

Postmodern Productions presents

“The Black-Bearded Barbarian – of Taiwan”



His followers didn't see him as a foreign missionary.
They saw him as a prophet.

Prof. Jim Rohrer

I think we can look back at Mackay and say he is the
finest Canadian of his generation.

Dr. Alwyn Austin

“The Black-Bearded Barbarian”

Produced with the participation of **OMNI Television**

Produced and Directed by **Susan Papp**

Director of Photography **Ray Fitzwalter**

Edited by **Oliver Manton**

Written by **Allen Abel**



The unique and uplifting saga of Canadian missionary George Leslie Mackay on the island of Taiwan, an uninvited intruder who overcame isolation and prejudice to become a beloved native son of an utterly foreign land.

Filmed on location in the spectacular mountain scenery of Taiwan, the 60-minute film features dramatic re-enactments of Mackay's life and career, rare archival images, interviews with leading experts on Mackay's role in church, Chinese and Canadian history, and visits to the educational and medical institutions founded by Mackay in the 19th century that still play a pivotal role in Taiwanese society today.

Produced and directed by Susan Papp and written by Allen Abel, “The Black-Bearded Barbarian” is a sensitive and compelling portrait of a man, an era, and the birth of what it means to be Canadian in a vast and challenging world.



Our Story:

Virtually unknown in his native Canada, George Leslie Mackay's saga is a tale of faith and fearlessness, commitment and courage -- the amazing life of "The Black-Bearded Barbarian."

For the last thirty years of the 19th century, this skinny, black-bearded Canadian Christian preacher walks the mountain trails of the beautiful island of Taiwan, defiant in his mandate and his message.

Reviled by most Chinese as a barbarian devil, pelted with abuse, threats and filth, he perseveres to become the most successful missionary of his generation, marries a Taiwanese woman, campaigns against racism back in Canada, and still is revered today as the spiritual father of thousands of Taiwanese.

He is a son of rural Ontario, the descendant of generations of poor, proud Scotsmen evicted from their farms and abandoned to starvation by their noble landlords. He grows up in an era in which Christian missionaries are media superstars and idols of devotion, self-sacrifice and courage. From earliest childhood, he yearns to bring "the blood-stained banner of Christ" to distant lands.

He is still in his twenties when he sails to the China coast, one Canadian missionary among hundreds. Selecting the island of Formosa (Taiwan) for his personal parish, he sets out to learn the Taiwanese dialect, civilize the aboriginal tribes of the interior, attract converts to his alien faith, build simple stone churches and win the allegiance and respect of the island's Chinese aristocracy.

Every one of these endeavours brings him to the brink of failure, exhaustion, and death.

He demands that his followers give up the beliefs that have sustained their culture for five thousand years -- their idols, ancestral tablets and incense-clouded temples. In return, he promises them eternal life under the protection of a foreign God.

After a decade of nearly fruitless wandering and preaching, Mackay takes a dramatic step that enrages his bosses back in Toronto -- and wins him a place in the hearts of the Taiwanese people that endures to this day. He marries a Taiwanese woman, proving his love for the island's people, and his church -- and his family -- blossoms.

"The Black-Bearded Barbarian" follows Mackay through this pivotal period, revealing the extraordinary courage and foresight of one of the first Canadians to embrace a foreign people, not as ignorant heathen, but as human beings worthy of friendship, respect, equality, and love.



The Filmmakers:



Keith Henderson, Susan Papp and Ray Fitzwalter