

Mackays motto was "It is better to burn out than rust away," meaning that it is better to live life as a comet across the sky than to rust in a corner. He was 58 when he died. "I have been amongst the people not beside them," Mackay often insisted. "I desire to labor and die amongst them." He had his wish.

#### A Taiwanese Hero, A Canadian Hero

The Mackay fan club is growing on both sides of the Pacific, and few who hear his story can resist his eccentric charm. Unconventional in his own, constricted society, Taiwan brought out the best in him, his sense of humour, his curiosity and love of nature. A hundred years later, the qualities that shamed Victorian Canada are politically correct, the things we celebrate: his marriage, his charisma and museum collecting even his dentistry. In many ways he was ahead of his time, in his work with the sick, the poor and the dispossessed, and the promotion of modern western education and medicine. In Taiwan, Mackay is celebrated as a builder of communities and a builder of bridges, among Chinese, aboriginal and Japanese, between Christians and non-Christians.

Sometimes we Canadians need others to tell us who our heroes are. In the 1960s Red China told us about Norman Bethune, a hero of the anti-fascist war. Now in 2001, Taiwan is telling about George Leslie Mackay. He should be celebrated as a Canadian original, a one-of-a-kind. He represents the best face of Canadians who perform humanitarian work overseas, a multicultural activist in the struggle against racism. More, he built a people-to-people bridge between Canada and Taiwan that is unbroken in 130 years. These are not things that rust away.

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