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Letter from Fr. Leonard Amrhein to Catherine Amrhein, Al, and Tom.

Fr. Leonard Amrhein C.P.

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CATHOLIC MISSION

YÜANLING, HUNAN, CHINA.

Sept. 25, 1945.

Dear Mom - Al - Tom,

At last we are settled down and at home. No more humming and boarding and what not - at least for awhile. It took us over five years to get to the Mission but now at last we are here.

We arrived in Yuanling last Tuesday September 18. The Bishop gave us a hearty welcome and made us feel at home immediately. And we sure were glad we had arrived at a place we could call our own. We are tired of being boarders. Ever since we were interned in 1943, we have been living in someone else's house and even though we were most welcome, still it wasn't our home. Well, now we can forget all that now.

I have a 56 page account of our experiences since 1941 - from August 2. that year to September 18, 1945 - our arrival in Yuanling. I am going to delay a bit in sending it home, because I want to re-copy some of it. I'll get it on its way as soon as possible. So now I'll start with our arrival here in our central Mission.

It was quite late when we arrived, so we didn't see much of the place. We were more interested

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in getting the coating of dust off ourselves. Well, next morning we had a chance to look around. The compound is an old Spanish one. The house and church are of Spanish architecture and must look very nice when they are cleaned up. At present they are shrouded in black-out paint, with their real colors of white and yellow showing through, where the rain washed off the black. In front of the house are a few grape-fruit trees and some palm trees. (We are in the semi-tropics)

The inside of the house is large and spacious. It is being painted and undergoing repairs. It has been in a more or less neglected condition for the past few years, because there was always danger of the Japs bombing. There was no use repairing a place one day and have it blown up the next.

At present there are only a few Fathers here: Bishop O'Leary, Fr. Linus Lambert, Fr. Caspar Caulfield and the three of us. The Bishop was interned in Hong Kong in the beginning of the war and later released. Some of the stories he tells makes one's hair stand on ends. He had a picnic the last three years compared to his few months of confinement.

We have not done any mission work yet. First of all because it is quite hot here (they tell us it is cool now compared to what it was). Secondly the Bishop wants us to take a little rest before we start working. At the same time we can familiarize ourselves with the local dialect. It is quite different from what we learned in Peking. Our troubles with the Chinese language are just beginning. — Beginnings without ends.



CATHOLIC MISSION

YÜANLING, HUNAN, CHINA.

A couple days ago we took a trip to one of our out-missions. It is 47 miles from Yuanling through the mountains. I never saw such mountains. The road wound in an out, up and down like a roller-coaster. I suppose, if we could have gone in a straight line, we could have cut the distance in half. Anyhow, we saw another mission and lots of beautiful scenery.

The occasion of the trip was this: Last June an American pilot crashed up near Huki—the mission we visited. The Chinese buried him and notified the American authorities. Once before an attempt was made to recover the body, but for some reason it was unsuccessful. So the day after we arrived here, an American soldier came asking for directions to Huki. The next day, we three newcomers went along—just for the ride. The soldier had a weapons carrier. He had a coffin on it.

He found Huki but not the body. After a lot of fussing around, we learned that the body was at a place about 10 miles in towards Yuanling. He staved back and sure enough, we found the body in a coffin along the road. He traded our coffin for theirs and had it put on the truck. As soon as the Chinese started to move the coffin, someone set off a long string of fire-crackers. This was to send the spirit on his way.

9.5.52

Well, how is everybody at home? Write and tell me what is going on at home. I'm starving for news. I received a letter from Francis the other day. - It was enclosed in a letter from one of the missionaries at home to one over here. - There was lots of news in this letter that I didn't know. In fact it was all news to me. Write some more. I'm four years behind on all news.

How are you Mom? How is that old rheumatism of yours behaving? I often thought of you during the past four years. In fact, I remembered you in every one of my Masses. Sometimes I tried to imagine what you were doing. Don't know how close I ever came.

Francis said Al was working in a shipyard. That was new to me. - Although that is just where I thought Al would be. The reason. - because he was going in for electric welding the last I heard about him. Good job Al, but how do you like it? That's what counts.

I suppose Tom is running Sankey's Office now that Tom is dead. - Francis told me that too. By the way Tom, how is the China Chippet? I have a whole box of souvenirs for you - relics of the war and the Japs. The only thing is, they are in Peking with the rest of my belongings. I hope they get down this way, but I won't swear to it. If they come I'll send the souvenirs home. I have a few with me, which I'll enclose in this letter.

Well, here's hoping I hear from you soon. I hope all are well at home. I am in dandy health and spirits. Intermment didn't have any evil effects on me. Just gave me lots of experiences. Best to all at home, Bill King & the rest.
Leonard

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CATHOLIC MISSION

PASSIONIST FATHERS

YUANLING
SHENGHOW, HUNAN, CHINA.



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