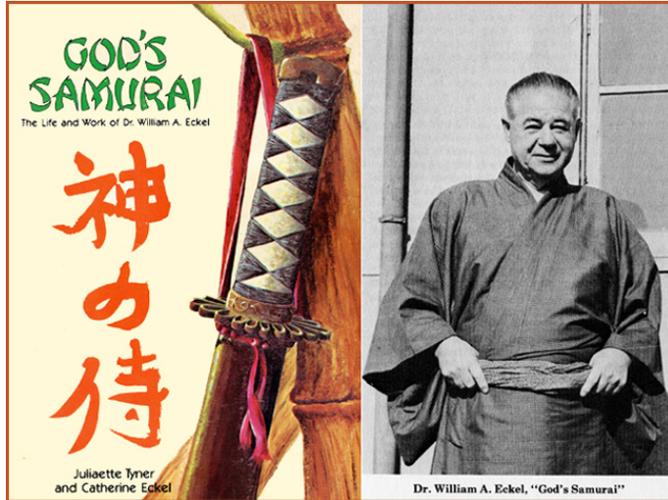


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## GOD'S SAMURAI



**The Life and Work  
of Dr. William A. Eckel  
By Juliaette Tyner and Catherine Eckel**

**Nazarene Publishing House  
Kansas City, Missouri**

**First Printing, 1979**

**ISBN: 0-8341-0560-8**

**Printed in the  
United States of America**

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**Holiness Data Ministry  
Digital Edition 07-14-2014  
With Permission**

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**Contents**

**Foreword  
Preface**

## **Part I**

- 01 -- A Prologue**
- 02 -- The Beginning**
- 03 -- A Time Of Adjustment**
- 04 -- A Time Of Expansion**
- 05 -- Times Of Testing**
- 06 -- Days Of Conflict**
- 07 -- Joy And Sorrow**

## **Part II**

- 08 -- No Go-between**
- 09 -- Levity in Perspective**
- 10 -- On the Road**
- 11 -- Absorbed by the Culture**
- 12 -- Precious in His Sight**
- 13 -- Re-tired for Retirement**

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## **FOREWORD**

**Suddenly he was there, with a broad-toothed grin, a throaty chuckle, an unquenchable sparkle in his piercing eyes, and a firm handclasp which afforded inner assurance that everything would now be all right. He had come directly from the ship to the cold grimness of my room in the officers' quarters at the Forty Second General Hospital in Tokyo. I was functioning as the Chief of the Surgical Service at this, the largest General Army Hospital in the Far Eastern Command.**

**It was January 7, 1947. The decade of war was past. The military occupation forces were trying to reconstruct a devastated nation and insure the peace. Most of the Shinto warlords were dead or in prison. The time had come for a concerted effort to reestablish the Church of Jesus Christ. Only a few veteran missionaries representing the prewar leadership of the major missions were actually cleared for a return during those austere days of the early occupation. Dr. William Eckel was one of them.**

**That first night we sipped hot chocolate, nibbled C rations, and talked about the future of the Church of the Nazarene in Japan. We discussed:**

- The forced breakup of the feudal estates and the consequent unprecedented opportunities for the churches to obtain properties and to build.**

- The collapse of the state religion and the new freedom to worship.
- The need to search out the remnants of our prewar congregations and reorganize them.

I watched him as he began the process. The word was soon spread via the grapevine and by correspondence, "Eckel-san" was back. As if drawn by divine compulsion, pastors came from their secular occupations in the mines, factories, farms, and ghettos to his humble house. There they sat to eat and to chat. They lingered to pray and to rededicate their lives to a preaching ministry and the reestablishment of the Church of the Nazarene in the Kingdom of the Rising Sun.

William Eckel was ideally equipped for the task of rehabilitation. He was alert and patient, tireless and diplomatic. His thought processes were thoroughly Oriental; but above all, he was compassionate. Skillfully he resettled these men into pastorates and sustained them until they could walk alone. He was an entrepreneur with just a touch of reckless bravado. This trait enabled him to seize opportunities that would have been ignored by the more prosaic. But prosaic or traditional responses did not fit this era.

That is why the miracle happened. That is why he was able to reestablish the church with most of the original pastors.

William A. Eckel was one of the most cherished friends I ever had. He was a missionary statesman with few equals. I bow deeply from the waist, as a proper Japanese would do, while I acknowledge the immeasurable influence for good which he had on me and my family during those impressionable years. -- Howard H. Hamlin, M.D., F.A.C.S.

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## **PREFACE**

The Japanese Samurai was a warrior who was highly respected for his strong character, his bravery, his dexterity with the sword, and his special expertise in fighting. In battle he wore a heavy metal armor and for pomp and ceremony he donned a metal armor trimmed with elaborate touches of gold. Any Japanese was proud to be a descendant of a Samurai.

William A. Eckel has been called God's Samurai because of his strong character, his courage, his ability to lead others, and because he considered any situation a challenge no matter how difficult. He went to battle clothed in the armor of the Lord.

We are indebted to Dr. Ross Kida and to Rev. Merrill Bennett who so graciously translated the addresses from the memorial service held at the 1977 Japan District Assembly.

Our deepest appreciation goes to all those Japanese and Americans whose lives and testimonies have contributed the information for this book.

And to the Eckel family, a special word of thanks is due for editing and support in the preparation of this life story. -- Juliaette Tyner and Catherine Eckel

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**PART I -- By Juliaette Tyner**

\* \* \*

**01 -- A PROLOGUE**

It was next to the last day of the year -- December 30, 1976. The sky was overcast, and showers came and went intermittently. A steady stream of cars were coming into the parking lot of the Church of the Nazarene in Camarillo, Calif., as my husband and I turned the corner and found ourselves in the midst of the procession. When we entered the narthex and waited our turn to sign the guest register, I sensed a strange quietness, a peacefulness; there was no hurry, no whispering, no confusion. An usher found a place for us to sit near the back of the church; the pews ahead of us were already filled with people. I looked at the front of the church banked with beautiful flowers and saw the shining bronze casket of one of the great missionaries of the 20th century. I glanced down at the little folded paper which the usher had handed me and read the following:

**In Memory of  
DR. WILLIAM A. ECKEL**

**Born  
June 10, 1892  
in  
Pennsylvania**

**Passed Away December 26, 1976**

**Service at  
Camarillo Church of the Nazarene**

**Thursday, December 30, 1976  
10:00 a.m.**

**Officiating  
Dr. Forrest Stone**

**Interment  
Conejo Mountain Memorial Park  
Camarillo, California**

I looked at the crowd of people now filling the church to its capacity. It was an unusual congregation. There were pastors and laymen from Nazarene churches in nearby towns -- Oxnard, Ventura, Ojai, Santa Paula; there were pastors of other denominations in Camarillo; there were friends from the Los Angeles area; there were retired missionaries from Casa Robles in Temple City; there were leaders from the Camarillo community, representatives from the Optimist Club, the Boys' Club, the school board, the city government; there were neighbors and there were the Camarillo Nazarenes; and most important, of course, there was the Eckel family. All of these had gathered to pay one last tribute to this zealous warrior of God for righteousness on both sides of the Pacific Ocean.

It was soon time for the service to begin. Rev. Paul Eckel, nephew of Dr. Eckel, gave the invocation. When the congregation began to sing the favorite old hymn "Amazing Grace," the Spirit of God seemed to fill the auditorium, and people were strangely moved by His presence. Certain church dignitaries gave eulogies, and Dr. Stone, pastor of the church, sang "Because He Lives." The text of the message was, "He being dead yet speaketh" (Heb. 11:4), a part of Dr. Eckel's choice passage of scripture. I sensed a spirit of reverence along with a feeling of victory as the pastor challenged each person to dedicate his life anew for the glory of God in emulation of the life we were honoring.

After the choir had stirred every heart with their beautiful rendition of "He's Living Today," Rev. Bill Dickson started to rise to give the benediction when suddenly a small Japanese man who had been sitting in front of us rose to his feet and asked if he might say a word. Pastor Stone graciously invited him to come to the platform, and every eye was on him as he walked to the front and began to speak. It was Koichi Yamamoto, a former officer in the Japanese navy who had been converted to Christianity and had joined Dr. Eckel soon after World War II to help rebuild the kingdom of God and the Church of the Nazarene in Japan. He spoke as follows:

"I just wanted to say a word for all of the Japanese people who could not be here today. I feel that this is Otosan, my father. If the Japanese

Christians had known enough in advance to obtain passports and visas, thousands of Japanese converts would be here today to attend this funeral. Ootosan is a very affectionate term for father which implies respect and love; and because Dr. Eckel was Ootosan to the Japanese people, I had to stand up and say how much we loved him. I want to read a few lines from a letter Dr. Eckel wrote to me in 1959 that I keep always with me. He wrote: 'We pray much for you that you may succeed. There is no excuse, you must succeed, Koichi and Nanako, you must succeed.' This letter has meant so much to me because that was the spirit of Dr. Eckel -- always move forward, don't stop, succeed for Christ. Thank you for letting me say what was on my heart."

What a tribute! Tears came to the eyes of most of us as we began to get a glimpse of what the life of Dr. Eckel had meant to the people of Japan and to the kingdom of God because he had been obedient to the call that God had given him over 60 years before.

As we stepped outside the church, the sun, quite significantly, was beginning to shine. Many thoughts filled my mind as we returned home from the funeral. I remembered that Sunday morning a few months before when Dr. Eckel had told some of his fascinating tales about Japan in Sunday school class. I had said to him, "Why don't you write the story of your life?"

He had retorted without hesitation, "Why don't you?"

"I will," I said. "I'll write it down if you will tell it to me."

That was the beginning of this book.

\* \* \* \* \*

## 02 -- THE BEGINNING

Sitting at the breakfast bar in Dr. and Mrs. William Eckel's lovely home, I was surrounded by graphic reminders of the couple's years in the Orient. Between us lay the microphone of a tape recorder. The warm California sun was streaming through the sliding glass doors as I looked expectantly at the rather mysterious man facing me. I say "mysterious" because it is still puzzling to try to reconcile the gigantic performances of a remarkable lifetime with the frail, yet intense, dynamic person who was sitting before me. There was in his bearing a restrained ebullience coupled with an exact politeness that gave him an aura of the Orient quite different from that of the average brash American. Rather small of stature, with twinkling hazel eyes, graying hair, and dressed in a full-sleeved blue kimono, Dr. William Eckel looked at me and smiled.

**"Tell me," I said, "tell me all about yourself." Speaking very precisely as if thinking in one language and translating his thoughts into another, he began to relate one of the most fantastic, yet true, stories of the 20th century.**

**"My father," he began, "was a Methodist minister. His name was Howard Eckel."**

**He went on to tell me that his father had lived in Altoona, Pa. He explained that Altoona is located in the crook of the Allegheny Mountains on Horseshoe Curve, a very famous historical site. His mother had been Eliza Baird before her marriage to his father. Her father had been a farmer, a coal miner, and a "humdinger," according to his grandson. Eliza and Howard were married in Latrobe, Pa., where he worked during the week to support his family and then preached at various churches on Sunday -- an old-fashioned Methodist circuit rider. To this couple six children were born. The first child was a daughter named Grace. Two and a half years later William was born on June 10, 1892, when the family was living in Charleroi, Pa. The next child was another little boy named Giles, who seems to have been the family favorite. More than 75 years later tears came to the eyes of Dr. Eckel and his voice broke as he told me about the death of his little brother, then only six years of age.**

**"He loved his daddy," said Dr. Eckel. "He would always wait for him with his head sticking through a gap in the fence where a rail was off. When he became so ill they knew he could not live, they told him that he would soon be going to heaven to be with Jesus. Giles said, 'All right, Daddy, I'll have my head out through the fence waiting for you.'"**

**Some years later another boy was born whom they named Howard. He died in infancy. A decade later two other children were born: Paul and Florence, who live in the eastern part of the United States.**

**William started to school in a small town called Mount Morris where his father was the pastor of the Methodist church. He confessed that he was a little rascal who liked at times to "bamboozle" the teacher. William enjoyed school because he enjoyed being with the other children and being a part of the activity. His love for people, even as a child, was the primary incentive for his life's work.**

**William found two other loves. He said to me, "To this day I cannot make up my mind which of the two I loved better. One was a horse my father bought for me, a little mare that I named Maud; the other was a trumpet."**

"Horses, you know, came before bicycles," he told me. "And when I got that horse, I loved her more than anything. All I wanted to do was ride her. I taught her how to jump; she could jump over any fence around. My father kept wondering why my horse would always get out, but I never told him." Dr. Eckel looked at me and grinned a very impish sort of grin.

One day when Rev. Eckel was going to one of his remote preaching points, he asked William if he would like to go along. Since this was a splendid opportunity to ride Maud, William readily agreed. When they arrived, it was time for Sunday school, so William went in and sat down on the back row of seats with several other boys about his own age. The Sunday school superintendent gave a talk explaining how important it is for children to give their hearts and lives to Christ. At the conclusion of his sermonette he said, "I want you boys back there to come up here to the altar and be saved."

William scooted down in his seat, trying to hide from the superintendent, who was pointing his finger right in his direction. The boy on his left got up and started forward; the boy on his right started forward. All of the other boys started to the front, leaving William all alone on the bench. He slouched down as far as he could, hoping that the superintendent would not notice that one boy remained. But the superintendent said, "Wasn't there another boy back there?"

William looked up and saw both his father and the superintendent looking at him, and he decided that he had better go. Never one to do anything halfheartedly, he arose, walked toward the altar, and vowed in his heart to be a Christian and a good one. That day in that remote little country church, God put His hand on His chosen vessel to carry the gospel to the Japanese people.

