



Reg and Leila Adair in the 1950s

Photo courtesy of Peter Adair.

Adair, Reginald Harold (1898–1972) and Leila (Thomas) (1897–1982)

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.

Reginald “Reg” and Leila Adair served the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia, at the General Conference headquarters, and in the Far East, specifically the China Division during the time of the Communist takeover.

Early Years

Reginald Adair was born in 1898 in Charters Towers, Queensland, the youngest child of John and Bessie Adair. As a young boy, he migrated with the family to Gisborne, New Zealand. He received his basic education in Gisborne and thought he might join his brother, George, in the plumbing trade but was then impressed that he should first attend the New Zealand Missionary College (NZMC). At seventeen years of age, he was baptized and entered the college, majoring in accountancy.¹

Church Employment

Adair demonstrated such a gift for accountancy that in his final year at NZMC, 1917, he served as the college bookkeeper. Graduates were often directed to sell denominational books door-to-door until a vacancy could be found for them. Reg was no exception, but he was soon appointed as a shipping clerk and accountant in the office of the North New Zealand Conference (NNZC) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Three years later, in 1921, he was made treasurer of the conference, a position he held for two years.²

Working in the NNZC office was a young woman from Christchurch, Leila Thomas (born December 21, 1897). She and Reg married in the Ponsonby church in Auckland on May 4, 1921.³ They transferred to Sydney so that he could take up a new assignment as the accountant for the Sanitarium Health Food Company (SHF) in January 1923. At that time in his life, he sought higher qualifications in his chosen field. Studies led to his acceptance as a Fellow of the Australian Society of Accountants and a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries. He was arguably the most qualified accountant among Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church employees in Australasia at the time.⁴ Twin sons, Ken and Oswyn, were born to the couple in September 1923.⁵

Adair’s nearly five years with the SHF culminated in a transfer to the treasury of the church’s Australasian Union Conference in Wahroonga in November 1927. He began as the assistant treasurer,⁶ followed by associate treasurer (1931–1935)⁷ and chief treasurer (1936–1945).⁸ For much of this time, he was also the manager and treasurer of the Union’s legal entity, the Australasian Conference Association. His responsibilities also required ex-officio membership of the Union’s executive committee.⁹

In 1946 he was appointed to serve at the General Conference in Washington, D.C., as one of three associate auditors.¹⁰ Two years later, he and Leila sailed for the Far East. Reg took up duties there as the treasurer and auditor for the vast China Division. In 1948 he was ordained.¹¹

There were almost 21,000 members in the China Division at the time, together with 17 academies, 13 hospitals, and 2 publishing houses spread across eight missions.¹² Financial responsibilities were weighty, exacerbated by

the political upheaval of Mao Tse-tung's Communist takeover. The year 1949 saw most of the complex church organization in China dismantled. Many missionaries returned to America or were transferred to other countries. The Adairs retreated to Hong Kong,¹³ remaining as treasurer of a downsized Provisional Division¹⁴ for a short while until he returned to the General Conference in 1950 to be one of three assistant treasurers.¹⁵ He held this position until his retirement in 1962. The treasurer of the General Conference, Elder C. L. Torrey, is quoted saying, "Brother Adair is leaving here with his flags flying. He is greatly appreciated by all the General Conference staff and by the field."¹⁶

Later Life and Contribution

Reg and Leila Adair retired to the SDA community at Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia. He died on September 17, 1972. Leila Adair died on May 3, 1982.¹⁷

While his brother George held the financial reins of the SHF during the depression years, Reg took a leading role in maintaining fiscal stability for the SDA Church throughout Australasia. He continued with that strength of leadership in the China Division during its deterioration and on into his contribution at the General Conference.

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NOTES

1. L. C. Naden, "Life Sketch of Pastor Reg Adair," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, October 23, 1972, 14.

2. Ibid.

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4. Naden, "Life Sketch."
5. Peter Adair, interview by author, Wahroonga, NSW, October 22, 2016.
6. Naden, "Life Sketch."
7. "Australasian Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1932), 101.
8. "Australasian Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1937), 69.
9. Ibid.
10. "General Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947), 7.
11. Naden, "Life Sketch."
12. "China Division," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1949), 94-110.
13. N. W. Dunn, "China Workers Reassigned," *ARH*, July 14, 1949, 24.
14. "Hongkong Provisional Division," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1950), 95-96.
15. "General Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1951), 15.
16. Naden, "Life Sketch."
17. Ibid.; Reginald Adair Service Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference archives, folder: "Adair Reginald Harold," document: "Personal Service Record."

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