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Kathleen Strange Foster: An Oral History

Introduction

I wouldn't like people to think that the experience was anything like *Schindler's List*. We were in a compound from which we were not allowed to leave. The food was not adequate, but [neither] was it adequate for the Japanese or the Chinese. We were all in the same boat but we didn't have our freedom. Basically it is a story of a great many people living together with their own stories.

I first learned of Kathleen while reviewing past *Chefoo Magazines* which are written by and for the school alumni. Kathleen had made two entries in past issues. The first was a small 1988 update which said, "writes of continued emotional difficulties which she traces to long absences from parents in school days. She has 'found psychotherapy very helpful and become interested enough to train and work in this field.'" (1) She included her address as she wanted to hear from others on this topic and so we began corresponding in May of 1996.

The second entry was in 1993 when she wrote a brief article about how Chefoo affected her life. Some of that article is quoted in the following oral history. Kathleen is two years older than Mary and so had spent more time within the Chefoo setting and had more interactions with the teachers. Kathleen was fifteen in 1945 at the time of liberation. The oral history that follows is based on interviews, letters and phone conversations between Kathleen and myself over a two year period.

Family Background

Kathleen was born in China in 1930 to CIM missionary parents stationed in Chengku, Shensi (Shaanxi) Province. Her parents had met and married in China in 1928. Her mother went to China from England in 1924 at the age of twenty-four and her father was twenty-eight when he arrived in 1925 from Canada. They met on a raft going down the Yellow River. In 1927 her mother was asked by the CIM to teach music at Chefoo for one year. Kathleen's father applied to go to Chefoo to study Chinese.

[My mother] was only there a short time before my father came along and carried her off. [But she] was a real woman's libber. She got equal pay [as a missionary] and insisted on having equal say on how it was used. It was a good 'faith' mission from that point of view [for women]. [My parents] had strong convictions. It took a special person of faith [to leave home and travel to China]. There's a feeling of spirit of Empire in the things they did. You can't separate any of this from the history of England though, can you?

Kathleen spent her first seven years in Chengku with her parents and Beryl, her three years younger sister. Of that time Kathleen says, "I'd like to find roots for the years one through seven. It was a nice but strange privileged existence within this walled compound compared to the Chinese' [lives]." At that time, most Westerners lived in homes behind compound walls which contained their church, home and servant's quarters. These compounds were then located within the walls of the town or city where the native Chinese lived. Kathleen's father was often gone for days as an itinerant missionary bringing the gospel to surrounding Chinese villages. Her mother also did missionary teaching but primarily stayed near the compound. Because of her father's frequent trips away from home, Kathleen considered him an "absentee father."

Family and School

Kathleen started at Chefoo in 1937 as a seven year old. Her parents took her to the school before the term started.

They knew they would send us to Chefoo. There was little choice. They knew they'd not see us for years if we went but it would have

been longer [seven years] if it had been the UK, and education at home [in China] meant less time for missionary work. I do feel we were sacrificed—not because of the internment. My three years without them was before internment. The five years after might have been shorter but their work was a thousand miles away and it took a month to travel so we would have been left for years anyway. It was a very good school and typical of its generation. Nobody thought it was that important not to see your parents for that length of time.

Her family lived at the San in the Chefoo compound which gave Kathleen time to adjust to the school, the staff and the children while she attended as a day-girl. "I was excited to meet children my own age." When her parents left in October Kathleen recalls,

I don't remember even looking back at where they were standing. I'd been a day-girl and then becoming a boarder, I was going to be like everybody else. That was fine by me. Yes, nice to conform isn't it? Not being the odd one out. I was the same as everybody else. Slept in those dormitories, ate meals with everybody and had our hair chopped to regulation length by Chinese barbers.

Kathleen did not see her parents until three years later in 1940 when her sister Beryl came to school at age seven. Kathleen was ten when she was told of her parents' arrival.

They said, 'your parents have arrived in the dayroom.' I went into the dayroom, the sun was coming through and there was my mother sitting on a chair and my father standing beside her and my sister. My mother. I can remember thinking detached, 'oh yes, what a lovely thing.' I felt so uncomfortable. I remember saying, 'can I go and play now?' It must have been awful for my mother. I just can't imagine. My mother had to work really hard that summer to get me back into the family because I didn't know what to say to them. What could they say to me?

