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Interview of Maurice Hall

Marice Hall

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Maurice Hall who has been engaged in evangelistic work in various countries for a number of years was interviewed by Joe Hacker on April 29, 1970.

Hacker: Would you give us a brief historical outline of the work as it began following World War II in France and as it had developed up to the time of your leaving France?

Hall: I met Brother Otis Gatewood and Brother Palmer in Germany. They encouraged me to come and live in the country of Germany and work with them. On leave, when we were able as military men to take leave, we went across into France and we wondered why somebody had not gone to this field. In French classes that I then took as soon as I was released from the Army, I kept asking the question: "Why doesn't someone go to France?" I was auditing German, but since I had some prior French experience, in order to get my degree as quick as I could and get back to the field, I was taking French for credit as my credit language. Melvin Anderson and I sat in a French class at ACC and one day Melvin said to me finally, "Maurice, if you will go to France, I will go with you." We determined therefore at that particular session that we would go, God being our helper. We went to France after having spent several months raising funds, traveling generally in Texas and Oklahoma, but went as far over as Tennessee. We were able to get my support and sponsorship from the Cleveland Avenue church in Wichita. Melvin was able to obtain the same from a Texas congregation. We then went to France in November, 1949.

When we arrived there, there were only a half dozen American diplomatic personnel there. Among these was Brother and Sister A. B. Clampitt and their daughter, Margaret, who later was married to J. Lee Roberts who was in Paris studying art. We sent a telegram to J. Lee Roberts and asked if he would accept a position with us as a translator and assistant to help us in the initial days of our work. J. Lee Roberts said he would stay. It was during the time that he stayed that he later married Margaret Clampitt and became identified with the work in Paris and also became interested in the work in Belgium.

The beginning of the work in France from the standpoint of a missionary directed or led work began in November, 1949. Military troops meeting there during the Second World War met in Brother and Sister Clampitt's home, but we began as of November, 1949, having public services. We went from one rented location to another which was in the center of the red light district in an upstairs room over a jujitsu hall. We met there for a number of years and the church grew to have some 70 or 80 members while we were there. A lot of these people were of the type of people like we find in Galatia--they were very quick to leave the gospel. We went from there to our present location in Paris which is at 4 rue Deodat-de-Severac where we have a good building and a good congregation. Out of this work has grown other work in the southern part of the city where Brother Donald Daughtery is working.

Hacker: How many missionaries were working in France during this period of time?

Hall: When Brother Anderson and I went to France, we were the only missionaries there and this continued until we were able to encourage Owen Aikin to come in 1953. Then soon after that Donald Daughtery, Claxton Wilson, Farrell Till and Leo Hindsley came to this work. They are the only ones who stayed for any period of time. After Leo left, his brother, Donald, came and began to work. About this time Brother H. B. Franks went to the work in Orleans. Brother Floyd Davis came to work with Melvin Anderson in the northern part of France at Lille. It was during this time that Richard Andrejewski, who is our French radio speaker, was converted in that part of the country. I believe that with one or two exceptions, perhaps with some who remained for fairly short periods of time, these are the only ones who stayed for any length of time. I want to take particular note of the fact that Winfred Wright came and worked in Toulouse. He had worked in Belgium, but he had worked largely in Toulouse and did an outstanding work there. He, Jay Byerley, Leo Hindsley, and Brother McAnulty came and worked for a time. These would be the men that I recall offhand who had a great deal to do with the development of the work in France.

Hacker: At this time we have the Hindsleys and Daughterys in Paris. These are the only people in France now.

Hall: No, Andrejewski is in the north. With him is Brother McAnulty working at Lille.

Hacker: So we have two cities in which we have workers.

Hall: Excuse me now. There is also a Bill Burchett who worked with Gerald Rowden over in Reims. About 1956 I went to the military congregation in Chateauroux and asked these brethren to give us \$1500 so we could go from one of these main cities in France to another to hold sort of a prospective meeting. I had come back from the Holy Land and had some slides. I prepared a series of lessons on the life of Christ as seen through these Holy Land pictures. We figured for \$150 we could go into a city, put out advertisements, big billboard signs, and hand out 5000 invitations urging the people to come to this meeting. We would prospect as to the areas of France which would be the most productive. When we did this, we found that the southern part of France, by far, showed the greatest productivity. We went into Nice, for instance, and began a meeting there with no contacts at all. By the fourth night of this meeting we had 184 people to come. Hal Frazier who had come back to France was working at Orleans and decided that he would like to move to Nice then. Hal Frazier is another man that I had not mentioned up to this time.

