

# Lang, Frederick (1899–1930) and Lily (Maude)

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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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Frederick and Lily Lang were appointed to Fiji.

Frederick and seven others lost their lives at sea in a hurricane in November 1930.



Fred Lang

From *Australasian Record*, February 2, 1931.

## Preparation for Service

Frederick Lang's parents, Edward and Alice, were among the early converts to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the south west of Western Australia. Frederick was born on January 22, 1899, at Busselton and raised on the family farm. As a consequence he became a very practical person, skilled in farming, blacksmithing, carpentry, and motor mechanics. At the age of twenty-one, he committed to a path of study that would fit him to be a church schoolteacher. During 1920 through 1923 he attended the Darling Range School at Carmel, Western Australia, and then advanced to the Australasian Missionary College, Cooranbong, New South Wales.<sup>1</sup> At the close of 1925 he graduated from the Normal (Teaching) Course.<sup>2</sup>

## Church School Appointments

Lang was appointed to teach in Queensland and South Australia during 1926 and 1927.<sup>3</sup> On December 26, 1927, he married Lily Maude in the Malvern Seventh-day Adventist church, Melbourne. They had met during their

college days. Since leaving college Lily was employed by the Sanitarium Health Food Company in Melbourne.<sup>4</sup> Following their marriage they returned to South Australia for Frederick to continue his teaching position. The school year, 1928, was not completed before they received notice from the Union Conference Council in September that a manual arts teacher was urgently needed at Buresala Training School in Fiji. They readily accepted the new appointment and promptly arrived at Buresala on October.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to his teaching Frederick Lang applied himself to solving the need for ample fresh water on campus. A spring was found higher up in the hills behind the school and Frederick harnessed its supply and piped it down into the dormitories and mission homes. This facility proved to be a distinct advantage.<sup>6</sup> During their term at Buresala two daughters, Ivy May and Lynnette, were born.<sup>7</sup>

Hurricane Strike On the morning of November 23, 1930, a maritime warning was radioed for all shipping to take shelter because a hurricane was predicted to cause havoc in Fiji. Windows at Buresala were secured and Lang gathered together a team of seven young men to help him take the mission launch *Cina*, the school punt, and three dinghies a short distance around the point and into the relative safety of the upper waters of the Viro River. Someone at Viro saw the flotilla in the vicinity of the beacon at the mouth of the river. One boat had grounded on a coral reef and the launch had circled to nudge its stern. Night was falling and heavy rain soon obscured them. The hurricane then struck with full force, those back at Buresala clinging to each other indoors for an hour until it subsided.<sup>8</sup>

Tragically, nothing more was ever seen of Lang and his team. For days the shores and seas were searched until all hope was lost. Later, an anchor and chain was found embedded on a reef and a fragment of the *Cina* was located on a distant island.<sup>9</sup> The Fijian men lost were Ratu Moapi (Moab) Manakiwai, Filitati (Bildad) Liutaki, Isikeli (Ezekiel), Fineasi (Phineas) Kalesiwaqa, Iviremi (Ephraim) Valevoro, Semi (Shem) Natakalous, and Peceli (Bethel) Navetau.<sup>10</sup> In terms of numbers the incident was the greatest accidental loss of life for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific.<sup>11</sup>

Another group of Adventist missionaries and crew aboard the *Laloma* narrowly missed a similar catastrophe. When they encountered the same hurricane they let down the anchors and ran the engine at full speed in the face of the wind for two hours but the anchors eventually broke. Their vessel rolled over a reef and was washed up on the beach relatively unscathed. Everyone swam ashore and they were able to refloat the boat later.<sup>12</sup>

Memorials Lily and her two daughters returned to Melbourne. Church members were generous towards a memorial fund to replace the *Cina* and forty Buresala young men worked on road construction during their holidays to contribute what they could for the boat, later named *Tovata*.<sup>13</sup> The total funds raised were 760 pounds which, when added to the insurance claim, covered all material losses.<sup>14</sup> Frederick's alumni arranged for a memorial brass plaque to be placed in the chapel at the Australasian Missionary College. It was originally mounted on a piece of polished jarrah wood from Western Australia.<sup>15</sup> The plaque is now located in the foyer of the men's residence, Watson Hall. Local Fijians also composed a memorial song that for years they would sing

softly at evening time, the same time that the men lost their lives.<sup>16</sup>

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## NOTES

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