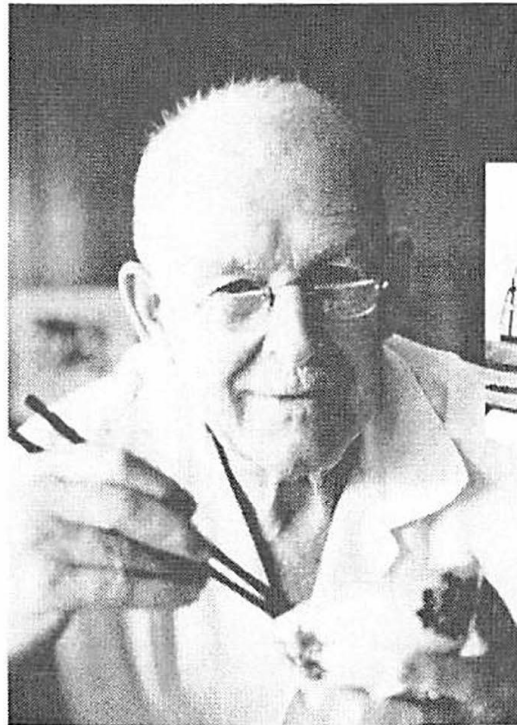


Robert McClure

1900 - 1991

Dr. Bob McClure was several times called “one of the true humanitarians of the 20th century”. A Canadian missionary-surgeon, he spent most of his life in service to poor people and communities throughout the world, and was the only layperson to become head of the United Church in Canada. Born of Canadian missionary parents in Oregon state, he was raised and initially educated in China. He graduated from the University of Toronto medical school in 1922 and returned to China as a surgeon and medical educator with the Canadian Presbyterian Mission to Honan Province from 1923-7.



In 1926 he married a nurse, Amy Hislop, whom he had met at university. Together they raised four children – Norah, Douglas, Patricia and Josephine. He served in Taiwan (1927-30), and again in Honan Province (1930-7). In those years he developed the Hwaiking rural medical system. During the Sino-Japanese war he was field director of the International Red Cross in central China (1937-41), then became director

of the Friends' Ambulance Unit on the Burma Road in China until 1948, often meeting Chou En-Lai and Mao Tse-tung.

Munroe Scott, in *The China Years*, sums up those years this way: "What a trail he had laid! He had criss-crossed China... With X-ray, radium, bicycle spokes, the 'loop', scalpel and wrench he had pioneered, adapted, improvised, taught and practised."

Returning to Canada in 1948, he had a private surgery practice for a short time before going abroad to work in a church missionary society hospital in Gaza (1950-4) treating Palestinian refugees. Dr. McClure moved to central India in 1954 to be medical superintendent at the Ratlam Christian Hospital where, in addition to carrying out more than a thousand operations a year, he promoted public health and birth control.

In a complete change of career, he was elected Moderator of the

United Church of Canada for the years 1968-71, the only layperson to hold this highest church office.

Back to medical service overseas, he served in Sarawak, Malaysia (1971-4), Peru and St. Vincent (1975-6), and Zaire in 1977. Well into normal 'retirement' years, he returned to Canada to serve occasionally and to speak for his special causes and raise funds for hospitals and missionaries overseas.

Bob McClure died in 1991, just short of his 91st birthday. Among many honours, he was named a Companion of the Order of Canada in 1971. In a salute by the Ontario Legislature on his retirement in 1978, it was said, "Dr. McClure's life, his attitude to life, and his service to humankind, ranks him in the first order of both hero and good example".