy fruit. The papaya trees also offered delicious fruit.

Not long after the family's arrival, Annette hired an amah (nanny), whose name was Tai Shum. She would become an important member of the family. A cook was also hired. While the earlier experiment of cooking dog fell short of expectations, cooking worms Chinese style turned out to be a more positive experience. According to my father, the Chinese liked to eat a certain worm that lived in fresh water, and one day he and Annette requested that the cook prepare some. First, the worms were washed, and then were sprinkled with salt which caused their bodies to burst open. They were then mixed with watercress and several beaten eggs. "It made a tasty omelet," my father wrote.

By the fall of 1928 the political situation in Canton had quieted down enough that Canton Hospital could be reopened. \* Clair had a busy schedule, dividing his time between the hospital, Dr. Bigler's clinic, the small hospital on the Lingnan campus, and teaching (in Cantonese) courses in pathology and anatomy at the Hackett Medical School for Women. He also found time to work on several research projects.

One of Clair's colleagues did a brief study comparing the health of the missionary families with the average Americans at home. He found that the missionaries in fact had less incidence of illness. However, deaths did occur. One was a teacher and father of six children. Another was the young son of close friends.

Clair described an incident during another outbreak of cholera in the city: *Two college students were brought to the hospital with fever, abdominal cramps, and diarrhea. Both reported having drunk fresh milk from a street vendor earlier that day. Then they developed excruciating pain in their muscles. A double dose of morphine gave absolutely no relief. The pains caused them to become maniacal and one of them butted his head against the brick wall. To quiet their pain and their screams, we had to give a light anesthesia of chloroform. Then we could start the intravenous of normal saline. But nothing was of any avail and they both died in less than 24 hours....During that epidemic some foreigners would die and I must confess that I felt the fear that permeated the whole city. It was pathetic to see the long dragon boat on the river go past the college every evening with a man beating a drum to drive away the demons that caused the epidemic.*

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\* For the next twenty-one years China would be embroiled in a civil war between Chiang Kaishek and the communists, a war that the communists eventually won in spite of American support for Chiang. On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China. Chiang fled to Formosa (Taiwan).

It was during the summer heat of 1930 that I was born at home on July 23<sup>rd</sup>. As with my oldest brother, Dr. Bigler came with her medical bag and nurse assistant. Annette had a short labor and needed almost no anesthesia, which Clair administered.

The family stories from the time we lived at Lingnan stand out because my brothers had their own memories. They recall our amah, Tai Shum, with much fondness. They remember that one day she took us three boys with her to the market, and on the way we stopped at a Buddhist shrine, where she made us bow to the Buddha. They remember our father scolding them for sucking on raw sugarcane from the market and firmly instructing them to sterilize it in boiling water. They also remember the gardener who could catch honey bees by their wings with his fingers.

Clair and Annette had many friends, an active social life, and frequently entertained guests, including a few from America. They also enjoyed short trips to Hong Kong to shop, search out a special restaurant, or even go to a motion picture theater.

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I have four letters that Annette wrote home during this time. The first is dated August 1, 1931, and is addressed to her sister Jessie in Cleveland. Here are excerpts: *Your letter which came a week ago telling about the wedding [of their sister, Grace, in Roanoke, Virginia] is what I've been waiting for. The bride is evidently too busy to write, which I can understand, but I am dying to hear from her nevertheless. The wedding sounds like a very pretty affair and I hope someone will send me some pictures....*



*There isn't much news from here. Staying on through the summer isn't very exciting. Yesterday we had the first typhoon of the season, but it was a very mild one and it isn't any cooler now that it is over.*

*The most excitement that I can report is that we are going to move. We have liked the house we are in very much except that as our family has grown larger, the house has grown smaller. Nothing else could possibly persuade me to move. But it has been rather a problem to take care of three lively kids in five rooms. So we asked for a bigger place. It isn't as attractive as the one we are in, but when furnished decently I think it will be very attractive, and it has lots of room and a great big yard which I hope will be very intriguing to the boys.... We bought a good-looking screen the other day, black wood with pictures in the panels. It is old, but how old I don't know. We like it very much. I wish you could see some of the things I have picked up. I think a few of them are really lovely and this screen is one of them.*

This next letter is dated November 1, 1931, and is written to Annette's other sister Grace, to whom she refers as Gracely. *I haven't written to anyone for a month, for no sooner were we back from vacation than I was stricken with one of the many fevers that are gettable here. As a result I have been out of my stride for a month and just beginning to feel normal....*

*It must have been nice to have Denny [their brother] visit you. I do wish some of the family would visit me. I have pleaded with you all to no avail. You better hurry up and take advantage of the opportunity because two more years and we will be coming home....* She goes on to tell about her frustration with fixing up their new house because of delays by the workmen, and how Clair helped with hanging curtains when she was still recovering from an illness.

