

LISTENING WITH THE HEART

By A. James Fuller & Michael G. Cartwright with Hannah Corbin '06



Paul & Lucy Alexander '49

Paul and Lucy Alexander (Indiana Central class of '49) served as educational missionaries in Taiwan for thirty-eight years from 1958 to 1996. They took on much of Chinese culture themselves as they began to understand the world of those they came to serve. Paul jokes that, "in Taiwan, I feel 51 percent American, but in the United States, I feel 51 percent Chinese."

Paul served as professor of biology, and they hosted student Bible study fellowship groups in their home. Lucy was involved with the women of the campus church and the university community in addition to the home. She defines service as "enabling others" to help themselves. He quotes a Presbyterian mission leader who urged them to make themselves "profoundly available."

Their memoirs, which have been published in Chinese, are titled “Listening with the Heart.” That title aptly describes the way that these two UIndy alumni lived out the motto “Education for Service.”

ROOTS

One of six children, Paul Alexander was born and raised in the Indianapolis area. His father was a carpenter and contractor. His parents both converted to the Christian faith when Paul was young, and their faith had a powerful influence on him. Though he was a good student, he struggled with being shy. At age 12, he first felt a call to the mission field after reading Albert Schweitzer’s autobiography, *Out of My Life and Thought* (Henry Holt & Co., 1933). Paul was the first member of his family to go to college, and he headed to the nearby campus of Indiana Central College.

Lucille Brown was born in Montana, but her family moved back to their home in Indiana when she was only three weeks old. Her father was a minister and had been on a home mission assignment in Montana for four years. Her older sister, Margaret (ICC ’46) was born there three years earlier. At age twelve, she began to feel drawn to mission work as she listened to conversations with missionaries and ministers visiting in her home. An affirmation was given to her as she worshipped once with campers around a campfire and looked up to ‘see’ the word “MISSIONS” emblazoned in letters above the fire. She kept this vision in her heart, not sharing it for years. She knew that someday she might be called to serve overseas. What should she do to prepare for that time?

INDIANA CENTRAL COLLEGE

Both of Lucy’s parents were Indiana Central graduates, and their faith and lives of service affected their children. Lucy grew up hearing that Central was the best college for United Brethren families, and it was understood that she and her younger brother, Keith (ICC ’51) would follow her parents’ and sister’s example and attend col-



lege there. She graduated from high school at the top of her class and was awarded a scholarship by the Southern Indiana Conference of the United Brethren Church on entering Indiana Central.

Paul and Lucy both came to the college planning to become medical missionaries but they did not know each other at the time. Lucy planned to go into nursing. She appreciated her sociology classes with Dr. Maechtle and prepared to major in sociology. In her junior year, however, she changed her major to biology and took several classes from Dr. Morgan, the professor feared by many students. She found him to be a good teacher. Since Central did not yet have a nursing program, she enrolled in the Indiana University School of Nursing in Indianapolis following her graduation from Central. She would later complete a master’s degree in sociology, so her interest in that field was not forgotten.

Lucy made a fairly easy transition to college life and was soon involved in her studies, a work program, and visiting with former camp friends from southern Indiana. Her big sister, Margaret, became a good listener and advisor when problems came up that needed a listening ear.

Paul came to Central at age seventeen and started classes in the middle of the school year, a semester ahead of Lucy. He felt socially inadequate until he made a few friends through the student work program. His excellence in studying biology caught the eye of Dr. Morgan, who asked him to work as a biology lab assistant, beginning his second semester in college. This radically changed Paul’s self-understanding as it opened up a window to the possibilities of teaching, which he had refused to consider during high school. Although he also found Dr. Morgan to be intimidating, Paul saw another side of him and drew close to the professor who had a lasting influence on him. As a junior, his view of history was excited by the teaching of a history professor who came to the college to teach for one semester. Dr. Richard Webster taught history as a process and appealed to the budding young scientist by frequently asking, “What is the evidence for this?” a common question in experimental science.



Paul and Lucy treasured friendships with Indiana Central's international students. For two years Paul roomed with Moses Musa Mahoi (see pp. 50-51), a student from Sierra Leone. Meanwhile, Lucy was close to Betty Kam, a young Chinese-American woman from Hawaii, who was an attendant in their wedding.

Indiana Central's policy of mandatory chapel attendance was partially responsible for bringing these two students together. Paul and Lucy met in their third year, when they were assigned to seats side by side and attended three classes together. Paul was Lucy's lab assistant for her general biology course. After a semester they began to date and became "Graduates of the Heart" when they were married in 1950, a year after their graduation.

