

Taylor, William Albert (1894–1985) and Mary Eliza (Kent) Taylor (1896–1985)

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.



Golden wedding anniversary of William and Eliza Taylor with their children Olive, George and Lily Pearce, January 2, 1974.

Photo courtesy of *Australasian Record*, September 23, 1974.

William and Mary Taylor were pioneering missionaries on the island of Ambrym, New

Hebrides. Their service was interrupted by a serious volcanic eruption on the island in 1929.

William Albert Taylor was born in New Zealand in 1894 to George and Annie Taylor.¹ He became a Seventh-day Adventist as a result of reading *The Great Controversy*.² In 1922 he entered the nursing class at the Sydney Sanitarium. During his training he met Mary Kent, who had graduated in 1920 at the same institution.³ Mary was born in Eugowra, NSW, in 1896, the third child of a large Seventh-day Adventist clan headed by patriarch Herbert Kent.⁴ It was in his country homestead that William and Mary were married by A. W. Kent on January 2, 1924.⁵

In 1925 William and Mary were pleased to accept an appointment to mission service in the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu). They sailed from Sydney on November 18, 1925, stopping at Lord Howe Island and Norfolk Island en route. By December they were established at their assignment on the volcanic island of Ambrym, caring for the

relatively new mission interests among several villages.⁶ Headquarters had been built, but on Taylor's arrival the center was removed to 36 acres (14.6 hectares) at Baiap on the western side of the island. They were happy in their work and rendered medical assistance whenever needed.⁷

On the Friday night of June 28, 1929, the volcano at the center of the island erupted, spewing molten lava and ash in the general direction of Baiap. Eventually the headquarters station was completely covered, and nearby Craig Cove was in danger. William helped to rescue his family and residents from the immediate danger area, taking them in small boats to Port Sandwich on nearby Malekula Island. Hearing of their plight, Jack Radley came to their assistance, and he and William rescued another eighty people from Craig Cove and found safety for them at Aore.⁸

After the volcanic eruption William and Mary took leave to New Zealand and, because of poor health, did not return. More than three years of mission service had made a positive contribution to mission progress on Ambrym. They engaged in farming on the outskirts of Christchurch, at the same time raising their three children, Olive, George, and Lily. William died at the age of 90 years on October 7, 1985, and was buried in the Waimairi Cemetery, suburban Christchurch.⁹ Two months later, on December 6, 1985, Mary died and was buried in the same cemetery.¹⁰

SOURCES

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3. Hilda Osmond, "Graduating Exercises of the Sydney Sanitarium," *Australasian Record*, November 15, 1920, 6.
4. Andrew [J.] Kingston, "Mary Eliza (Kent) Taylor," *South Pacific Record*, February 15, 1986, 14.
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7. D[onald] Nicholson, "Ambrym, New Hebrides," *Australasian Record*, February 8, 1926, 3.
8. W[illiam] A. Taylor, "Volcanic Eruption on Ambrym, New Hebrides," *Australasian Record*, July 29, 1929, 4.
9. Kingston and McDonald, 15.
10. Kingston, 14.

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