Hacker: He is in World Radio work. Now, because of your background in French, you have also worked in Vietnam. Could you give a historical sketch of your work there when you went, how it developed and how it was when you returned?

Hall: When one starts talking about missions and when one starts preaching the great commission, of course, the first application he has to make of that is to apply it to himself. This is what Ernie Gill said to me. He said, "You told me one time that I couldn't keep on preaching the great commission without doing something about it myself. I will either have to stop preaching it or do something." When I kept telling my students at Michigan Christian College that we really needed to get this gospel to the whole world, more and more I began to ask

"Maurice, what's holding you back now? Your two older boys are ready for college; your younger boy will not be affected adversely by this. Why don't you go?"

At a time when I was going to go to France for a campaign with six girls, I asked the church at Royal Oak, Michigan, if they would help to provide the money for us to go on from France on across to Vietnam to investigate the opportunities. They said they would put it to the congregation and see. So that Sunday morning, and I was due to leave the next day to go to France, they put this up to the congregation. We would need about \$1500 to make the rest of this trip. They put it up to the congregation and by that night \$1560 had been given. We assumed it was the Lord's will for us to go. As soon as the campaigns were over in France, Marie and I went through the Holy Lands, India and on to Vietnam where we arrived in August, 1962 to investigate the opportunities.

The day that we arrived there we met Ken Wilson, a military sergeant who was the engineer on the ambassador's plane. Ken Wilson and Joe Hale, a lieutenant in the Navy, had been working together with servicemen in the area and had gotten a few Vietnamese people together. In fact, out in a little country community of Quandung, they had been able to build a little chapel with Vietnamese help and with a little money they were given in their contributions. They built a little chapel and they were meeting with these people there. They were taking turns preaching and doing a great job. Of course, it was primarily with the military men, but they did have a very few Vietnamese. When we finally came back to the States, we determined that, God being our helper, we would go back to Vietnam if the door would be open. The Royal Oak church said they would like to send us back to Vietnam. We decided that with their help we would go back in January of 1964. We went back to Saigon as our base. Saigon at that time was a city of 3,000,000 people. It had grown from 200,000 people in 1954 to 3,000,000 by 1964. In ten years it had grown ten times and over.

The day we arrived, with the invited guests of Brother Ken Wilson and the other brethren who still were there, we had thirteen Vietnamese people come to the services. We began to baptize people almost immediately and that afternoon we began a preacher training class. We kept this class going all the time we were there. The work then developed from that point on fabulously, I felt. We were meeting in the Ken Wilson's home when they got orders to be transferred back to the States. We moved to the American Vietnamese International Center, and we worked there in that area for a short time looking for a house that had a big downstairs with a living room-dining room where we could meet and with rooms for an office area. We found this at 44 Hongthaptu Street. Here we began having as many as 50 or 60 people for worship. This grew to as many as 80. By September of 1966, when we had to come home because Marie fell ill, we had 135 or 140 people. Many times 30 or 40 had to sit on the outside of the building because they could not get in. By that time the work had grown so we not only had work at Quandung out in the country and Hongthaptu Street, but we also had works in four other areas of Saigon.

By this time the American Community School had closed down, and we were asked to help begin a school for some of the people who were left as a result of closing the school. We started a tuition school where American teachers would be paid a salary for their 7:30 to 12:30 a.m. teaching and then beginning at 12:30 for the rest of the day they could help us with our mission work. This school was com-

pletely self-supporting, and, in fact, made enough money the first year with about 85 students in the school--it finally grew to have 185--that we were able to buy three Vietnamese Volkswagen buses at a cost of about \$3000 apiece. We were able to buy these for the missionaries to use in their transportation. So the work really spread rapidly.

Marie and I felt the need of coming back to the States. In fact, one of the opportunities I had was when Michigan Christian wanted us to come back and speak on their lectureship and Pepperdine at the same time offered us the opportunity of coming. They said they would pay my way home if we would come home and speak on this lectureship and help them in some fund raising. We came back and for about a month's time, I worked with them raising funds for their missions program. Then, after having spoken a number of times, I spent another five or six months visiting congregations and visiting people telling them about the opportunities.

