

# Anderson, Arthur Eugene (1918–2015)

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## GIN SIAN MUNG

Gin Sian Mung, BBA, M.Com., MBA, CPA, CGMA, is the youngest of the three sons and seventh child of the twelve born to pu Phung Kai and pi Tel Khan Ning, who were among the first fourteen baptized Zomi Adventists on May 8, 1954, in Chinland. He and his wife, Ciin, have two daughters and a son. Mung is a licensed member of the California Society of CPAs, the American Institute of CPAs, and the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants with Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA) designation. He was Upper Myanmar Mission (UMM) treasurer, education, stewardship, legal affairs, and health director, and MYUM chief accountant. He was the senior accountant and is currently the senior auditor of the Southeastern California Conference.

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Arthur Eugene Anderson was a pastor and the only Seventh-day Adventist missionary to the Chin people of Burma (now Myanmar).

## Early Life (1918-1951)

Arthur Eugene Anderson, known as Eugene, was born on February 14, 1918, to Arthur Anderson and Helen (Chapman) Anderson at St. Helena Adventist Sanitarium, California, United States. His paternal grandfather, Alfred Anderson, migrated from Sweden to California in his youth to find work. It was here that Alfred discovered the Seventh-day Adventist message. Deeply in love with the Advent message, he returned to Sweden to share his newfound faith with his family and relatives. After a while, Alfred returned to California and used his carpentry skills to help build churches, one of which still stands today in the town of Ukiah, California<sup>1</sup>

On his mother's side, Eugene Anderson's great-grandparents were early converts to Adventism, joining the church when John Loughborough and Daniel Bourdeau conducted evangelistic meetings in 1868 in Petaluma, California.<sup>2</sup> When Eugene was sixteen months old, his father passed away after suffering a ruptured appendix.<sup>3</sup> Eugene was raised by his mother Helen and grandfather Harry. Harry took care of his grandson every day while Helen studied nursing at St. Helena Sanitarium. He had a lasting and deep-rooted influence in Eugene's life.

## Education and Marriage

When he was fifteen years old, Eugene attended Lauralwood Academy in Oregon. On his way, he stopped at Pacific Union College (PUC) where he enrolled in the high school program. He spent the next five years working his entire way through school. At PUC, he met a young woman named Lois Lenora Dillon, who was studying nursing. Born on January 4, 1919, in Visalia, California, to Lawrence Blogett Dillon and Gladys Marguerite Roach Dillon, Lois was also working her way through school. They continued their studies until 1938 and married on September 11, 1938,<sup>4</sup> in a country church near Lemoore-Hanford, California. Eugene entered the teaching field as the principal and a teacher at Visalia Exeter Academy (now Sierra View Junior Academy<sup>5</sup> in California. Their

two boys, David Eugene Anderson and Leslie Earl Anderson, were added to the family during this time.

Eugene Anderson decided to return to Pacific Union College and earn a degree in theology. After two challenging years in which he both studied and worked to support his family, graduated in 1951. Shortly after, the General Conference called him to serve in Myanmar. For Eugene, this call was a dream come true. "He had been inspired as a little boy while attending a small church school, by the stories the teacher read of God's work in Myanmar, as told by Pastor Eric B. Hare in his story books. This had always been a dream for Eugene."<sup>6</sup>

## The First Mission Trip in Chin Hills, Myanmar (1952-1953)

On Sunday March 23, 1952, Anderson and his family left Oakland, California, sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, and arrived in Rangoon (now Yangon) sixty-three days later on Sunday, May 25, 1952. His first assignment was principal of the Seventh-day Adventist Mission Training School in Myaungmya. Before the end of the school year, he attended the mission's annual planning committee in Yangon on February 2, 1953, for which Robert Pierson, president of the Southern Asia Division, was also in Myanmar. Anderson was asked to lead the search for a suitable location for a new mission in Myanmar,<sup>7</sup> and he accepted the call without hesitation.<sup>8</sup> With C. B. Guild (union president), Robert Mya Pe (union secretary), and Freddie Ba Tin, he flew from Yangon to Kalaymyo on April 3, 1953,<sup>9</sup> to explore the possibility of opening a new mission field in Chinland without knowing anybody there to guide them. In the air during their flight, they discussed possible answers, if someone questioned the purpose of their travel. They agreed on an answer: we come from the Voice of Prophecy Bible Correspondence School. When they landed at Kalaymyo Airport, a young man introduced himself saying, "My name is Go Za Kham. Who you and what you are doing here?"<sup>10</sup> They answered as planned earlier on the plane. As they continued their conversation, the young man told them that he had completed several courses and received certificates from the Voice of Prophecy Bible Correspondence School in Columbo, Ceylon. It shocked all of them, and as a tingling sensation shivered down his spine, Anderson "thought about God leading us. I could never have anything clearer." It was if God had arranged Go Za Kham to meet them upon their arrival.<sup>11</sup> Anderson was convicted of God's hand in their quest.

