



Boliu Adventist Hospital  
Photo courtesy of Milton Hook. From the collection of Warren Martin, Sydney, NSW.

# Boliu Adventist Hospital, Papua New Guinea

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## MILTON HOOK

Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian*, *Gospel Revivalist* the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

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Boliu Hospital on the Island of Mussau, Papua new Guinea was opened in 1955. It was closed in 1977 when a government facility opened approximately thirty minutes' walk from the mission station.

Prior to the Second World War, any medical cases on Mussau Island, New Guinea, were treated by missionaries Arthur and Nancy Atkins at their back door. No other medical facilities were available on the island. Their mission station and school were established at Boliu overlooking Schadel Bay at the southern end of the island. Fellow Seventh-day Adventist Trevor Collett was operating a timber mill on neighboring Emirau Island and supplied timber to Atkins for the building of a school and a simple weatherboard cottage with a corrugated iron roof. This structure eventually served as the hub and dispensary for the Boliu Adventist Hospital.<sup>1</sup>

The war brought tragedy to the developing enterprise. Both Atkins and Collett lost their lives. Following the war years, John and Kath Martin were appointed to Mussau. They arrived in May 1949 and remained until 1952. John had served in the army as a medical officer, having first received some basic training in warfare injuries and tropical diseases at the Heidelberg Military Hospital, Melbourne. Kath had completed three years of the nurses course at the Sydney Sanitarium and Hospital. They used the weatherboard cottage, where they treated malaria, skin and chest

infections, ulcers, bone fractures, and other accidents. It also served as a maternity ward and dental clinic. There were only a couple of beds, screened off from the rest of the room. All medical supplies were obtained from the government without charge.<sup>2</sup>

When missionaries Calvin and Beryl Stafford arrived at Boliu in June 1954, they made some improvements to the station. Four concrete slabs were laid near the cottage, and local materials were used to construct two wards for males and two for females. The roofs were grass thatch, providing a cooler atmosphere than the cottage. Stafford installed a diesel motor and generator to supply electricity to all the buildings on the station, including the dispensary, wards, and doctor boy's house.<sup>3</sup> The Staffords were not trained in medical lines, and Beryl had to insist that she could not be very helpful, especially with difficult childbirth cases.<sup>4</sup> The national nurses, husband and wife Pereri and Rebecca, were the highest level of medical assistance available.

Colin and Melva Winch, both trained nurses, replaced the Staffords in 1957 and remained until the end of 1960. Pereri and Rebecca assisted them. The hospital catered to the populations of both Mussau and Emirau islands, numbering over two thousand people.<sup>5</sup> Mission station superintendents had the oversight of the hospital, in addition to the school, but they were usually not directly involved in the day-to-day medical services.

During the eight years that Milton and Betty McFarlane were stationed at Boliu from 1961 to 1968, all medical services were rendered by national nurses.<sup>6</sup> The McFarlanes were replaced by John and Patricia McMahon. Patricia was a trained nurse, and toward the end of her term, in the early 1970s, she had the assistance of a national nurse, Ruth Elisha.<sup>7</sup> Ruth was succeeded by a married couple, Samuel and Esther Kangai, who served until the hospital closed.<sup>8</sup>

The hospital was listed in the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* from 1970<sup>9</sup> to 1977 as a 24-bed institution that was established in 1955<sup>10</sup> when Stafford installed the electricity. It was closed when a government facility opened approximately thirty minutes' walk from the mission station.<sup>11</sup>

## SOURCES

Dickens, H. A. "Hopes Being Fulfilled at Boliu School." *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, October 28, 1957.

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McFarlane, Milton. "Boliu Central School, Mussau." *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, August 1, 1966. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1970–1977.

## NOTES

1. Kay (Atkins) Pitches, email to Milton Hook, February 14, 2018.?
2. Warren Martin, email to Milton Hook, February 19, 2018.?
3. R. A. Harrison, "Bismarck-Solomons Medley," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, April 11, 1955, 3-4.?
4. Ruth (Stafford) Cregan, email to Milton Hook, January 16, 2018.?
5. H. A. Dickens, "Hopes Being Fulfilled at Boliu School," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, October 28, 1957, 16; Colin Winch, email to Milton Hook, February 7, 2018.?
6. E.g., Milton McFarlane, "Boliu Central School, Mussau," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, August 1, 1966, 3-4.?
7. "Boliu Hospital," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1972* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1972), 372.?
8. E.g., "Boliu Hospital," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1975* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1975), 374.?
9. "Boliu Hospital," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1970* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1970), 388.?
10. "Boliu Hospital," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1977* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1977), 415.?
11. Barry Oliver, email to Milton Hook, February 8, 2018.?