It was at this time that we got involved in the child care work. We had refugee children that were being brought to us each day. People would ask us to help them care for the children. We began this work when a man killed himself by pouring gasoline over his head and striking a match. His wife came and asked us to take the small children so she could get out with the bigger ones and make a living. We took the first five children and put them in Brother Ming's house on bamboo mats to sleep on the floor along with the rest of the family. That's the way he slept too. He was a barber and only made a few dollars a week, enough to take care of he and his wife and their food but not enough to take care of five extra mouths. We told him that we would find the funds to pay for the care of the children if he would do this. He began to care for these five. That work grew until we had 200 children in the child care program.

We received other workers from the States. In the five or six months we traveled we had contacted a lot of young people, many who came directly from the summer seminar here. We had some outstanding workers. We had some who had the frustrations, of course, of their first period overseas, but we had some outstanding workers who came. We are thankful to God for every contribution that they made for the cause of Christ there. Brother Ralph Burcham who had been teaching at Michigan Christian College came and worked with us. Probably one of the outstanding men in this period was Leonard Blake who had been working with the children's home in Valparaiso, Indiana. He helped us tremendously.

When we went to Vietnam the original missionaries there were my wife, me, and Phil Carpenter. I would like to express a particular appreciation for Phil Carpenter. He was a young man who had come from Mount Dora Children's Home and who had graduated from Michigan Christian with two years of college. He was a very excellent Bible student. Phil was just willing to do anything. I believe that the adaptability and versatility that Phil portrayed was in a great measure responsible for some of the work that we were able to do. Many times I would come home and I would have made an appointment for the evening. Maybe someone else would come by in the early evening saying, "We really need you to do so and so." Well, sometimes it would be such that I could send Marie to talk to a woman, Phil to talk to another group, and I would go to another group. In this way the work grew.

Another thing that I think happened that is very interesting work was with the university students. We found that they were very interested in learning English. If they were interested in learning English, we told them we would make an agreement with them. "We'll teach you two hours of English on three evenings a week if you will come back two evenings a week for Bible study." They agreed on this basis. The English that we taught them on those three evenings a week came from the Bible. We used the simple Bible language as a textbook. We oftentimes had so many people in this class which met in another building that we asked some brethren to help. We took in enough tuition to pay the Vietnamese brethren who were taking care of that building and to pay rent on that building. We were not trying to operate any kind of a business. We were trying not to begin another American give away program over there. We were letting them do what they could. It finally turned out that the American Community School was taking care of the rent on one building where the school was being held and the church was meeting in that building. Then these English classes were taking care of the rent on another building, and we were preaching every Friday night, Saturday night and Sunday in that building.

When in 1966 we had to come home, the work by this time had grown that we had works as far south as Cantho and as far north as DeNang. Works had been spread throughout the country. In military bases we had to contact military men to print up notices as to where Christians were meeting, and encourage them to get together. On occasions someone would go out and encourage them. We had congregations meeting in 23 different areas, either Vietnamese or English congregations, by the time we had to come home in 1966. That pretty well is the picture up to that time.

Before we left to come home, we had some 19 young people--Brother Burcham being a more mature man--but mostly young people, who had come to help us in one of these school programs or to get a job over there to support themselves to help in the work. I can say great wonderful things about the majority of the young people. We did have some who probably came with the wrong motives to the field. They did not have the training like you are giving them here at Harding College which is so desperately needed. I never would again do what I did at that time. I learned a lesson. I never would again invite 19 young people to come as fullfledged missionaries without the training and experience that they needed. I feel that we made a mistake here. We paid dearly for the mistake. Nevertheless, a lot of them grew up awfully fast. With a very few exceptions, they really came through when the need was there.

Hacker: What has been your experience in France and Vietnam in training national preachers and converts?

Hall: We did a lot more of this in Vietnam than we did in France because we had the men available. In Vietnam I have never seen people so anxious to learn. They would come begging us to teach them. If we had a class at 9:00 in the morning, they would arrive at 8:30. If you cut the class off at 11:30, they would beg you to please stay on and teach them to 12:00. They would ask you what you planned to do in the afternoon, for they would like to come back in the afternoon. These men, of course, were rather mature men. Some of them were older men and some of them were younger men. But in Vietnam the men like to study ideas. They are kind of like the Athenians. They just spent their time thinking about these things. They like to really delve into ideas. In general the men give the money to the

women and the women are the business people in Vietnam, so the men have some time available usually for this kind of thing. We had a preacher training class in Vietnam every day from 9:00-12:00 in the morning. Some time we did it in the evening but not regularly. As a result of this, the work went to DeNang, Cantho, and a number of other cities in Vietnam which at the moment don't really come to mind.