However, they won me back and we had a wonderful summer living together in the San, picnicking in the hills and on the beach. I got to enjoy being part of a family. But their work called and again it was time for them to go. I could not bear to leave them standing there with my mother in tears. My mother was almost inconsolable. I wrenched myself away and walked the half mile to the classroom blinded by tears, excused myself and sat down. The teacher asked someone, 'What's the matter with her?' 'Oh, she just said goodbye to her parents.' The teacher said nothing to me and went on with the lesson. The pain of that parting is with me still. (2) Their call was most important to them and we all paid the price.

Boarding at Chefoo

My sister danced away the first time and I danced away the first time because it was so exciting going to school. But the second time, I knew what I was in for and it was not, not something to be looked forward to. It affects the rest of your life. Although you come to terms with it in whatever way is right for you, it's still there. But they were going to spread the gospel; that made the difference. That was their point of view. My point of view was I knew what I was in for this time.

I was in for being one of the crowd with nobody there who I was of prime importance to. Nobody there who was really interested in my feelings. Interested in my physical well-being. Very interested in my spiritual well-being [laughs].

But not my emotional well-being. They wanted us to be happy, of course they did. If I'd been in tears somebody would have come and asked me what was the matter. But it's not quite the same as being taken seriously by your mother, being really listened to. There wasn't much listening at Chefoo. There was no one to whom we really mattered. So in the end you just learn to cope and get on with it.

I coped by saying, 'I can't worry about every thing so I will decide what I'm going to worry about' and actually making mental lists of what I would worry about. I didn't examine my feelings. I learnt to be numb. That was my way. I just learnt not to allow feelings to surface in an uncomfortable way. This feeling that nobody was interested in my feelings went on for years and years. [silence] But that was the circumstance. It isn't a question of laying blame. That's just the way it was. [silence]

If you wanted attention you could do things spiritually couldn't you? [laughs] I remember at age nine I decided at nine-thirty in the morning on a certain date to be converted just to be funny. It was a hothouse atmosphere from that point of view. So I had 'seen the light' if Doctor asked me 'Have you seen the light?' We had so much of it [religion] all the time. I'm sure we didn't not believe it, it just became a bit monotonous. I remember kneeling for prayer and some were so long that there'd be things passed along under the pews. We could always repent and confess our sins if we wanted a bit of attention. Which does sound dreadful doesn't it? But [if] you didn't feel you were getting what you needed you'd turn it into something spiritual and then you'd get attention.

School Discipline

I had seen what happened to people who drew attention to themselves—canings, having to punch a pebble pillar. They were so unhappy some of these people, even in the prep school and they were always in trouble. I thought nope, it was better to be inconspicuous. There was safety in anonymity. Although I was mildly rebellious, I wasn't strongly rebellious. The pressure of pleasing God and thereby your teachers and thereby your parents was enormous.

I didn't see them [teachers] as giants. I did see them as people starting with the episode with Miss Covert. If she'd been on a pedestal she'd come off it. Miss Covert was reading to us and she wouldn't listen to us that we'd already had that chapter read and she read it again. I said she was silly. I was told on. Hugh squealed on me and I thought, 'stupid boy, snivelling wretch!' I got told off and taken to look up this verse, 'your sins will find you out.' I can remember all the time thinking, 'this is ridiculous' and I was only nine.

Three times I got caned on the hands in front of the whole school for talking at the wrong time. The trouble was you were asked to confess and then you confessed that you'd been talking and you got caned for it. I never learnt not to own up when asked who had been talking! It really was encouraging deceit. I had to do my teeth with soap for telling lies. I always had a good imagination.

The God thing was a control. And uniforms—that's British but a very strong way of controlling. We had these awful straight black overalls with round necks that we wore over sweaters and there was a band of your house color. Ours was blue so I was happy to be Judson. I didn't want to be Carmichael because she was yellow and Slessor was green. (3) It was quite good fun being competitive. It was good to go for things to win—the conduct prize, the posture prize. We had a special sash with the tunic for the posture prize. I don't think I ever got a prize. It was generally expected that certain [students] would get it.