About the same time, Mr. Eckel bought William a trumpet, and an entirely new area of life opened up for the child. He loved to play, and after only a few lessons he became extremely proficient. "I was proud of the fact that there was no movement on the trumpet that I was not able to execute," Dr. Eckel said.

While William was enjoying life, riding his horse and playing his trumpet, his father was not having an easy time. He was being harassed by some church officials for preaching the doctrine of entire sanctification, which he had experienced and which he believed in so strongly. No doubt as an answer to prayer, Rev. Eckel was called to a church in Haverhill, Mass., in what was then known as the Pentecostal Holiness Movement. He readily accepted and moved with his family, relieved that at last he had a church where he could preach the full gospel as he believed it. The only

sad aspect of this move was that Maud had to be left behind in Pennsylvania.

After some time William's father was asked to take charge of the Pentecostal Holiness Movement in the state of Kentucky; thus it was that the Eckels were in one of the groups that banded together in 1908 in Peniel, Tex., to form the new denomination called the Church of the Nazarene. Rev. Eckel was assigned the position of district superintendent of Kentucky and Tennessee. His duty was to supervise the transition of the various holiness groups into established Churches of the Nazarene.

While his father was working at this important task, William enrolled in Olivet College. While still a college student, a strange longing had begun to manifest itself in his heart; it was a longing which soon was to grow into a sense of divine call to go to Japan and take the gospel to the Japanese people.

The first step toward this ultimate goal was to prepare himself for ordination which he did largely under the supervision of his father. Then at a district assembly presided over by the founder of the new denomination, Dr. Phineas Bresee, in 1912, William Eckel, along with a Mr. Glasswell and a Mr. Mackey, received his ordination papers and became a full-fledged minister in the Church of the Nazarene. This was another giant step toward Japan, although he was still on the eastern seaboard of the United States.

Not long after William's ordination his father was appointed district superintendent of the Southern California District and moved with part of his family to Los Angeles, Calif., to assume his new duties. William remained in Kentucky, preaching each time an opportunity presented itself and playing his trumpet for every suitable occasion.

One of these occasions proved to be a turning point in William's life. He was invited to play his trumpet for a camp meeting, and when he arrived for the first service, he spied a lovely young lady playing the piano. Her name was Florence Talbott.

"Oh, my! How she could play!" Dr. Eckel recalled. "We played night after night, and I'd say to her, 'Cut loose, go ahead, I'll follow you!' And she really cut loose. I tried my best to outdo her. I'd lead out with my trumpet, and she would try to outplay me, and finally we'd just laugh and say, 'Who's following who?'"

It was not only the shared musical talent that brought this young couple together: Florence, a devout Christian and a member of the Nazarene Church, had been praying about what seemed to be a call from

**God to the mission field, and it seemed that she had a special leading toward the country of Japan!**

**"How long was it before you popped the question?" I asked, visualizing a long and proper courtship appropriate for the early 20th century.**

**"About two weeks," Dr. Eckel answered with a grin. "When I asked her if she'd marry me, she said, 'Do you mean it?' I said, 'Yes, I mean it -- will you?' She just sort of cuddled up to me and said, 'Yes, I will.' 'When?' I asked. 'The sooner the better,' she said. But then she thought of something that bothered her, and she said, 'But I'm two years older than you.' 'What's that gonna hurt?' I asked her, and she said, 'Well, if you say it's OK, then it's OK, I guess.' So we set the date. I had just turned 21 and was my own boss, and I thought that if I wanted to get married, I'd get married."**

**Florence and William were married in 1913 in Kingswood, Ky., in the home of her parents by Dr. J. W. Hughes, a Methodist minister.**

**The young couple remained for a time in the Talbott home even though Mrs. Talbott was not really happy about the marriage of her only daughter. In fact, it proved to be not only difficult but impossible for Mrs. Talbott to give up her daughter, so as a result she lived with her daughter and son-in-law a great part of the time. "Tribulations worketh patience," Dr. Eckel reminded me with a twinkle in his eyes. During this period of time the possibility of ever getting to far-off Japan seemed remote indeed, but God had not forgotten His pagan children in the Land of the Rising Sun, nor had He forgotten those whom He had chosen to take the gospel to them.**

**While God was working on this side of the Pacific, He was also very much involved on the other side. When the Church of the Nazarene was organized in 1908, some holiness missionaries who had been working in Japan united with the new denomination. They were asked by the church to move to Kyoto and open a Nazarene mission there. A number of missionaries spent a year or two on this field, but the work was discouraging and difficult, and many returned to the States disillusioned or ill.**

**At last in 1914 Mrs. I. B. Staples and her husband, who had founded a mission for the many Japanese people in the city of Los Angeles, were commissioned by the church to go to Kumamoto on the southern island of Kyushu to start missionary work there. This meant, of course, that a replacement must be found for the Stapleses in Los Angeles. District Superintendent Eckel, knowing of his son's desire to minister to the Japanese people, asked his son and daughter-in-law if they would like to take over the work at the mission. The young couple eagerly accepted the**

assignment and moved to California, excited and thrilled with the prospect, but a little apprehensive about their first really tremendous challenge.

When the Eckels arrived for their new assignment, they found 35 or 40 Japanese Christians eager to welcome them. As they began their labor among these Oriental people, Dr. Eckel said, "It was not long until we realized that we were working in a whole new ball of wax."

Of course the most immediate problem was that of language. Most of the Japanese in Los Angeles spoke very little English at that time. The Eckels solved their problem by inviting a young Japanese Christian named Nobumi Isayama to move into one of the rooms of the mission at 1056 Berenda St., so that it would be convenient for them to study with him. Every afternoon they worked at learning the difficult language. They used a Japanese primer and began as if they were little children, with Isayama teaching them as he had been taught. As William and Florence became better acquainted with Isayama, they realized that he was a potential jewel for Christ. He had a pleasing appearance, a sparkling personality, an excellent grasp of the plan of salvation; but the most vital element was lacking -- the Holy Spirit.

Isayama had come to the United States with only one goal in mind -- to make money. Since becoming a Christian, he had enjoyed witnessing and praying with the Japanese on the coast just as long as it did not interfere with his original plan. The Eckels became extremely burdened for this young man. They became so concerned that one night Florence suggested that they pray until God gave them the assurance that Isayama would be totally committed to God. All night they prayed! The next day Isayama said that he did not feel like teaching that day. He admitted upon being questioned that God had been dealing with him and later testified saying, "The Lord had been dealing with my heart, calling me to preach. I had been fighting it. If I became a preacher, I had to give up the idea of making money. That afternoon I felt just terrible; I had no desire to teach or do anything. Someone, understanding my distress, suggested that we pray. We prayed, and as soon as I surrendered my life unconditionally, the Holy Spirit came suddenly and cleansed my heart. Then we had a wonderful time rejoicing and praising God there in that upstairs room of the mission."

Soon after Isayama was sanctified, he decided that he should return to his own country and find a wife. Before leaving, he said to Dr. Eckel, "I am going back to Japan and marry and bring my wife back here to the United States, but in case there should be some kind of quirk and you should be transferred to Japan, let me know and I'll wait for you."

**William Eckel replied, "I'll do it, and listen, as long as I have a biscuit, we will divide it between us. We will work together for the Lord." Isayama left for Japan.**

**In 1915 the first Church of the Nazarene was organized in Kumamoto with a good group of charter members and Rev. Hiroshi Kitagawa as pastor. During the same year the Church of the Nazarene was holding one of its first General Assemblies. Delegates from all over the United States were going to convene in Kansas City, Mo., to report on progress that had been made and to plan for the future. The youngest delegate to that assembly was none other than William Eckel from the Japanese Mission in California. Dr. Eckel's eyes shone as he remembered that assembly. He told me how one of the general superintendents had come to him and said, "Eckel, we want you to represent us in Japan next year. Will you go?"**

**"What did you say to that?" I asked.**

**"I said, 'Dr. Reynolds, I'm rarin' to go!'" Dr. Eckel grinned and said, "That was the beginning."**

**This was the door of the Orient being opened to the gospel of holiness; this was the answer to that indescribable yearning in William's heart; this was the reason that he and Florence had been asked to take over the mission; this was the reason for the hours spent learning the difficult language and trying to understand the Japanese people. All the parts of the puzzle were beginning to fall into place. Just as God had prepared Moses for his mission to the Israelites in Old Testament times and as He had prepared Paul for his mission to the Gentiles in the first century, so God prepared Florence and William Eckel for their mission to the Japanese people in the 20th century.**

**They had one year to get ready to go. What a year! They must continue to study the language; they must go to the people of southern California and raise enough money to pay all their expenses; yet the work at the Los Angeles mission must not be neglected. In addition, Florence was expecting their first child. The baby was a boy whom the proud parents named William but called Bill. He was born on June 6, 1915. Their hard work with the Japanese was rewarded by the conversion of many to Christianity, with several of the converts being called to preach. Greater and greater grew the love for the Japanese in the hearts of the Eckels.**

**At last came February of 1916. What an exciting adventure! For the first time this young couple with their baby made their way over the Pacific Ocean to the land that was to become their adopted country for almost half a century.**

The voyage to Japan took 21 days. It was a time of great uneasiness, for the German U-boats were operating throughout the Pacific. The nights were spent in total darkness to avoid detection by the Germans. Dr. Eckel told me that he could not improve on the description of this trip that he had written previously. The description follows:

"We were zigging and zagging, doing everything possible to circumvent an attack by a U-boat. We all knew that if one found us, that would be it! For over a week the United States navy escorted us when we were in a particularly dangerous zone. I remember very well when daylight came one morning and we could see the top of Japan -- Mount Fuji. We all rejoiced, but the danger was not over, for the U-boats were operating around every Japanese port. When we finally pulled into port and dropped anchor, our hearts were glad, and we said with great exultation, 'We have arrived in Japan!'"

\* \* \* \* \*

### **03 -- A TIME OF ADJUSTMENT**

The final destination of the Eckels was to be the city of Kyoto, located on the western side of the central island of Honshu. On February 25, 1916, they arrived in the port of Kobe, about 50 miles away. Imagine their surprise and joy to see among all the unfamiliar faces, the smiling faces of their dear friend Isayama and his bride, who was dressed elaborately in her full Japanese regalia! She was all ready for her promised trip to the United States, but little did she know at that time that her wedding trip was to be postponed for another 40 years. Miss Lula Williams was with the Isayamas to welcome the new missionaries.

After passing through customs, they all went to the Sannomiya Railroad Station where they ate dinner together. Miss Williams acted as the hostess for the occasion. After the meal she spoke at length to the Eckels. She tried to be as realistic as possible, yet not dampen the obvious enthusiasm of this dedicated young couple; she wanted to prepare them for some of the hardships she had endured and which she knew would confront them when they began their work. Dr. Eckel remembered that she had said something to this effect:

"You are coming into a difficult situation. The Church of the Nazarene is only a few years old. Sometimes missionaries from the older denominations misunderstand our motives; often the Japanese are hostile to foreigners. Your job will consist of many activities, but remember this, your primary duty here is to preach the gospel of heart holiness. You must determine in your heart that you will remain regardless of circumstances. You must not give up. Japan needs you, and we welcome you."

**Dr. Eckel looked straight at me and said, "Miss Williams had been through the fire so to speak. She knew what we were up against, but I was determined at any cost to make a go of it. I was ready to give myself 100 percent for Japan."**

**"And what about your wife?" I asked. "Did she feel the same?"**

**"She felt the same. She loved the Japanese people and was determined to make our home there among them and win some of them to Christ."**

**At that time, Dr. Eckel told me, it was very difficult for foreigners to rent property in Japan. The people were generally suspicious of Westerners. Almost always the Americans wanted to make some changes in the house or building to convert it to Western-style living. The Japanese did not want their property changed. They would always inquire what the renters wanted to do in the way of repairs, and the price would rise in direct proportion to the number of changes anticipated. In some cities it was considered a disgrace to rent one's property to foreigners.**

**In spite of these difficulties, Miss Williams had found three houses together on East Mountain overlooking the old capital city of Kyoto. This picturesque city, the center of the Oriental religions of Japan, boasted a beautiful pagan temple which had been built at a cost of \$5 million. But now a construction company had just completed one hundred rental houses. The three procured by Miss Williams were located at the end of a row and had a large open court in front. The Eckels were given the largest house; Miss Williams took the smallest, and the Isayamas, the third. Another advantage to these houses was that the tenants were allowed to make any changes they wished, so the Eckels were able to adapt their little house to their needs and make it very comfortable for the next two years while they lived in Kyoto. Of course the house was very different from the ones they had lived in here in the States. Even though it was a small house, it seemed quite spacious since they had so little furniture. They had no chairs, for Japanese then sat on straw mats on the floor; they had no stove, for Japanese at that time cooked their meals on hibachis; they had no bed, for Japanese slept on mats on the floor. The Eckels had brought some blankets with them so they were able to keep warm and fairly comfortable even on the floor. They did have a low table.**

**"It is amazing how very versatile and sufficient one room can be under certain conditions," Dr. Eckel said. "You stand the table up in the corner of the room, take the mats out of the closet -- we had a large closet - - spread them on the floor, and you have a bedroom. Roll the mats up, put**

them back into the closet, put the table down and bring in the hibachi from the porch, and you have a kitchen and a dining room."