Hacker: What has been your experience in the use of American money in the building of buildings and the necessity for certain types of buildings in developing an indigenous work?

Hall: Part of the way I feel comes from my German experience. We lived in France and we were very closely associated with the German work. In Germany we had seen grass grow up in the floor of the Frankfurt church building that was built according to American specifications with American influence and American decisions. The German people would not even be concerned enough about the building to keep it clean. We had learned a lesson I think from this particular incident that we did not believe it really wise for us to go over there, take American money and build a building.

We felt like we ought to meet in homes. We felt that people would come more readily into homes. There is a more relaxed atmosphere in a home. People of all social positions can come into your home to worship. If you build a building, you have either got to build it in the wealthy section of town and it becomes a social barrier to the poor or the poor section of town and it becomes a social barrier to the rich. We thought it was good to have a home that would be big enough for the church to meet.

I would not say rigidly that every circumstance would be this way. I think there are times when there is a need for some help from somewhere else to build a facility. In general, I would much rather prefer to see us go and teach the people the word of God, preach to them, convert them to Christ, encourage them to meet in their homes and when the times comes that they need a building to begin by renting one rather than our going and building a great big building and then trying to find some people to fill it up.

Hacker: In Vietnam and in France you indicated that you had experience using schools, benevolent work and also groups in this work. What is your attitude now about using these special approaches? Which ones do you think work best?

Hall: I think it really depends a great deal on the situation where you are working. I don't think that the type of school we had in Vietnam could ever have been worked in France because the government would not have permitted it, but I think it was a special need in Vietnam at the time. There was no other American school in all of Vietnam at this time. Yet, there were some of the finest citizens of the community that had children that spoke only English. (Amazingly enough, did you know that Madame Nu who was the former president's sister-in-law spoke French as her basic first language? She also spoke Vietnamese, but when she spoke publicly to the people her speech was written for her in French and then translated into Vietnamese. Now, this was a Vietnamese person. Her first language was French.) We found in Vietnam that we had a different situation there from any that I had ever seen anywhere. The Vietnamese people were very anxious to learn, so any kind

of an educational opportunity that you could put before them they would grab it rapidly. It is through this way that I think we made inroads into some of the finest people of the Saigon community. The church there I think was being built on a firmer basis there.

In France we tried to use preacher training, but not nearly to the extent that we did in Vietnam because we just didn't have the people who would come to our classes. We just didn't have the quantity of people to come.

Hacker: We have people here and have had in the past and probably will have in the future who are thinking about developing groups to go to the mission field. What kind of frustrations have you run into with this approach and what kind of advice would you give to people planning this approach?

Hall: I would think that the people who are going to go as groups ought to be sure first of all that they really know each other, that they are willing to adapt to each other, and that they are really Christians. This may sound funny to say that missionaries should first of all be Christians, but this is exactly what I mean. They ought to first of all be Christians and to realize that you are not all going to have the same sense of values. The women are not going to have the same desires about keeping their house clean, just like here in America. In America when a woman invites you over, she gets her house clean before you come. However, on the mission field where people are oftentimes living very close together, these things begin to grate on people's nerves.

I think the group approach is a very wonderful approach, but I believe in a group approach it would be better if you had the mature seasoned missionaries going and with them as apprentice missionaries--young men who recognize that they are going to observe, work with and help the older men in those initial years until they really get some experience. Somebody has said a missionary--and a young missionary--going into a mission field ought to keep his mouth shut. I think Joe Cannon told his students, "To go to the mission field, keep your mouth shut for two years and observe what is being done before you criticize his methods because even in these little things, he has some things to do."

We believe that the most necessary requirements for a missionary are first of all, of course, that he love God and His word, that he knows God and His word, that he know and love the people, that he have an ability to learn a language because in most mission fields that will be required, but probably not one whit behind these others, that he be as adaptable and versatile. If there needs to be somebody picked up at the airport that he sees this as being as much the Lord's work as preaching a sermon. If there is a ditch that needs to be dug or somebody needs to be taken to the hospital, this needs to be done.

Hacker: Brother Hall, as we continue this interview, I wonder if you would be able in a few minutes to give us your general philosophy of missions.

