

Adams, Cyrus Southey (1920–2016) and Nola (Timmins) (1922–2012)

ROSS GOLDSTONE

Ross Goldstone, M.A. (Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia) retired in 1998 as Senior Pastor, Avondale Memorial Church, Cooranbong, NSW, Australia. New Zealand born, Goldstone has served the Church as a pastor, Conference Youth Director, teacher, and Sessional Lecturer at Avondale College. He has authored nine books relating to Adventist history, including *The Angel Said Australia*. He is also co-author of four other books on Adventist history in Australasia. In retirement Ross Goldstone continues to research and write Adventist Church history.



Cyrus Adams

Photo courtesy of Adventist Heritage Centre, South Pacific Division.

Cyrus and Nola Adams, born in New Zealand, gave forty-one years of service to the Church in the South Pacific Division. Cyrus was a pastor, evangelist, teacher, missionary, and conference administrator.

Early Life and Education

Cyrus Southey Adams was born in Gisborne, New Zealand, on March 21, 1920.¹ He was the youngest of six children. Of English heritage, his parents, Robert Southey and Annie Constance (Bramwell) Adams had independently migrated to New Zealand from Australia in search of employment and a new start in life.² They met in New Zealand, married, and eventually settled on a small farm in the Waipoa Valley west of Gisborne.³

At the time of Cyrus's birth, the Adams family had close links to the Anglican Church (known throughout New Zealand in those years as the Church of England). Cyrus was christened by the local Anglican minister. The family was later introduced to the Seventh-day Adventist Church by Pastor Alfred Judge.⁴ The older members of the

family were baptized and joined the Gisborne Church in 1927, but Cyrus, being younger, was baptized by Pastor James Pascoe in 1934.⁵

After growing up on the farm, Cyrus spent four years at the New Zealand Missionary College (now Longburn College), studying the intermediate ministerial course and the business course. He graduated in 1943⁶ He then completed his theological training at the Australasian Missionary College (now Avondale University College), graduating in 1945.⁷

Nola Agnes Timmins, daughter of Nolan and May (Morris) Timmins, was born in Eketahuna, New Zealand, on July 10, 1922. May Morris had attended the Charles Paap evangelistic series in Eketahuna and was baptized on November 7, 1907. Nolan had been a Methodist but eventually was baptized and married May. Nola was one of seven children born to Nolan and May Timmins. She was baptized at the end of 1933 at the age of 11 by Pastor Battye in the Masterton Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁸

The Timmins family lost their farm and new home during the depression of the 1930s. As a result, they moved to Dannevirke where, because of family poverty, Nola was the first of her siblings to attend high school. Too poor to afford textbooks, she was loaned these by the school. She took the commercial course, which provided the best possibility for early employment. A talented pupil, at the end of her third year she was invited to become a junior teacher and the principal's secretary in the following year. So it was in 1938 at the age of 15, Nola began her career as a business teacher. During the next four years, she studied at nighttime for her teaching diploma and in 1942 became a Pitman certified teacher and was elected as a Fellow of the Incorporated Phonographic Society of Australia. It was with these qualifications that Nola was appointed as the business teacher at the New Zealand Missionary College (now Longburn College), a position she held for four years and where she met Cyrus Adams.⁹

Years of Service

During his vacations while a student at Avondale, Cyrus had engaged in literature evangelism in both New Zealand and Queensland, Australia. Upon graduation, having proved himself successful as a literature evangelist, he was invited to join the Queensland Conference as an assistant publishing director. He remained in that position for one year.¹⁰

While a student at New Zealand Missionary College, Cyrus had commenced a relationship with Nola. For three years after he moved to Australia, he conducted the romance by correspondence. Late in 1946, Cyrus received an appointment to locate in Fiji. Before embarking for Fiji, he returned to New Zealand so that Nola and he could be married. The marriage took place in the New Zealand Missionary College chapel on January 2, 1947!¹¹

Cyrus and Nola Adams spent 16 years ministering in Fiji. Between February 1947 and February 1950 he was a district director in the Fijian highlands. From March 1950 until the end of 1951 he was a departmental director in

the Fiji Mission located at Suvavou, Viti Levu. During this time he became fluent in the local language and preached in Fijian. He was ordained to the gospel ministry in the Suvavou Church on June 10, 1950.¹² Late in 1951, he was appointed president of the West Fiji Mission, a position he held for five years.¹³ Their son, Robert (1948), and daughters Rosalind (Maxfield, 1950) and Janice (Chapman, 1952) were all born during these years in Fiji.¹⁴

Eventually, there was a need for a Bible teacher at Fulton College, a person of experience who could train ministerial students in the work of ministry for the island nations of the Pacific. Cyrus Adams had a great interest in theology and a warm personality. He was a clever artist and a poet of note. He was considered ideal for the position, and Nola was an experienced business teacher. Thus at the end of 1956, Cyrus and Nola were appointed to Fulton College: Cyrus as the head of the Bible Department and Nola as the teacher in the Business Department.¹⁵ During their six years at Fulton, the family was able to experience time without being constantly separated because of Cyrus' work responsibilities.