The Eckels bought the necessary dishes after they arrived in Kyoto. The Japanese served rice in porcelain bowls and fish in porcelain dishes, but soup was usually served in lacquer bowls. Of course they ate with chopsticks, an art they had learned from their Japanese friends in Los Angeles. Food was simple and what the Japanese had eaten for centuries. They ate mostly fish, rice, and vegetables, accompanied by the ever-present cup of green tea. On rather special occasions when their finances would permit, the Eckels served the very popular dish called "sukiyaki," a combination of pan fried slices of beef and a variety of vegetables served over rice. At times they would have small slices of raw fish and delicious bamboo sprouts. Fruit was available when it was in season.

I thought about some of my favorite foods and my soft bed and electric blanket, and for a moment I felt sorry for this young couple -- but only for a moment; for I could see by the shining eyes and smiling face of my friend that he had not considered it a hardship, but rather a joy and an exciting adventure because the dream that had been his for so long was finally coming to fruition.

Even though there was no organized district in Japan, no Nazarene churches, there were a small number of Japanese Christians who were delighted to welcome the Eckels and who promised to help in every possible way to advance the work of the Lord and to spread the gospel in their native land. At first the Eckels spent their time visiting the people, getting acquainted with Japanese customs, making friends, and gathering support for a more aggressive effort. There was little social life other than visiting and eating with their new-found friends and the Isayamas.

The first time the Eckels invited some Christian friends to eat with them, they all sat down around the low table. Of course their shoes were always left at the door, and the people drew their feet under them and settled themselves on the little straw mats. The guests then looked expectantly at their host, and for a moment Dr. Eckel was a little bothered, for he knew how strictly the Japanese followed their customs and he wanted to be the perfect host, but he really did not know what to do next. Who should come to his rescue but his ever-present friend Isayama sitting beside him who whispered, "Pick up your bowl and chopsticks and stir your soup and take a sip, then the others may start." Impeccable manners preserved by the advice of Counselor Isayama! The meals went slowly, talking, planning, eating, and sipping tea. Often the ritual would last two hours or more, but in 1916 the Japanese were not in a big hurry. Many times a person would be won to the Lord during the course of a meal. Other times people would come to the home of the missionaries and ask

for prayer. They would say, "I want to change from Buddhism. I want to be a Christian and get involved." Dr. Eckel said that one of the greatest appeals of Christianity to the Japanese was the activity of the Christian religion, a notable contrast to the passivity of Buddhism.

The Eckels had not been in Kyoto long before they learned that a Miss Ethel McPherson was being sent by Headquarters in Kansas City to help Miss Williams with her mission work in the very heart of Kyoto's theater district. She arrived in 1917, and she and Miss Williams continued the work at the Nazarene Mission just across the street from the largest theater on the street of theaters. Here every night crowds of people would swarm to see the plays about ancient Japan.

Dr. Eckel said, "Every night the narrow street was a solid mass of humanity, like the waters of a river, flowing through Kyugoku (Theater Street) on their way to eternity, always seeking something strange or new. At the Mission they found it: Bibles, tracts, religious books, and a preacher explaining the mighty Word of the Living God. The work of these two ladies left such an impact on that city that people still remember and talk about the Nazarene Mission that used to be on Kyugoku."

It was only a short time before the Eckels found that Miss Williams' speech to them on their arrival had been indeed prophetic. Many of the Japanese people let these new missionaries know that they were quite satisfied with their religion. They did not care to change.

Dr. Eckel told me, "I realized that I had to draw up a new code to live by. It had three parts. First, I had not only to learn a new language; I must think as the Japanese think; I must act as the Japanese act. I must forget that I am an American and be one of them. Second, nothing was going to persuade me to quit and go back to America. Japan was to be my home. Third, I must present Christ, who could transform their lives, to them. I would show them a happy religion in the midst of stoicism, and I would never fail to pray for my people, the Japanese. This was to be my code. Whatever others did, this was to be my way of life."

As I listened to Dr. Eckel talk about his philosophy, I could see very clearly why this missionary had had such fabulous success where so many others had failed. The conviction, the determination, the perseverance embodied in this one individual staggered my imagination, and I realized again that God does not make mistakes. Surely He had chosen wisely when He laid Japan and her people on the heart of this stalwart Christian!

He admitted that there were times of discouragement. "But," he said, "I had made up my mind. The harder things got, the more convinced I became that there was work to be done, and that it was my job to do it."

About two years after we got there, the road got very rough; the enemy tried to persuade me to quit and go home as others had done, but I was not persuaded."

"What was the most difficult thing to face?" I asked, wondering to myself whether it would be sleeping on the hard floor every night or eating rice for every meal or taking baths in cold water. But it was none of these.

He said, "It was the resistance to change on the part of many of the Japanese. Many of them felt that Jesus and the way of salvation through faith was perhaps good for the American, but not for them. I remember well when the first Japanese man tried to explain this to me. He said, 'We want your business, we want your learning, we want your tourists, we want your money; but we do not want your God.' I felt as if someone had poured cold water all over me. My heart asked, 'Should I leave them alone? Should I just go back to America?'"

Obviously he found a way to resolve the conflict, for he had not given up and returned.

"I inquired of the Lord what He would have me do, just like the prophets of old did, and God spoke to me through His Word. He gave me two scriptures: 'For we are labourers together with God; ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building' (1 Cor. 3:9). And 'For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ' "(1 Cor. 3:11).

This was the inner conflict; this was the early struggle; this was the crucial decision that sealed the eternal fate of thousands of Japanese people who because of the total commitment of this skillful soul winner found peace and joy and contentment through repentance and acceptance of the living Lord into their hearts and lives.

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#### 04 -- A TIME OF EXPANSION

The Kyoto Mission station was located on Gojo (5th) Street, near a very old bridge from which all distances in Japan were measured in the early days. As Dr. Eckel reminisced about this work in Japan, it was obvious to me that this mission brought back memories of many battles fought and victories won in the expansion of Christianity in the Land of the Rising Sun.

One of the first difficulties he encountered was objections to the street meetings they held to advertise regular services at the mission. Most of these objections seemed to come from the police; so Dr. Eckel, as he

said, "took the bull by the horns" and went to see the governor of the prefecture and requested permission to hold the street meetings. God evidently moved the heart of the governor, and Dr. Eckel was given the desired permission. From that time on there were no more problems with the police; in fact, they were obliged to protect the missionaries and keep order as the services were held.

Dr. Eckel told me the story of one of many young people won to the Lord through these meetings. He had noticed this particular boy was leaning against a telephone pole, listening to the music and to the sermon. After the service, he had followed the group back to the mission, and after some additional instruction, bowed in prayer. That night he remained after everyone else had gone from the regular service, and finally Dr. Eckel learned that he was a runaway, many miles from his home, which was in Kyushu. He confided to the Eckels that his home was very unhappy; his brother had just died and he was lonely and depressed.

"But now," he said, "I have heard the voice of God, and I am going to follow His voice the rest of my life."

The young man had never known anything but Buddhism, and he was so happy with his new-found peace that he could hardly contain himself. He wrote to his mother to tell her the news, and she replied that she was happy that he was well and that she was glad to know where he was, but she was very unhappy to hear about his becoming a Christian. A few months later he visited her, but she was still not interested in his testimony or the Christian religion. She wanted him to get a job and settle down as the other boys in the neighborhood were doing, but he refused. He told her that he was going back to Kyoto and study to become a preacher like Dr. Eckel. She just laughed and said, "You do not have any money to go back, and I will not give you any."

"Then I will write to my friends," he replied.

"You have no friends except the ones you have here," she told him.

"I will write to them and I will show you; they will answer," he assured her.

When his postal card came to the mission, Isayama asked Dr. Eckel if he had any money to send to the boy. Of course Dr. Eckel found some and sent it, telling the young man to hurry back. The boy's mother was astonished. She could not believe that Christians really loved and cared for one another.

"Is that Christianity?" she asked.

The boy returned, entered Bible school, became a preacher of the gospel, and had great joy in finally winning his mother to the Lord before she died.

Dr. Eckel recalled that many years later when he was visiting this young man's church, he found two offering boxes at the entrance. The larger box had a door and shelves, much like a cupboard. The young resourceful preacher explained that the smaller box was for money and the larger one was for vegetables, eggs, rice, or fish.

"You know, Missionary," he said, "we must provide for every kind of offering."

What large returns from an investment of a small amount of money, a little confidence, and very much Christian love! It is through stories like this that I began to get an insight into the great heart and vision of Missionary Eckel.

In 1918 the Eckels received word that the request for a new work which they had made some months before had been granted, so they and the Isayamas began to make plans to open a mission in the city of Hiroshima. Isayama was sent ahead to find lodgings for the two families. He would go out early every morning and look until late at night, but as soon as a property owner found out that he was a Christian and that a missionary would be coming, he would refuse to rent. Finally the Eckels grew tired of waiting and sent word that they were coming to Hiroshima anyway, house or not!

There was no place to stay except in the little Japanese hotel. Crowded and uncomfortable, the two couples prayed and prayed, asking God to help them find a house to live in. One morning when their money was almost gone and their spirits low, Florence announced, "Today we are going to find a house. The Lord told me so."

That very day they did find a house. It was an old house, at least 75 years old, where a military officer had been living. Attached to the house was a stable where the officer had kept two horses. The entire building was extremely dirty and in bad disrepair. Much work had to be done before they could live in the house, but undaunted, the four set to work. It was not too long until the stable was clean and repaired, the rats were gone, the flies and bugs were controlled, and the missionaries had a nice, homelike place in which to live. But then came the real problem! When they tried to find a building to rent for the mission, they were rebuffed on every hand. The people of Hiroshima had banded together and agreed that they would never rent their property for use as a Christian church.

Since no place could be found for a mission, Dr. Eckel felt that they should investigate the possibilities at Kure, a city only 16 miles away. No Westerners at all were allowed to live in Kure because of the large naval installations there, but the Isayamas were able to find a house to live in and a large, vacant building that had been a fish market but which could be made into a suitable place to hold church services. The building was in an excellent location since it was on a street which many young men who were employed in the navy yards used each day as they went to work. The Eckels had to have a permit to enter the city, and they were shadowed all the time they were there. In fact, the entire city was heavily guarded. However, this did not seem to hinder the work of the missionaries.

In 1919 the Eckels learned that Dr. Reynolds would be coming to Japan for his second visit. The services he held in Kure were of tremendous help to the new mission. Dr. Eckel recalled that to advertise the services, the Isayamas and the Eckels would go out and hold street meetings. Mrs. Isayama would beat a drum, Dr. Eckel would play his trumpet, and Florence would sing. Never had the Japanese people heard such music! The crowds would gather, and then Isayama would testify and invite the people to the regular services. In the evening service Dr. Reynolds would preach and Isayama would interpret; always there were a number of seekers. At the close of his visit Dr. Reynolds baptized 12 young men whom he called the "Twelve disciples of Kure."

As he continued to visit the various churches and mission stations in Japan, Dr. Reynolds realized that it was time for a formal organization; so in the year 1919 the first organized missionary district in the Church of the Nazarene was brought into being. What a thrilling time for all the national pastors, Dr. Reynolds, and especially Dr. Eckel who with God's help had brought it all to pass!

Near the close of this same year Miss Williams requested a furlough, and some of her co-workers felt inadequate to continue the work without her, so they asked to be relieved of their duties. This was a setback to the work in Kyoto, so Dr. Reynolds asked Dr. Eckel to return to Kyoto and expand the work there. Leaving the flourishing church in Kure in the capable hands of Shiro Kitagawa, the Eckels and the Isayamas returned to Kyoto.

Dr. Eckel remembered taking a survey of the city to see what part would be best for a new mission to work in conjunction with the old Gojo Mission. At the time the old capital was divided into two districts: the upper district was adjoining the palace grounds, where the emperor had lived for more than a thousand years. The lower district did not touch the palace grounds. In the upper district Dr. Eckel found a large vacant building which

had been used as a restaurant. He was able to rent the building, but again extensive repairs were necessary before it could be used as a mission. A Christian doctor living in the area took a special interest in the project. He and several Nazarene Christians rallied to the aid of the missionaries, and soon a church was organized. It was named the Kamikyo Church, and Isayama became its pastor. He remained with that congregation 15 years. Dr. Eckel continued to supervise this church and other churches and missions on the central island.

In July, 1920, the Eckels were elated when a baby daughter was born to them. It was at the time of year when the Japanese azaleas were in full bloom, and they decided to name their beautiful child after the beautiful flowers. In order to make the name unique, they changed the accent to the third syllable and called their daughter AzaLEa.

Dr. Eckel told me that the birth of a child in Japan was celebrated quite differently in those days from what they had been used to in the United States. "We had to find enough food for presents and take a gift to each of our friends and say, 'We are sorry to announce to you that a baby is born in our home, which causes you consternation.' Then they would reply, 'No, don't mention it.'"

"That seems strange to apologize for something that is none of their business," I ventured.

Then Dr. Eckel explained to me that the Japanese view life very differently from the way Americans do. He said that they felt they should apologize for any inconvenience which they caused to another individual whether direct or indirect. They did not want to cause any problem for the human race, and if perchance they did do anything that might provoke anxiety, they felt they should at least apologize for it. If any kind of tragedy befell a Japanese, he would apologize for the trouble it caused his friends or bystanders. If his house should burn down, he would take a gift and apologize for the inconvenience of his neighbors' having to come out to view the fire!

At this point I began to get a glimpse of the real substance of the code which Dr. Eckel had determined to live by: To become one of them, to think and to act as one of them. What infinite patience and perseverance it must have taken for the Eckels to become so well accepted and so well loved by the Japanese people!

Late in the year of 1922 the Eckels left Japan on furlough to spend Christmas in America. This was to be a very happy year for them. Of course there was the wonderful reunion with their families. Everyone was amazed

at how much William D. had grown and how pretty little two-year-old Azalea was.

