



Veronica Flanigan outside the Australasian Division office.

Photo courtesy of South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.

Flanigan, Veronica Mary (1914–1997)

MARIAN DE BERG

Marian de Berg, secretarial (Avondale University College, Cooranbong, NSW, Australia) retired in 2017 as administration assistant, Ellen G. White/SDA Research Centre, Avondale University College. A New Zealander by birth she has served the church in South New Zealand and Queensland conferences, South Pacific Division, and Avondale University College. In retirement she enjoys guiding at Sunnyside Historic House. She authored the book *Stories from Sunnyside* and wrote

Veronica Flanigan is best remembered for her thirty years of service to the youth and junior youth of the Church in Australia.

Early Life

Twins, Veronica and Jack (1914-1984), were born to John (1890-1982) and Maryann Flanigan (1883-1983) on October 8, 1914 at Punchbowl, Sydney. Two years later sister Winifred (1916-1991) completed the family. In 1920 the family moved south where the father installed power generators in the towns of Tumut and Cooma, returning to Sydney two years later and settling at Lane Cove. Mother Flanigan was baptized in 1924 after buying the book *Bible Readings for the Home Circle* from a colporteur, a visit from an Appeal for Missions collector, and Bible studies. Flanigan's father had accepted work in Papua New Guinea and upon learning of his family's new faith became angry because of his Roman Catholic views. When he returned home the family employed various pretenses so they could worship on Sabbath. The three children were baptized in 1932.¹

Education and Early Employment

Flanigan attended Lakemba, Lane Cove, and Chatswood schools in Sydney.² Then working as a student colporteur and at the Cooranbong Sanitarium Health Food Company she was able to attend Australasian Missionary College from 1932 to 1937, graduating from the Bible Workers course.³ During her time at the College she also studied home nursing, general science, ancient history, piano, and art.⁴ In 1938 she commenced her working life in evangelism in North New Zealand, first in New Plymouth and then in Auckland⁵ In 1941 she was appointed to the Missionary Volunteer (MV) Department of the North New Zealand Conference, and the next year was appointed as the Junior Missionary Volunteer (JMV) departmental secretary.⁶ She also took the time to visit the youth at several churches around the north island.⁷ From early 1945 to 1951 she took a break from denominational employment.

Working for the Youth of North New South Wales

Joining the MV Department of the North New South Wales Conference in 1952⁸ Flanigan devoted herself to looking after the juniors and youth of the church. She worked tirelessly for them at the annual conference camp meeting, youth camps, junior camps, aboriginal camps, Sabbath School rallies, and the organization of the first pathfinder fair in the conference. For camp each year she would assemble duplicated special booklets⁹ with songs, a daily program, lessons, and poems. Before her official transfer in 1957 to the Australasian Division Youth Department she was requested to assist in the preparation of the vocational honors booklet.¹⁰

At the Australasian Division Headquarters

Flanigan worked closely with several departmental secretaries at the division office and was a member of the Missionary Volunteer Advisory Committee. She authored the booklet, "Plans for Junior Youth" (1962);¹¹ and adapted the American Pathfinder workbooks (particularly the Friend and Companion books) to suit Australasian conditions.¹² This involved many letters to government departments and research facilities to check appropriate information on fauna, flora, flags, national anthems, and stars in the southern hemisphere. For each flower and shrub, Flanigan's niece, Rosemary, remembers that Aunty Ron would cite the botanical name instead of the common name of each plant.¹³ She made many illustration boards of these so juniors could compile their own workbooks when working on Pathfinder honors and assigned work. For instance, when she worked on the flags of the South Pacific region, she wrote to government officials in each country to check when the flags were used on government buildings, for what special occasions, and when the national anthem was sung.¹⁴

Flanigan helped organize and act as a judge at Pathfinder fairs and also organized and provided hobbies and crafts for the young people.¹⁵ Work on youth congresses would start at least twelve months prior to the event and consume many working hours of her time. She also edited the journal, *The Winner*, for the juniors of the Church from March 1969 to June 1974.¹⁶ Flanigan would work in this department of the Church for the next seventeen years. In addition, she was secretary of the Avondalians Club, a forerunner to the Avondale College Alumni Association. Here she was described as the indefatigable secretary and organizer.¹⁷