During their time at Indiana Central, President I. Lynd Esch adopted the new motto, "Education for Service." They both appreciated this motto since service was so much a part of life at Central. They enjoyed their part-time work assignments at the College. Lucy also taught a Sunday school class for children at Riley Hospital for two years while studying at the college. This was nothing new for her since "service was so ingrained" in her family, and she felt that she

was simply answering "the call of God." Still, both of them "appreciated the environment" and found the College to be a "great place to learn," while it presented so many "opportunities to work."

MORE EDUCATION

Following their graduation in 1949, they both set out to prepare for their calling to medical mission overseas. The path seemed clear, if the destination was still somewhat dimly defined. Lucy entered the Indiana University School of Nursing in Indianapolis, while Paul went to graduate school with a teaching assistantship in zoology at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. He still planned on going to medical school if he could find financial support. During Paul's graduate study, his preoccupation with the mechanistic framework of scientific research began to raise questions about his Christian faith. He explored other religious faiths through reading. Although he regularly attended worship at different churches and was deeply moved by messages that seemed to touch on the spirit of Jesus, he never joined any faith-sharing small group where doubts might be shared. He was not able to share his thoughts and feelings with other Christians and eventually began to identify with agnostic thinkers.

That first year of graduate study changed his long-term plans. His physiology course with first-year medical students helped him to realize that he preferred teaching and laboratory exploration rather than the intensive memory work required of medical study. He enjoyed the laboratory interaction with undergraduate students, helping them to search for answers to their own questions. Going on to medical school became a remote possibility.

EARLY MARRIAGE

In December 1951, Lucy finished her nursing program and moved to Bloomington to be with Paul, living in one of hundreds of government issued stationary trailers given to the university for temporary housing for married students. She worked in the city Bloomington hospital, and their first child, Anne, was born in November 1952. Paul finished his doctoral research in August 1954, but had not yet written his dissertation. Their second child, Stephen, was due in December 1954 so he took a job teaching at Northwestern State College at Natchitoches, Louisiana, to support his growing family. He found, however, that he could not give attention to the dissertation during the academic year while teaching.

Paul and the family spent two months during the summer of 1955 in Bloomington in order for him to work on his dissertation and be near his advisor. His work, however, was mostly data analysis and library research, with only a little progress on the writing. He was embarrassed to consult with his advisor. In late August, Paul, Lucy, and the two babies left Indiana at midnight to return to Louisiana. As Paul drove through the night with his family asleep, he began to sing the old hymns memorized from childhood. Hymns such as "Just as I Am" brought tears to his eyes. He was overcome with emotion and wept with joy to consider the grace of God in his life since childhood. This led to a "soul-searching conversion experience" and a renewal of his personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

After returning home to Natchitoches, Louisiana, Paul and Lucy joined a new Sunday school class for couples where Paul, for the first time in his life, felt free to share his thoughts and feelings in response to the Bible study theme. Sunday morning worship in the small Presbyterian church came alive with the awareness of the presence of God with His covenant people. Another son, Philip, was born to them in December 1956.

SEARCHING

Paul had not worked on his dissertation since 1955. He decided to focus on it again during the summer of 1957 in Bloomington by himself. He made very good progress for two months until he experienced a mental block, and laid the work aside without consulting with his advisor. Did this mean that he must choose another career?

With this in mind, Paul wrote a letter to the Presbyterian Board of World Missions in January of 1958 inquiring about possible positions for service overseas. He soon received a letter telling him that Tunghai University, a young Christian university in Taiwan, needed someone with his credentials for the coming academic year, but that he must finish his PhD requirements first. Paul and Lucy decided to accept the challenge and started preparing for service in Taiwan.

It was a difficult decision to make. They had to sell the only house they ever owned. They had to pack what would be needed in Taiwan and sell or give away the rest of their furnishings. They left Louisiana in mid-June to attend six weeks of orientation classes with 40 other outgoing missionaries at the Presbyterian Conference Center in Montreat, North Carolina. Finally in August, Paul was free to return to Bloomington to write on his dissertation in full consultation with his advisor. He finished it in three months, writing daily, while Lucy cared for the three children at her parents' home in Smith Valley, Indiana.