After the holidays Mrs. Eckel settled down in Kansas City to await the birth of their third child while Dr. Eckel began traveling around the United States telling the churches here at home about the new and thriving work in the Orient and raising money to be used in Japan to continue and to expand the work of Christian evangelism upon his return.

"Were you at home when the babies were born?" I asked, knowing that there were two instead of one.

"No. I was away," Dr. Eckel said. "I remember very well when the telegram came to me from E. G. Anderson: 'Two boys born this morning stop Both mother and twins doing well.' I never wrote it down and I never forgot it."

Dr. Eckel took a train home immediately to see his new twin sons, Baldwin Talbott and Eugene Talbott. When the Eckels returned to Japan at the end of their furlough, their number had increased from one-third of a dozen to an even one-half dozen!

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## 05 -- TIMES OF TESTING

When the Eckels arrived on the boat at Kobe, the Isayamas were there to greet them. Both families were happy and relieved that the long trip was over and that the Eckels had arrived safely. However, it was not long before Dr. Eckel learned that all had not gone well while he was away. As they rode on the train toward Kyoto, Isayama told him the story of the most crucial test the church had encountered so far in Japan.

The Christian doctor who had been so helpful in starting the new work at the Kamikyo Church had decided to go with his wife to a new work that had been introduced in Kyoto by a preacher who promised to teach his followers the art of divine healing. A number of other Nazarenes had gone with them. They had asked Isayama to bring the rest of his congregation with him and join them, but he had refused because, as he told Dr. Eckel, he had been converted in the Church of the Nazarene, he believed in its doctrine and program, and he intended to remain faithful to his calling as a pastor. As a result of this division, a church that had been running over 100 suddenly dropped to 15 or 20 people. Isayama told Dr. Eckel that the days that had followed had been the darkest days of his life, but he and his wife had remained faithful, fasting and praying night after night and carrying on their pastoral duties during the day.

All this Isayama told Dr. Eckel as the train sped toward Kyoto. When he had finished the story, he asked Dr. Eckel whether there was anything they could do to renew interest in the church. Dr. Eckel smiled at him and assured him that God would make a way, that the darkest hour is just before daybreak. After all the months of trial and disappointment, Isayama could not respond too hopefully, but he had not lost his faith nor his belief that God could perform the impossible.

After much prayer and study Dr. Eckel felt that the wisest thing to do was to open a new mission in a strategic location so that it would be near enough to act as a feeder for the Kamikyo Church. Now the question was "Where?" After more prayer and study they decided on the Nishijin section, the most famous weaving area in all of Japan. There were no large factories; the silk weavers lived in small houses, but each house reserved one room for weaving. There were several different kinds of silk weaving, and each weaver had his own specialty.

The missionaries soon found a large, old vacant house and rented it. Like all the other buildings they had rented, this one also needed repair. They removed all the paper doors which constituted the walls of the house, cleaned it, and made it ready for a meeting. But instead of holding a meeting, the missionaries had handbills printed. Then each evening they would go out and hold a short street meeting where they would pass out the handbills and announce that a meeting would soon take place. After these meetings the Eckels and the Isayamas would return to the rented building and pray for the people. In just a short time the people began to ask when the meeting was going to be held. "Soon," the missionaries would reply: The people seemed to become more and more interested. When Dr. Eckel felt that the time was right, a meeting was announced. The house was nearly filled for the very first service, and many made their way to the altar to accept Christ as their Savior.

A young man, carrying a towel and a wash basin on his way to the public bath, saw the crowd and stepped inside to investigate. This was the first time in his life he had heard the gospel, but when the invitation was given, he was the very first person to come forward for prayer. This young man became Rev. Murakami, who became the publisher of the district paper and a tremendous power for God and the church in Japan.

The second night of the meeting there were so many people they could not all get into the house. So many people were sitting on the floor that the rice-straw mat gave way and sank down in the middle, but no one laughed or moved; they just continued sitting quietly listening to the message. Again the altar call was given, and again the altar was filled with seekers, praying for forgiveness and asking Christ to come into their

hearts. The meetings continued for four nights, and more than 75 people were converted; the Kamikyo church was on the move again! The next New Year's Day a special service was held in the church and over 250 people attended. Dr. Eckels' conviction that God never fails those who remain faithful to Him through times of trial proved reliable one more time.

From that time on, the Kamikyo church began to grow and reach out to all parts of the city. At every service there were people who had never before heard the story of Jesus. Isayama was the regular pastor, and he worked hard preaching, visiting the sick, and witnessing for Christ at every opportunity. Dr. Eckel held several special meetings for the church. In one of these meetings the wife of a retired policeman was miraculously healed and saved. Her conversion was soon followed by that of her husband and family, and the testimony of these people did much to increase the interest in and growth of this new work.

Incident after incident of remarkable conversions and healings were related as Dr. Eckel thought back over the more than 40 years he had spent in Japan, preaching, praying, building, encouraging, and establishing the Church of the Nazarene.

The years passed by with the Eckels continuing to supervise and enlarge the work in Kyoto and the outlying areas. In 1927 the workers in Japan were thrilled and honored when Dr. Eckel received word that not one, but two general superintendents, Dr. R. T. Williams and Dr. J. W. Goodwin, were coming for a visit.

These two American preachers were used to strenuous schedules, but they were not used to travel in the Orient. Passengers on trains in Japan had three classes from which to choose -- first, second, and third. Third class was the least expensive and the most uncomfortable. Second class fare was twice as much as third class, and first class was twice as much as second. To the conservative Japanese it was much easier to sacrifice comfort than money; therefore most of the people traveled third class. This was the transportation which was provided for the Americans, complete with hard seats, box lunches, and other inconveniences. Dr. Goodwin at that time was 60 years of age, yet he shared the same rigorous travel and activity as did his younger colleague.

It was in the church at Kure that both general superintendents got their first experience in Oriental-type missions. Dr. Eckel's eyes twinkled as he told this story. He recalled that a torrential rain began on the day of arrival of the Americans. The service had been well advertised in advance, and a large hall had been rented for the occasion. But hour after hour the steady downpour continued. Dr. Goodwin was not feeling well, and it was decided that he should not go out in such bad weather, but that Dr.

Williams would go with Dr. Eckel and preach. The two took their umbrellas and went sloshing through the mud and water in the streets. Even though it was raining very hard, the narrow street was quite crowded; and since everyone was carrying an umbrella, Dr. Williams was assaulted on every side. He was much taller than the Japanese, and this meant that the points of their umbrellas came almost on a level with his eyes. With one hand he carried his umbrella and with the other he tried to protect his face. He suddenly stopped in a puddle of water and asked, "W. A., do you think that there will be anyone there after we have gone through all this to get there?" (Dr. Williams was evaluating the situation based on his experiences in the United States.)

Dr. Eckel replied, "Well, we are nearer there than we are to the hotel, so we had better go on."

When they finally arrived at the hall, they tried to brush off some of the water and straighten their clothes. They prayed with the other workers, and then walked out on the platform. "I shall never forget the look on the general superintendent's face!" said Dr. Eckel. "He was expecting only a handful of devout souls. What he saw was over 2,000 people, mostly non-Christians, eager to hear about a living God."

Rev. Kitagawa interpreted for Dr. Williams as he preached, and when the call was made for people to come forward to accept Christ as their Savior, people started coming from every direction until there were three rows of seekers across the front of that large building. Needless to say, Dr. Williams was elated, and this meeting gave the church at Kure a tremendous boost.

During these busy years the Eckel children were growing up in a very different environment from that of their American cousins. Japanese nurses practically reared the children; therefore the Japanese language for all practical purposes became their "mother tongue." The children spoke English only to their parents; all of their other associates were Japanese. When time came for their education, there was much concern. Coming to the aid of the Eckels, both parents and children, was Dr. Eckel's younger sister, Florence, who went to Japan and stayed for several years acting as the children's teacher.

Dr. Eckel smiled as he told me, "You know, we had to keep telling them, 'You are Americans; you are not Japanese.' But they really did not understand who Americans were until they made their first trip to the United States. When the ship docked at San Francisco and they caught sight of all the Americans, they said, 'Look at all those foreigners!'"

While the Eckels were in the States on furlough, the children were enrolled in American schools. Dr. Eckel said, "There were lots of problems to be solved and frustrations to be worked out. The children kept asking when we were going home."

Certainly the Eckels' children were citizens of two lands and, culturally speaking, they were predominately Japanese. The one-year vacation came to an end in 1928, and the family returned to Japan.

Then came 1929, and in America the stock market crashed and the country was plunged into the big depression. People all across the United States were out of work, standing in soup lines or working for the WPA [Work P-rogress A-dministration]. The ones who were lucky enough to have regular jobs took huge cuts in wages and considered themselves fortunate. Individuals and businesses went bankrupt, and many mortgages were foreclosed on homes, commercial buildings, and churches. Even though many Nazarenes paid more than their tithes, churches were hard pressed to stay open. There was very little money for anything, and hardly any for foreign missions. Missionaries were being recalled every month. Finally the word came to Dr. Eckel. The bad news was that the church could no longer pay even his meager salary or support the work in Japan, and he was to come back to the States immediately. Dr. Eckel sent word back that he was not coming, that he would support himself and as much of the work as he could. He then began to look for a job which would enable him to do just that. He did not look long. God opened the door for him to teach English and Japanese history at a military academy right there in Kyoto. The salary was small, but for five years he taught in that academy, from 1929-1934, and kept the churches open and the work going, paying all the expenses himself. It was while he was teaching in this school that he began to learn bits and pieces of information that led him to suspect that the Japanese warlords had more on their minds than their war with China.

By the year of 1935 the membership of the Church of the Nazarene in the central district of Japan had grown to 1,600, and the number of churches had grown to 33. The Christians would gather for days of fasting and prayer; there was a great tide of spirituality sweeping through Japan, and it was not yet 30 years since the Japanese had first heard the gospel message through the Church of the Nazarene. During this time many of the converts had become mature Christians, assuming positions of leadership and responsibility.

The church leaders in Kansas City saw the advantages of turning over much of the responsibility to the Japanese, allowing them to adapt the program of evangelism to their own culture. By this time the general church was again sending some money for the mission work. Thus it was that in 1935 General Superintendent J. B. Chapman went to Japan to

preside over the first district assembly of the Japanese Church of the Nazarene. Dr. Eckel was in charge of all the arrangements for the occasion. On the first ballot cast for district superintendent, Rev. Shiro Kitagawa was elected. I could hear the pride in Dr. Eckel's voice as he told me how this was his dream come true! A full-fledged Japanese Church of the Nazarene with their own elected Japanese leader!

When the General Board met in January, 1936, they decided that a new missionary district should be opened elsewhere in Japan. For some time Dr. Eckel and Isayama had felt the need for a work in the capital city of Tokyo, so they were delighted when word came asking them to assume that responsibility.

In just two years' time with the prayer and hard work of these two dedicated men, 10 churches were organized in the Tokyo area. The name given this new work was the Kwanto District. God blessed the churches with talented pastors and dedicated laymen. Rev. Isayama was made the district superintendent of the new district, and Dr. Eckel continued to evangelize, counsel, supervise, and encourage. Every indication was that the work in Japan was flourishing, but deep in Dr. Eckel's heart was a gnawing fear of what the growing nationalism might do to all of Christianity in the Land of the Rising Sun.

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## 06 -- DAYS OF CONFLICT

The clouds of war were growing heavier and heavier, and Dr. Eckel began to hear rumors that the military government was considering the idea of placing the Christian churches, as well as other sects, under the control of the Minister of Education. What would this mean to the churches that he had worked so hard to bring to fruition?

"Did you feel a growing hostility on the part of the Japanese people?" I asked Dr. Eckel.

"There was absolutely no hostility on the part of the people," he told me.

He then explained to me that while it is customary to speak of the Japanese people as being the enemy in World War II, it is much more accurate to assign that title to a secret society in Japan at that time known as "The Black Dragon." Since there was never a legal organization, little can be documented concerning their activities; yet it is common knowledge in Japan that the Black Dragon was literally the power behind the throne during the prewar years. Its membership was estimated to be

about 100,000 rabid nationalists hidden within the framework of Shintoism and led by a man named Toyama, who was dedicated to making Japan a supreme power. As the power of this organization began to grow and intensify, Dr. Eckel could see trouble ahead, for the principles of Christianity were diametrically opposed to those of the power-hungry warlords. Naturally, the Japanese Christians were caught in the middle of the conflict between worship of God and loyalty to their country. The situation became more and more difficult for them, and Dr. Eckel's heart went out to them; nevertheless he continued to stress the importance of God being supreme in their hearts.

"Those were heartbreaking days," he said, "I wanted to make it easier for them, but there was no way."

As time went by, it became more and more difficult to preach. New restrictions were continually being placed on the missionaries and churches. The missionaries finally were told that they must submit outlines of their sermons, and laymen had to write out their prayers so that government officials could check to see whether they could be prayed to God without insulting their Shinto ancestors. In every service there was a plainclothesman to report whether the "correct" sermon and prayer had been used. Every Japanese Christian was on a blacklist, and every missionary was shadowed.

One day early in 1940 when Dr. Eckel was in Tokyo, a Japanese friend who was close to government sources came to see him.

"Are we alone in the house?" he asked.

Dr. Eckel assured him that no one else was present. "Are you very sure?" he insisted. Then he looked in every room and closet to see for himself that they were indeed alone. When he had finished his search, he came back to Dr. Eckel and whispered, "You know, Missionary, that I am your friend; what I tell you, repeat to no one. Get out of Japan while you can, or you may never make it."

"When?" Dr. Eckel asked.

"Now," his friend replied.