Hall: I think it grows out, of course, of the very fact that Jesus has told us to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. I think that also involved in my philosophy of missions is the idea that I personally want to go to an area of the world where the gospel has never gone. We went to France because no

one had been there before. There was an opportunity and there was a need. People said, "Why go to France because you heard of the flippant people, the red light district and the nudists shows?" but really we knew there were some good and honest hearts meeting somewhere with God in France if we could just get to them.

Also involved in my philosophy of missions is the fact that the apostle Paul went generally, not only to the main centers of activities thinking that the gospel would go out from those more readily, but also to the place where religious minded people were meeting together. I do not believe the way to begin a work is to go to the drunks, to the red light districts where the people are down and out, to the frustrated. I mean frustrated from the standpoint that they have been to every religious group that has come to town, and now they have come to you because they need a little attention and they want you to give them that attention until you are so fatigued with them that they finally will leave you to find some other new group that has come. Paul seems to have gone to the most religious minded people in the community. He went to the synagogue. He also went to the women who were out meeting by the river side. He went to the market place where people were meeting together to discuss ideas--spiritual and metaphysical ideas.

I believe that we today are making a great mistake in thinking that we can build a building, even a cathedral, and expect the people just to rush into this building. I believe that it is difficult to get a man to come into a new building--into a building that is strange to him--so we ought to go into these areas, pioneer into these areas and then start our work in our own home, not, I think, even in some rented hall. This is not the way I have always done it, but this is the way I believe is wise to do it now--not in a rented hall down some back street in the red light district--but in your own home. Invite friends to come.

I would suggest that we go to the services of our religious neighbors that seem to be the most biblically oriented, those who love God's word more than the others seem to. We should have services at such a time that they do not conflict with our religious neighbors' services. For instance, if their services are at 11:00, let us meet at 9:00 for worship, and then be ready at 11:00 to sit down in the Bible class of some religious neighbor. When the question comes up and he says, "Well, I don't believe that baptism is for the remission of sins;" you may, in a kind way and with love in your hearts, say: "Well, you may not think so, but have you ever considered this passage of scripture." Then have the class turn to that scripture and read it. Working in this way in one place in France during one period of time, we went to a group. I remember the first time we went there. They had maybe 30 people meeting. We walked in and we sat down very quietly. They were glad to have us. They said to us, "We don't have anybody tonight to play the piano. Our pianist hasn't arrived. Do either of you play the piano?" Well, Marie and I could say right away, "No, we don't play the piano, but have you ever tried singing acappella? You would be surprised how beautiful you can worship God just singing without the instrument." They said they had never tried it. That night we sang praises to God without the instrument. Afterwards they said, "Well, you know, we don't care whether our pianist comes or not in the future. We have found out we can sing without the instrument." So we worked with these people. We went there every Sunday night. We had our services at a different time. We went to their services. One Sunday evening the preacher didn't come and someone said, "Brother Hall, wouldn't you bring us a little message tonight." I said I would be glad to, and I just happened to have an outline in my pocket on the subject of obedience. I didn't preach harshly against

their Pentecostal teaching about the tongues or something like this. I felt these people could be taught the principle of obedience. They would obey anything that God said, so I tried to show them the principle of obedience. After that, Colette Le Cardinal, a daughter of one of the elders came and said, "I want to give my life to Christ, Mr. Hall. Will you baptize me?" Colette had also been attending our services at our earlier service, you see. We baptized her. Later Colette married Don Daughtery who is one of our preachers in Paris. Her father and her mother were converted. In fact, seven of the outstanding people that we had in the church in Paris and some of these real foundation stones that we have in the church today, came as a result of going to the synagogue, of going into this area.

There may be much else that is involved in my philosophy of missions and maybe there is some area or phase that you would like to mention or question me about that I haven't brought out.

Hacker: No, I think this suggests the direction you think a new work should go, and how you should approach the people basically and the work. We appreciate very much the time you have taken to talk with us today and to make this contribution to our Library of Missions. We want to wish you Godspeed as you continue your work with your wife in the field wherever the Lord may lead you.

Hall: Thank you, Brother Joe. I would like to say as I conclude that I thank God for you and for the great amount of time that you are giving in this mission preparation program here. I believe that a new day is dawning in missions when young men are coming here and are preparing themselves as they are at Harding College to go out into these fields. I will assure you that when I go back to the mission field, I will be looking to Harding College for some men to come and go with me.