EARLY TAIWAN

They flew to Taiwan in November of 1958. At mid-semester, Paul began teaching in the Biology Department of Tunghai University. He taught Chinese students in English, and their only textbooks were in English. Students were required to study English with native speakers of English during their first two college years. Among Paul's eleven senior students, however, few were fluent in conversational English. Paul taught a double load of classes that first semester to allow the seniors to finish the physiology course in time for graduation.

Tunghai University was established in 1955 to become a fully residential community of 800 students, faculty, and staff. There were many occasions to meet others on the campus since it contained a grocery store, post office, church, and primary and middle schools on the 300-acre campus. About one-third of the faculty and one-tenth of the students were Christian. The Christian women of the community met weekly for prayer and Bible study fellowship.

Chinese lessons for the Alexanders were out of the question that first year. They moved twice after their furniture shipment arrived. In August 1959, they experienced their first typhoon, followed by a flood and an earthquake. Paul was on a student biology field trip at the time and was marooned for a week on a small island off Taiwan's southern coast. Lucy, pregnant with their fourth child, was at home, isolated with bridges washed out. There was no way to communicate. Paul eventually made his way home by boat, bus, bicycle, and rafting by moonlight across the river. It was a joyful reunion, with much thanksgiving.

Their second daughter, Dorothy (UIndy '84), was born in December 1959 with a cleft lip and soft palate. Their medical advice was to return to the United States for her first surgery before she was six months old. Paul taught double time again the following semester so that they could return in the spring for her surgery in Indianapolis near their families. The school year found them living in Louisville, where Paul was enrolled as a special student at Louisville Theological Seminary and Lucy audited a few classes.



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Anne was in third grade and Stevie in first. The children all experienced chickenpox, mumps and measles during the winter. Then another surgery in Indianapolis for Dorothy followed in the summer.

BACK “HOME”

It was a difficult time, but looking forward, God’s call was still strong. Now they knew where they were going and what they were expected to do. They set off for Taiwan again with Anne, Stevie, Philip, and Dottie aboard a 12-passenger ocean freighter. It was a three-week trip from California to Taiwan with stops in Japan, Korea, and Okinawa. They took up life again in the university house they had vacated the year before—a place they would call ‘home’ for the next thirty-five years.

During the next two years, Paul’s teaching time was limited to one laboratory course each semester to make time for four hours of Chinese tutoring each day followed by hours of study for both of them. Paul and Lucy began to settle into their life in Taiwan and began to feel more comfortable as they learned the language and the culture of the people around them.

Paul began a research program on frog reproduction and development involving graduate assistants and interested students. When an American ornithologist, director of an international study of Asian bird migration, came to Taiwan to look for someone to be responsible for a cooperating team in Taiwan, Paul responded. Funding was provided for Paul to form a field team of four biology graduates who used nets to catch birds and then placed aluminum bands (with a Hong Kong post office box number) on their legs. In five years about 160,000 birds were captured and banded, resulting in recaptures in far places to the south and the north. The northernmost location was on the north coast of Alaska. These two research programs brought Paul into intimate contact with the land of Taiwan, catching frogs in the rice fields, irrigation ditches, and waters of the countryside, as well as studying birds from the seashores to the high mountains. He began to pay more attention to the ecology of Taiwan and later taught a graduate course in physiological ecology.

GRIEF

In August of 1965 their ten-year-old son, Stevie, died of encephalitis. The tragedy of losing Stevie broke their hearts, but Paul and Lucy trusted in the Lord to sustain them in their sorrow. They were comforted through the outpouring of love from friends in the university community and their mission family. They stayed in Taiwan, sure that they were where God wanted them to be.

Less than a month later, while still grieving over the loss of Stevie, Paul took eight-year-old Philip and three of his classmates on a picnic to a hillside field near the university to watch the migrating birds. They decided to eat their picnic inside the old pillbox, an abandoned gun

emplacement that had been built on the island by the Japanese during World War II. Philip ran ahead to climb up the large pile of rocks to enter the concrete structure, which the family had visited recently. The classmate who followed Philip into the pillbox called out, “Where is Philip?” Paul quickly entered to look. There was a ladder that allowed access to the deep tunnel that led to the other entrance some distance away. To Paul’s horror he saw that the third rung of the ladder was broken. Apparently Philip had started down the ladder to hide from his friends, when he slipped and fell some 50 feet. He never regained consciousness and died four hours later.

Paul and Lucy’s grief was beyond comprehension. In a month they had lost both of their sons. The church offered them the opportunity to return to the United States, but Lucy told Paul that she could not leave their university campus home for fear that she might fall apart emotionally. In the United States they had no home and no work. Their personal loss allowed them to draw closer than ever to the Chinese people who reached out to them in sympathy. Lucy’s parents flew out to visit them for ten weeks through the Christmas and New Year holidays.