The Eckels began immediately to make preparations to come to the States. They had already planned to attend the General Assembly which was to be held in Oklahoma City. When they were finally allowed to sail, they were ordered to go with little more than the clothes they were wearing. Even so, they were much more fortunate than many of their colleagues, for about 100 Christian missionaries never got out of Japan.

**As Dr. Eckel stood on the deck of the ship saying good-bye to the loyal group of Nazarene pastors who had come to see him off, his oldest and dearest friend among them, Isayama, said to him, "Missionary, if you don't get back to Japan, we will shed our blood if need be for the Christ who shed His for us." The next few years proved that this was the kind of commitment necessary to withstand the dark and terrible days that lay ahead.**

**A few months later Rev. Isayama and Rev. Kitagawa were allowed to sail to the United States to attend the General Assembly. They met with Dr. Eckel and the General Board to discuss the crisis facing the church in Japan. It was decided that for the sake of strength and efficiency in the difficult and trying times, all the Nazarene churches in Japan should be united into one district. Isayama was named district superintendent, and the two men returned to Japan with some apprehension, yet totally persuaded that God was able to keep that which had been committed to Him.**

**In the meantime, here in the United States, Dr. Eckel had been refused permission to return to Japan, so he began traveling from church to church, holding special services and telling the American Nazarenes about the mission work and churches in Japan. Early in the year of 1941 he was appointed district superintendent of the Rocky Mountain District, and he and Mrs. Eckel moved to Billings, Mont., to assume their new responsibilities.**

**It was a very difficult time in many respects, for the Eckels were torn between their loyalty to their own country and love for their many brothers and sisters in Christ in the country which had now become the enemy of the United States. They were ministering to churches here in American where the customs, priorities, and procedures were often very different from those they were used to in Japan. While they were laboring on the Rocky Mountain District, they were constantly worrying about what was really happening in Japan. Their primary concern was for the people, but they also wondered what was happening to the church buildings, the homes of their friends, and property that Dr. Eckel had worked so hard to acquire.**

**Another very personal, traumatic conflict was raging in the mind of Dr. Eckel because of the information he had concerning the goals and plans of the Japanese government. The Pentagon questioned him repeatedly. What and how much should he tell? He could not withhold intelligence which might save his own country from defeat; he had always loved America dearly. Yet he could not betray his dear friends who loved and trusted him even though they lived in Japan. There were so many**

questions! What should he do? Only God had the answers, and Dr. Eckel spent hours on his knees seeking to know and do His will.

By the time the war was in full fury, Dr. Eckel had one more anxiety. One of the twins, Baldwin Talbott, enlisted in the United States Army. So the Eckels joined the thousands of other American parents waiting, watching, and praying for their sons in uniform. The rest of the Eckel family was busy in varied activities. William, the eldest son, was now a minister; Azalea was a pastor's wife and an elementary school teacher; and Eugene Talbott, the other twin, was still in college.

Never one to waste time regardless of the circumstances, Dr. Eckel set himself to the task of serving and enlarging the Rocky Mountain District. During the five years he spent in this assignment, the first district parsonage was purchased, each church was visited on a regular basis, and 11 new churches were organized and established. Dr. Ross Price, now superintendent of the Rocky Mountain District, wrote: "Dr. Eckel received a unanimous vote at the conclusion of his first year as district superintendent. I think that this was the only time a D.S. received such a vote in the entire history of the district." No matter where Dr. Eckel was assigned or what the task, the results were always more than gratifying!

Mrs. Eckel traveled with her husband over the district whenever she was able, but she had developed a heart condition, and her health was beginning to fail. How the Eckels prayed and longed for the day the terrible war would be over, and they could return to their adopted home across the seas!

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## 07 -- JOY AND SORROW

At long last peace was declared. General MacArthur, though not without detractors in the United States, remains a hero to the Japanese people and a true statesman to the Americans who observed his conduct in Japan during the occupation. He was determined to make peace with the Japanese, and he realized that the spirit of peace must come from the proper source, the hearts of the people. Accordingly, his instructions to his troops were in every way conducive to the establishment of friendly relations with the common people of Japan. I could sense the admiration in the voice of Dr. Eckel as he spoke of the general.

Perhaps the greatest postwar incident influencing the spread of Christianity in Japan was the visit of the emperor, the "Son of Heaven," to the American Army Headquarters. The press was there, and the cameras clicked as the unprecedented event was recorded for history. No longer

was the emperor a divinity; he had capitulated to other human beings; the very foundation of the Shinto religion was now shattered.

The next event which stunned the Japanese people was the television broadcast by Hirohito himself reading a carefully worded message which stated that he was not divine and that he had no relation whatever to the Shinto sect. Dr. Eckel told me that this was the answer to the prayer the Japanese Christians had been praying for years -- that God would open a way for their people to accept Christ without fear and intimidation from their own government.

Dr. Eckel remembered that Chaplain Joseph Pitts, a member of the occupation forces, was perhaps the first Nazarene to search out what was left of our churches. Nearly all had been destroyed by the bombs, but finally in Tokyo he found a Nazarene church building standing in the midst of rubble. This was the church where Isayama had placed his life on the line as bombs were exploding and fire was raging on every side. Isayama had knelt at the altar of the little church building and told God that if He let the fire engulf the church, He would have to take his life also. God miraculously protected the building and his faithful servant even though everything else in the neighborhood was destroyed. Soon other Nazarene servicemen began to make their presence known by way of helping with food and clothing and encouragement.

In November, 1945, a committee of representatives of the Protestant churches of America was sent to Japan to lay plans for rebuilding and enlarging the work of Christianity in the ravaged country. They had a delicate question to ask as citizens of the victorious country: Did the Japanese want the Protestant churches of America to return? Before this question could actually be voiced, the Japanese Christians asked one of their own: Would the Americans come and help them reestablish and enlarge the work of Christ in their needy country?

The committee returned to the States, elated with the response they had found, so in April of 1946 a new era of missionary work was begun in Japan. Only missionaries who had been there before and understood the Japanese would be allowed to go. At last Dr. Eckel's prayer to return to his beloved field was answered.

After six months of delays, frustrations, and preparation, passage was finally booked for his return. Leaving his wife and family here in the United States, Dr. Eckel set sail in a battered old ship called the Marine Falcon, which was loaded with supplies for the occupation forces. It was January 7, 1947, before the ship sailed into the quiet waters at Yokohama harbor. "As the ship tied up at the pier, I was standing on the deck," Dr.

Eckel recalled. "The town before me was shattered and desolate; only here and there could be seen buildings that had withstood the ravages of war."

He told me how unnatural the old wharf looked, about the heavy army equipment going back and forth, about the military guards everywhere, and about the military police directing the traffic in the harbor. As he stood staring at the strangeness, he realized that Japan had undergone a complete transformation. It would never be the same as in the days before the war. Never before had any foreign army set foot upon her soil. Always before the will of the emperor had determined her course. Today all was different. What would come out of such chaos? What would he be able to do in such a shambles?

As he stood at the ship's rail pondering these questions, he saw two men climbing the long flight of steps; one was an American and one was a Japanese. As they came closer and crossed the gangplank, Dr. Eckel recognized Lt. Doyle Shepherd and his old and dear friend, Nobumi Isayama. Dr. Eckel said, "Lt. Shepherd was all dressed up in an officer's uniform, neat and clean, but poor Isayama was dressed in just anything he could find. He was very thin, and his face was worn and tired. One look told me his story before he even had time to relate it; but he shook my hand and greeted me so warmly that I have never felt more welcome."

Dr. Eckel remembered how he and Isayama had exchanged news of each other's families, and how glad they had been to find that all had survived the terrible years of the war. Of course the next question was the one that Dr. Eckel had asked over and over during those anguished days when the news would go out about the bombs being dropped all over the land. He fearfully voiced the question, "What about the churches?"

Isayama's eyes became sad and his voice dropped as he answered, "Some we have found, but many we cannot trace."

Both men stood silent for a moment, remembering those faithful ones who had gone to their rewards. They thanked God that once again they were together, and they promised Him that they would do all they could to salvage whatever was possible from the tragedy of the war.

Dr. Eckel remembered how helpful and kind General MacArthur had been during those early days. He would give the missionaries transportation order to any part of the country for church activities. He gave them military conditions under which to operate. It was not long until the news of Dr. Eckel's return spread over most of Japan. Many of his old friends sent greetings or came to call. Each time they said, "Thank God, our American friends have not forgotten us."

With the same vigor and enthusiasm with which he had undertaken his original assignment, Dr. Eckel plunged into the task of rebuilding the Church of the Nazarene in Japan. He summed up those years of struggle, giving God the glory as was his custom.

"God helped us and had General MacArthur help us, and slowly but surely we were able to accomplish what had seemed impossible."

Mrs. Eckel was eager to return to Japan, and so as soon as her health allowed and travel arrangements could be made, she arrived in Japan to be with her husband and her loyal Japanese friends who had survived the war. Her health worsened, however, and her activities were greatly curtailed because of it. Often she had to remain at home while her husband went about aiding and encouraging the churches under his supervision. She began to plan for and look forward to their scheduled return to the United States to attend the General Assembly in 1952. In the spring of that year Dr. Eckel was to attend a meeting of Japanese pastors at Osaka. Mrs. Eckel decided that she was well enough to go along. But while they were in Osaka, Mrs. Eckel became very ill, and on June 27, 1952, she died. One of her Japanese friends said, "She was counting so much on going to the General Assembly in Kansas City; she didn't know that she was really going to the great General Assembly in the sky!"

After simple funeral services, her body was laid to rest in the International Cemetery. The faithful Japanese Christians assured Dr. Eckel that they would always care for her grave when he was not in their country. Her death marked the end of the first part of Dr. Eckel's life.

As our taping sessions continued day after day, I noticed that Dr. Eckel was gradually growing weaker. I could always tell when he felt tired, for instead of answering a question directly, he would smile and say very graciously, "Katie will tell you about that." It was not long before he was unable to continue with the tapings, and only a few weeks until he was spending most of his time in bed. On the day after Christmas in 1976, Dr. William Eckel made another crossing. This time it was not from Los Angeles to Tokyo, but from Camarillo to that Celestial City where the souls of American and Japanese Christians alike are welcomed by the Christ who promised, "If ye confess me before men, I will confess you before my Father who is in heaven."

And so to all who are wondering what happened to this unique servant of God in the second part of his life, I repeat Dr. Eckel's words, "Katie will tell you all about that!"

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## **PART II -- By Catherine Eckel**

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### **08 -- NO GO-BETWEEN**

**Juliaette Tyner has brought you this far in the story of the life and work of William A. Eckel. I, Katie, will lead you through those later activity-packed years from 1953 to 1976 during the reorganization and growth of the Church of the Nazarene in Japan, the retirement from Japan, and the refueling for America.**

**February is one of the most beautiful months of the year in Japan because there is less rain; the air is crisp and fresh. The days are clearer, and off in the distance from Tokyo, glistening, snow-capped Mount Fuji stands majestic to be viewed by all with delight. This mountain is the source of many legends and, to the Japanese, is a sacred mountain. They all desire to climb it and worship at the summit as the sun rises out of the Pacific. In Japan the sun is the first thing seen at the beginning of each new day. This is the reason that Japan is so often referred to as the Land of the Rising Sun. The Japanese have a saying about Mount Fuji that one who never climbs the 12,365 feet to the top is a fool, and anyone who climbs it more than once is a fool! Who wants to be a fool? We all climbed it at least once.**

**It was on one of those brisk, cold February mornings in 1953 that I boarded the special express train and found my seat on the special second class car for the long ride from Hiroshima to Tokyo. I was employed by the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission and was supervisor of nurses at the clinic in Hiroshima. Being employed by the American government made it easier to travel in deluxe accommodations. As missionaries we usually traveled by third class.**

**This trip to Tokyo was for two specific reasons. One was to see a very special friend who had been sent there by the military for a six weeks' technical course. He was stationed at Miyajima, near Hiroshima, a base that had been confiscated by the Occupation Forces after Japan's defeat in World War II. We had been seeing each other on a regular basis and had discussed marriage, but he was on a tour of duty with the military and I had a contract with ABCC. Marriage would have to be sometime in the future. This particular trip was for the purpose of seeing him; and, secondarily, I was going to try to see Dr. Eckel, who was the chairman of the Missionary Council as well as district superintendent, to tell him that I would not be accepting the appointment I had just received from the General Board as a missionary to Japan.**

There were two reasons that I had made this decision. One, I had looked over the situation and could see no role for a nurse in the present missionary organization. The other reason was the marriage consideration, which would necessarily delay the acceptance of the appointment.

Since my friend had to be on duty on Sunday, I had made an appointment with Dr. Eckel to see him then. He was speaking in the morning service at the Shimokitazawa church in Tokyo. (This was the church that had not burned during the war.) Would I go along with him? he had asked. It sounded like a fun experience so I agreed.

He came by the YWCA where I was staying to pick me up, and we traveled across Tokyo in his little white Studebaker. This car was later sold to finance the building of a church. On the way I told him of my intention not to become a part of the missionary staff. He seemed to accept it calmly and did not offer any counter suggestion at that time. Little did I know what was going on in his brain!

It was the custom for the district superintendent always to eat lunch with the church board after a service. We were escorted upstairs in the parsonage which was attached to the church building. (It was customary for the parsonage to be attached, not to be a block or a mile from the church!) The "fusuma" doors between two rooms had been removed and a long table arranged. It was attractively laden with delectable rice cakes and raw fish. I was directed to a cushion on the floor at the end of the table next to Mr. E. Sitting on the floor around this table with the Japanese Christians was a thrilling spiritual experience for me.

