

Radley, John “Jack” Clifton (1894–1968), and Rose Merle (Martin) (1900–1989)



ROSE-MARIE RADLEY

Rose-Marie Radley was born at Wahroonga, Sydney, Australia, the younger daughter of missionary parents John Clifton Radley and Rose Merle Radley, and then based in The New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) in the South Pacific. From 1950 she trained as a nurse, adding qualifications in mid-wifery and nursing administration. After gaining experience in hospitals in New South Wales, she served as theatre supervisor at North York Branson Hospital in Toronto Canada (1958–1960), director of Nursing Services at Taiwan Sanitarium and Hospital in Taipei (1965–1968), director of Nursing Services at Tsuen Wan Hospital in Hong Kong (1968–1971), deputy matron at Sydney Sanitarium and Hospital in 1972, and finally as matron/director of Nursing Services at the renamed and rebuilt Sydney Adventist Hospital from 1972–1996.

Jack and Rose Radley.

Photo courtesy of Milton Hook from the collection of Rose-Marie Radley, Wahroonga, NSW.

Jack Radley served the Seventh-day Adventist Church caring for the mission boats in the island missions, working primarily as a captain, engineer, carpenter, and slip manager.

Early Years

John Clifton (Jack) Radley was born on November 4, 1894, at Castle Hill, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, the sixth of the nine children of John and Mary Radley.¹ Rose Merle Radley was born at Parramatta, Sydney, on March 14, 1900, the eldest of the five children of William and Nellie Martin.²

The Radley family, originally members of the Wesleyan Church,³ became Seventh-day Adventists as a result of the personal endeavors of Ellen G. White, who described her experience at the 34th Session of the General Conference in April 1901.⁴ Jack's father, an orchardist, worked with Ellen White to acquire the land at Cooranbong for the Avondale School for Christian Workers—later Avondale College—and at Wahroonga for the Sydney Sanitarium and Hospital—later Sydney Adventist Hospital.

In 1905, Ellen White wrote a letter to the Radley children following the unexpected passing of their father from blood poisoning at the age of 54 on May 6, 1905.⁵ John Radley had been the first patient to die in the new Sydney Sanitarium.⁶ The letter had a profound effect on Jack, who was just 10 years old at the time. It was one of the driving forces behind his lifelong desire to serve in the mission field of the South Sea Islands.

In about 1914 Jack was baptized at Murgon in Queensland by Pastor C. H. Watson. At the time, Jack was living with his elder brother Alf and gaining practical engineering skills.

Soon after his baptism, Jack rode a horse from Murgon to Avondale, New South Wales, a distance of more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles), to prepare for service as a minister of the gospel. He attended the Australasian Missionary College at Avondale from 1915 until July 1917, when he was invited to travel with Captain G. F. Jones, a pioneer missionary to the Solomon Islands and the South Seas, as boatswain/assistant engineer on the new 60-foot 8-inch, 32-ton mission ketch *Melanesia*.⁷

The Martin family, who were orchardists, moved to Ourimbah, New South Wales when Rose was five years old. She attended the local primary school and then the Australasian Missionary College in 1915–1916. While there, she studied English, reading, spelling, algebra, physiology, and Latin. In 1917 she took up employment at the Sanitarium Café in Hunter Street, Sydney, and then from 1918 to 1921, she undertook nurse training at the Sydney Sanitarium and Hospital. From 1922 to 1924 she was employed by the Warburton Sanitarium and Hospital.⁸

Early Work Experience and Marriage

Radley returned to Australia in November 1923 after more than six years of unbroken service in the Solomon Islands as a single man.⁹ In that time he had matured and gained experience as a sailor and captain. He was also well on the way to becoming an astute marine engineer. He had been mentored by G. F. Jones, an outstanding pioneer missionary, captain, and navigator. However, he was basically self-taught. He was mathematically gifted and became an outstanding practical engineer and builder. Radley had never been to sea before he sailed on the maiden voyage of the *Melanesia*. At that stage, he had no knowledge of navigation, yet one of the key accomplishments of his life was that of being an outstanding navigator, again mentored by G. F. Jones.

