

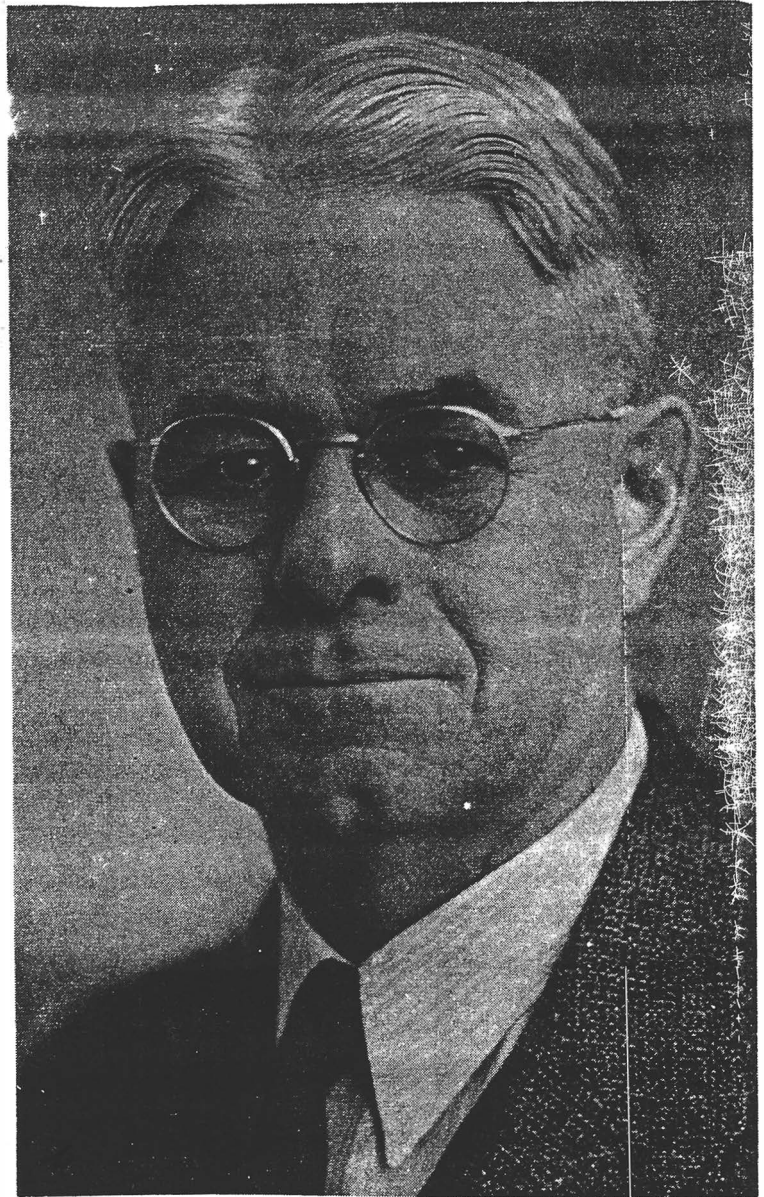
The sisters' brother, John Earl Baker, had an equally interesting and distinguishing career, that in addition to his unification of the communications included direction of vast famine relief operations that surpassed those well-known efforts of Herbert Hoover, made in Europe after World War I.

It was in 1920 that the Chinese government loaned Baker to the American Red Cross operating in that nation as a drought hit the country bringing famine. The relief effort was aimed at employing 161,000 farmers suffering from hunger to work on public improvement projects in return for food. With the dependents of these thousands of farmers, an estimated 900,000 persons received food in the Honan province famine, which affected some 2-million persons.

The public improvement projects were the building of 850 miles of roads to reach the famine struck farmers in the interior and hundreds of additional miles of road were planned at the same time. The 1920 famine had been caused more by lack of transportation facilities and routes. The J. E. Baker bridge is located on the road between Sian and King Yang as a memorial to his efforts.