In the prep school I was constantly losing things and had to have my hanky pinned to my dress. I lost things so many times that they stopped taking marks [points] off my house [team]. Every morning, 'lost property: Kathleen Strange.' I put it down to not being happy. Mostly my faults were talking too much. I think it was psychologically damaging—certainly with the God bit thrown in, there was no escape. And with no parents there you were reduced to pulp.

[One time] the boys gathered all the girls' dolls and set them up on lockers in the boys' playroom. They pretended [the dolls] were gods and

bent down worshipping them because that's what we knew, these huge Buddha temples. Well this really got the staff going. [laughs] [The boys] knew that. They were not daft. We were just normal children--missionary's kids and we were constantly told how wicked we were and made to feel it. What happened to their sense of humor?

Peer relations

My idols were not the teachers. My idols were the older children. Age was very important, who was older than who. If you were younger and made a remark to somebody who was older they would say 'don't be cheeky' because of the age span, not so much because of what you said. There was a lot of sending children to Coventry by your peers. It happened to me and it was horrible. I tried to give somebody a piggy-back. She stood on the bench and I shifted her over my head. She landed and did something to her teeth. She said I had done it on purpose which I don't think I did. Nobody would speak to me for days, DAYS! The staff got to hear about it and sat the ring leader [and Kathleen on] opposite flights of stairs. They made us stare at each other until we smiled.

Children who had their parents at Chefoo were sometimes viewed differently. Kathleen was in the same class as one of the teacher's children. "I always felt that I was inferior because she had her parents there and I didn't. I remember being very jealous of [her] being able to go and have her mum."

Since most of the children did not have their parents there and were unable to travel home for the holidays, the staff rose to the occasion at the appropriate times.

Christmas, Christmas [said fondly]. If you were left at school for the holidays you had a good time. They had a Christmas tree and presents. One of the staff would dress up. Christmas morning you had a mat with all your presents from your family. [The staff] really did make a great effort to make it nice for us. It was a long holiday for them to entertain us, six weeks.

The remaining days and weeks at Chefoo, though, is when their classmates took on some of the familiarity of family. As the years went by and the students were interned, the intenseness of their peer relationships grew.

We had good friends--like sisters. Eleven [of us] shared a dormitory for two or three years--there wasn't much we didn't know about each other. We used to insult each other so much. We'd lived with each other for eight years, night and day, you know what you can and can't say. We could be nasty. You learnt to get along with it.

I came back [to England] and soon learned you couldn't say things like that to British children—tease a bit unkindly about what you think. We hid our vulnerabilities, didn't we. Away from family it's no good being vulnerable. Some showed their homesickness. Some would cry themselves to sleep.

In the secondary school my bed was within touching distance of this other girl's. She always wanted me to stroke her back until she went to sleep. Looking back I think how much of that was her way of getting comfort and was there something sexual in that? All of us found it difficult to ask for what we wanted. I would have liked somebody to tickle my own back but I'd never dare ask for it.

While Kathleen may not have asked for physical touch, she thinks perhaps she compensated for it in other ways.

I had a lot of sickness—diphtheria, mumps, measles, chicken pox, scarlet fever, whooping cough. I look back and see a very unhealthy child and think, Why was En I think at some level that was where I got my nurturing. I remember the wardrobe ladies. The fact that we actually got physically touched by these people, measured, must have been some sort of nurturing because we were never touched otherwise.

No one ever hugged us, we never sat on anyone's knee, we were never kissed. It was a small wonder we were not at home with our own bodies, that we found it hard to embrace and touch as we grew older. It's taken me a long time to be comfortable with hugging and [drops voice] kissing and just being able to cry and share my emotions. Those were probably some of the longest lasting affects.

Being uncomfortable with physical touch didn't help Kathleen at age eleven when she received the news of the death of her father who died from typhoid and cholera.

