

Nakayama:

By David Carter

The Diocese of Calgary has a wealth of experience locked up in its 'retired clergy' who are helping carry the responsibility of the various aspects of the diocese.

One of these 'retired' men this past summer travelled 5 continents, 18 countries, 37,013 miles over a period of five months—and preached 144 times!

The Rev'd Canon Gordon Goichi Nakayama supposedly retired in 1970, but has continued with his pastoral responsibilities with the Japanese-Canadians living in Coaldale, Stirling, Taber, Vauxhall, Magrath, Raymond, Cranford, Patricia and Rosemary.

He and his wife continue to live next to the petite church of the Ascension in Coaldale—a church which embraces various nationalities and which was built in 1964 by three Japanese-Canadian carpenters and painted by yet another.

But the story of Gordon Nakayama is one which spans the world.

Japan-Canada

He was born in 1900 in Ozu, Japan to a Buddhist family of farmers. He was the third child in a family of seven and he left home at the age of 15, shortly after his father died. He was off to obtain an education. He worked his way through university in Kyoto before remembering one day that his father had once described Japan as a small country with too many people, predicting that one day some of the family would emigrate.

Canon Nakayama's aunt had married a Methodist minister in Vancouver and it was to their home he travelled in 1919. He was warmly welcomed—but somewhat afraid when he understood they were praying he would become a good Christian. He had promised his mother he would remain Buddhist.

But the family and friends in Vancouver showed genuine warmth, and on Good Friday, 1920, in St. James Anglican Church he listened to a sermon by Father Cooper which stressed Christ on the cross and the three words of Forgiveness, Salvation and Love—and he became converted to Christianity.

He was baptized in September, 1920, in the Methodist Church, Vancouver, and became most active with the Sunday School and as a member of the Church Board. In 1926 he met a lady missionary from Japan who had been sent to work with the Japanese Canadian Anglican Mission in Kitsilano and soon they were going to both churches. And soon they married. In the next few years Gordon learned more about the Anglican Church.

Two calls

In 1929, the Nakayamas experienced tragedy—the stillborn birth of their first son. This was a crucial turning point for Gordon: he had previously considered medicine as his vocation, but in the midst of his grief he realized his real comfort came from the United Church and Anglican clergy, and he offered his life to God as a minister.

The response was that both denominations wished him to join their ranks. After deliberation he chose the Anglican church and began training at the theological college in Vancouver. But at the same time he had to carry the load of the Japanese-Canadian

mission in Kitsilano . . . and since he is a diligent pastor-workhorse it took him five years to finish his course. He was ordained Deacon in 1932 and Priest in 1934.

In his care, the mission flourished and they built a new church and made other additions in 1935. He was also responsible for visitations with out-stations—the West Coast of Vancouver Island, Fraser Valley and the Okanagan.

In 1939, after war broke out, the Canadian government started to have the RCMP categorize the Japanese-Canadians. Then in 1942, after the Americans had

were allowed to travel out of the detention centers, and Gordon Nakayama was one allowed to travel in order to minister to his scattered people. While there with 9 returned missionaries from Japan, he baptized 200 persons in three years.

During the Second World War there was not one reported instance of espionage or sabotage by Japanese or Japanese-Canadians!

In May 1944, Gordon was invited to the national executive meeting of the Anglican Church in the Montreal area, and spoke



—DAVE WANLESS photo

started to transport American-Japanese to the interior of the U.S.A. from the West Coast, the Canadian government followed suit in what was to become one of the darkest stains on the Canadian conscience.

The Nakayamas, like their fellow Japanese-Canadians, had their property sold without consultation—at ridiculously low prices—and their furniture was included in the sale of the houses. To add insult to injury, the gov-

Black days

ernment then had the gall to charge 'commission fees' against the final price. By way of example the Nakayama home was worth about \$7,000. It was sold for \$1,500 including furniture—and a further fee of \$150 deducted!

