

Townend, Walter Austin (1914–2004)

CALVYN TOWNEND

Calvyn Townend, B.A. (Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia). Townend retired in 2015 as general manager of Adventist Media Centre, Sydney. A New Zealander by birth, Townend served as a pastor, evangelist, departmental director and administrator. In retirement he has done evangelism in Papua New Guinea, and Sarawak, Malaysia, and leadership development throughout the Pacific. He has authored one book and edited many newsletters. Townend is married to Dawn with three children, ten grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

Walter Austin Townend was a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, author, teacher and administrator from New Zealand who had broad influence in the South Pacific Division.

Early Life and Education

Walter Austin Townend (known as Austin) was the first child of Randolph Barker and Gertrude Townend.¹

He was born in Wellington, New Zealand, on February 2, 1914² and spent his boyhood years in

Lower Hutt and Petone, New Zealand. After schooling, he worked at the Sanitarium Health Food Shop and Café in Wellington. It took Townend six years to save £39 to enable him to study a two-year business course at New Zealand Missionary College, Longburn, New Zealand.³ He had six siblings: Joan (Mrs. J. Millward), Ronnie, Lorraine (Mrs. L. Robson), Lesley, Maxwell, and Brian.⁴

While a student at New Zealand Missionary College Townend met Irene Barbara Maberly. Irene Maberly was born in Sydney, New South Wales, on June 26, 1915.⁵ The Maberly family moved to Manuwera, New Zealand, when she was twelve. Austin and Irene Townend met while students at New Zealand Missionary College and were engaged in 1935. They were married in Sydney on October 25, 1937, by Pastor W. E. Battye.⁶ To the Townends were born six children, Calvyn Austin (born November 29, 1938, at Christchurch, New Zealand), Leone Irene (Allum) (born August 22, 1940, at Wellington, New Zealand), Colleen Barbara (White) (born March 27, 1942,



Walter Austin Townend

Photo courtesy of Milton Hook.

at Christchurch, New Zealand), Ronald Walter Tyndale (born December 14 1945 at Christchurch, New Zealand), Glenis Irene (Dickins) (born July 25, 1947, at Christchurch, New Zealand), and Wayne Alvin (born June 25, 1955, at Christchurch, New Zealand).⁷

Denominational Service

Between 1928 and 1934, Austin Townend first worked for the denomination as a shop salesman in the Sanitarium Health Food Café in Wellington, New Zealand.⁸ After graduation from New Zealand Missionary College in 1935, he was appointed salesman at the Auckland Sanitarium shop/café.⁹ One year he later, he was promoted to leading salesman at the Sanitarium shop/café in Hunter Street, Sydney,¹⁰ in 1937 he became manager of the Sanitarium shop in Christchurch,¹¹ and in 1941 he was transferred to Wellington as the manager of the Sanitarium shop/café where he had commenced his denominational service thirteen years earlier.¹² When he was manager of the Wellington Retail he used to connect with the Prime Minister of New Zealand and other Parliamentarians who regularly had lunch at the Sanitarium Café.¹³

While in Auckland and Wellington, Townend participated in the local churches as the youth leader,¹⁴ attracting the attention of the Australasian Union Conference youth director. This led to an invitation to serve as youth secretary of the South New Zealand Conference.¹⁵ He served in that position from March 1944 until December 1950.¹⁶ During this time he held a number of other positions in addition to his responsibilities with the youth, including Home Missions secretary in 1947 and 1949, press secretary in 1948-1950, and temperance secretary in 1950, Between January 1951 and December 1954 he was Home Missions secretary, press secretary, Sabbath School secretary, director of the Bible Correspondence School, as well as a local church pastor.¹⁷ As press secretary, Townend became acquainted with every newspaper editor in South New Zealand and had hundreds of stories published.¹⁸

While in the South New Zealand Conference, although he had never trained as a minister, Townend was ordained to the gospel ministry at a session of the South New Zealand Conference held in Christchurch on November 23, 1946.¹⁹