The Headmistress seated me on her lap to tell me of my father's death. That bothered me more than what I was hearing. We were not cuddled and hugged and I was very uncomfortable. The loss did not mean much at the time because he wouldn't have been there anyway. (4)

I hardly knew my father. I was with them until I was seven but my father was frequently away preaching. From age seven to ten I never saw [my] parents and then we had three months together. Then I never saw him again. I remember feeling a curious mixture of being important and knowing that I had to feel sad. It didn't really hit me until we came to England in 1946 and there was just my mum.

Feeling important was a theme in Mary's story in Chapter Two. While Mary attributed her specialness to being a Chefoo student, Kathleen felt otherwise.

I thought I was special but not because I was at Chefoo. I felt I was special in a racial way to the Chinese which is a curious thing to feel at a missionary school. Else why did we live in a compound, separated? Why did we live in a special area of Chefoo [town]? Why weren't we amongst them? Why weren't we allowed to talk to them? They did the things we were told were not good. We didn't see any Westerners who did those things because [all] I knew were missionaries. I suppose I knew God loved me [yet] I didn't feel loved. But I did feel special because I felt superior. [laughs] I'm not nice. [I] had compartmentalized my thinking-- Western: moral; Chinese: immoral. [Upon return to London] a poster said, 'Beware of pickpockets'. I was stunned; 'did the English steal?!'

Internment

Feelings of Western superiority were challenged as the war progressed and the 'enemy aliens' were placed in internment camps. In November, 1942 the Chefoo School was forced to leave its compound and resettle two miles up the mountain at a Presbyterian compound called Temple Hill. The students and staff walked from Chefoo to Temple Hill, "going along singing 'God is still on the throne' with all our possessions tied in bundles. We were kept in ignorance of things that might have frightened us."

Conditions at Temple Hill were quite different from Chefoo.

There were 99 of us in the two big houses. [We had] thirty-three sleeping in a loft on the floor. I felt I didn't have any privacy. The staff were visible all day. There was no escape for them, or us from the Japanese or from each other. Our guards lined us up for roll call. In true missionary spirit we learned Japanese numbers and answered smartly along the line.

Lessons were carried on in every available space. Our class was one of the biggest and had a dreadful reputation for making a lot of noise. Once we were all sitting in one corner of the room and decided to test this theory out. We sat there and all moved our hands and mouths but didn't say anything. Sure enough along came the teacher and said, 'be quiet you're making far too much noise!' We'd worked a few things out. Temple Hill was only ten months. We were glad to get out of it really.

Weihhsien Camp

In September of 1943 the Chefoo School left Temple Hill and settled in Weihhsien Civilian Assembly Center. Kathleen's remembrances in general were of

Flies, bed bugs, mosquitoes. We were all lumpy. We always had a job. We used to make coal balls with coal dust and mud. I helped with the laundry. We washed these gray sheets. They would freeze before we got them on the line and would flap in your face. We all took turns stoking in the winter. I was a terrible stoker so when people knew it was my turn they would come with extra sweaters on. [In Guides] they gave us the thrift badge. We never had to go for it—we were all so thrifty—I ate out of a sardine can.

In the internment camp letters ceased almost completely. I had three postcards from my mother, courtesy of the Red Cross. I wrote to her about food, my friends and guiding. Sometimes I signed them 'Kathleen Strange' in case she got muddled with the other Kathleen. Memories were getting dim. (5)

I don't ever remember looking outside the camp unless you were on the third floor of the hospital [where] the boys were. The girls were on the next floor. I slept on Miss Parson's trunks. She had three all the same size so I was very lucky. We were supposed to keep them on bricks because the rain came in the window and it would ruin them. The bricks were wobbly [so] I took them off and the contents of the trunks got wet. It was very aggravating for her and she was extremely cross with me. I knew she had a right to be angry but I also thought she went well over the top. I was demoted and had to sleep with the younger children for a week.

I felt safe. I never thought anything terrible was going to happen to me. Even with the Japanese going around with fixed bayonets I felt entirely safe. We did not know what was happening elsewhere or we might have been afraid. The only time I had contact [with Japanese] was when I was chopping wood. The Japanese soldier from the guard tower had just changed when he walked by and saw me trying to chop the wood. So he did it for me. Otherwise the Japanese guards had these huge Alsatian dogs which terrified the life out of us. I didn't feel safe with the dogs. On the way back from camp we stopped to be outfitted at Port Suez. They thought we'd be so delighted to see all these dogs and we were terrified. But I never thought the Japanese would harm us, though that was ignorant.