Some 23,000 Canadians were herded into box cars and moved via freight train to the southern interior of B.C. Internment or custodial camps were established on the following basis: United Church persons to Kaslo, Roman Catholics to Greenwood, Buddhists to Sandon and Anglicans to Slocan City.

The original plan was to place 1,500 persons at Slocan City but in the end 7,000 Japanese-Canadians were forced to live in tents and makeshift shelters in that location from July 1942 to August, 1945. Their bare existence subject to the climatic variations of the Kootenay valleys is a topic they prefer to avoid.

Only clergy and physicians

Profile of a whirlwind

In 1947 the Canon took some men and travelled to the B.C. interior to deserted Slocan City, and manhandled their former kindergarten building onto a CPR flatcar and shipped it to Coaldale to become the parish hall. Cost—\$130—paid by Gordon Nakayama.

The parish continued to grow and in addition to serving the various outstations, the Canon worked with 23 Occidental families in the area. In 1955 Bishop G. Calvert and Archdeacon R. Axon, alarmed at the terribly poor salary being paid to Gordon Nakayama, created the mission, a parish of the Diocese of Calgary.

In 1947 Mr. Nakayama was invited to tour 39 cities in the U.S.A. to speak of the Japanese-Canadian situation and to speak concerning his favorite topic—the Love of Christ. He also visited 29 Canadian cities.

Okinawa and on

In 1951 he was loaned to the American Church as they sought to establish an Anglican Church on Okinawa. He stayed 14 months and was most instrumental in the vigorous and rapid growth of the church there. On June 4 he had one Christian family—by Christmas that year he had baptized 56 persons and there were 850 children in the church school (he was the teacher!) From his 14 months there, Canon Nakayama can count as spiritual sons five priests and one bishop—the latter being his first convert on Okinawa. Within that year 100 persons were confirmed!

In 1952 his health broke (no

wonder) and he returned to Coaldale. Nevertheless, he has tried to devote one month of each year to missionary work beyond Coaldale area.

He travelled to the Holy Land and Switzerland in 1960, Japan in 1964 (where he converted his brother and sister's families); in 1970 to Okinawa and Japan; in 1958 to Brazil, Argentina and in 1972, Canon Nakayama toured U.S.A., Mexico, Ecuador, Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, Tanzania, Egypt, Greece, Switzerland, Denmark—this is the 5 month trip where he preached 144 times!

Future beckons

He is now planning another trip for next year—there are still places he hasn't been!

The Canon supposedly retired in December 1970 but Bishop Goodman has not been able to locate the special kind of person required to attempt to fill the varied ministry of Gordon Goichi Nakayama.

The Nakayamas obviously lead a blessed family life together and have been blessed with a daughter Joy (Ottawa) and their popular priest son, Tim (Seattle).

Oh yes—in his spare time, The Rev'd Canon G. G. Nakayama has written 15 books on theological topics in Japanese, and is currently preparing another!

This is not the whole story of this interesting man but if you would like to learn more write him at Box 461, Coaldale. He is willing to travel to meet with you, and to show his slides.

for 20 minutes about the deplorable conditions imposed upon his people. A resolution was passed and forwarded to the Canadian government which in turn established a commission which eventually made some token reparations.

After the war, Canon Nakayama travelled to visit the Japanese-Canadians in Montreal, Southern Ontario, Winnipeg and Southern Alberta. He was sent by the MSCC to Southern Alberta. The 'good' people of Lethbridge and Taber didn't want the Japanese-Canadians to live in their fair cities so they moved to the Coaldale area.

It is interesting to note that the whole irrigation development, market gardening and sugar beet industry of the Taber-Lethbridge area is almost totally the result of the industry of the people originally 'rejected' by the power structure of Taber-Lethbridge.

So in 1945 the Nakayamas started their mission in a house-

Coaldale starts

church in Coaldale which measured 14 feet by 20 feet.

They were prevented from purchasing property so they turned their \$200 over to Bishop H. Ragg and he bought the house and property for them. Most of the Anglican families from Slocan City had moved to the Niagara Peninsula but the Nakayamas worked with their people and the mission grew steadily.