

A legend.
A legacy.
A lifetime of inspiration.



Eric's life

In 1924 Eric was selected for the British team for the Olympic Games in Paris. It was expected that he would run in several races, including the 100 metres, which he was predicted to win. A few months before Eric was due to compete, the Olympic schedule was released and he learned that the heats were to be run on a Sunday. Eric was a devout Christian and withdrew from the 100 metres event as he was not prepared to run on a Sunday. His action brought him under enormous pressure, from both the British Olympics management and the press to compete in the event. They believed that Eric was a traitor because he was costing his country a gold Olympic medal. Eric refused to give in and instead began preparing for the 400 metres, a distance over which he was not expected to do well.

After the Olympics Eric turned to what he believed was his calling as a Christian missionary. Christian missionaries went to China with the goal of converting citizens to the Christian religion. This included teaching the people of China about Christianity so they were able to take on the work of running the churches in their area. There were many Chinese citizens who didn't agree with the work of missionaries like Eric, and were angered by this type of foreign control they had not asked for and did not want.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, things became extremely dangerous for those people living in China. Eric made the decision to send his family to safety in Toronto, Canada. His wife was 6 months pregnant at the time, and had to make the journey from China to Canada with their two young daughters alone. Eric could have gone with them but didn't feel he should, so he stayed to continue working with the Chinese people. This was the last time Eric saw his family before dying in 1945. Eric never got to meet his unborn daughter, Maureen.

Struggles in the internment camp

Life was difficult at the internment camp that Eric was sent to. All chores that made daily life possible within the camp were done by the internees themselves. It was hard work for even the fittest of individuals, those who were old, weak or sick were in a terrible position. Eric was well known for carrying the coal, chopping the wood, and collecting the rations of those unable to do so themselves and who had no family in the camp to do it for them. This was on top of carrying out his own chores, teaching, being in charge of sports, taking roll call, being warden of a section of camp, taking church services and conducting bible studies. He was more in demand than anyone else in the camp. Even with all these responsibilities Eric was always there, to lend a listening ear, or provide encouraging words to those in need.

Eric along with other teachers whom he had been interned with, tried to carry on school for the imprisoned youngsters as best they could. Their goal was to have the children's education interrupted as little as possible, a hard feat considering the circumstances they were working with. They had very few textbooks, blackboards, chalk, or any apparatus at all. Eric taught those hoping to specialise in science at University when the time for release came. For one girl alone he made a beautiful notebook full of drawings of apparatus which she ought to have been using, but could not, and with that to guide her she learnt enough to enter Melbourne University straight from the camp when the war was over.

Eric was well known for his willingness to listen to others and their problems. He sympathised with and assured people how much he cared. To the people he met Eric became a confidant, comforter, grief counsellor, social worker, diplomat and problem solver. This manner of presenting himself in service to the people around him meant that he soon became trusted by all, including preachers, nurses, students and importantly the local people. All from the most illiterate peasant to the highest official, poured their hearts to him.