Between 1955 and 1959, Townend served as departmental director for the North New Zealand Conference.²⁰ He then served four years as departmental director for the Trans-Tasman Union Conference based in Sydney, Australia. In 1962, he accepted a request to be the president of the North Queensland Conference, subsequently renamed the Northern Australian Conference.²¹ A new office complex for the North Queensland Conference was constructed in Townsville during 1963²² and the conference convention center at Aitkenvale was further developed.²³

From 1969 to 1976, Townend was the president of the South Australian Conference.²⁴ While president, he moved the South Australian Conference office from Adelaide City to a new building at Prospect²⁵ and developed a new camp ground at 140 Pimpala Road, Morphett Vale which had been purchased in 1967. Annual camp

meetings were held at the site until 1993. The site is now in use as the school grounds of Prescott College Southern.²⁶

At the time of the South Australian Camp Meeting in 1975, Austin and Irene Townend’s youngest son, Wayne, along with the pilot and four other passengers, was killed in a light plane crash on Kangaroo Island. The trauma of this loss contributed to the Townends’ early retirement.²⁷

After retiring to Dora Creek, New South Wales, Townend was asked to teach in the Theology Department of Avondale College (now Avondale College of Higher Education).²⁸ He continued this volunteer work for twenty-one years. In 1998, his contribution to Avondale College was recognized when he was awarded the first honorary Master of the College.²⁹

Soon after, at age 86, Townend retired from teaching, but continued writing. Throughout his writing career he never used a type-writer or a computer. Everything was written long-hand. Before he passed away, he had a number of manuscripts ready for publication including “God Made Easy.”³⁰

Summary of Denominational Service ³¹

1928	Retail Sales	Wellington	Sanitarium Health Food Company
1933	Student	Palmerston Nth	New Zealand Missionary College
1935	Retail Sales	Auckland	Sanitarium Health Food Company
1936	Retail Sales	Sydney	Sanitarium Health Food Company
1938	Manager – Retail	Christchurch	Sanitarium Health Food Company
1941	Manager – Retail	Wellington	Sanitarium Health Food Company
1945	Departmental Director	Christchurch	South New Zealand Conference
1955	Departmental Director	Auckland	North New Zealand Conference
1959	Departmental Director	Sydney	Trans-Tasman Union Conference
1963	President	Townsville	North Queensland Conference
1969	President	Adelaide	South Australian Conference
1976	Retirement		

Contribution

Throughout his career, Townend wrote several hundred articles for denominational magazines. His first article appeared in the *Australasian Signs of the Times*.³² One series, “Here’s a Promise for You,” appeared in the “Signs” every month for twelve years commencing May 1, 1971.³³ A series, “God Had a Man,” ran for 25 articles,³⁴ and

another, "God Had a Woman," comprised twelve articles.³⁵ Articles were published in the *Youth's Instructor*, *Australasian Record, Review and Herald, Ministry* and *Good Health*.³⁶ In 2000, Autumn House in England published his book *More than Meets the Eye*.³⁷ Just before his death Townend completed two other book manuscripts.

Townend was a leader who supported his staff but expected them to excel, especially in soul-winning. In both conferences where he was president, there were more baptisms in a year than any time before. He called a number of laymen to become full-time pastors, including Ervin Ferris, Neal Peaty, Fergus Mackay, and Bill Otto. These men were all ordained as pastors and served the church. Bill Otto was an evangelist who later became president of the South New Zealand Conference.³⁸

While serving in Adelaide, Townend fostered his love for brass band music. Although he never played an instrument, he attended weekly practices of the Adelaide Brass Band and served as President of the band. When he moved to Dora Creek, he continued his weekly attendance at Avondale Brass Band practice and was elected as President of the Band.³⁹ At his funeral a large group of bandsmen gathered in the Avondale College Church and presented several pieces in his honor.⁴⁰

Townend died at home on October 27, 2004, aged 90 years, and was laid to rest in the Avondale Cemetery after a memorial service held in the Avondale College Church.⁴¹ Irene Townend died on December 10, 2007. She was buried next to her husband in the Avondale Cemetery.⁴²

