Bedwell, Harry Wain (1917–1991)

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Harry Wain Bedwell was a pastor, editor, and administrator in the United States, Canada, and Asia.

**Early Life**

Harry Wain Bedwell was born on February 8, 1917, in the United States of America to E. E. Bedwell and Jessie Wood. His father was born in Des Moines, Iowa, and his mother was born in Medical Lake, Washington. In 1967, the family resided in Spokane, Washington. Although his father was not an Adventist, Bedwell converted to Adventism through the influence of his mother, who was a faithful church member. He accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord through baptism in 1931 when he was 14 years old. Elder R. A. Smithwick baptized him and he became an active member engaged in the various programs of the church and school. His early years were spent in Spokane, Washington.¹

**Education and Marriage**

Bedwell’s education provided a good foundation for his faith. For his elementary education, he attended a church school. After graduating from North Central High School in Spokane with a business diploma, he attended Walla Walla College from 1937 to 1941 where he finished his bachelor’s degree in theology.² This combination of business and theology training gave him more opportunities to work and serve in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.³

On June 15, 1941, Bedwell married Marvel Belle Smith in Spokane, Washington. Marvel was born on August 3, 1917, to Earl and Eva Smith in Canada. The family migrated to Spokane, Washington, in 1920. The Bedwells were blessed with two children, Carole June (1945-) and Darrel Earl (1949-), both born in Canada during their father’s first mission assignment. The Bedwells dedicated their lives to serving the Lord.

**Ministry**

After graduation from Walla Walla College in 1941,⁴ Bedwell proceeded to the Manitoba-Saskatchewan Conference, Canada, for his first assignment as a ministerial intern. Three years later, he joined the Maritime Conference in 1944.⁵ His dedication to the gospel ministry showed excellent results. In 1945, he was ordained as a gospel minister during the Conference Session at Maritime Conference, Halifax, Canada.

Following his ordination, Bedwell’s function as a pastor expanded. He left the Maritime Conference in 1946 to answer the call for a Bible teacher at Oshawa Missionary College in Ontario, Canada.⁶ He became the head of the Bible department and college church pastor. In 1952, the General Conference voted to send Bedwell to the Far Eastern Division (FED, now Southern-Asia Pacific Division) to serve as editor of the Philippine Publishing House (PPH) in Manila, Philippines. The GC Committee requested the release of Bedwell from the Canadian Union Conference and Oshawa Missionary College to fulfill his calling in FED in Asia.⁷ Aside from being editor, he also became the manager of the publishing house in 1955.⁸ These experiences gave him the wisdom and opportunities to embark on another line of work in 1959. After working as editor and manager of the PPH, he was called to serve as the secretary-treasurer of the North Philippine Union Mission⁹ where he remained until 1961.¹⁰

Bedwell’s faithful and dedicated ministry and leadership led to his appointment as the secretary-treasurer of the Southeast Asia Union Mission (SEAUM) in Singapore in 1961. In 1962, he was called to greater responsibility as the president of SEAUM,¹¹ while simultaneously serving as the editor of the magazine The Messenger.¹² As a president, he made himself available throughout the mission’s territory, officiating in church dedications, ordinances, and other events in locations such as Sandakan, Sabah (formerly New Borneo);¹³ Kuching, Sarawak; the Malayan Mission, Borneo,¹⁴ and Thailand.¹⁵ One remarkable development in the Southeast Asian Union was the growth of the publishing work.¹⁶ Several colporteurs, though limited in number per country, promulgated the gospel work. Even non-Adventists students helped in raising funds for Ekamai Mission School in Thailand through printed media.¹⁷ Bedwell’s work in the Southeast Asia Union Mission purported to have “strong leadership.”¹⁸ Hence, in 1966, the General Conference committee elected H. W. Bedwell as secretary of the Far Eastern Division (FED).¹⁹

As FED secretary, Bedwell travelled to countries and areas under the supervision of the division. In 1967, he traveled to Hong Kong where he attended the groundbreaking ceremony of the Hong Kong Hospital.²⁰ His three and half years as secretary of the FED were characterized by great activity in the church’s endeavors. He was appointed a member of the finance committee during the 1968 autumn council in Toronto, Ontario.²¹ In 1970, Bedwell was elected field secretary and religious liberty secretary of the Far Eastern Division²² Later, he was also designated assistant treasurer in the FED,²³ a position which he held until the culmination of his work in Asia. On April 1, 1974,²⁴ the Bedwells bid farewell to the Far Eastern Division after serving its territory in various capacities for twenty-two years.²⁵

Harry W. Bedwell died on December 11, 1991.²⁶

**Sources**


Harry W. Bedwell Biographical Information. General Conference Employee Service Record.

“Meet Your New Division Staff 1966-70.” Far Eastern Division Outlook, July 1966.

“New Hospital Started in Hong Kong.” Far Eastern Division Outlook, August 1967.


NOTES

1. Harry W. Bedwell Biographical Information, General Conference Employee Service Record.


3. Ibid., Harry W. Bedwell Biographical Information, General Conference Employee Service Record.

4. Ibid.


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