

Boynton, Allen Robert (1901–1986) and Mildred Hilda Nelson (1902–1977)

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.

Allen and Mildred Boynton were trained nurses who first served at Washington Sanitarium, D.C., and at Porter Sanitarium in Colorado during World War II. They served as medical missionaries in various sanitariums/hospitals in the Far East including those in Shanghai, Wuhan (Hankow), Seoul, and Tokyo. A total of 19 years were spent in overseas mission service. When they returned, they settled in California for Allen to work in the Loma Linda Sanitarium and Hospital.

Heritage and Education

Allen Boynton was born in Brooklyn, New York City, on December 11, 1901. His parents were Allen Robert Boynton and Theresa Georgianna (Smith). Allen's siblings were Olive Theresa (b. 1897), Dorothy May (b. 1905) and Enid Marion (b. 1906). His father was a practical man, and the family moved from place to place as he found work as a steam fitter in Brookhaven on Long Island, New York state, a builder's laborer in Cape May at the southern tip of New Jersey, and a shipyard carpenter in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.¹

Allen attended the elementary church school at Cape May and advanced to Shenandoah Valley Academy, Virginia, spending only one more year in studies. From his father he acquired some carpentry and painting skills. He also spent two years selling books for the Adventist church. His formal education was limited, but somehow he managed to gain entrance to the nursing course at Mount Vernon Sanitarium and Hospital, Ohio, and graduated in the Class of 1924. It was there that he met Mildred Hilda Nelson of Swedish heritage, who was working as head nurse at the institution. They married on February 22, 1926.²

Denominational Service

Initially, Allen and Mildred found work at the Washington Sanitarium, Takoma Park, Maryland, close to Washington, D.C., while they waited for an opportunity to serve overseas as medical missionaries. Their

preference was to go to South America because Mildred had studied Spanish a little. Allen worked as a cook in the Sanitarium, and Mildred worked as the desk clerk.³

Instead of a vacancy in South America, an appointment to the Shanghai Sanitarium became available, and they accepted it wholeheartedly.⁴ Their decision marked the beginning of many years in the Orient.

Leaving San Francisco on July 18, 1928,⁵ Allen and Mildred arrived to enter a mandatory period of study of the Chinese language. Three months after their arrival, on November 7, Mildred gave birth to their first child, Allen Robert, Jr.⁶ Following studies they soon began work at the Shanghai Sanitarium. It was not long before Mildred was serving as director of the female nurses. Allen was listed as technician in the X-ray Department and in charge of the male nurses.⁷ However, he became a man of many additional roles, supervising the hydrotherapy and physiotherapy departments, doing some teaching of the trainee nurses, stepping in as an anesthesiologist and acting as a preceptor, cook, and maintenance man.⁸

From April 1936 through June 1937, Allen and Mildred were granted furlough back in their homeland. They, together with their two children, Allen Robert, Jr. (b. 1928) and Caroline June (b. 1932), visited relatives, and Allen took the opportunity for further studies in physiotherapy, anesthetics, and x-ray techniques.⁹

The Boynton family returned to Shanghai in 1937, but within a short time, they transferred inland to the Wuhan Sanitarium in the Hubei Province.¹⁰ Allen worked mainly in hydrotherapy and physiotherapy, but also managed the X-ray Department and gained some experience as purchasing officer.¹¹ Their second term of service was marred by war conditions. As the situation became more dangerous, Mildred and the children were evacuated to America in late 1940, together with other missionaries.¹² Allen stayed behind and accepted the role of business manager of the institution. Special conditions were established at the Sanitarium because up to 20,000 refugees had sought refuge in the surrounding grounds. A clinic was initiated to cater for their immediate medical needs.¹³

After twelve months of separation from his family, Allen became eligible for special leave. He sailed from Shanghai on September 11, 1941, reaching San Francisco safely on September 28.¹⁴ During the remainder of World War II, Allen served in the Hydrotherapy Department of Porter Sanitarium and Hospital, Denver, Colorado.¹⁵ He also took time out to complete a further year of studies at Keene Academy as a senior student in order to make up for a shortfall in earlier years.¹⁶

Allen was one of a select few who was given a military permit to return to China immediately after the cessation of hostilities in August 1945.¹⁷ Mildred had to wait for another twelve months before sailing to rejoin him. Allen was appointed to be the manager of Wuhan Sanitarium and Hospital. Civil war in China became intense, and for safety reasons, Allen and his family were transferred to Shanghai in late 1948. He managed the Shanghai Clinic and Hospital for a brief period in 1949¹⁸ before transfer to the Seoul Sanitarium and Hospital, Korea, where he accepted the role of business manager. He was occupied in this work for twelve months and then transferred to the Tokyo Sanitarium-Hospital, once again as business manager.¹⁹ He and Mildred sailed from Yokohama on July

17, 1952, on permanent return to America.²⁰

It was a relatively easy exercise to find a suitable position in the homeland for Allen because of his many abilities, but he chose to settle in California for the benefit of college education for his children. In January 1953, he accepted the role of desk clerk at the Loma Linda Sanitarium and Hospital (College of Medical Evangelists)¹ and remained there for several years.²²

Final Years

Allen and Mildred were content to spend their retirement years in California. Mildred passed away on August 9, 1977, and rests in Montecito Memorial Park near Loma Linda.²³ Allen passed away on September 12, 1986, in Riverside, and he now rests alongside Mildred.²⁴

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