Cyrus and Nola Adams made a lasting impact on the lives of the young people who passed through their classes at Fulton. Many a young minister was equipped with a set of prophetic charts for use in evangelism under the watchful tutelage of Pastor Adams.¹⁶ With her qualifications and skills, Nola was able to make a significant contribution in the mission field, particularly in the six years that she and Cyrus spent at Fulton College. She was actively involved in teaching sewing and knitting with the village women while in the highlands of Fiji and inaugurated the work of the Dorcas Society. Later in Samoa, she was instrumental in establishing a branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Union.¹⁷

In 1963, the educational needs of the children compelled the family to return to Australia, where Cyrus accepted an invitation to be the pastor of the Albany Church in the West Australian Conference.¹⁸ In 1966 they were transferred to care for the South Perth and Fremantle churches. At the time, the South Perth congregation was fractured by theological controversy, and the Fremantle Church was engaged in the construction of a new church building.¹⁹

On April 6, 1969, Cyrus became the president of the West Australian Conference.²⁰ During his time as president, Carmel College was under threat of closure. Cyrus Adams was strongly committed to Christian education, and under his leadership, the college was able to remain open through a challenging period.²¹

Following almost seven years in leadership in Western Australia, Cyrus Adams was elected as the president of the Tasmanian Conference, a position he took up at the beginning of 1976 and held for two years.²² Then, at the end of 1977, Cyrus and Nola received an invitation to return to the Pacific Islands—this time for Cyrus to be the president of the Samoa Mission in the Central Pacific Union Mission.²³ They remained in Samoa for five years, especially assisting local pastors in conducting evangelistic series. During his tenure, Cyrus persuaded the executive committee to budget for the purchase of a large tent from New Zealand for conducting evangelistic meetings. It was used to good effect in many of the towns and villages throughout Samoa.²⁴

Cyrus and Nola Adams returned to Australia at the end of 1982, having served for more than 21 years as missionaries in Pacific Island nations.²⁵ Insofar as their three children had married and settled in Western Australia, they opted to return to that conference. Greatly loved by church members, Cyrus devoted three further years to pastoral ministry. His special love was visitation and conducting Bible studies in the homes of the people. Nola took an active interest in the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the work of the Bible Society, and the Dorcas Welfare Society.

Later Life

Cyrus and Nola Adams retired at the end of 1985 after 40 years of ministerial service and 1 year of literature ministry.²⁶ Retirement did not diminish their love for service. Both Cyrus and Nola continued to work in various ways in the Western Australian Conference until Nola died on December 12, 2012.²⁷ Both she and Cyrus were residents in Sherwin Lodge, Perth, at the time. Cyrus died in Perth on May 6, 2016.²⁸

Contribution

Cyrus and Nola Adams spent 21 years in mission service, 19 years in administration, 6 years in training ministers, and 9 years in pastoral evangelism. They made a significant contribution to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific Division. Cyrus's efforts to maintain the viability of Carmel College has paid dividends in the education of young people in the Western Australian Conference.

A gentle, humble man who related well to his staff and church members, Cyrus was seen as a mentor, confidant, wise counselor, and theologian who was called upon to meet theological tensions that emerged within the church. In his retirement, he enjoyed responding to invitations from time to time to be a guest lecturer at Mamarapha College, the training school in Western Australia for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. He also was appreciated as a poet and artist who found joy in expressing with pen and brush his response to life as he experienced it.

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NOTES

1. Cyrus Southey Adams, *Adams Family History: Connections and Reflections* (Mandurah, West Australia: Drum Print, 2012), 205.
2. *Ibid.*, 4.
3. *Ibid.*, 3.
4. *Ibid.*, 17.
5. *Ibid.*, 24.
6. *Ibid.*, 26; E. J. Johanson, "Graduation Address," *Australasian Record*, January 17, 1944, 1.
7. Adams, *Family History*, 50. Elva E. Thorpe, "Festival of the Jacaranda," *Australasian Record*, January 21, 1946, 2.
8. Janice Chapman, email message to author, February 19, 2017.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Adams, *Family History*, 51.
11. *Ibid.*, 55. Alfred Judge, "Adams-Timmins," *Australasian Record*, February 17, 1947, 7.
12. Adams, *Family History*, 85.
13. *Ibid.*, 107.
14. *Ibid.*, 205.
15. *Ibid.*, 107.
16. *Ibid.*, 111.
17. Janice Chapman, email message to author, February 9, 2017.
18. Adams, *Family History*, 124, 127.
19. *Ibid.*, 132.
20. *Ibid.*, 135.

21. S. Ross Goldstone and Neroli Hiscox, *Glimpses of Carmel Adventist College: 1907–2007* (Warburton, Victoria: Signs Publishing Company, 2007), 132–133.
 22. Adams, *Family History*, 157.
 23. *Ibid.*, 158.
 24. *Ibid.*, 162.
 25. *Ibid.*, 163.
 26. *Ibid.*, 171.
 27. Glenn Townend, "Nola Adams obituary," *Record*, March 2, 2013, 23.
 28. Terry Johnson, Lynn Burton, and Roger Millist, "Cyrus Adams obituary," *Record*, July 16, 2016, 22.
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