After the lunch and the proper amenities (bowing multiple times to express our appreciation for the occasion) we left to return to the YWCA.

At first we sat silently in the car as we dodged in and out of the bicycle and vehicle traffic. Finally he broke the silence by reaching across the front seat and laying his hand on mine. Then he said in his dignified but very forceful manner, "Will you marry me?"

In total disbelief I responded, "Marry you! I am not in love with you." "But don't you think you could love me?" he asked. In a state of shock I returned to Hiroshima to my job and to ponder and pray about this most unusual proposal. The Japanese would have at least used a go-between!

Mr. E. felt that in order to remain in Japan as a missionary, he needed a wife to share his responsibilities. After Florence's death he had returned to the States for a few months to recuperate and to reorganize his life. During this time he was introduced to many lovely ladies, none of

whom he felt he could take away from their home base to a foreign land to a work that would be so completely demanding and so different.

All the while he knew that I had been appointed as a missionary, but what he did not know was that I had decided not to accept the appointment. He often thought, he told me later, that after I had joined the mission, there would be time for a courtship. But on that epoch-making Sunday, I had unwittingly blown his plans to bits. He had panicked and popped the question. This was one of the few times he acted on impulse, I am sure.

General Superintendent and Mrs. G. B. Williamson were coming to Japan in March to conduct the District Assembly and Mr. E. wanted very much to respond to their previous question as to how he could remain in Japan as a single missionary. And, incidentally, he wanted to seek their approval of his plans to marry the young nurse in Hiroshima.

On July 15, 1953, I terminated my contract with ABCC to make another which I did not break, "Until death do us part..."

Mr. E. did not want a church wedding because the invitation list would have to be so long. I conceded and we were married in the headquarters home in Tokyo surrounded by some close friends and the top officials of the Church of the Nazarene in Japan. It was truly an international wedding. Rev. Nobumi Isayama, a longtime friend and co-worker of Mr. E.'s, who had really been responsible for my employment with ABCC, gave me away. He had over those few short years truly become a beloved friend and a Japanese father to me; and since my own father could not come, Rev. Isayama kindly agreed to assume the role. My maid of honor was an American-born second generation Japanese, who was my secretary, interpreter, and good friend at ABCC. The minister was a Canadian missionary who had been my good friend during my first year in Nagasaki. An American nurse, who had also contributed to my securing the position with ABCC, had charge of the reception.

In those days it was impossible to buy ready-to-wear clothes on the Japanese market that would fit a 5'5" American woman. The PX, the military post-exchange, had nothing that I could wear as a wedding dress. So I sent an urgent request to a friend in Florida to select a wedding dress and mail it as quickly as possible. She did, and it arrived in time for the wedding.

The florist was given specific directions, we thought, on how to make the nosegay flower arrangement which I was to carry. At the last minute the flowers arrived just as they had been cut from the garden, with long stems and no arrangement of any kind. The guests were all waiting, so we just tied a ribbon around the flowers and I carried them that way. This was the

beginning of my education to the fact that missionaries must be very flexible, easily adaptable, and not easily frustrated.

The Christian wedding was over successfully, and we were on our way toward Mount Fuji for a brief honeymoon. As we were leaving Tokyo, in the car, I turned to my new husband and said rather emphatically, "There is something you forgot."

He threw up his hands in his usual dramatic way and said, "What was that?"  
I retorted, "You forgot to kiss the bride."

You can be sure he wasted no time in fulfilling this amenity. He pulled to the edge of the road and took care of that without delay. He was always a very loving, warm, and caring husband.

He was so Japanese and I so American that it took a few struggles and communication sessions to work through some of our differences. He had always been the revered and austere Dr. Eckel to me. "How shall I refer to you to the Japanese?" I asked.

He replied in his Japanese way by puckering up his mouth as though he were weighing his thoughts and words carefully, and then said, "Ooooh, donna sama."

One day the back doorbell rang while the Japanese servant was out, so I answered the door. It was the wife of one of our Japanese pastors. During the course of our conversation I referred to Mr. E. as "donna sama." I shall never forget the look of amazement and anguish on her face. I knew that something was not right. I made further inquiry and discovered that "donna sama" means "my honorable lord." He never apologized!

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## 09 -- LEVITY IN PERSPECTIVE

Mr. E.'s sense of humor could surface quickly and be followed by a boisterous laugh. One of his particularly strong features was his ability to laugh at himself.

For those years our home was also the district office, so the District Advisory Board would meet all day some days and then spill over into the next day if necessary. The Japanese never made quick decisions nor did they talk directly to a person if that person were to be the decision maker. They would always talk to someone else about the problem and that person would in turn relay the information to the decision maker. Of course the

decision maker was present and heard the entire discussion. Perhaps there were fewer errors that way.

There were many and frequent "sodans" (meetings to confer). Mr. E. had one particular chair in which he sat. I never sat in it and the Japanese avoided it. Probably they avoided it because it had taken on the contour of Mr. E.'s physique, which did not fit them. I never sat in it because I was a woman, and women were seldom invited to be a part of these high-level church "sodans." We only served them Japanese tea and sembe (sem-bay, small Japanese wafers). No meeting could ever progress without tea and sembe, both of which were consumed all day long. But after we served them or checked the empty teapot, we women bowed out.

To American women this seems strange, especially if the woman is liberated, but it was the custom and "when in Rome do as the Romans do." I would say that most of the Japanese women liked their roles and I liked mine. When those men would bow graciously as I placed the cup of steaming tea in front of them and throw their arms in the air and say, "Oku San (woman of this house), thank you," I was adequately rewarded. In the Word it says that we must be given to hospitality, and I considered this to be one of my gifts. I believe that they knew I enjoyed serving them because they liked to come. This was one of the ways I could show them that I loved them.

It was not only my responsibility to keep the teapot filled with hot, green Japanese tea and keep a supply of sembe on the table, but also to serve lunch and dinner. But even though I moved in and out like the black robed character in a Kabuki drama who is not supposed to be seen, I still had ears and could hear.

It seemed to me when the meetings grew dull, someone would inevitably mention the time Mr. E. baptized the city officials in Kyoto. Then would follow a roar of laughter and a slapping of the knees. According to Mr. E., soon after he arrived in Japan when he was diligently studying the Japanese language, he was invited to give the benediction at a meeting of the city officials. This was a distinct honor for a foreigner, not only to be invited but to be given a place on the program and an opportunity to offer prayer to the living God. When it came his turn on the program, he rose and asked the group to please stand. He raised his arms in all the pomp and ceremony that befitted the occasion and started to pray. But instead of praying, "Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you," he said, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Of course, this was in Japanese. Rev. Kitagawa and Rev. Isayama were both there and they never let him forget it! He laughed about it and enjoyed it as much as they.

But then he could turn the tables. He often told about the first baptismal service that he and Isayama participated in. Just before the ceremony Rev. Isayama came to Mr. E. and said, "What do I do?"

"What do you do?" Mr. E. asked. "Do you mean that you have never baptized before?"

"This is the first time," Isayama responded.

Mr. E. gave him step-by-step instructions and then waited. They were each to take half of the converts, who were all lined up dressed in white kimonos, waiting their turns. The current in the river was quite swift. Rev. Isayama took the first one, a small young girl. He put her under the water very nicely and said, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." But he did not lift her out of the water. Time passed and he still did not bring her up. As she began drifting downstream, Isayama tried to get hold of her while Mr. E. was standing on the bank holding his breath. Finally Isayama retrieved her, brought her up out of the water, and with one yank stood her on her feet. Returning to the converts standing in line, he said, "Next," as though nothing unusual had happened!

Mr. E. slipped down over the hill to give release to his emotions in convulsive laughter. Only a Japanese could have executed such a performance and remained absolutely stoical.

I remember on one occasion we were riding a Japanese bus in Tokyo. It was crowded as usual with many people standing. In fact, the busses have seats only around the sides to allow for more standing room. It was raining and that also is not unusual, for it rains about 300 days out of the year. Everyone carries his own umbrella. The men carry big black ones; the women, pretty floral ones; and the children, small colored ones. But each one carries one; no one shares.

Our bus pulled up to the bus stop with the usual rolling motion and then the jerk that makes it stand still. We remained stopped while waiting for the signal to change. Outside at the curb a man suddenly lost his balance and began to dance and slip. All eyes on the bus were focused on this dancing man when suddenly his umbrella went flying into the air and came down basket side up. By this time the man had totally lost his balance and sat right down inside his umbrella! Two Americans burst out in laughter but the Japanese remained stoical. This made it even funnier because we knew those Japanese would have a good laugh after they were home.

During those years following World War II, the Japanese young people were seeking a new kind of freedom-modern style. Some still

adhered to the old custom of go-betweens for arranging marriages. Bound by tradition, they could think in no other terms. But there were others who preferred the newer way of life. One particular young couple became interested in each other. The beautiful young woman happened to be a maid in the Eckel home and the daughter of one of the pastors. The young man was handsome and was an enthusiastic preacher. He was genuinely born again and fully committed to the Lord. Their prospects for having a happy marriage seemed perfect, but there was just one problem -- the older Japanese Nazarenes had not changed. They complained bitterly to Mr. E. because they would see the young couple leave the mission compound together and return together. This was indeed a no-no!

Recently after 25 years of a happy marriage, this same couple chuckled as they told how Mr. E. had scolded them. "He really scolded us," they said with emphasis. But they elaborated, "He was a good father to us and understood us very well. After he had scolded us he would say, 'If you must see each other, don't do it here!'"

He loved this couple dearly and continued through the years to give them fatherly guidance. I know they loved him just as much. They are now serving as missionaries in Hawaii.

Missionaries must be prepared to be all things to all men. One day Mr. E. received a call from an American serviceman. This G.I. said that he had a very serious problem and needed an interpreter. If he came to the missionary home, would Mr. E. interpret for him? Of course Mr. E. said he would, so they arranged a time. At the appointed hour, he arrived with a Japanese girl. To Mr. E.'s utter surprise the young man wanted to propose to the young woman. She could speak no English and he, no Japanese. At great length the young man expounded on his love for the girl, and Mr. E. in his best Japanese related it to her as she beamed in sheer delight. They were eventually married.

Looking back over our years in Japan, I realize how important Mr. E.'s sense of humor was and how much it contributed to his joy of living. Without a keen sense of humor it is difficult, if not impossible, to succeed as a missionary in a foreign culture.

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## 10 -- ON THE ROAD

Just as the apostle Paul had to travel from place to place to instruct, to win, and to organize new churches, so did we in Japan.

The train clicked along on the narrow-gage rail as we neared Taisha and then came to a halting stop at the terminal. Outside our train window we could see a group of believers from the Taisha congregation lined up to greet us. One of the warm customs of Japan is to turn out to meet visitors when they arrive on the train and to see them off as well. As we de-boarded, Mr. E. exited first in typical Japanese fashion. The Japanese bowed very low in respect to this man they dearly loved and exclaimed, "Eckel Sensei, Yoku irrashaimashita. O tsukare sama ni narimashita. Toi tokuro kara irrashaimashita." This affectionately means "Our teacher Eckel, we are so glad you have come. You have come from such a long distance, you must be very tired." They always used this expression, but it was meaningful and descriptive because after riding on the train any length of time, one was indeed weary.

They grabbed our suitcases and the package of gifts we had brought to them and together we walked along the dirt road to the famous 100-year-old noodle shop. For three generations this shop had been in the same family. They had developed a gourmet noodle recipe that was famous in the surrounding area. As we neared the primitive old shop, the aroma came to meet us and already we felt hungry. But the hunger did not match the growing excitement we felt because the owner of the shop, an older man, had through the influence of one of our young Japanese preachers found new life in Jesus Christ. He was ebullient with new-found joy! This was an exciting experience because the light of the gospel had indeed penetrated the darkness. This home and noodle shop stood under the shadow of one of the oldest Shinto temples in Japan. It was even older than the noodle shop itself.

Mr. E. had been invited by the shop owner on this occasion to come and talk about building a church. Until this time, like the early church, the people had been meeting in a home. The noodle shop's dirt floor had been sprinkled with water to lay the dust and make it as presentable as possible for the missionary arriving from the capital, Tokyo. We lavishly slurped a steaming hot bowl of buckwheat noodles, and then we were off for the service.

At the home we left our shoes at the door and stepped up into the house. There we settled ourselves on the cushions on the floor and sat like polite Japanese with our legs folded under us. I was thrilled to be surrounded by a foreign culture but in an atmosphere filled with the familiar presence of the true and living God.

After prayer and singing, Mr. E. was presented and he stood to speak. Just as he was able to keep his English speaking audience spellbound, so he was able to captivate the Japanese as he carefully led them through the scripture with simple explanations and interpretations.

Many of the scriptures are written in the Oriental setting, and that has made it easier for the Japanese to understand. For example, in one of his sermons I recall how he so graphically used the scripture in Revelation: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." We understand well what it means to knock at the door, but what about the voice?

In Japan the custom is to come to the door, open it (for it is usually unlocked), step inside, close the door behind, and apologize for being in. The expression "gomen kudasai" is used to call out and say, "I am here," but literally it means, "Please excuse me for being here." So it is really the voice which announces the visitor. The coming in to sup with one another means to feast together and to accept each other. As Mr. E. related in his sermon, the feasting involves inviting Christ into one's life, and salvation is received in return.

Another scripture he sometimes used and interpreted from the Oriental point of view is Josh. 4:9: "Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan . . . and they are there to this day." The Japanese understood this immediately. When they are out mountain climbing or hiking over a route they may not travel again, they occasionally stop to rest and gather stones and pile them as a memorial that they passed that way. Those piles of stones also remain in one's memory. In a spiritual sense we must pile our stones of confession and repentance and leave them behind us. We remember where we piled them, but they are to be left there as we pass on in our journey with the Lord.

