Crane, Eugene Alonzo (1904–1998)

THANG SUAN SUUM, AND REMWIL R. TORNALEJO

Thang Suan Sum is a doctoral student at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Cavite, Philippines.

Remwil R. Tornalejo is an associate professor in the Historical-Theological department of the International Institute of Advanced Studies Seminary (AIIAS). Tornalejo has a B.A. in theology from Mountain View College, Valencia, Philippines, and M.P.S., M.Div., and M.Th. degrees from AIIAS. He had served as a pastor, Literature Ministry Seminary dean and instructor at the South Philippine Union Conference. He had served as chair of the theology department of the South Philippine Adventist College. Tornalejo completed his D.Theol. from Theological Union (ATESEA). He is married to Marilou Manatad. They have four children.
Eugene Alonzo Crane was a pastor, evangelist, church administrator, writer, and motivator of young people.

**Early Life**

Eugene Alonzo Crane was born on December 9, 1904, in Wichita, Kansas, to I. A. Crane and Mary Firebough Crane of Keene, Texas. Eugene Crane was raised in an Adventist family and the influence of Godly parents and Christian education led to his conversion and baptism at the age of 12. He was baptized into the church in 1916 at Addington, Oklahoma, by his own father. He spent his childhood years at Oklahoma before the family moved to Keene, Texas. He spent his teenage years in California. He had two other siblings, Waldo and Beulah.

**Education and Marriage**

Crane attended Southwestern Junior College from 1919 to 1924. He also attended nursing school at St. Helena Sanitarium from 1925 to 1928 and Pacific Union College in Angwin, California, where he finished a course in nursing in 1942. Crane was united in marriage with Ethel Marie Will (1908-1991) in 1927. Their marriage was blessed with two children, a girl and a boy named Betty and Donald, who were both born in Rangoon, Burma (now Myanmar) during their missionary duties.

**Ministry**

While studying at St. Helena, Crane began denomination work in 1925, first as a worker in the St. Helena Sanitarium. From 1928 to 1934, he engaged in evangelistic work in the Northern California and Nevada-Utah Conferences. He was ordained to the ministry in 1934 at St. Helena Sanitarium by J. E. Fulton. After his ordination, Crane was called to foreign mission service in Burma where he served in different capacities for the next seven years. From 1934 to 1936, he served as superintendent of the Tenasserim Mission in Burma. From 1936 until 1938 he served as superintendent of Irrawaddy Delta Mission. From 1939 until the end of the year 1941, he was superintendent of Burma Union Mission. While serving as superintendent of the union, he was also medical secretary of Myanmar Union Mission, secretary of the mission, and pastor of the Yangon English church.

Crane was forced to leave mission work in Myanmar in 1942 when, during World War II, the Japanese forces invaded Myanmar. Due to the war, it was impossible for him to return and serve the ministry in the Myanmar Mission Field. Consequently, he was called to serve in the War Service Commission of the Central Union Conference in the United States, and later accepted a call to become a departmental secretary for the Ontario-Quebec Conference. At the end of 1944, E. A. Crane accepted a call to from the Canadian Union Conference to become Missionary Volunteer and education secretary. With his wife and two children, he moved to the town of College Heights, in Alberta, Canada.

After working with the Canadian Union Conference for almost three years, during the mid-year committee meeting of the General Conference in 1947, E. A. Crane and his entire family accepted the call to move to the Southern-Asia Division where Crane served as president of the Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) Mission. The Cranes sailed from San Francisco to Sri Lanka (“Ceylon” during the period Crane worked there) in December 1947.

Crane conducted the first evangelistic series in the island country of Sri Lanka in the city of Matara, starting on a Sunday, April 9, 1949. The effort last three weeks. He encountered strong and fearful resistance from the people during the beginning of the meetings. However, he patiently pressed on and friendly interest replaced the public disorder of the early meetings.

Under Crane’s leadership in the Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) Union, more evangelistic meetings were conducted in the Moratuwa area. Meanwhile, Ethel Crane also conducted food and clothing sales in the early part of December 1949 with the cooperation of the Sri Lanka (Ceylon) Dorcas Society, which attracted a number of customers.

Still president of the mission in 1951, E. A. Crane held evangelistic meetings in thirty different places throughout the Sri Lanka (Ceylon) Union Mission. This remains the busiest recorded year of evangelism in the history of the Adventist Church in Sri Lanka.

Crane’s tenure as president continued to be marked by first time events. In 1952, with the support of the lay-members in Sri Lanka, the Kandy church was dedicated, the first building funded by local support. At the same time, the Sri Lankan colporteur ministry was started. And a church was organized for the school at Mallapitiya.

Upon his return from Ceylon, E. A. Crane worked in the Georgia-Cumberland, Carolina, and Michigan Conferences. He was a representative of Twentieth Century School of Bible Prophecy, visiting house to house and giving Bible studies in the area of Chattanooga, Tennessee.

**Later Life**
After sixty-one years of marriage, Ethel Crane died on August 19, 1991. Eugene A. Crane married Lena Levy with whom he spent four years before he died on March 5, 1998, in Dayton, Maryland. In addition to his daughter Betty Crane Calloway of Hope Mills, North Carolina, and his son, Donald Crane of Dayton, Maryland, he was survived by five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Legacy

Eugene Crane was devoted minister and administrator who not only proclaimed the gospel, but broadened the Adventist Church’s sphere of influence wherever he worked. The influence of his work is still seen in countries like Myanmar, Canada, Sri Lanka, and his home country of the United States of America.

SOURCES

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NOTES

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid. See also H. L. Rudy, “Introducing Elder Crane,” Canadian Union Messenger, March 7, 1945, 2.
8. 


10. Ibid.


12. Ibid.


15. Ibid.