Baker left as advisor to the ministry of communications, the number two position for an American in China after constant warfare disrupted the 4,000 miles of railroads under his virtual control. Concessions on the railroads were in the hands of the Japanese, Germans, Russians, French and British for their financial backing, which also caused political problems for him to some degree.

It was only two years later that another famine, worse than the one before occurred in China, and at the urging of many na-



John Earl Baker

tions, Baker returned to find literally millions dying of hunger and cholera. Some 12 million Chinese died in the famine, but other millions owed their lives to Baker who used rail and waterways along with trails he built to get food to the starving. He had to contend with roving Chinese bandits and had to commandeer boats and trains in order to move food supplies.

In 1931, the Yangtze river flooded bringing devastation and the need for relief efforts again. To control the Yangtze in the future, he directed the erection of 2,000 miles of dikes. He directed another famine relief operation in 1934, caused by a drought and inadequate stores of reserve food.

It was in 1936 that Baker decided to return to the U. S. after 20 years of fighting pestilence, famine, war, escaping from train wrecks, floods and cholera. He was given an honorary degree from the University of Wisconsin that year.

Three years later, however, he was drawn back to combat the twin problems of the Yellow river flood and the Sino-Japanese rift that left 20 million Chinese persons facing famine and made homeless by the Japanese invasion. He became known as the "Samaritan of Shanghai" as the war struggle eventually affected some 160 million persons, for whom he attempted to find food, shelter and medicine. By this time Baker was director of International Red Cross activities and chief executive of the China International Famine Relief commission.

A couple of years later at the age of 58, he became inspector general of the Burma road and worked to make it an efficient supply route to China, cutting red tape and halting the profiteering and graft of Chinese officials in the region.

He was back in the U. S. in 1943 and assigned to army camps in the south to orient the soldiers as to the nature of the Chinese and Japanese people.

In 1945 he was transferred to the United Nations rehabilitation and relief effort once again working in China. Three years later he was appointed by President Truman as one of two American members to the joint commission on rural reconstruction, a China counterpart to the Marshall plan for Europe, however his office staff, including himself, were just a few steps of the Communist armies moving from Nanking to Chungking, to Chengtu, to Canton and finally to Taipei on the island of Formosa.

It was on the island haven that he invested his knowledge of

farming and helped introduce a parasite destroying chemical to save the rice crop; planting another crop to grow side by side with cotton in between the latter's rows, and a land reform program that if tried 50 years before in mainland China, might have averted the Communist takeover.

At long last he returned to America in 1953, the holder of a doctor of laws degree from the University of Wisconsin, and died several years later in 1957 at the age of 76.

His going to China was really not planned, having occurred by chance while teaching at the University of Michigan. He met another professor on the staff, who had been in China earlier, but had declined to return and Mr. Baker was recommended in his place. He left the U. S. in 1915 and promptly came down with typhoid shortly after arriving in Peking with his wife and two daughters. A son was born while they were living in China.

He had been given the position of consulting statistician of the Chinese railways with the Peking headquarters. He wrote the first annual report to bankers of the many nations that furnished the capital for the railroad and were really in control of the entire system. Although in charge of accounting he was able to institute other efficiency systems in the operating department.

Much of his effort in China in the railroad field, was due to a background he had acquired while working for the federal government in Washington shortly after his marriage in 1908. His knowledge of railroading included testifying in a significant court case and later he was hired by the Southern Pacific railroad

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and went to the west coast. It was from there that he came to the University of Michigan.

Interestingly, Mr. Baker had never attended high school, but went directly from grade school to college in 1895 and received his degree in 1902. Two of those years he was out of college, teaching school after receiving his two-year certificate. He later attended the University of Wisconsin and received another degree in 1906, which included making Phi Beta Kappa honors.

Careers in nursing, teaching and engineering have led to interesting life stories of members of the Frank Baker family and to countries that are always in the news.