One of the commandments says to love one's neighbor as oneself. Mr. E. was compulsive, yet natural, in his efforts to win people. His philosophy in promoting the gospel was first to win men to himself. They must have confidence in and respect for him if they were ever to be expected to receive Jesus, the Person he represented. Wherever there were children, Mr. E. could draw them as a magnet draws a metal object.

I remember on one occasion we were traveling out of Tokyo toward the mountains. At that time Japan had not yet made her great recovery and become the progressive country she is today. The ascarid (roundworm) was a serious problem and a threat to health. It was difficult to find a place to eat where the food was safe, particularly in the rural areas, so frequently we packed our lunch basket and stopped along the road to eat. There were no roadside state parks, but the lush green hillsides were such gorgeous examples of God's beautiful creation that eating along the road was a pleasure.

On this particular trip we had stopped in an area surrounded by rice paddies with their very straight rows of newly set rice plants submerged in water and on the other side a hill green with trees and undergrowth. It seemed like a quiet and secluded place to stop and eat our lunch. As we sat in our big, old, blue Oldsmobile, people began to gather and peer through the windows at us while we ate. They were old and young, all curious about the foreigners -- which indeed we were. They talked among themselves in Japanese, discussing the kind of food we were eating and laughing about our big noses. Some of them walked around rubbing the car as if it were something from outer space. Of course they did not know we understood what they were saying.

Finally Mr. E. could stand the strain no longer. He got out of the car and began in his usual amiable way to talk to the children. At first, in their surprise at his ability to communicate in Japanese, they backed off and tried to smother their embarrassed giggles by putting their hands over their mouths. He pulled one little fellow close to him and showed him his favorite coin tricks. The little one became so absorbed in watching the gaijin (foreigner) that the older children pressed in closer. Mr. E. had stooped down to the height of the child, and by this time I could barely see his head for the sea of little black heads around him.

The older people began to crowd in too with their "ah, ahs." When he had their full attention, he asked them if they had ever heard of Jesus. It was Mr. E's usual pattern: he created the opportunity for witnessing by first attracting the people to himself. He possessed tremendous ability for winning people, for he loved people and they loved him. On one occasion I was invited to speak at a Mother-Daughter banquet in California. I was introduced as the wife of a man all the women loved!

Sometimes his responsibilities took us to the far north island of Hokkaido to visit the various churches; other times, to the southern tip of Kyushu, the southern island. Sometimes we went just across the huge metropolis of Tokyo. It was always exciting when it came time to visit the Can of Milk church.

The Can of Milk church was one of the first to be organized after the war. Pastor Kitamura had returned from the war and was visiting some of the makeshift homes that had been thrown together from pieces of old corrugated iron or whatever could be found. He came to one place where a woman was weeping. He introduced himself and told her that he was a minister of the Church of the Nazarene and asked whether he could be of help. She told him that her husband had died in the war and her little son was now dying in the hospital because they had no milk to feed him. The pastor asked if he could pray and then excused himself.

He set out across Tokyo to find Mr. E., who had just arrived back in Japan. The Japanese bus he had to travel on was powered by a charcoal burner on the back and since the driver had to stop frequently to stir the charcoal, it was an agonizingly slow journey. But at last he arrived and rushed to Mr. E.'s room. There he poured out the story of the young woman whose baby was dying for the lack of milk. "Eckel Sensei (Teacher Eckel), is there anything you can do?" he asked.

Mr. E., moved by the story of the pitiful living conditions and of the dying infant, went to his cupboard and brought out the last container of powdered milk. It was a black-market item at that time because it was so scarce. The pastor tucked the can under his coat and started the long trip back across the city. He was praying that he would not get caught. If he got picked up by the military police and was found to have the milk, he would have been thrown into jail without questioning. He did arrive safely and presented the can of milk to the old grandfather. The old man was so overcome by the kind generosity of someone who did not even know the family that he said to Pastor Kitamura, "The kind of religion that would make a man share his milk with my grand-baby ought to be in this community."

He led the pastor to a plot of land that had an old warehouse on it and told him the church could have it. Pastor Kitamura was delighted, and went back across Tokyo to tell Mr. E., praising the Lord all the way. Mr. E. was able to secure some funds and they converted the old warehouse into a church. Since that time the warehouse has been remodeled twice in order to accommodate the growing congregation. Pastor Kitamura, having largely recovered from a stroke, still pastors that Can of Milk church with the assistance of his son.

If we were to tell all such stories as this one, this book would become too large, but traveling from church to church involved a significant part of our lives as missionaries.

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## 11 -- ABSORBED BY THE CULTURE

Mr. E. lived longer in Japan than he lived in the United States. Many people felt that he even looked like the Japanese. One time while on furlough, he and Dr. Chapman were sitting on the platform together. Mr. E. began his sermon by saying that some people said that he looked like the Japanese. He refuted this by remarking, "I don't care what anyone says, that just isn't so."

Dr. Chapman then interrupted by saying, "Wait a minute, wait a minute. Let's put that to a vote."

Even the Americans thought so. I have often heard the Japanese say, "You are one of us, you even look like one of us." His manner, too, was like theirs, gracious and not impulsive.

He was always pleased when these kinds of comments were made because it meant that he had identified with them thoroughly and was accepted by them. No longer did he need his coin tricks to win their confidence.

Many of his sermon illustrations were taken right out of the cultural setting, a method Jesus himself often used.

The following illustration is one that I always found moving when Mr. E. related it:

During the depression President Franklin Roosevelt put a moratorium on American dollars overseas. When I took my check to the bank to deposit it and receive the exchange for the Japanese yen, the bank teller, who had always been so friendly in the past, this time seemed to ignore me. I thought that perhaps the man had not noticed that I was waiting at the window, so I called out, "Gomen kudasai." (Excuse me, but I am here.)

Finally the teller came and said, "Oh, Mr. Eckel, haven't you heard?"

"Heard what?" I questioned.

"That your American check is no good. We have received word that we are not to cash any checks."

"Do you mean to say that my check is no good?" I asked.

"I am afraid so," replied the teller.

I said, "Domo, arigats" ("Thank you very much"), and turned and walked out of the bank. I stuffed the check into my coat pocket and thought that at least it would make a good bookmark. I started home, shuffling along the rocky road, kicking stones as I went. The bottom seemed to have dropped out of my world. I wondered what I could do, for I realized that the construction workers at the church would be waiting for their pay and there would be none to give them.

Instead of taking the little path toward home, I climbed up the hill in another direction. As I sauntered along, I passed a man sitting at a potter's wheel in the front part of his house. It was all open so I could easily watch as the potter spun the wheel around and with deft fingers shaped beautiful pieces of pottery. As I watched, I said to myself, "I feel like that piece of clay, pummeled and pummeled." Finally I said to the potter, "Is that hard to do?"

"Oh, no," the potter replied. "Would you like to try it?"

Always ready for adventure or something new, I said, "Yes, I would." The potter got up from his cushion on the floor, shook himself, brushed the dust off his clothes, pointed to the well-worn cushion, and said, "Dozo" ("Please go ahead").

I sat down and awkwardly began to spin the potter's wheel. I picked up a size of clay as the potter had done. I tried molding it into a ball, but instead of its forming a nice ball it stuck to my fingers and I had a terrible time. Finally I did drop it on the spinning wheel. For the potter it had leaped right up and had taken on a beautiful shape. For me it would do nothing. I looked at the potter in defeat and said, "Makemasu" ("I give up").

The potter returned to his wheel and with the very same piece of clay, now dirtier than before from my hands, made a most attractive little vase. I watched him take up another piece of clay, much larger than the other. He kneaded it and kneaded it until it was just right, and then he shaped it into a large vase with graceful lines. After he had made the big vase, he kept watching it as it went around on the potter's wheel. As the wheel began to slow, he picked up a mallet and with a sharp tap on the side of the vase, he made a big dent in it.

"Oh," I groaned, "you have ruined it!"

The potter replied, "No, I wanted this one that way."

I made my way up the hill to a place where I often went when I wanted to be alone and pray. I felt just like that vase, as if I had been hit and was all caved in. But I told the Lord that no matter what happened, I was going to serve Him. The very next day word came from the bank that they had received communication from Kansas City to honor the check. Once again my confidence and commitment had been rewarded!

There were many experiences that came to Mr. E. just because he was a foreigner. Those opportunities he would relate in some way to the advancement of the kingdom of God. In fact, to him every situation had to have some significance. For example, we never invited anyone to our home

either in Japan or in the States but that some mission was attached. In some way we must encourage the person in his faith or witness concerning Jesus or by some means promote the Kingdom.

I occasionally heard him relate an experience he had had in Kyoto in the early 30s. The Japanese were preparing a brocaded scroll to be displayed at the World's Fair in New York City. He was invited by the company that had received the assignment to come and view it the day it was unrolled and inspected for the first time by the company's president. Since he was an American, they wanted his reaction to their masterpiece.

Because he related the incident and applied it so graphically to reinforce his sermon on heaven, I remember that it went as follows:

When I arrived at the company, I was invited into the president's office, where the proverbial Japanese tea was served with delicate paper-thin wafers. Several of those wafers had adhered to the roof of my mouth and had been washed away with the tea while the president explained about the scroll. Finally he arose and said, "Let us go." The president was preceded by a lesser executive who carried a ring of keys. I followed. One door was unlocked. We passed through and the door clicked behind us. A second door was unlocked; we passed through and it clicked behind us. I thought they must be using prison labor. If so, maybe they have one more prisoner now.

Finally we arrived in a room where a little old man was weaving with his fingernails. In those days these artisans wore very long fingernails which they cut like saw teeth and used them to weave with. This was an art not easily mastered. When we entered the room, the little weaver jumped down from his stool where he had been sitting cross-legged as he wove. He made a sweeping bow to the president and to me. I bowed in return and waited for the next development.

The president made a gesture, and the weaver began to unroll the brocade. I stepped up and rubbed it and noted that the threads were largely gold. Then I knew why the doors had clicked behind us. As I appeared to show my interest, the president said, "You know, that is the reverse side. He had a pattern which he has followed, but today will be the first time he will see it on the right side."

They unrolled it across the immaculate straw mat floor. I gasped at the beauty as I saw it unfurl. It was an exquisite picture with a stream trickling out of a mountain. It seemed I could hear the quiet flow of the water over the rocks. Dotted here and there were gorgeous gold chrysanthemums, the national flower. As I stood enthralled with the beauty of this magnificent work of art, the little weaver knelt down beside it and

began to stroke some of the most elegantly highlighted areas. I said to him, "Why are you doing that?"

He replied, "I have been weaving from a pattern these many months and there were some extremely difficult areas that I could not interpret. I didn't know what they were, but I just kept following the pattern."

So, I said to him, "What do they mean to you now that you see them as a finished product?"

He replied with thoughtful emphasis, "These are the beauty spots."

I gave them my appraisal and left.

As Mr. E. would relate this story, the people in any congregation would be sitting on the edge of their seats, completely enwrapped in the word picture of the beauty of the scroll. He would then turn to them and say, "You and I are weaving a scroll of life which someday will hang on the walls of eternity. Will those difficult places in your life stand out as beauty spots?"

This illustration with the help of the Holy Spirit has caused many people to reassess their lives and make a total commitment to Jesus Christ, the only Person who can take the rough spots in life and convert them into beauty spots.

\* \* \* \* \*

## 12 -- PRECIOUS IN HIS SIGHT

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Ps. 116:15).

With these words Rev. Funagoshi, a longtime minister in the Church of the Nazarene in Japan, closed his address at the memorial service for Mr. E. during the Japan District Assembly in 1977. Others paid tribute to this man they had known so well: Mrs. Teru Isayama, Rev. Takichi Funagoshi, Rev. Yozo Seo, Rev. Tsurutaro Sakurai, and Dr. Aishin Kida.

Rev. Funagoshi reminisced about those early days following World War II. In 1948 the second District Assembly was held with Dr. Orville Nease as the general superintendent. At that time Mr. E. was elected district superintendent. According to Funagoshi, this was the beginning of his remarkable work. There were only three church buildings owned by the Church of the Nazarene. All others were rented facilities of one kind or another. Before the war it had been the custom to lease land and build

churches rather than buy the land outright. Of course they had not anticipated the holocaust of war that would destroy all of their buildings. As long as the building was on the property, they had a "squatter's right" to the land and there was no problem, but once the building was gone, they no longer possessed the right to the land.

Rev. Funagoshi observed that one of Mr. E.'s priorities was the securing of land and the construction of church buildings. He said, "Owing to Sensei's all-out effort, 99 percent of the churches came to own their own land and buildings to be used as fortresses of evangelism."

The 3,000 tsubo (about three acres) was secured for a headquarters and a seminary. Later in this chapter I will give the details of how this property was secured. His third point was relative to Mr. E.'s great evangelistic vision. "Sensei had a burning heart for souls, and with his vast vision it was difficult for those around him to keep up. At present the church is carrying on fruitful evangelism in Hokkaido and Okinawa. This was started as a result of Sensei's fervent spirit. And when I think 'What if he hadn't been here,' I overflow with thankfulness." The fourth point of his summary dealt with the Japan Christian Junior College: "For this school it is obvious that Sensei gave of his own personal resources; and one thing I can't forget is how he poured out his heart and blood for this."

In regard to Mr. E.'s attitude toward education, Rev. Yozo Seo remarked that it is easy for a man of evangelistic fervor to regard education lightly, and for a man of educational earnestness to neglect evangelism. But Eckel Sensei, in his time, tended to give fervent attention to both evangelism and education.