Contribution and Retirement

The Friend and Companion workbooks for the older JMV took much adaptation to suit the Southern Hemisphere. Over the years she saved published stories, pictures, poems, newspaper clippings, border designs, and conference youth magazines.¹⁸ She took a well-earned retirement in April 1974, setting up home in inner Sydney at Redfern for herself and her parents. In 1978 she established a home at Yerinbool in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales. Here she purchased her first car and having never secured a drivers licence, would have her brother Jack drive them all to appointments. She cared for her elderly parents until their deaths in 1982 and 1983, as well as for two aunts and an uncle.¹⁹

Veronica also devoted much time in attempting to clear Lindy Chamberlain of the murder of her daughter, Azaria. Together with appeals to members of Parliament, the judiciary, and others, Flanigan wrote a booklet entitled, "The Azaria Evidence: fact or fiction?" (1984),²⁰ and a pamphlet, "Guilty until proved Innocent" (no date given).²¹ When Motor Neurone Disease struck she was capably cared for by her niece Veronica Chambers. As the disease progressed, she was unable to talk and communicated by pen. Visitors complained at the slowness of her writing, so she used shorthand and then wrote "now you read it." She passed peacefully in her sleep on May 22, 1997 and was laid to rest in the Bowral Cemetery to await Christ's return.²² This pioneer of the JMV/Pathfinder work in the South Pacific Division earned the reputation as a walking encyclopedia.²³ Her

knowledge of the Scriptures and biblical history, together with her understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was renowned.²⁴

SOURCES

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"Well Done!" *Australasian Record*, May 13, 1984.

NOTES

1. Veronica Chambers, "Life Sketch for Veronica Mary Flanigan," 1997, unpublished manuscript held in the Ellen G White/SDA Research Centre, Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia, Document File 3105.
2. "Scrapbook put together by nieces," Veronica Flanigan Collection, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia, Box 606.
3. Florence Grolimund, "Graduation at Avondale," *Australasian Record*, December 13, 1937, 8.

4. Academic Transcript for Veronica Flanigan (1937), Australasian Missionary College, Accessed 2016.
5. Veronica Mary Flanigan Worker's Biographical Record. South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives. Folder: "Flanigan, Veronica Mary" Document: "Worker's Biographical Record."
6. R. E. G. Blair, "North New Zealand Conference – Officers and Departmental Leaders for 1941," *Australasian Record*, April 21, 1941, 3-5.
7. J. D. Anderson, "Visiting Some of the North New Zealand Youth," *Australasian Record*, January 18, 1943, 4.
8. Flanigan Biographical Information Record.
9. Among the special booklets Flanigan prepared for the junior youth were two: "Especially for Juniors" and "Building for Eternity," Veronica Flanigan Collection, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia, Box 833.
10. "The Services of Miss Veronica Flanigan . . .," *Australasian Record*, July 22, 1957, 16.
11. "Minutes of the MV Advisory Committee," March 15, 1962, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia, Box 945.
12. R.A. Vince, "MV Department Report," *Australasian Record*, December 12, 1962, 12-14.
13. In a conversation with Flanigan's niece, Rosemary Kay, she mentioned that her Auntie Ron always referred to any plants and flowers by their botanical names. This was confirmed in an email dated March 14, 2017, held at the Ellen G. White/SDA Research Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education.
14. For Flanigan's work on the flags of the South Pacific see Veronica Flanigan Collection, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia, Box 611.
15. Explorer File, Veronica Flanigan Collection, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia, Box 610.
16. *The Winner* was published bi-monthly for the juniors of the Australasian Temperance Society. Copies are held at the South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.
17. Pearl D. Brown, "Avondalians at Avondale," *Australasian Record*, January 11, 1971, 11.
18. Flanigan kept a large collection of published stories, pictures, poems and newspaper clippings. See Veronica Flanigan Collection, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

19. Information collected from Flanigan's nieces, Veronica Chambers and Rosemary Kay. Ellen G. White/SDA Research Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.
 20. A copy of this booklet is house at the Avondale College of Higher Education Library – 364.10099291 F61.
 21. "Guide to the Papers of Veronica Flanigan," MS 9648, Box 2, National Library of Australia, Canberra, ACT. <http://www.nla.gov.au/nla.obj-297705661/findingaid>.
 22. See Life Sketch prepared by Veronica Chambers.
 23. "Well Done!" *Australasian Record*, May 13, 1974, 13.
 24. R. Brown, T. Turner, B. Gane, and G. Kent, "Veronica Mary Flanigan obituary," *Record*, July 5, 1997, 14.
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