School Values

A lot of it was exciting. The staff [made] a good life for us filling our time. They were well organized. I remember the Headmistress saying, 'Never read a book before twelve.' You do your work in the morning and then you can play or read. There were games to be played, Guides took up a lot of time. We had a treasure hunt to find one of our teachers in disguise_ We had clues to follow. Nobody could find her. In the end she was sitting right in front of us dressed in a nun's outfit. Those were good sorts of things to do for kids.

There were all those structures. We never had a sense of purposelessness. There was always an aim. We were always studying for something. There were a lot of clever people there. I felt lower than average [but] when I got back here [England] and discovered that I was better than average I was amazed.

Our education was broadened [in that] we were freer from teacher control. Three of them [teachers] shared a small room next to my dormitory of about ten beds. The rest had rooms down the corridor. Our poor teachers never got away from us. We were able to observe all their human weaknesses. We saw everything they did and who they did it with. They could not stop us from talking to whom we liked. The whole place functioned on rumors of the war, the guards, the black market, illicit relationships and lapsed believers. I listened and learned. We were scandalized by some of the behavior in Weih sien, though we were kept in ignorance of a great deal.

School carried on in the dormitories, doing maths on bits of paper with stubs of pencils while sitting on mattresses laid on cabin trunks. Two boys were allowed by the Japanese to go over the wall and catch frogs which we then cut up. Incredibly, three lots of students were set school certificate exams. The papers were kept and certified after the war by the examining board. Miss Bain ran the Guide company

and was a no nonsense, jolly-holly-hockey sticks lady. Soon as you saw her coming you put your shoulders back and prepared a big smile and had no complaints. I remember saying something was a bother and she said, 'Guides should not be bothered!' Miss Phare had presence in a way that you automatically became polite in her company. You always looked for her approval.

Miss Lucia, she could take a joke. Not many of the teachers would have. We were playing blindman's bluff and she came and sat down. Maida, who was blind folded, put her hands all over Miss Lucia's wiry hair and made rude remarks. She knew jolly well it was Miss Lucia and

Miss Lucia knew she knew and played along with the joke which was lovely. She wasn't afraid to show her emotions. You never felt judged by her. She listened to us and responded with warmth.

Relationships

While in camp, Kathleen became friends with Lonnie, a seventeen year old who was not a Chefoo boy. They had met in the dining room where Lonnie sent a message from the boys' side to the girls' side that he was interested in her. Kathleen could see him for fifteen minutes in the morning and in the evening. At the end of camp the internees

[could go] for walks and I liked to walk with him. It was cold and he had lent me his shirt when we met the little prep girls going for a walk with Miss Can. She looked at us and I thought, 'Oh dear.' Sure enough there were no more walks after that. It was all so innocent_ The evil was in their imaginings, it wasn't in us because we didn't know enough.

We were so naive at fifteen I don't think I would have had a clue. My mother told me where babies came from when I was eleven. They were supposed to tell you before you left for secondary school. My mother didn't pick a good time. I was at the beach swimming and didn't want to be sitting and listening to this.

When periods started I had some remembrance of what she'd been saying. I started at Temple Hill [but] I suppose because there wasn't enough food I stopped.

Health

One difficulty was finding pads to use. You had to make your own and wash your own out every time. Where do you put those wretched things to dry? I remember Sally was in washing her's out. I went into the room and she got this filthy black basin and I said, 'What on earth are you doing?' She had a coal-ball beside her and as soon as somebody came in she put the coal-ball in the water so nobody could see what she was doing. T'was not good. Sanitation was just appalling. The loo's were disgusting--squat down. And the huge cesspool--lovely.

Although there was poor sanitation, Kathleen had few health problems during camp. One time she had a "dreadful toothache" and went to the camp dentist. "She took my tooth out and then I fainted so she gave me some brandy. I arrived back in the dormitory smelling of brandy, minus a tooth and not having told anyone about it. There was such a hoo ha!"

