

Westphal, Wilma Mae (Ross) (1907–1987)

MILTON HOOK

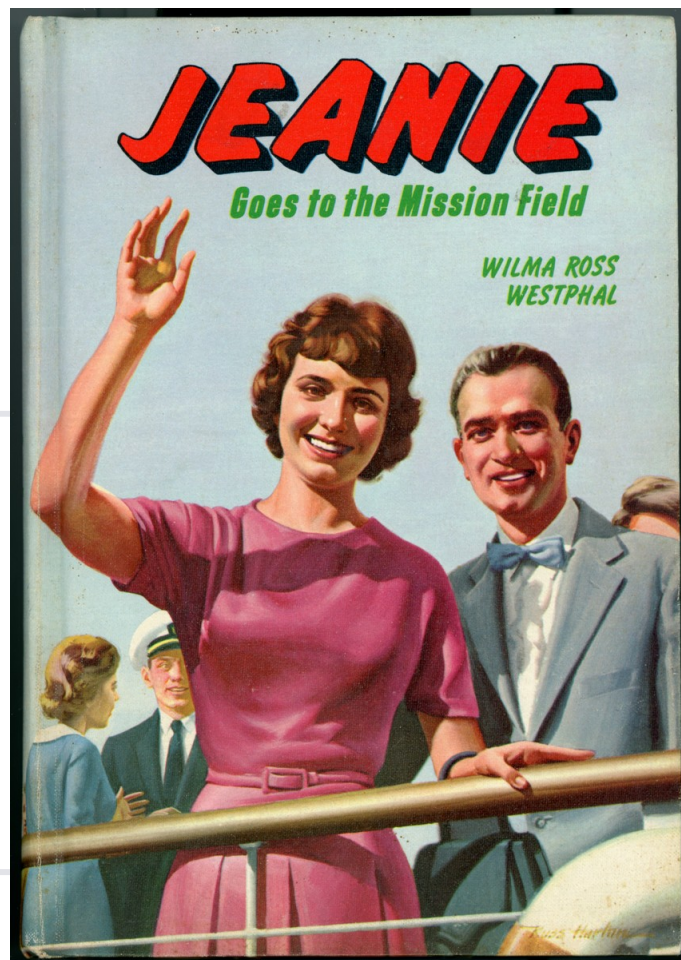
Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New 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.

Wilma Westphal was a school teacher, departmental secretary, and free-lance journalist who published articles and books under the name Wilma Ross Westphal. She and her husband, Chester, served in Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, and Honduras, in addition to the home conferences of Potomac and Northern California.

Early Years

Wilma Mae Ross was born in Howard, Kansas, on March 15, 1907, to John and Laura (Richard) Ross. Her father was a carpenter and farmer. She had five brothers and two sisters: Calvin (b.1904), Lester (b.1909 and died in childhood), Orval (b.1912), Wanda (b.1915), Loreen (b. and died 1919), Glenn (b.1921), and John.¹ During her younger years, her parents moved from Kansas to Colorado where she was baptized by Elder Eddie Curtis in 1917. Later the family settled in Oregon. Wilma attended the Suthulin Academy, Oregon, and Eugene Business College, where she completed a short stenographic course. Further studies in home economics and teaching were entered into at Walla Walla College, Washington State.²

After College Training



Cover of book by Wilma Ross Westphal.

From *Jeanie Goes to the Mission Field*.

Wilma did not complete enough college units to graduate before she accepted an elementary teaching role in 1929 at Rogue River Academy, Oregon. A shortage of staff at the institution found her acting as matron and doing office work in addition to her teaching. After two years of teaching, Wilma married Chester Edwin Westphal on June 24, 1931, at Medford, Oregon. Chester was the son of Elder Joseph William Westphal, pioneer missionary to Argentina.³

Following their marriage Wilma and Chester were appointed to the Upper Magdalena Mission in Colombia. Wilma served as the Sabbath School and Young People's secretary until 1933⁴ when they transitioned briefly to the Panama Mission and then on to the Costa Rica Mission and Honduras Mission.⁵ These were all Spanish-speaking territories, Chester being familiar with the language from his early years and Wilma having to acquire the new tongue.

