

Biography

Robert N. Tharp was born in Pingch'uan (Pakou), Jehol Province, Manchuria, January 31, 1913 of British (Caucasian) parentage. Entire youth and boyhood spent in China (totaling 30 years). United States citizenship 1962.

Elementary education at home, high school and college equivalent taken through correspondence courses from Wolsey Hall, Oxford, England. All requirements for College of Preceptors, Senior Oxford and Matriculation examinations were covered. No degrees acquired and all educational records were lost in Manchuria after Japanese entry into WWII.

Experience:

1933-41 Continuous residence in China in religious work.

1941-42 Imprisoned, then interned by Japanese in Manchuria and Japan.

1942-45 Repatriated via Portugese East Africa, and South Africa to India. Various wartime activities in British Governmental agencies involving intelligence, counter espionage and counter propaganda as a Chinese Specialist. Two years in New Delhi and then one year in San Francisco, in radio propaganda with British Ministry of Information via VOA radio facilities until end of WWII.

1947-48 Returned to China in religious work. Driven out by Chinese Communists. Returned to United States.

1948-51 Instructor in Chinese, Army Language School, Monterey, CA.

1951-65 Instructor in Chinese, later Assistant Director, Institute of Far Eastern Languages, Yale University. Responsibilities covered course development in

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Chinese and other Oriental language programs for USAF, other military, and civilian students. Produced a 925-hour course covering 32 weeks which incorporated some 300 -plus hours of programmed (and largely machine scored) testing and evaluation. Supervised 250-300 students annually, together with faculty and staff of 25-30. Pioneered audio visual programs and installations. Invented and patented first audio language laboratory booth. Voiced major portions of Yale's Chinese language tapes.

1965-67 (USAF program moved to Defense Language Institute, Monterey, CA.) Assigned as Coordinator for USAF Chinese language program. Additional responsibility for implementing methodology developed at Yale and inclusion of same in the majority of 28 different language programs at DLI. Resigned when program viability was virtually destroyed by Army red tape and restrictions. (First retirement.)

1967-69 Work on revision and re-writing of Chinese language texts, dictionary and aids for advanced students of the Chinese language, and further development of audio visual aids and techniques.

1969-75 Moved to East Coast, Columbia, MD. Hired by the New York Board of Education as Evaluator, then Director, Bilingual Education Project (Chinese / Spanish / English). (Retired when no longer funded.)

1976-77 Moved back to Monterey. Opened first Mandarin Chinese restaurant in area.

1978-84 Re-hired by Defense Language Institute as Course Developer and Monitor of Chinese Language programs.

1984-1993 Retired and writing autobiography: They Called Us White Chinese "The Story of a Lifetime of Service to God and Mankind". Heavily involved with local Chinese population in interpretation and helped in resolving legal and other problems.

Additional:

Invented, designed, and acquired first U.S. patent for convertible language laboratory booth (1961 - Design Patent No.190, 081). Conducted business in manufacture and distribution of same. Carried out extensive research in Teaching Machines including development of pilot courses. Worked as a consultant with various manufacturers of language laboratory equipment (and Teaching Machines) including Magnetic Recording Industries, Audio Teaching Center, Chester Electronics, Electronic Futures Inc., and others. With associates, designed first programmed Language Aptitude Screening Program (forerunner of Psi Lambda, Harvard) still in use by the USAF (Machine scored).

Publications:

Articles on Audio-Visual instructional methods in language teaching for various A-V magazines and journals for language teachers. Presented papers and talks at variety of seminars and conferences for language teachers on A-V subjects, including Modern Language Association, and papers presented at International Language Conference, West Berlin, 1964. They Called Us White Chinese "The Story of a Lifetime of Service to God and Mankind". (845 page posthumously published autobiography)