Kathleen's major medical problem came after liberation while preparing to leave China. The last week of camp Kathleen's hip started hurting. She left

Weih sien at the end of September with the majority of the Chefoo group on a train to Tsingtao.

I felt so awful, my hip hurting. When we got to the Edgewater Hotel we had to queue up and I couldn't stand anymore. By that time the staff thought, 'there is something the matter with her.' They took me to a hospital run by Germans and I was operated on by Dr. Neve. (6) I had osteomyelitis, an infection of the bone and mine was in the hip. Three of us got it in camp. I was the first civilian in the area to be treated with Penicillin. A Canadian troop ship in the harbor had it on board. Dr. Neve and all the other doctors had never seen it used before. She scraped [the hip] and popped me full of Penicillin.

I didn't know how ill I was. My sister said I nearly died. I can remember not being aware of the passing of days and things. Miss Broomhall, the Headmistress, used to come read to me every day which I thought was marvellous. I was on my back. I couldn't do anything, see anything. Miss Pyle made a wonderful offer to remain with me while the others went back to their homelands. Fortunately I recovered in time to return with the last party. (7) We would have gone on a ship for Canada but somebody said, 'No, your mother's in England.' My mother was in China until '44 so I had no idea where she was.

When I was moved to the ship at Tsingtao [for] the voyage to Hong Kong, they put the stretcher across the seats of the largest car they could find. At dock they couldn't get me up the narrow gangplank so they hoisted me [up with a] crane. The stretcher was waving around and everybody on the ground was holding their breath. I was clutching my bottle of penicillin and arrived in the middle of a deck full of young American sailors which was wonderful!

It was six weeks [by boat] but nice because there were lots of returning soldiers and we spent ages talking to them. On the ship I heard about England—about the weather, strange cities, strange customs and about pounds, shillings, pence and farthings. My mother was there. I didn't remember my mother. I wondered what she would be like and how it would feel to live in a family.

The ship felt safe. I wasn't sure I wanted to arrive—England wasn't home. Everything was totally different from what I knew. It was a real loss leaving [schoolmates]. It was like having a family blow-up and go to all different parts of the world. People I spent eight years with were gone. At least at camp we knew all these rituals. Then they're all gone when we come back.

Reuniting

Upon their arrival in England, Kathleen and her sister had to have their mother pointed out to them. "After five years apart meeting was difficult. We wanted hugs but felt embarrassed, we had to know each other again." The girls and their mother lived at the mission home where their mother worked. "Adjusting to life in the Mission Home was not that difficult. It was just another institution full of returning missionaries." (8) But there were difficulties.

It took me a long time to relax enough to feel comfortable with her [mom].

Even then I never achieved the kind of casual relationship that you have with your parents. My mother never allowed herself to be angry with us and we were never allowed to be angry with her. The most difficult adjustment came at twenty-one when my mother, sister and I had a flat together. It felt strange being with just my mother and sister because I had always lived with other people.

Connecting past to present

Through the years Kathleen tried to talk to her mom about Chefoo and the internment experience. "My Mum didn't want to relive it or think about it. She couldn't cope with it. She didn't talk about it so it was good to get counselling to be able to talk about it." Kathleen also attended the Chefoo reunions, "going was a way of finding out who I was--how I related to all these people because in a way they were my family." But she came away from them with mixed emotions as they "brought back all these feelings of being alone and not anyone being interested in me as a child. We were there to be told and taught, not listened to."

We'd have somebody speak and a picture show and it was all religious and good. The staff was always, 'Oh wasn't it so wonderful!' I felt that I ought to feel that everything had been good, but I couldn't. And I couldn't talk about it. I suggested somebody write an article about how Chefoo affected them for the rest of their lives and they said, 'why don't you write.' So I had actually resigned (9) and then wrote it [the 1993 article] and they printed it.

I think what I've probably done since camp is take a sideways step and looked at things from a different direction. I've got a different slant on things after the religious straight jacket. I cannot call myself a Christian in the sense most would think of it. I find even the thought of going to church difficult—somehow at a deep level I feel that I will be entrapped again. Walls have figured rather largely in my life. The first

place I was born into had walls, then to a school [with] walls around the compound and then concentration camp there were walls again.