While on furlough in 1938, Wilma and Chester adopted twin girls, born in Los Angeles in 1937. They named them Rosilee and Marilee.⁶ They returned to the Honduras Mission where Chester was director and Wilma served as Young People's secretary in their final year, 1942.⁷ They then moved back to Panama where Chester served as president of the conference and Wilma accepted the portfolio of Sabbath School secretary.⁸

After the Second World War years, Wilma and Chester came back from the mission field on permanent return, and Chester served in the ministerial team of the Potomac Conference for seven years.⁹ The family then transferred to the West Coast so that Chester could take up an appointment as chaplain at St. Helena Sanitarium and Hospital.¹⁰ Later he joined the ministerial team of the Northern California Conference.¹¹

As a development of her earlier departmental work with young people, Wilma began to write stories for publication in *The Youth's Instructor*. Some of her earliest articles were based on her own childhood and college experiences. She adopted the name Jeanie for the main character to tell her thinly-disguised autobiography.¹² These articles formed the basis for her first book, *Jeanie*, published in 1960.¹³ The extension of her autobiography was published in 1966 under the title *Jeanie Goes to the Mission Field*.¹⁴ Nonautobiographical books from her pen followed, as did many articles in denominational periodicals such as *The Youth's Instructor*¹⁵ and *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*.¹⁶

Final Years

Wilma and Chester remained in California during their years of retirement. Wilma passed away on October 6, 1987, and was laid to rest in the St. Helena Cemetery.¹⁷ Chester remarried to a widow named Dorothy Jeanne (Roberson) Simmons.¹⁸ Chester passed away, aged ninety-four, on February 14, 2002, and was laid to rest alongside Wilma.¹⁹ Dorothy passed away seven years later and was interred alongside her first husband in St. Helena Cemetery.²⁰

Books by Wilma Ross Westphal

Jeanie (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1960).

Jeanie Goes to the Mission Field (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1966). Adventures of the Wife of a Missionary in Central America

Smoke and Ashes. Written by Ralph Escandon. Translated by Wilma Ross Westphal (Dorrance Publishers, 1973).

Heretic at Large (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976). Story of Max and Noema Trummer, Pioneer Missionaries to Columbia.

The Miner's Son (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976). Biography of Harry Moyle Tippet, Teacher and Editor.

Feathers in the Wind, vols. 1 and 2 (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1981). True story of a Yankee girl who goes south to live with her aunt and uncle on a Mississippi plantation and searches for happiness and the meaning of life.

Sister Mary Lou (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2016). True story of Mary Lou Pfannenstiel who aspired to be a nun but later came to interpret life and faith from a different perspective. Co-authored with husband Chester Westphal and published posthumously

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"Raymond Ernest Simmons." FamilySearch, Intellectual Reserve, 2021. Accessed August 19, 2021.

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Westphal, Wilma Ross. *Jeanie*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1960.

Westphal, Wilma Ross. *Jeanie Goes to the Mission Field*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1966.

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Wilma Mae Westphal. General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, Silver Spring, Maryland. Work Service Records. Versatile Box 7303. Folder: Wilma May Westphal. Document: "Biographical Information Form."

NOTES

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2. Wilma Mae Westphal. General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, Silver Spring, Maryland. Work Service Records. Versatile Box 7303. Folder: Wilma Mae Westphal. Document: "Biographical Information Form."
3. Ibid.
4. E.g., "Upper Magdalena Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1932), 183.
5. Wilma Mae Westphal. General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, Silver Spring, Maryland. Work Service Records. Versatile Box 7303. Folder: Wilma Mae Westphal. Document: "Biographical Information Form."
6. "Wilma Mae Ross," FamilySearch.
7. "Honduras Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1942), 114-115.
8. E.g., "Panama Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1945), 125.
9. E.g., "Potomac Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1950), 41.
10. E.g., "St. Helena Sanitarium and Hospital," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953), 463.
11. E.g., "Northern California Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1970), 72-73.
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