EXPANDED HOME

Lucy found unexpected blessings in the wake of tragedy: “After the loss of the boys, our home was more open. God gave us a bigger family. We became more intentional in affirming each other, and capturing the moment and savoring it.”

During the next five years the Alexanders took in and cared for several children, including those of missionaries who lived in distant areas of Taiwan and needed a place for their children to stay while attending the school for missionary children in their city. Their home also became a center for welcoming newcomers to the university, answering questions of culture, and furnishing transportation for Chinese and foreigners.

When the mission gave them a car to use, they were enabled to extend their ministry beyond the university campus, giving transportation to the campus Christian Women's Society as they ministered in prisons, children's homes, and hospitals. One by one they were asked to help several expectant mothers who needed urgent transportation to city hospitals in the middle of the night. The car enabled them to help out at the children's school seven miles away. For a period of time, their car was the only privately owned car on the university campus. It was "profoundly available" with a driver. With Taiwan's growing affluence in the 1970s and 1980s, privately owned cars steadily increased on campus.

NEW FAMILY MEMBERS

In 1967 they were blessed by the birth of a third daughter, Emily. Three years later an eight-year-old Chinese boy was brought to them. "Could you keep Gordon until you find a home for him?" their mission co-workers asked. He was welcomed with open arms. Gordon's adoptive mother was Gladys Aylward, a British missionary to China whose story is told in the movie, "The Inn of the Sixth Happiness." She had died in January 1970, and for three months, Gordon had been living with an American missionary family. He was fluent in Chinese and English and was already enrolled in the missionary school. The Alexander family again had four children. They began the long process of adopting him into the family.

In retrospect, the loss of their sons in 1965 brought a "new dimension of empathy" to the Alexander family. Choosing not to return home to the United States in a time of tragedy ended up making them "feel more at home" in Taiwan. Others were more open to sharing their own suffering with them because they knew of the couple's tragic loss. At the time of their son Philip's



funeral, the president of Tunghai University came to Paul and told him that he believed that "God must have something special for you to allow you to suffer in this way." Looking back, they came to agree with him, finding comfort and blessing in unimaginable ways.

PAUL & ACADEMICS

In 1968 Paul began to take on administrative duties as well as his research and teaching at the university when he was appointed dean of science and became acting dean of engineering for a year. When he resigned his deanship in favor of a senior colleague who had just finished his PhD, he became assistant to the university president and director of research development for two years. These positions thrust him into leadership, and he was instrumental in facilitating the formation of five interdisciplinary research centers at the university. The centers were designed to promote research and service as well as faculty excellence. Three years later the centers

were integrated to form the Environmental Research Center. A master's program in biology was established in 1973, and for the next 20 years, Paul served as adviser for 27 master's theses in the fields of reproduction and life cycles of Taiwan's frogs, birds, and mammals.

After a term as chair of the biology department, Paul and Lucy returned to the U.S.A. for furlough and lived near Indiana Central University. For health reasons, they extended their stay for a second year. Paul was invited to become a visiting professor of biology at Central, and he also served as acting chair of the Biology Department for the 1977-78 academic year. Paul enjoyed his work at Central and began to feel at home in the community. He and Lucy seriously considered whether they might remain in the United States. By December, however, it was clear to them that they should prepare to return to Taiwan the following summer.



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On their return to Taiwan they found that their university community was being affected by the ten-lane highway being constructed alongside the campus to link the city of Taichung with the new seaport nine miles east of campus. The number of private cars had increased dramatically. The new, dynamic president of Tunghai University had begun to influence the university with his challenging vision. Paul was appointed again as dean of the Science College and served for eight years. New departments of Environmental Science and Information Science were soon added. As the university continued to grow in enrollment to more than 10,000 students, it was no longer a fully residential campus, but a larger community with housing for students, faculty, and staff spilling over into the adjacent areas.

FURLOUGHS

Furloughs came every fifth year: four years in Taiwan and then one year in the United States. It was a year of study and itineration to many supporting churches as well as visiting family. A typical year would see them visiting about 50 different churches

to share their experience in Taiwan, speaking at Sunday worship and family night suppers. Projection slides helped to give insight into the life, culture, and Christian witness in Taiwan. The challenge was for Christians to listen for God's call to service, whether near or far.

