



Hazel and Allan Butler, c. 1930.

Photo courtesy of Joy-Marie Butler.

Butler, Lewis Allan (1890–1961) and Hazel Myrtle (Hoskins) (1890–1968)

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Shirley Tarburton, M.Litt. (Distinction) (University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia) retired in 2008 after 40 years teaching church-school (mainly high school but including eight years at university). An Australian, she has taught in four mission fields, Australia, and New Zealand. She has authored five books and co-authored one on church history, biography and family history, as well as several magazine articles. She is married to Dr. Michael Tarburton with two

adult children and four grandchildren.

Lewis Allan Butler (known as Allan and subsequently referred to as Allan to distinguish him from his father, Lewis Butler) was a business studies graduate from Australasian Missionary College who gave 45 years of service to the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in the Australasian Division (now South Pacific Division) as accountant, manager, teacher, evangelist, and administrator, with seven years as a conference president.

Early Life

Allan Butler was born on August 21, 1890, at Woodburn,¹ near Ballina in northern New South Wales, Australia, where his father had a store and a ferry-boat to deliver supplies along the Richmond River.² He was the eldest of six children born to his parents, Lewis Butler (1844-1932)³ and Lilian (1869-1920).⁴ The other children were as follows: Winefred (1892-1982, married Harold John Baron in 1920), Sydney Clifton (Pastor, 1894-1992), Francis James (1896-1979), Frederick Ewington (1898-1984), and Edward Adrian (1900-1973).

Lewis and Lilian were devout Christians and the family attended the local Presbyterian church every Sunday where the children were being taught to be very particular about keeping Sunday holy.⁵

Desiring to give their children the opportunity for a University education,⁶ Lewis and Lilian moved their family to Sydney in 1900.⁷ They bought several blocks of land in a newly-settled area called Wahroonga⁸ and established a store near the railway station.⁹ About this time they heard of a group building a medical institution called the Sydney Sanitarium and Benevolent Association in the same area. Lewis Butler thought they were crazy and said he would never go near them!¹⁰

Conversion and Education

Towards the end of 1902, Lewis Butler became ill with rheumatic fever. Doctor after doctor was consulted, but he grew steadily worse. Doctors were called from more distant areas but none could give any hope. Finally he was given forty-eight hours to live. In desperation Allan and an uncle took Lewis over the bush track to the new Sanitarium only to be turned away as it was not yet open.¹¹ They appealed to the manager and to Dr. Kress who finally gave in to their pleading. The now-unconscious¹² Lewis Butler became Sydney Sanitarium's (now the Sydney Adventist Hospital) first paying patient. Despite pessimistic expectations, Lewis recovered. While convalescing, he began reading a book that caught his interest – *Daniel and the Revelation* by Uriah Smith. Before he was discharged, arrangements were made for Pastor G. B. Starr to come to the Butler home to give bible studies which led to both Lewis and Lilian being baptised into the Seventh-day Adventist faith.¹³

As a result of this change in the direction of his life, Lewis Butler sold his business and properties in Wahroonga and moved his family to Avondale where he was asked to take charge of the general store that was operated by the SDA training school situated there. The children all attended the church school and later the Avondale School for Christian Workers (now called Avondale College). They also joined the church.¹⁴ Allan was baptised in May 1907.¹⁵ At the time, he was enrolled in the Business Course at Avondale from which he graduated in October of 1909.¹⁶

First Period of Mission Service

The next month¹⁷ Allan was appointed to Buresala, the SDA mission school in Fiji,¹⁸ where he worked until May 4, 1911.¹⁹ He learned to speak Fijian very well and was soon able to teach in the vernacular.²⁰ Allan spent the remainder of 1911 in Samoa, on Savaii Island,²¹ after being transferred there by the Union Conference Committee.²² While learning Samoan,²³ he traveled through the villages distributing the *Tala Moni* (Good News) and other literature.²⁴ Unfortunately he became ill²⁵ so on January 5, 1912, he arrived back in Sydney under transfer to work at the Union Conference Office.²⁶ His family felt he had come home to die, and he was admitted to the Sydney Sanitarium where he unexpectedly made a good recovery.²⁷ He spent the rest of 1912 as secretary to Pastor J. E. Fulton, the President of the Union Conference.²⁸

