

Dwight Woodbridge Edwards

President 1935-1936 Rotary Club of Peiping
By Herbert K. Lau (劉敬恒) (Rotary China Historian)

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Dwight Woodbridge Edwards, President 1935-1936 Rotary Club of Peiping (北平扶輪社), was Senior Secretary of the International Committee of YMCA in the Republic of China (中華民國).

Dwight was born on 25 March 1883, in St. Paul, Minnesota, U.S.A., to Anne Louise Deane, age 29, and Maurice Dwight Edwards, age 35. Dwight and his siblings were raised in Minnesota. His brother was Rev. Deane Edwards of the Rye Presbyterian Church who lived in Loudon Woods. His nephew Richard served during WW II in the American Field Service.

Dwight received bachelors and master's degrees at Princeton University before going to the Imperial Japan in 1906. He spent the next 43 years overseas as senior secretary in China of the International Committee of Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and field director of the United China Relief (援華聯合會). United China Relief was a major American humanitarian organization founded in 1941 to raise funds and provide aid to the Chinese people suffering from the effects of the Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II. It was the largest American effort of its kind for China at the time.

Dwight married Mary Estelle Vanderslice on 19 May 1915, in Peking (*Beijing*) (北京), China, and they would have three children during their marriage.

In 1937, a dispute broke out between Japanese and Chinese troops near Peiping (北平) (*Beijing*), China. This dispute escalated into a military conflict and marked the beginning of the Second-Sino Japanese War (1937-1945). The War destroyed and displaced many Chinese citizens. Most of the displaced had nowhere to go or no way of supporting themselves. As a result, several organizations popped up in the United States led by Americans sympathetic to the plight of the Chinese.

In the 1940s, seven of these organizations joined forces to establish the United China

Relief. The organization sent aid workers to China and aimed to raise US\$5,000,000 to help the Chinese affected by the War. Almost half of the funds would go directly to medical aid while the rest would be divided into quality of life improvements like training new leaders and taking care of war orphaned children.

When Imperial Japan attacked and bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on 7 December 1941, the United States entered the World War II. As a result, Dwight's wife was taken prisoner by the Japanese military forces while in China.

《THE RYE CHRONICLE》 Friday, 3 December 1943

Mrs. Dwight Edwards arrived in New York, Wednesday, aboard the Gripsholm. She had been in a prison camp in China. She is a sister-in-law of the Rev. Deane Edwards of Loudon Woods, and mother of Miss Anne Edwards, who has made her home with the Rev. and Mrs. Edwards since coming from China some years ago. Mrs. Edwards was interned on December 7, 1941. Mr. Edwards is in Chungking, Free China, and head of the United China Relief. The mother and daughter, who have not seen each other in four years, will stay in New York before visiting the Rev. and Mrs. Edwards.

Dwight returned to the United States in 1949. He was awarded the Decoration of the Bountiful Harvest by the Grand President of China for his part in the International Relief Commission program in North China in 1920. Since his return to the United States in 1949, he had been a member of the Princeton Rotary Club and received an honorary Doctorate in Philanthropy from Princeton University.

Dwight Woodbridge Edwards, a former YMCA director in China and Japan for 43 years, died on 15 October 1967, in Princeton, New Jersey, at the age of 84. At the time of his death, he was survived by his wife, Mrs. Mary Edwards; a daughter, Mrs. Anne of Fairfield, Iowa; a brother, Rev. Deane Edwards of Rye, New York, and eight grandchildren.

