



Forbidden Orphanage Outside the Forbidden City

By **Becky Cerling Powers**

Biography|Religion

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Laura Richards was a shy American nurse who moved to a remote North China village in 1929 to take in castaway babies. Through 22 years of famines, bandit invasions, and wars, she lived in the same poor conditions as the Chinese peasants, while managing to save the lives of nearly 200 destitute children.

So why did she refuse the Chinese Communist Party's offer to make her a national heroine? Laura Richards' story was too dangerous to tell when she returned to the U.S. in 1951. But when she died thirty years later, the old letters, photographs, and scattered bits of memoir that she left behind were so intriguing to her second cousin Becky Cerling Powers, that Becky began a 25-year quest to discover her quiet relative's amazing story.

Eventually that quest led Becky to China and the orphans themselves. Today, over half a century after Laura left China, her story and her children's story can finally be told.

About Becky Cerling Powers

Becky Cerling Powers is a parenting columnist and editor of *My Roots Go Back to Loving* and other stories from "1998: Year of the Family," a collection of faith-based family stories originally published in *The El Paso Times*.

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In Praise of Forbidden Orphanage Outside the Forbidden City

“[Powers] describes a faith and dedication that inspires awe. And [she] places it all in context so well. How will it be received in the wider world? As an inspiring piece of history? As a challenge to faithfulness and commitment? As a threat? Maybe all of the above. How will it be received in China, or by overseas Chinese believers? I can only imagine. I wonder how the book can be positioned so as to provoke wide readership...” — **Bill McConnell, retired assistant to the president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship**

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