Their furlough was scheduled for the summer of 1971 when Anne would return to America for college. They had prayed that their new Chinese son would be allowed to go with the family to see the U.S.A. and become a U.S. citizen. However, the court decision was delayed. Paul decided to stay in Taiwan to try to hasten his exit permit even though Gordon's care and schooling was already arranged with a fellow missionary family. So with a heavy heart, Lucy left with the three girls (ages 3, 11, and 18) to live in Indianapolis' University Heights neighborhood, near where her parents had retired. They expected Paul and Gordon to come later in the summer, but even this was not possible.

During their separation, communication was difficult. Letters took seven days to arrive. Campus telephones were limited to the main offices in Tunghai University. Appointments for receiving telephone calls

must be made a week ahead by mail. Critical decisions needed to be made without consultation, complicated by a salary that must now be divided for two locations on different continents. This was a heavy burden for Lucy, but most distressing was the uncertainty of Paul's return to Indiana. They had never experienced this kind of uncertain separation. Paul finally returned to Indiana just before Christmas for a six-month leave, while Gordon continued to stay with their mission friends. It was a happy reunion, although it was difficult for them to share the pain of their separation.

MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

The Alexanders later found an advertisement for a weekend Marriage Encounter and eagerly signed up to attend. This was a healing experience that would change their marriage and their work in Taiwan during the 80s and 90s. They learned how to share their pain and their needs by active listening without blaming or silence, sometimes writing down their reactions to specific events.

Each furlough time they would make it a point to attend a Marriage Enrichment event. In 1983 they were trained by the Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment (A.C.M.E.) to lead marriage enrichment events. (A.C.M.E.'s motto is "Making marriages better beginning with our own.") The door opened to a new ministry with couples that continued in Taiwan until the Alexanders retired in 1996. They led small groups of Chinese couples to improve their communication skills and to share their relationship experience by dialogue in the group, emphasizing appreciation and affirmation. They helped Tunghai University set up a Family Wellness Center in 1986—the first of its kind in Asia—with marriage enrichment as its central offering. They codirected the Center in its first year. Three of the couples trained by Paul and Lucy continue to lead marriage enrichment events throughout Taiwan today.

Lucy was asked to design a game that would create the kind of atmosphere found in their marriage enrichment events. "The Appreciation Game" (1990) is a bilingual board game for families that encourages players to share their experiences, with appreciation. It has found wide use in church groups and many homes in Taiwan, as well as in Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and among Chinese-American churches in the United States.

A RETIREMENT PLAN

The Presbyterian Board of World Missions provided a week of debriefing time for furloughed missionaries each year at Montreat, North Carolina. In 1982 one of the seminars helped Paul and Lucy begin to plan for their retirement. A big old house, built in 1912, located in the heart of the Montreat Conference Center was for sale. This excited them with a vision for family or group ministry in retirement. The realtor offered to manage the house rental to summer conference groups. With the help of loans from family and friends, they were able to make the down payment. Paul's parents helped remodel and repair the house to serve



groups of up to twenty-five persons each week during the summer and weekends of fall and spring. The house served as home for Paul and Lucy for two furloughs before they retired there in 1996.

Paul and Lucy have hosted the week-long Alexander family reunion for 15 summers at their Montreat home. With the reunion's 35-40 persons of four generations, there is always a kaleidoscopic panorama of interaction taking place. Their move into retirement from their beloved university community in Taiwan to the beautiful mountain village in North Carolina in 1996 was like coming home again.

Tunghai University has invited them to return to Taiwan several times, once in 2000 for three months to work with the University Chaplain's office, visiting retired faculty and staff who lived on campus. At that time their life story was written in Chinese by a family friend and university colleague. This "memoir" includes excerpts from their many personal letters from four decades as well as many hours of interviews with the writer.

As the title of their memoir indicates, Paul and Lucy Alexander have a strong sense of vocation, but they do not think of themselves as indispensable. Paul is concerned that the word "calling" isn't used much any more, which means that many people don't realize that they have "a higher calling." God's call is not always dramatic. Paul and Lucy know from experience that God moves in the ordinary events of life. They look back to their time at Indiana Central with the awareness that God was working in their lives through personal relationships with classmates and teachers who drew them out of themselves and offered them opportunities to grow. They understand that such friendships encouraged them to open their lives to serve others. It was just that kind of openness that allowed Paul and Lucy Alexander to "listen with the heart" and offer themselves across a lifetime of Christian service.

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