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NOTES

1. Much of the information in this article comes from the personal knowledge of the author, the eldest son of Austin and Irene Townend.
2. Walter Austin Townend Sustentation Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference archives, folder: "Townend, Walter Austin," document: "Sustentation Fund Application: Walter Austin Townend."
3. New Zealand Missionary College Graduation Certificate; "Distribution of Labour," *Australasian Record*, September 16, 1935, 6.
4. Calvyn Townend "The Townend Story," unpublished document presented at a meeting of the Sev-Ad Historical Society, August 2, 2002, held in the personal collection of the author, 5 – 11.
5. Walter Austin Townend Sustentation Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference archives, folder: "Townend, Walter Austin," document: "Sustentation Fund Application: Walter Austin Townend."
6. W. E. Batty, "Townend-Maberly marriage," *Australasian Record*, December 6, 1937, 7.
7. Walter Austin Townend Biographical Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, folder: "Townend, Walter Austin," document: "Worker's Biographical Record."
8. Walter Austin Townend Personal Service Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, Folder: "Townend, Walter Austin," Document: "Townend, Walter Austin Service Record;" "Historic Picture Gallery," *Australasian Record*, July 22, 1974, 3
9. "Distribution of Labour," *Australasian Record*, September 16, 1935, 6.
10. Walter Austin Townend Personal Service Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, folder: "Townend, Walter Austin," document: "Personal Service Record."
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.

13. Personal knowledge of the author as the eldest son of Austin and Irene Townend.
14. W. Austin Townend, "Ponsonby Young People at Work," *Australasian Record*, April 6, 1936, 3-4.
15. Walter Austin Townend Personal Service Records; South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives; Folder: 'Townend, Walter Austin,' Document: 'Personal Service Record.'
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17. Ibid.
18. Calvyn Townend "The Townend Story," unpublished document presented at a meeting of the Sev-Ad Historical Society, Cooranbong, August 2, 2002, held in the personal collection of the author, 6.
19. H. J. Windeyer, "South New Zealand Conference Session," *Australasian Record*, January 13, 1947, 4.
20. Walter Austin Townend Personal Service Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, folder: "Townend, Walter Austin," document: "Personal Service Record."
21. Ibid.
22. H. F. Rampton, "Special Events during Townsville Camp," *Australasian Record*, June 22, 1964, 1-2.
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24. Walter Austin Townend Personal Service Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, folder: "Townend, Walter Austin," document: "Personal Service Record."
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27. Calvyn Townend "The Townend Story," unpublished document presented at a meeting of the Sev-Ad Historical Society, Cooranbong, August 2, 2002, held in the personal collection of the author, 6.
28. Personal knowledge of the author as the eldest son of Austin and Irene Townend
29. "Identity Awarded Honorary Degree," *Record* [South Pacific Division], January 30, 1999, 4.
30. Manuscripts held in the personal collection of the author

31. Walter Austin Townend Personal Service Records; South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives; Folder: "Townend, Walter Austin," Document: "Personal Service Record."
32. W. A. Townend, "Thousands Are Dying to Live," *Signs of the Times*, May 16, 1959, 2.
33. "In our next issue...", *Signs of the Times*, April 1, 1971, 15.
34. The first article in the series appeared as W. Austin Townend, "God Had a Man," *Signs of the Times*, December 1975, 16.
35. The first article in the series appeared as W. Austin Townend, "God Had a Woman," *Signs of the Times*, January 1978, 26.
36. A search for articles may be conducted at <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/Forms/AllFolders.aspx>
37. Walter Austin Townend, *More Than Meets the Eye* (Watford, England: Autumn House, 2001).
38. Personal knowledge of the author as the eldest son of Austin and Irene Townend.
39. Plaque from Avondale Advent Brass held in the personal collection of the author.
40. Personal knowledge of the author as the eldest son of Austin and Irene Townend.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.

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