The last point of Rev. Funagoshi's summary emphasized Mr. E.'s superior leadership. "Sensei's true stature was in his character. I think this came from the Holy Spirit," he said. "Sensei's preeminent leadership qualities encompassed all people. He had the gift to lead them and get them to work joyfully."

Rev. Sakurai, the current district superintendent of the Japan District, evaluated Mr. E. as a person who was always holding out a vision in advance, a leader who did not know retreat, truly a missionary on a large scale, a man with a heart overflowing with abundant humanness.

Mrs. Isayama reminisced about many of the early street meetings and the rejection of the Christians in Hiroshima.

Dr. Aishin Kida had for many years been the district secretary without whose brilliant and enduring services Mr. E. would not have been

able to accomplish his work. His words related more to the warm visit they shared together just a few months before Mr. E.'s home-going.

Six years after we had retired from the field in 1964, we made a return trip. The Japanese held a big reception for us, and many of them told how they first found the Lord under Mr. E.'s influence. One man told about his returning from the battlefield in China where he had been under Communist influence and had been "brainwashed." He was a dynamic and forthright person. He was so thoroughly indoctrinated in the philosophy of Marxism that he was determined to convert his country. One of the first things he felt he must do was to force the Americans out of Japan.

He had known Mr. E. in prewar days, so one day he appeared in front of the old Japanese house which Mr. E. shared with a young Japanese couple, Mr. and Mrs. Etsuro Isayama. He was carrying a large poster on which was written in big Japanese letters, "ECKEL, GO HOME." All day long he pranced back and forth in front of the house with the poster.

The Japanese were frightened and said to Mr. E., "What shall we do?"

Mr. E., always fearless, simply replied, "Don't do anything. Just let him alone."

Hayashi was the man's name. The second day he returned, and the third Mr. E. decided that he should take some action. He went out and said, "Hayashi, you must be very tired; you have been walking out here for three days. Why don't you come in and have a cup of tea?"

Hayashi was so surprised at this gesture of warmth that he simply said, "What shall I do with this poster?"

Mr. E. replied, "Just stand it against the wall there; no one will steal it."

Hayashi looked emaciated and tired. Mr. E. had been able to secure some steaks from the PX. (At that time he was working under the appointment of General MacArthur and had the privilege of the Occupation Forces.) He said to Hayashi, "If you are not in a hurry, I have some steaks and I'll have the Japanese housekeeper cook them and make us a meal."

Hayashi looked at him in utter dismay. The very man he was trying to run out of the country was offering him the first food he had had in several days!

After he had eaten lavishly and they had talked for several hours, Hayashi destroyed his sign, accepted Christ into his life, turned right-about-face, and has been using his boundless energies for the Lord in the Church of the Nazarene ever since. In fact, he has been one of the most outstanding laymen in the church.

It was about this time that Mr. E. received a phone call from Dr. Howard Hamlin, an American physician who was stationed in the military headquarters in Tokyo. He had just learned of a man who owned three acres of land about 15 miles out from the center of Tokyo and who wanted to give it to some philanthropic organization. It could be made available to the Church of the Nazarene if Mr. E. was willing to follow through on the legal details necessary for clearing the property.

One of the first actions General MacArthur had taken when he assumed the command of the military occupation of Japan was to break up the big landholdings and redistribute the land. He did this by requiring that absentee landowners sell their land at a minimum price to those who either lived on it or tilled it.

This particular man had received word that the men who would buy his three acres intended to turn around and sell it to the Communists for their headquarters. He hated the Communist ideology and was determined to interfere with such a plan, so he had come to the Occupation Forces Headquarters to see what he could do. He had asked if he could give it away and had been informed that he could donate it to some philanthropic organization such as a church. He had said that he did not know any church, but that if they could find one, he would give it. Dr. Hamlin came into the picture at this point and called Mr. E.

It was arranged for Mr. E. and the gentleman to meet and discuss the matter of transferring the land. There were some problems to be solved, for the men who were currently farming the land possessed the "squatter's right." It was necessary to hire an attorney and have the title cleared legally. Dr. Hamlin asked Mr. E. if he would be willing to assume that responsibility. Since Mr. E. felt that this was such a golden opportunity for the church to secure a beautiful site for a headquarters, church, and seminary, he agreed to do it. Of course he did not know all of the ramifications involved, but he walked by faith.

Naturally the farmers farming the land were not going to accept this hands down, so they fought back. It took many months of negotiations and about \$3,000 to get it settled. Finally the attorney called Mr. E. and told him that the land was his, but that he would have to occupy it at once. There was a crop of wheat on the land just ready to harvest. Mr. E. took along a couple of Japanese and went out to the property. They walked into the

**middle of the wheat field, trampled down some of the wheat, and drove stakes as though they were measuring the land with intentions to build. Then they prayed right there and claimed the land for the Lord. They drove home in their jeep, determined to return the next day and take the same action if necessary. But during the night the farmers went in, harvested their wheat, and cleared the land. When Mr. E. returned the next day and found the land clear, he knew they had won and the land was now the property of the church.**

**There was a road that separated this parcel of land into two sections. On one half of this site the Florence Eckel Memorial Church was built with a kindergarten adjoining it. A parsonage and a missionary home were later added. These all remain.**

**On the other side of the road, three missionary homes, three homes for Japanese, a dormitory, and a building for the seminary and district offices were built.**

**For 13 years this land served the church well, but the value of the land had appreciated so much that Mr. E. felt it would be wise to sell half and relocate in a less expensive area. He recommended this action to the Missionary Council and District Advisory Board before he retired in 1964.**

**According to Rev. Funagoshi, who was district superintendent at the time of the sale, this land sold for three hundred million yen, which was a little over \$800,000. That money enabled the church in Japan to build a beautiful, big, reinforced concrete headquarters building more in the center of Tokyo, to buy sites for campgrounds, and to do other important things for the work and progress of the church.**

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### **13 -- RE-TIRED FOR RETIREMENT**

**The Foreign Mission Board had granted us the privilege of travel to India, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaii on our return trip to the United States. A careful itinerary was planned and at each place except Singapore we were to hold services and represent Japan and the World Mission program.**

**Twice before 1964 we had made plans to retire from the field and return home, but both times the Missions Department had asked us to remain a little longer. But Mr. E. had now reached beyond his "threescore years and ten," and it seemed the appropriate time to retire.**

When Dr. Coulter, the Missions secretary, was in Japan, he gave us approval to have packers prepare our things for shipment to the United States. Always before we had done our own, so this gracious assistance was appreciated. He advised us to secure an estimate of the cost about three months before we were to leave and send it to him. We did, but what we had failed to anticipate was the farewell gifts we would receive from the Japanese. They are such tremendous gift givers! Our baggage doubled during the last three months. This created a very great problem: how were we to finance the shipment of all the lovely gifts? We always ran on such a narrow financial margin that we did not have that much in reserve. Since it is impossible for the general church "machinery" to respond that rapidly, we had to send a telegram to the family with an S.O.S. Mr. E.'s son Eugene responded with enough cash for us to ship our gifts home. They were gifts of love, and we just had to bring them with us. The church did finally come to our rescue with a reimbursement.

To our happy surprise when we arrived in Los Angeles, we found that Eugene and Elizabeth Eckel had prepared a beautiful little house with a carefully designed Japanese garden for us to use as a temporary home. How grateful we were for this gentle thoughtfulness!

The General Board had contracted to keep us on the missionary salary for the first year and encouraged us to travel as we had done in the past when on deputation. They made up a schedule for us to go from church to church with our missionary message.

Our first year in retirement was traumatic because of facing the future with inadequate income. For the first time I saw Mr. E. really depressed and discouraged. He had always planned for the future of the church, but not for himself. I realized it would be necessary for me to return to my profession. It was not easy to find an appropriate position in nursing right away because I had not worked at it for over 10 years. My previous experience had been in nursing education, so I returned to the university to catch up in my field and learn what the newest trends were. The nursing profession changes as rapidly as does almost everything else.

Mr. E. always demonstrated tremendous faith, and again the Lord was faithful in His promise to care for His own. Mr. E. had always wanted to be a pastor of an American church. About this time Dr. Nees, the superintendent of the Los Angeles District, asked him how he would feel about taking the home mission church in Camarillo, Calif. The church had been organized for only two years, and there had been problems securing permits from the city to build on property which the district had purchased. The people were discouraged and many had left; a small nucleus of faithful and determined believers remained.

The opportunity to pastor a small struggling church appealed to Mr. E. He had been accustomed to difficult situations. To him they constituted a challenge. Nor was Mr. E. ever one to be baffled by the seemingly impossible. He knew his God was in command, and he believed that they two together could overcome every obstacle. The church could pay only \$75.00 a week so this income would necessarily have to be supplemented.

In the meantime the pastor of the Ventura Nazarene Church, just 13 miles from Camarillo, had informed me about an opening in the nursing division at Ventura College. I made application for the job. Actually, I did not qualify for it because I needed at least one year's experience in nursing within the last three years in order to secure the necessary teaching credential. However, because I had had experience in teaching nursing before I went to Japan, they seemed interested in me. We put out our fleece. If I secured the position, we would know that God was leading us to take the church in Camarillo.

The day before Mr. E. was to give the final word to Dr. Nees, I still had not received confirmation about my position. That night we prayed and presented the plan once again to the Lord. We determined that the next day I should phone the college if there was no letter in the mail. We rested in peace, knowing that God was working out His plan. We just did not know yet what it was. The next morning there was the letter from the college informing me that I had been hired! "The trying of your faith worketh patience."

In June, 1966, Mr. E. officially became the pastor of the small, home mission church. He was excited. The church had granted him the privilege of responding to his many calls for missionary conventions to the extent of one each month. He agreed to turn back to the church the \$75.00 for the week he was away.

The first year we worshiped in the rented Masonic Lodge. One night Mr. E. was preaching a wonderful sermon and the people were enthralled with the message. I was a little drowsy. In the middle of his sermon he was giving an illustration. He said, "In Japanese it would go like this '-----' " But what he said was not part of his illustration. He was telling me in Japanese to wake up, that I looked pretty bad going to sleep. He did not lose his trend of thought and kept right on preaching. I whispered to the woman next to me that he had just told me to wake up. She giggled and passed the word along until everyone was tittering. He did not know why.

One evening while Mr. E. was meeting with the church board in the home of one of the parishioners, the telephone rang. The pastor of the Southern Baptist Church was on the line. Their church board was also meeting. They had decided to expand their facility and put in a day school.

**In order to do this, they would need to relocate because the present location was too small. Would the Nazarenes want to purchase their property for \$125,000?**

**The church had been praying for guidance regarding a building because the congregation was growing and it needed a home. This offer was like fresh dew from heaven. After certain considerations Mr. E. said to the people, "Let's buy it!" He challenged them to contribute \$1,000 per family. They did and that amounted to \$8,000. Eight thousand subtracted from \$125,000 was still an enormous amount, but it did not stop him.**

**Mr. E. got in touch with every potential giver and the other Christians did also. Yes, they were able to make the purchase, and at the time of this writing the church is averaging more than 125 in attendance and is nearly debt free.**

**Mr. E. continued to receive calls for Faith Promise conventions until he was past 83 years of age. He accepted every one possible. He philosophized that it was better to wear out than to rust out! He was always thrilled when a church would pledge beyond its goal for missions.**

**We had gone to Camarillo with two goals in mind. One was to inspire the people and the other was to make the city of Camarillo aware that the Church of the Nazarene had come to stay. By the end of the second year, Mr. E. had become very much involved in the Optimist Club and in the Boys' Club. He was the eternal optimist; therefore it was just natural that he should be invited to become the chaplain for the Optimist Club and later to serve as its president.**

**Near the end of the second year of his ministry in Camarillo it was necessary for him to resign from the church because of his health. He had already had his first pacemaker implanted; he was to have five subsequent ones. He adjusted very well to the mechanical devices and continued to travel and challenge the people for missions. His fame as a public speaker and storyteller spread throughout the country, and he was invited to speak in many schools. He really loved speaking to a room full of children and keeping them on the edge of their seats. Two summers he was the chaplain for Junior Girls' Camp. They affectionately called him "Uncle Bill." He would never grow old, so he would not let them call him "Grandpa" even though he could have been their great-grandpa! His spirit was always vivacious and young even though his body slowed.**

**A fitting tribute is found in the following quotation from the local newspaper editorial which eulogized him after his passing:**

**"During those final days he would lapse into unconsciousness, into a coma. He would wake periodically. One of the first -- and very last -- things he did was to pray for a young woman at college with a burden to bear.**

**"So it was that he died as he had lived, giving even those last moments to another, grappling for a soul, striving to lift a care. So, too, it was that he died as he had lived, an inspiration to others, courage personified.**

**"But death to the Reverend Bill Eckel was not something to fear, those close to him said. It was, instead, that one last step carrying him closer to the One he had walked with his eighty-four years.**

**"And the sadness he felt was not for himself, they said, but for those he left behind with journey incomplete and hearts aching ....**

**"Some said that he looked Japanese, that even his mannerisms were oriental. He spoke the language fluently. Reverend Eckel had devoted more than forty years of his life as a missionary to Japan. Volumes could be written about what he was able to accomplish there . . . His love for his fellow man transcended geographic barriers and continents of men with different names and faces."**

**"The editorial concludes: "He walks now in higher pastures."**

**I was once told, "If you rub shoulders with greatness, greatness will rub off on you." I am not sure of the accuracy of the statement, but I do know that I am the better person for having known and intimately loved this man, William A. Eckel, God's Samurai.**

**\* \* \* \* \***

**THE END**