On December 31, 1912, Allan once again sailed for Fiji. This time it was a temporary release from the Union Office to fill in at Buresala “until others become proficient in the Fijian language.”²⁹ However, as the months passed, it seemed he was still needed as much as when he arrived. So he sent for his fiancée and on October 12, 1913, they were married at the Suva SDA Mission Station.³⁰

Marriage and Family

While studying at Avondale, Allan met Hazel Myrtle Hoskins who was one of his classmates in the Business Course.³¹ She had been born Hazel Myrtle Clarice Dennis on September 10, 1890, in Melbourne, Victoria.³² Her parents, Alfred Walter Dennis and Sophia Kay Dennis (nee Wight) were poor, and her father left the family when Hazel was young. Hazel was the youngest surviving child of eight siblings and was put up for adoption or ‘sold’ to an elderly SDA couple³³ before or about the time her mother married again in 1900.

Elias Hoskins (1834-1915) was sixty-three and Hephzibah Ellen Matthews (1857-1937) was forty when they married in 1897.³⁴ They remained childless, and Hazel came to live with them. Elias was a travelling salesman selling Adventist books and was uncompromising in his support of the work of the SDA church.³⁵ However, he did not know how to relate to children and Hazel was very unhappy there.³⁶ When Hazel was sent to study at Avondale at age sixteen (1907), she was glad for the opportunity to leave home and had resolved to escape from the school and disappear.³⁷ She wanted nothing to do with the religion she had been observing but what she experienced at Avondale changed her mind.³⁸ She was living with loving and lovable Christians and was

converted, becoming one herself.³⁹

Hazel graduated from the Preparatory Course in 1908⁴⁰ and from the Business Course at the same time as Allan in October 1909.⁴¹ Sometime after that she spent two years studying nursing at the Sydney Sanitarium⁴² and it was probably at that time, while Allan was recovering after being in Samoa, that the friendship blossomed into love, and they became engaged to be married. When it looked as though his temporary appointment to Fiji was becoming permanent, Hazel left her nursing training and joined Allan in Fiji. Right after their marriage they set up their home in Buresala and Allan continued working at the school.⁴³

Allan and Hazel had four children: Beryl Hazel (1914-1996) was born in Fiji; Mervyn Allan (1917-2001) and Lancelot Lewis (1918-2004) were both born in Adelaide, South Australia; Fernella Effie Lillian (1920-) was born in Auckland, New Zealand.⁴⁴

Career

The couple spent 1914 and most of 1915 in Buresala where Allan was teaching and keeping the books.⁴⁵ His grasp of the Fijian language made him an effective communicator and that, together with his love of music, enabled him to translate a number of hymns into Fijian.⁴⁶ By 1915 he had been given the added responsibility of being the farm manager.⁴⁷ He was also proficient in operating the school launch and navigating the waters between Ovalau, where Buresala was located, and Viti Levu, where the mission headquarters were in Suva.⁴⁸ Their term of service in Fiji finished in 1915, and on September 7 the family arrived back in Sydney where Allan was appointed to manage the Sanitarium Health Food (SHF) Café.⁴⁹

He spent the next ten years working for the SHF.⁵⁰ In November 1916, Allan took over the management of the café in Adelaide, South Australia,⁵¹ moving it closer to the centre of the city and doubling its business.⁵² In 1920, he was transferred to Auckland, New Zealand, to manage the SHF Café there.⁵³ He was also on the New Zealand Central Health Food Board.⁵⁴ During 1923 and 1924, Allan set up and managed the new SHF Café in Dunedin located in the South Island of New Zealand.⁵⁵

In 1925, the Butler family returned to Australia because Allan was appointed to Avondale⁵⁶ to serve as accountant in the Australasian Missionary College office.⁵⁷ While working at the college, he took the opportunity to participate in lay evangelism and other outreach activities that he enjoyed.⁵⁸ Allan's responsibilities were expanded in 1931 when he was put in charge of the Business Department at the college.⁵⁹

