

ANDREW T. ROY

Never A Dull Moment

芮陶庵中国生活回忆录

A Memoir of Family and China

(美) 芮陶庵 著



南京大学出版社

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To Margaret
long suffering and kind,
who did not envy, nor was boastful,
who sought not her own,
who rejoiced not in evil but in the truth,
who hoped all things,
endured all things;
and for whom I am eternally grateful.

To David and Stapleton
who carry on in their own lives
our family interest in,
and love for,
both America and China

PREFACE

This is not a biography. It is a journal of forty-two unforgettable years, 1931 – 1972, mainly in China, with a few biographical items as a necessary string inside the necklace of people and events.

All the events occurred. The people are real and, in most cases, referred to by actual names. The conversations, however, may not be remembered exactly.

This is a family record, read only by a few family members. I bear complete responsibility for the reactions, opinions and errors found herein.

I have not included footnotes or a bibliography, for this is not intended as a document for scholarly criticism. It is a record of one man's observations of events and people that affected our family's life. It may seem to be a kaleidoscope of changing images. But, there is a pattern. I invite you to hunt

for it.

I have used the Wade Giles system of romanization, along with Pinyin in parentheses where it might help to clarify names and places.

The poems and lighter anecdotes included in this narrative have no logical relation to my serious reflections on our China experience. They are included because our years in China were so full of surprises and enjoyments that a dry record of events and reactions might give a false picture of life there.

There is a second reason for including them. A missionary should take his call, his mission, most seriously, but never himself too seriously. It is a profession in which a temptation lurks to pose as hero or martyr, and therefore is a profession which needs continual doses of humor and humility.

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PART ONE

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

1903 – 1929

1

HAZY MEMORIES

The land was pastel brown, the Rio Grande muddy brown, everyone's skin was brown, the dust a brown powder. We—my parents, David T. and Harriet Caywood Roy; my sister, Jean; and I—lived at Minera, twenty-five miles up river from Laredo, which is always brown. The river water was warm and slow moving, except in flood, when it wriggled like a sidewinder on a hot stretch of sand and swung acres of Mexico over to Texas or vice versa.

My father was a mining engineer. We were the only English-speaking family for twenty miles in any direction. The miners came from across the river. The coal was a semi-canal variety which did not rub black on hands, but could be lighted with a match. It was excellent for coking. The Mexico

City—Eagle Pass Railway through Laredo used it, and the American Navy in the Spanish-American War wanted more of it. The prosperity of Laredo at times depended on it. I learned to love the smell of sulphur that hung in the air near the mines. The dry baking heat was searing except during *northers*. Then cold winds blew down from the plains, we built fires and used Mexican blankets.

It was a land of rattlesnakes, scorpions, centipedes, tarantulas. My father never put on shoes in the morning until he had shaken them out. Scorpions and centipedes liked to spend part of the night in recently used shoes.

GRANDFATHER REMINISCES

(Reminiscences of my grandfather, Andrew Roy, and of how he came to be of Glen Roy, Jackson County, Ohio)

MacGregors of Clan Alpine's royal blood line
 fought with claymores and refused to bow to yokes.
 At Culloden our plaid was in the front line;
 but fighting meant neglect of herds and plow;
 stronger neighbors used us often and betrayed us.
 For support of Stuart causes we were outlawed.
 Montrose, MacLarens, Campbells all encroached.
 We were scattered and for years took other clan names,
 moved to Maryland, to Canada, to France.
 A child, I worked in coal mines north of Glasgow,
 securing one full year of steady schooling;
 but I read when chances came, and I remembered.
 At eighteen I migrated to the States,
 reaching Cumberland before the Civil War broke.

I joined the Union troops, was wounded, captured,
carried lead and pain in one leg till I died.

I found my Maggie Watson after discharge.

I liked her set of jaw, her busy hands.

We moved on west to coal fields in Ohio,
worked and saved, bought land and had our children.

Five sons took mining engineering in Columbus;
two daughters finished college work as well.

I found conditions in the mines unsafe, and spoke up,
wrote letters, entered politics, gave speeches,
fought for safety laws, befriended miners' unions,
and became Ohio's first State Mine Inspector.

Serving under four administrations,

I visited the mines, proposed new laws
for Ohio and for western Pennsylvania,
authored books about coal mines and mining history,
and recited Shakespeare with my sons on winter nights.

* * * * *

At Glen Roy, the old homestead has fallen, the marble
mantels have been taken from the rooms, but a central cy-
press staircase still is standing like Rob Roy upon a crag a-
bove Loch Earn.