

Celebrating a half century of priestly duty



Pete Amos/Sentinel

The Rev. Alexander Anderson

EDITOR'S NOTE—The Rev. Alexander Anderson, rector emeritus of Calvary Episcopal Church, has seen a half century of life in the priesthood. These years of service will be honored by his friends Saturday. Edith McCauley has contributed the following information of Anderson's life.

AS A YOUNG man growing up in Ireland, Alexander Anderson always wanted to do mission work and hoped he could travel. He's done both in his life. At the age of 19, the youngest of six children, he said goodbye to his native Belfast in Northern Ireland. As his family members gathered to sing "Auld Lang Syne," he began a junket that ultimately led him to new beginnings in the Yukon Territory in Northwestern Canada.

It was a long journey of six weeks for the young man — first by ship and then by train to the prairies. He was traveling under the auspices of a British missionary society that offered scholarships of sorts to young men willing to do mission work in the sparsely-settled Canadian areas that were without clergy. He recalls that it was not unusual for young Irishmen to leave their homes and head out for other lands.

In 1933, he received his bachelor of arts degree from the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, and later that same year was graduated cum laude with the licentiate of theology, from Emmanuel Anglican Seminary in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The next year, he was ordained a priest after already serving as a curate for a year in Edmonton, Alberta and also in Dawson City, Yukon.

At one time, Anderson was the only white man in an Indian village, where he was in charge of the mission and also the school. Some of the spots he served had names reminiscent of Jack London's Klondike novels — Dawson City, Moosehide and Whitehorse in the Yukon and Ketchikan in Alaska.

From that point, he slowly inched his way ever southward as he was assigned to Chehalis, Wash.,

Portland, Ore. and finally to Santa Cruz. From then on, he noted that he always felt he was vacationing.

Romance had entered the young Irishman's life back in Dawson City where, in 1934, he met his future bride, Irene Patterson. Her father was the superintendent of education for the Yukon Territory schools — all four of them.

Shortly after she met Anderson, Patterson (being quite young) left the Yukon — it was called "going outside" — to continue her education in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Love finally prevailed and in 1938, they were married and spent seven months honeymooning in Ireland. She became acquainted with her husband's family and he talked throughout the area of his experiences in the rugged Yukon, where temperature may drop to 68 degrees below zero, according to Anderson.

There first home was in White Horse and the next in Ketchikan. They were discovering, however, that two cannot live as cheaply as one, especially with the news that the first of their three daughters, Corinne, was on the way.

Their southward trek was about to begin as was their family. After Corinne came Elizabeth and Sandra. Today, they have four grandchildren.

In addition to the many church positions held throughout the years, Anderson also served for 20 years as chaplain for the Army Reserve and for the California and Oregon National Guards, being discharged as a lieutenant colonel. He was a Rotarian, is past Big Sir of the Sons in Retirement and plays 18 holes of golf nowadays. Cribbage is another hobby.

The Andersons have returned many times to Ireland during their 46 years of marriage because he still has family members there and, as he says in the Irish brogue he still retains, "Ireland is a wonderful place to be from." He considers this country his home.

The celebration of his 50th anniversary starts with a 2 p.m. service at the church, 532 Center St.