While Radley was never seasick, he did have two serious episodes of blackwater fever.¹⁰ Both occurred in before 1924, when he was single. On one occasion, he had been away from other missionaries when he contracted the

disease. The local people put him on board the *Advent Herald* and took him to the mission post at Batuna, where Pastor A. R. Barrett and his wife were stationed. They did not have any idea of how to deal with the disease. They left him in bed, unconscious, and went down to pray for him in the mission church. Providentially, he recovered.

Jack and Rose were married at Ourimbah on May 25, 1925. Two children were born to the marriage: Dorothy Merle and Rose-Marie, who later served in Canada, Taiwan, and Hong Kong and then as matron/director of nursing at Sydney Adventist Hospital from November 1973 to 1996.¹¹

After returning to Australia, Radley had taken up employment as an engineer for the Sanitarium Health Food Company at Cooranbong. In 1926 he and his wife were appointed to the New Hebrides to install a used sawmill plant for the Aore Training School. His role was almost immediately expanded to that of carpenter and engineer for the mission. Later, he was given charge of the mission launches.¹²

Prejudice Reversed

At the time Radley went to the New Hebrides, there was strong prejudice against the Adventist mission on the part of the French-British Condominium Government and the French people. Radley was instrumental in turning this around. From his base at Aore, running the sawmill, and through his work with the Adventist mission boat *Loloma*, he was engaged in a great deal of launch repair work for the neighboring residents of the district.¹³

Radley, in his role of training young nationals as boat crews and at the sawmill, learned both French and the local language and established good relations with the local people. In 1929 and 1930 relations between the Church, Government, and people were reported to have improved markedly because of his help as a translator and friend of the court in judicial and administrative proceedings between the Government and nationals in his area who had rebelled over land matters and other Government policies. Following the cyclone of 1929, he also gave significant assistance in the repair of at least two damaged French launches.¹⁴

Following a devastating cyclone that almost totally destroyed Aore, Radley took his first furlough in 1929 with Rose, who had been in Sydney for more than a year following the premature birth of her first daughter, Dorothy Merle.¹⁵ By this time, with the assistance of Rose and Dr. Gaudiard in the New Hebrides, he had become proficient as a primary care medical worker and dentist. He could speak four languages in addition to English. Later, during the Second World War, he also worked as an anesthetist.

Following their furlough, in 1930, Radley sailed the *Loloma* from the New Hebrides to Suva. He then took his crew to Sydney via steamer and sailed a new 45-foot launch, the *Le Phare*, to the New Hebrides. Although the engagement of a contract captain had been considered for these ship movements, Radley proved himself more than capable and was then regarded as the senior captain in the South Pacific mission fleet.¹⁶

In February 1931, Radley, with the *Le Phare*, was involved in a dramatic, heroic, and providential relief mission that resulted in the saving of Dr. Gaudiard at the Second Hospital from imminent death from tetanus. This mission, culminating in a fulsome letter of appreciation from the French commissioner in Vila, added a further dimension to the already improved relationship.¹⁷

In June 1931, W. G. Turner, president of the Australasian Union Conference, reported that the earlier manifestation of the most definite prejudice against the mission had been replaced with the most cordial feelings and that residents everywhere had treated his visiting group with kindness and genuine regard.¹⁸

A Serious Accident

In 1932 Radley sustained a serious injury at Aore. He was working on exchanging an engine in one of the mission boats. The men holding the ropes were unable to keep the engine up, and it descended on his left leg, crushing the leg and fracturing the tibia, fibula, and ankle. His condition was serious, and the Australasian Union Conference acted to have him repatriated to Australia. Recovery was slow but incomplete, and in August 1933 he received a retiring allowance.¹⁹ For three years he ran a small dairy farm at Douglas Park south of Sydney. In September 1936 Radley was appointed as a service engineer at the Sanitarium Health Food Company's factory at Cooranbong, where he had previously worked and where he was closer to ongoing medical treatment.²⁰