Another change occurred in 1933 when Allan was sent back to New Zealand to be the accountant and teacher of Business Studies at the New Zealand Missionary College at Longburn in the North Island.⁶⁰ It wasn't long before he was once again involved in evangelistic outreach as a layman and with good success.⁶¹

However, his time in New Zealand was short. During the December 1933 Union meetings, the Union Conference Committee appointed him as Secretary-Treasurer of the Queensland Conference.⁶² As before, he soon

participated in meetings not directly related to his official duties.⁶³ His ability in this area was noted, and at the end of 1938, he was asked to transfer to the West Australian Conference for pastoral ministry.⁶⁴

Ministry

At the West Australian Camp-meeting, on March 4, 1939, Allan Butler was ordained to the gospel ministry.⁶⁵ He immediately commenced an evangelistic campaign and by August 1939, he and his co-worker, C. P Southwell, were studying with forty-four adults in the Fremantle area.⁶⁶ In 1940, the suburb of Cottesloe was added to their territory⁶⁷ and in June the Conference President reported that "Pastor L. A. Butler is doing very well in Fremantle and Cottesloe."⁶⁸

The following year he was sent south to evangelise Bussleton which culminated in a baptism of ten on December 20, 1941.⁶⁹ Allan loved evangelism and put all his energies into it; however, his constitution was not equal to the task and he again became ill.⁷⁰

When he did not recover quickly, he was admitted to the Sydney Sanitarium on the other side of the country and ended up spending nearly seven months there.⁷¹ His family shifted from West Australia to Sydney, and in July 1943 he finally went back to work visiting people who had become interested in Bible study by listening to the Advent Radio Church in Sydney.⁷² Unfortunately, he suffered another health set-back in September which necessitated an emergency operation and another period of hospitalisation.⁷³

By the beginning of 1944 he was once again able to resume his ministry and continued studying the Bible with contacts from the church's radio ministry.⁷⁴ He was well-known for having success in leading people to make a decision for Christ.⁷⁵ In the Annual Session held early in 1945, he was appointed to be the City Evangelistic Personal Worker for Sydney,⁷⁶ and at the Conference Session held a year later in February 16, 1946, he was also made a member of the Conference Executive Committee.⁷⁷ In November 1946 he had the joy of baptising fifteen people.⁷⁸

At the 1946 Annual Conference Meeting, Pastor Butler was invited to take up the presidency of the Tasmanian Conference commencing January 1947.⁷⁹ The Tasmanian Conference had only a very small staff of ministers, so he organised that the church members themselves would run the evangelistic campaigns with the ministers providing supervision.⁸⁰ This proved successful and he was able to give a good report of five evangelistic series by January of 1948.⁸¹

During 1948 a review of the organisational structure of the SDA church in Australia was held and one of the results was the creation of the Greater Sydney Conference. Pastor Butler was invited to be its first President, so the commencement of 1949 saw him back in Sydney again.⁸² He was the president of the Greater Sydney Conference for five years. During this time he emphasized public evangelism, with ministers being encouraged to run a number of campaigns across the city.⁸³

Another decision made during his presidency that had far-reaching consequences was the building of the new Adventist High School at Strathfield.⁸⁴ This replaced the Burwood school, and its superior location and improved facilities were considered to be a real blessing to Adventist education and the youth in the conference.⁸⁵

Retirement and Death

Towards the end of 1953, Allan's health was once again causing concern, and at the conference meetings in August he tendered his request for retirement.⁸⁶ It took effect immediately and the next week he was back in the Sydney Sanitarium.⁸⁷ He was an invalid for the rest of his life with an immobilizing heart condition.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, he continued to write occasional articles for the church paper and wrote weekly encouragements to each of his children.⁸⁹

Pastor Allan Butler died in the Sydney Sanitarium on April 18, 1961. He is remembered for his emphasis on evangelistic service, promoting soul-winning amongst the churches, and his encouragement of young evangelists.⁹⁰ Hazel lived another seven years, passing away on September 4, 1968. She was ever a supportive companion to Allan and had the joy of seeing each of her children occupied in working for the church.⁹¹

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