

Missionary

Woman preaches warning words about Communist threat to world

By HELEN CHENEY
Post Staff Writer

Martha Franks is a very unretired-retired missionary from the Baptist Church, 82 and pretty, witty and bright, with snowy hair that waves back from her high forehead.

Here recently to address the Rowan Association of Baptist Women, she talked about her experiences with the Communists in China during her 41 years spent with the Baptist mission.

Miss Franks, of Laurens, S.C., stayed with the Rev. and Mrs. Kenneth Bragg on Rutherford Street. Then she took off in her Volkswagen to visit friends in High Point.

Her affection for the Volkswagen goes back to her stay in China. "I'm now on my 13th Volkswagen and on my seventh Rabbit. My last one was totaled when a lady slammed into me," Miss Franks explains.

She laughs about being introduced in Charleston as a retired missionary. "I'm sure I'll never live that one down. They introduced me (you know how they talk in Charleston putting extra r's) as a 'retired' missionary and a little boy said 'Mama, what makes her retarded?'"

She was appointed to the mission field in China in 1925 after training at Woman's Union Training School at Louisville, Ky., following her graduation from Winthrop College. She studied the language in Peking.

China was torn by civil strife in those years. She taught and was dean of women in the North China Baptist Theological Seminary and remained at the Hwanghsien Seminary until World War II, when she was interned by the Japanese for six months and then repatriated to the United States.

She talks about her life in China under the Communists and feels her "preaching" must be a warning to the American people of the Communist threat.

"I miss the Chinese and I really think I feel more at home with the Chinese and more comfortable with them than I've ever felt anywhere else," Miss Frank says.

"Not so with the Communists. I lived among them for a number of years and under them for a year. When I lived under them there was a

Communist guard at my door, and once a week the secret police came to question us. They would bring a stack of papers this high," she says, and measures a good height off with her hands.

"You never put them off. Everytime they came, as was the custom we offered tea and cookies. They never accepted. I learned to jabber, jabber and say nothing. It was nerve-wrecking when I knew their intention was to trip us up."

Miss Franks remembers many fearful moments during this time. "You never knew when they were coming, day or night," she says. "Many of my friends disappeared during this questioning time. The day the Communists took over, a little group who were working in the school rose up and identified themselves as Communists. We never dreamed they were among us.

"They took over and in just no time at all they divided the students into 'cells'. Each cell had a leader. Hours and hours they drilled the groups in Communist propoganda until they could repeat the propoganda back letter perfect to the leaders."

Miss Franks says it took her six months to get an exit visa. Yes, she was frightened. "We all got out but one young doctor. All that he had done was refute Communist propoganda about Americans and Christians. He was imprisoned and tortured there 'til he died. There were some Catholic nuns who told us about the torture. An American nurse in the prison claimed his body and had him buried there."

In 1950 Miss Franks went to Taiwan, where she was among those interned by the Japanese after the invasion of Pearl Harbor. The Japanese had already taken over that part of China.

"Our fear at that time was that if the U.S. won the war, the Japanese wouldn't know what to do with us. The easiest thing would be to put us under the ground," she says.

Miss Franks was among the 1,500 American prisoners of the Japanese who were taken to Africa. "We met a ship with 1,500 Japanese prisoners of war to exchange for the American prisoners.

"The outcome? A prominent Chinese businessman said, perhaps hopefully, 'Maybe the scorpion will eat itself, but it will take a long time.'"

Miss Franks said, "The Chinese patience and endurance lets them swing back when the pressure is lifted."

One scary time for this lady was the time when they were confronted with bandits approaching the village where she was.

"Our village was surrounded by a wall," she recalls. "We could see the fires in the distance as the villages were burning, coming towards our direction. The fires kept getting nearer. At the home where we were staying, the head of the household was a 'medicine man'. He went out and talked to the leader of the bandit group and I'm sure money passed hands. They passed our village by.

"If we had not been passed by, we knew what the bandits would have done. Rape the women and burn the homes."

Miss Franks lost everything she had twice in these troubled times. "During the Depression I had to have a lot of books," she says. "I started out as a kindergarten teacher and then was required to teach in the seminary and I had to go to buy the books.

"The Communists sold my books by the pound to be used as fuel. Just imagine garlic simmering with Matthew King burning beneath. Another time I had to pack a little suitcase in a hurry and this is what I chose to take with me: photographs of my family, some long baby dresses that had been mine, my Bible and some soap."

When Miss Franks returned from China, she didn't forget what she had seen and experienced. "I laid it down and was boiling within," she says. "People looked at me like they thought I was crazy when I tried to warn them of Communism. I think people are now waking up to its dangers.

"I hate to see us spend our wealth



Post staff photo by James Barringer

Missionary Martha Franks says America must be warned of communist threat

on missiles, but I think the Russians would take over if we failed to keep up with their armaments. I think we would play right into their hands if we didn't. I'm convinced the only way to defend ourselves against Communism is to do what it takes to defend ourselves. I'm convinced Russia aims to take over the world.

They have said so. And they don't mind taking your head off if you oppose the communist philosophy."

This spunky lady talks about the time she was in a dilemma as to what to do with her life when she was a student at Winthrop.

"The answer came," she said: "God will plan your life if you want

him to. If you are going to be a teacher, why don't you go where teachers are needed?" So I went to China."

Martha Franks waved goodbye from the Braggs' driveway as she set out in the blue Volkswagen she calls her "Sugar Lump." Why? "Cause that's what that car is."

China Is Subject Of Talk ✓

Miss Martha Franks, a retired missionary whose 41-year career was spent in China and Taiwan, will speak Sunday at 11 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. at Snyder Memorial Baptist Church.

A special invitation is extended to the youth of the area to hear Miss Franks in an informal session at 9 p.m. Sunday.

After her career, Miss Franks retired in April, 1966. Since then, she has kept a heavy schedule of speaking engagements across America.



FRANKS

Her career was marked by a variety of colorful incidents, including her confrontation with the Chinese Communists and her internment by the Japanese during World War II.

Durham Sun
Elizabeth City Advance
~~Fayetteville Observer~~
Gastonia Gazette
Goldsboro News-Argus
Greensboro Daily News
Greensboro Record
*

New South River
SEP 24 1971