Association with W. H. Carpenter

During his time in the South Sea Islands, Radley had formed a close friendship with W. H. Carpenter, the brother of W. R. Carpenter who had founded the eponymous island trading company. In 1939 Carpenter invited Radley to Rabaul, New Britain Island, Papua New Guinea, to work on his boats at his slipway. While there, he proposed to Radley that he captain a new trading boat he was having built and that would serve not only his company but also the Church. Carpenter also agreed that Radley could take up his earlier role of slipping mission boats.

Radley accepted his offer, and he captained one of Carpenter's vessels and, later, the newly built *MVAmbon* (which had its maiden voyage on November 2, 1941), an 84-foot, 80-ton supply boat engaged in moving passengers and taking supplies to western settlements and outlying islands of the Territory of New Guinea.

War Service

Following the occupation of Rabaul in January 1942, Radley sailed the *Ambon* back to Cairns, Queensland, Australia, where it was taken over by the Australian forces. Fleeing missionaries also sailed the 41-foot *Diari* back to Cairns. Radley then sailed the *Diari* to Dora Creek, near Avondale College. The Union committee decided to renovate the vessel and lend it to the Australian forces for medical relief purposes in the South Pacific. Radley worked on the boat and was then engaged on August 11, 1943, by the Australian Army as master of the vessel

(renamed *AM400*) and was discharged with the rank of first lieutenant on March 4, 1946. In this role, Radley, although under the full direction of the army, was able to support Adventist mission personnel, paying wages, keeping up supplies, and keeping headquarters advised of the standing of believers, initially in the Papuan Gulf but later in the north of the Territory of New Guinea.²¹

Radley administered anesthesia when required for emergency operations. On one occasion when he was giving anesthesia in a hospital, the local area was bombed, and the surgeon was killed. Radley had to complete the operation. On another occasion, a bomb fell alongside his boat but did not explode.

Postwar Service

Following the conclusion of hostilities, the Church was able to purchase the *Ambon* as a transport vessel to assist in the replacement of mission personnel and the rebuilding of denominational infrastructure damaged or destroyed during the war. Radley was engaged on a three-year contract to complete the renovation of the *Ambon* and captain the vessel.²²

Because its own fleet had been decimated during the war years, the Church contracted for a fleet of 13 new vessels to be built and delivered, progressively, between 1947 and 1949, using the services of a contract captain. Problems arose with this plan, including the beaching of two vessels on the New South Wales coast. As a result, Radley took responsibility for delivering the 65-foot *Batuna* to Rabaul²³ and later the 48-foot *Vari Va To* to the Solomon Islands with the contract captain, whom he relieved of responsibility when he refused to put into Brisbane to allow the engineer to be landed for surgery for appendicitis.²⁴ He also delivered the last of the 13 boats, the 48-foot *Leleo*, to the New Hebrides after the vessel had been repaired following its beaching under the former contract captain.²⁵

In February 1949, at the second meeting of the new Coral Sea Union Mission, it was noted that Radley's services might be required as the maintenance engineer for the mission. Radley had drawn the attention of the union mission to the high cost of setting up a slipway and workshop for the mission and had suggested that he could possibly serve the needs of the Church better by accepting employment from W. R. Carpenter as a slip manager. The committee voted to place on record an expression of their confidence in his ability as a maintenance manager and their appreciation of his willingness to assist. They noted that their best wishes were with him as he took up his new work.

At that time W. H. Carpenter asked Radley if he would be willing to go to Vancouver and set up a maritime engineering and repair facility. Radley told him that his heart was in the work he was doing, that he and his wife had committed their lives to God, and that His protection had been very evident to them in many threatening situations. As much as he liked Mr. Carpenter, the postwar shipping needs of the Church in the South Pacific were so pressing that he felt compelled to stay.