*The youngsters are all fine and growing up so fast. I seem so young to have as many and such big children! Junior is in the third grade, John goes to Chinese kindergarten with several other foreign youngsters and likes it fine. Larry is walking like he always had done it.*

*Another letter to Gracely is dated November 23, 1931. I am glad that finally you received your wedding present and I am glad that you like it.... We are having gorgeous weather now and we try to absorb every day of it because it doesn't last for long.*

*You sound very domestic talking about house cleaning, having company, and taking in the church work and missionary societies. I'm not much for the church work.... She writes of Thanksgiving-related events, entertaining guests, including Dr. Bigler, and a dance sponsored by the American Consul. So you can see we are heavily scheduled socially. What a whirl!*

*The last letter, also to Gracely, is dated March 2, 1932. The package containing the undies, suits and socks for the boys arrived last week and I hereby express my deepest gratitude for your time and trouble.... Junior's suit is just right and it arrived the day before his birthday. He wore it for his birthday luncheon. He was delighted with the tie, his first! Johnny's suit is lovely, and though I haven't tried it on him I know it is right. Larry's suit is too sweet and I know he will look cunning in it.... You make me a little homesick when you tell me you turn out turkey dinners one after the other with buffet suppers to follow without batting an eye. You must work fast and efficiently. Your suppers sound wonderful and the Virginia ham makes me weep. I'd give my soul for some.*

*She then writes about going to teas, one of which was a fund raiser for Shanghai refugees, and several social events. She concludes her letter: It has been spring-like the past few days and my thoughts turn to clothes, of which I have none. How I'd love to go to a good shop and get something new and smart from head to toe. No such luck, d---n it!*

*Love from us all, Annette*

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In the summer of 1932 Clair and Annette decided that following her three deliveries, she would undergo minor gynecological surgery for a perineal repair. It would be done at the small Lingnan hospital, with Dr. Oscar Thomson, chief surgeon at Canton Hospital and a close friend of Clair's, performing the operation. *As a special precaution, Dr. Thomson had all of the surgical instruments and linens sterilized in the Canton Hospital where the equipment was up to date and then he brought all out to Lingnan.*

On the last day of June the operation was performed in about forty-five minutes. Clair administered the chloroform anesthesia. On the third day Annette was feeling fine and was brought the short distance home. Clair wrote that *although she had some fever the wound looked clean, but her appetite was not as good as the day before. On July 3<sup>rd</sup> her fever shot up to 103 and she felt exhausted. Dr. Thomson came to examine her and opened the swollen wound. I made a smear from the infected tissue, and looking at it under a microscope I was horrified to see streptococci bacteria. I then knew what had caused Annette's rapid rise in temperature. I also knew that the infection was most likely to be fatal.*

As soon as Dr. Thomson determined that Clair's blood was compatible with Annette's, he gave her a blood transfusion, followed by intravenous glucose. In spite of the treatments, *the following day Annette sank into a stupor with heavy breathing and would not respond. Being July 4<sup>th</sup> we asked the children not to shoot off the firecrackers they had purchased.*

Clair sat by Annette's bedside for the rest of the day. As darkness descended and joined him in his grief, he tried vainly to get her to respond. In a desperate moment he shouted her name, but

there was no recognition. He stayed up with her most of the night. Annette died quietly the next day. It was the 5<sup>th</sup> of July. She was thirty-seven years old.

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The funeral was held the following day in our home. Everyone was in shock. Afterward Annette's casket was taken to Hong Kong, where she was buried in the Happy Valley cemetery. Clair soon came to realize that he couldn't continue his work in Canton without Annette, but before making final arrangements to return home, he followed the advice of friends who suggested that he and we three boys spend time on the resort island of Cheung Chow, not far from Hong Kong. Clair wrote: *One evening at Cheung Chow I felt Annette's presence over my left shoulder. She was cheerful and trying to comfort me, but when I turned to look she was not there. This feeling of communication seemed real. I made a note in my diary, "If this is a delusion it should soon pass. If it is something more genuine it should become clearer to me."*

We left Canton on September 28, 1932, going by boat down the Pearl River to Hong Kong. Knowing that he wouldn't return to China, my father didn't want to leave Annette behind. He had her body disinterred and cremated so that he could bring her ashes home with him.

The next day we boarded the American ship *President Coolidge*. Before our departure, friends gave my brothers and me each a bag of small gifts. With the intent to extend our pleasure and ward off boredom, we were allowed to open only one gift each day.

Once underway, my father was now on his own to take care of his children. He wrote: *It was necessary to learn rather fast how to manage three active boys, especially Larry. He would be right next to my deck chair one minute, then he would disappear and at times it was a race to find him. One day he got a head start on me and I heard a woman scream, "Someone get that*

*boy!” Then I saw him climbing the steps that led to a narrow deck at the stern where there were wide spaces between the two guard rails. By the time I had reached him, Larry was holding on to the upper rail, leaning out and looking down at the churning ocean. The woman who had screamed sat limp in her deck chair, and as I went by I reassured her that all was well. I was able to find a fifteen foot rope which I tied around Larry’s middle. Then I felt safe to sit and read for a few minutes until a tug on the rope told me that Larry was not far away around the corner.*

My father told me that as a two-year-old, I spoke as much Chinese as English. One story is that while we were having lunch I stood on my chair to look out of the porthole, and pointing I exclaimed in Cantonese, “Look, Daddy! I see a steam boat.”

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Amherst, Massachusetts

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