I think you go through life sorting out the things that happened to you and making sense of them. I did not feel loved or important though I believed in what my parents were doing. I learnt to avoid trouble by being inconspicuous. I learnt not to care too much in case of loss. I learnt to be responsible for my own feelings and to keep them to myself. It did not occur to me for a long time that others might be interested in what I felt. I have had to learn to be vulnerable and allow others to help and support me; that is still hard. This learning has come late in life. [\(10\)](#)

When my mother died at age eighty-nine I was very sad and grieved but not as much as I might have been. The most painful good bye was when I was ten. It took a lot of weeping in counselling to heal that wound. Chefoo had its good and exciting times, but it was also a time of loneliness and loss. My experiences have made me what I am. Having worked through many of my feelings connected with my childhood, I am content. Counselling others is a rewarding experience; out of my pain has come understanding and enrichment for myself and for others. No part of your life is wasted. You can't regret. Whatever happened to you made you who you are at the moment, struggling in the process of becoming.

Summary

Both Mary and Kathleen would agree that what happened in a person's past shapes who he or she is in the present. What this case study has done is to compare the early lives of two women who experienced an historical event at the same school and interacting with the same people. While there are many similarities in the experiences and lessons learned, there are also differences in their outlooks and paths taken in life. Perhaps the most significant difference is how they look back and view their shared past.

Mary has taken a broader, positive perspective of her Chefoo and internment experience. She has collected her thoughts together and pulled out what was good and beneficial from her schooling experience. She is awed by and highlights the way the teachers and staff rose to the occasion to provide security and safety for the children during the war through the use of predictable routines, rituals and discipline. Mary has incorporated these same themes into her own vocation as the head of a juvenile detention center where she provides a safe and structured environment for the teenagers and tries to establish rituals, values and instil the power of success with them.

Kathleen, on the other hand, was more introspective when reflecting on her past schooling experiences. While Kathleen was grateful for the positive aspects of Chefoo and the teachers' talents, she also looked more critically at the emotional impact the actions of others had on her. Kathleen's perceived lack of individualized encouragement from others allowed her to suppress her painful emotions. It has only been in her later adult years that she has unearthed and confronted these feelings through psychotherapy. This journey led to her being trained as a counsellor so as to help others deal with their emotional issues.

Both women have seen how their past schooling experience shaped who they are and the types of careers they chose over the years. Each of them has turned what could have been a traumatic, negative experience leading to inward self-destruction, into outward positive expressions of helping others. Each directly applied what they learned or interpreted from their schooling experience into her own life's work. Mary followed the structure and ritual themes that she experienced. She also found an outlet for expressing these ideas in her writing and speaking tours.

Kathleen's having experienced the lack of being listened to and valued at Chefoo resulted into her listening to others through counselling. Her other means of expressing the emotions within were by teaching painting and in her own career as an artist. The last chapter will take the personalness of each of these women's stories and extract what the researcher has learned about schooling, separation and the co-construction of the moral component curriculum and what implications this has for educators today. In a broad sense, this study is looking at how the students perceived the social order and control within the confines of the boarding school and the internment camp.

1 Kathleen Strange Foster, *The Chefoo Magazine*, (June, 1988), 39. [↑](#)

2 Kathleen Strange Foster, "'The Past in [is] a Foreign Country; They do things differently there,'" *The Chefoo Magazine*, (Summer 1993), 10-12. [↑](#)

3 The Girls' School was divided into competitive houses named after three women missionaries; Amy Carmichael-India, Nancy Judson-Burma and Mary Slessor-West Africa. [↑](#)

4 Foster, (1993). [↑](#)

5 Foster, (1993). [↑](#)

6 Dr. Helen R. Neve, a CIM doctor stationed at Chefoo. [↑](#)

7 Foster, (1993). [↑](#)

8 Foster, (1993). [↑](#)

9 from the Chefoo Schools Association alumni group. [↑](#)

10 Foster, (1993). [↑](#)