In September 1950, Radley was engaged as contract captain to deliver the 53-foot *Lao Heni* from Port Moresby, Papua, to Suva, Fiji.²⁶ In January 1951 he accepted the position of ships maintenance officer for the Coral Sea Union Mission with the use of the *Batuna* in order to carry out his duties. His first task was to provide maintenance to the Solomon Islands Mission's vessels.²⁷ For a while, he continued to use the W. R. Carpenter slipway at Rabaul, Papua. He later built a new slipway at Rugen Harbor, south of Rabaul, and there set up the support service facilities. He also ran repair operations with the use of the *Portal*.

Radley was involved in a number of rescues at sea. The most dramatic was in January 1951 when the 48-foot *Lelaman* was traveling from the island of Emira to Kavieng in New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, for the Coral Sea Union Session. On board were the president of the Australasian Division, two visitors from the General Conference, and three missionaries. The vessel ran aground on a reef near Tsoi Island off the coast of New Hanover. Radley was sent to salvage the boat, which had been driven 150 yards onto the reef by high tides and a storm. After locating the boat, it took him and his crew 11 days to blast a channel through the coral and, with the help of the *Batuna*, drag the vessel into deep water.²⁸

Throughout her life in the mission field with Jack, Rose was regularly engaged in nursing activities as the occasion demanded. She acted as midwife with difficult deliveries and was called to render intensive assistance in the case of emergencies or other high need situations, such as outbreaks of dysentery and other infectious diseases, mass vaccinations, and essential health education in the tropics. As was customary at the time, such work was unpaid.

Radley wrote five feature articles that were published in the *Australasian Record*, including descriptions of the maiden voyages of three new mission vessels and stories that involved the saving of lives from disease and natural disaster.²⁹

In February 1951, two new 28-foot vessels, the *Sea Mark* and *Laurel*, were purchased from Norman R. Wright in Brisbane.³⁰ Radley, with island national crews, sailed the vessels to Port Moresby, with his brother Glen assisting as far as Townsville. Two years later, three additional 28-foot vessels were ordered. In early 1954, Radley, Glen, and George Rusa sailed the three boats (*Dani*, *Dabarere II*, and *Diari II*) in convoy to Port Moresby with island national crews.³¹

Retirement

Jack and Rose Radley retired in 1955 for health reasons. Jack had never fully recovered from his accident at Aore in the New Hebrides in 1932. He lived and worked with the aftereffects of tropical illnesses, including malaria and blackwater fever. He had also suffered a heart attack. Despite the setbacks, he had worked consistently with long hours throughout his working life. A time to slow down was much needed.

In retirement, the Radleys worshipped with the small company at Swansea, north of Sydney. They became heavily involved with nurturing and growing the group. When land for the Swansea church was acquired, Radley volunteered to build the church. He was occupied almost full-time for many months and did most of the work himself (with some assistance on Sundays from the only nonretired male in the congregation and from his brother Glen with the roof).³²

Rivalling [G. F.] Jones in importance in the history of navigation in the South Pacific is J. C. Radley. He gave considerable assistance to Captain Jones in navigating the 'Melanesia' and, after the maiden voyage, filled the role of both chief engineer and mate until a native crew was trained. He was successfully entrusted with the task of sailing a number of boats from Australia to the mission field. The maintenance of many of the boats fell to his lot, and his name appears again and again in mission events. Jones and Radley obviously had respect and affection for each other.³³

Jack Radley died of heart disease in Belmont Hospital, south of Newcastle, on February 19, 1968, and was buried in the Avondale Cemetery, Cooranbong. His wife, Rose Merle, also died from heart disease in Wahroonga on October 7, 1989, and was buried beside her husband.³⁴

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