## Adventist Mission Headquarter Established in Tedim (December 8, 1953-April 6, 1955)

The search committee continued its journey to Tedim and surveyed the town for the possibilities of establishing God's work in this province. After they had completed their search, they headed back to the Kalaymyo airport to return to Yangon. However, God had other plans. At the airport, they received a telegraph from the division president, Elder Pierson, asking them to go to the village of Rih to meet with Willis Lowry at the Indo-Myanmar border. Although they knew nothing about this village, Robert Mya Pe and Eugene Anderson canceled their return journey to Yangon. As they were walking along the dusty road, they were confronted by a young man

called Rualchhina. Visiting with him, they discovered that he was a student from Assam Training School, an Adventist school in Assam, India. Rualchhina had come to Myanmar in search of work in the ruby mines.<sup>12</sup> He agreed on April 9, 1953, to accompany Mya Pe and Anderson to Rih.<sup>13</sup> From Kalaymyo, they returned to Tedim en route to Rih. With the assistance of Go Za Kham in Tedim, they were able to find two porters, Thang Hau and Tual Za En, who later became Seventh-day Adventists. They arrived in Rih on Wednesday and spent two days treating the sick and injured in the nearby village.<sup>14</sup> William G. Lowry, with his wife Helen, Ngurkunga, and Lalkhuma, from Lushai Hills, India, arrived in Rih on Friday, April 24, 1953.<sup>15</sup> For a couple of days, they met together discussing how to move forward and establish the Seventh-day Adventist Mission in Chin State.

When they returned to Tedim, Anderson asked Go Za Kham to help him find Ngul Khaw Pau, who had written a letter to the mission station in Aizawl, Lushai Hills, expressing his interest in knowing more about the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They found him in the civil hospital in Tedim, where Ngul Khaw Pau had been admitted due to serious injuries from a bomb explosion. Ngul Khaw Pau confirmed that the letter was his. When Anderson asked, "According to your request, I have come to help you. Are you willing to work with me?" He promptly replied, "If the Lord spares my life from this casualty, I will."<sup>16</sup>

After seven months, the Anderson family landed in Kalemyo on December 6, 1953.<sup>17</sup> They settled in Tedim on December 8, 1953,<sup>18</sup> as full-time missionary to Chinland. To pave the way for future mission work, Cecil B. Guild, with his wife, Nora, arrived in Tedim on Tuesday, January 19, 1954. The next morning, they left on a ten-day tour of the surrounding villages along with Anderson, Lalkhuma, and Ngul Khaw Pau.<sup>19</sup> On March 21, 1954, Anderson launched his first evangelistic series with Go Za Kham as his interpreter in Leilum at Hang Za Gin's residence. When the series ended the third week of April 1954,<sup>20</sup> fourteen people were baptized. P. A. Parker, president of Central and Upper Burma Mission, baptized them on May 8, 1954. On May 21, 1954, the first Seventh-day Adventist Church in Chinland was organized in Lawibual, Tedim, by Pastor Philip Parker. Phung Kai was the first church elder of the church in Tedim.<sup>21</sup> On October 16, 1954, Parker baptized seventeen people, the second baptism in Tedim.<sup>22</sup> Eugene Anderson was ordained to the ministry on January 1, 1955, by eight ordained pastors. Anderson conducted his first baptism on March 22, 1955, when he baptized his two sons, David and Leslie, Ngul Khaw Thang, and Vung Thawng's wife.<sup>23</sup> It was the third baptism in the Tedim Adventist church. Within just sixteen months of hard work, thirty-five people had accepted the Adventist faith.

During his time in Tedim, Anderson acquired a piece of land for the mission headquarters, built a house, dug a twenty-five-foot deep well, and completed a four-wheel drivable road to the mission house on the property. He worked tirelessly to spread the gospel to the natives. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he was able to generate great attention and curiosity about the Sabbath, especially among the American Baptist Mission churches. However, adversaries of the gospel worked in full force to stop the spreading of the Adventist faith and succeeded by ordering Anderson and his family to leave Chinland by April 1955. They left Tedim for good on April 6, 1955.<sup>24</sup> Anderson was the first and the last Seventh-day Adventist missionary in the Chin State.

Anderson's adversaries thought they won the battle, but the mighty hand of God continued guiding the new believers. Their zeal in sharing the gospel kept burning like an unquenchable wildfire even in the absence of their beloved missionary. Go Za Kham and Ngul Khaw Pau, who were among the first fourteen people baptized on May 8, 1954, traveled down to Kalaymyo in October of 1955, where they conducted an evangelistic meeting in a small village called Thingunau-Siyin. God added many new believers, and a Seventh-day Adventist company was formed on October 29, 1955, as a result of these meetings. Twenty-eight more people were baptized by Parker on May 5, 1956, and on that same day, the Siyin Adventist church was organized. It became the second organized Seventh-day Adventist church<sup>25</sup> in Chinland, and at the time writing, it remains one of the strongest of the Adventist churches in the Upper Myanmar Mission.

The faithfulness of the early believers kept the church growing in spite of various distractions and obstructions. At the time of writing, there were sixty-two churches and twenty-one companies with 7,337 baptized members among the Chin people of the Upper Myanmar Mission.<sup>26</sup> There are other Chin Adventists in other parts of Myanmar, United States, and other countries around the world not included in the above numbers.

After the government's order to leave Tedim, Anderson was asked to set up a chaplain program at the Seventh-day Adventist Hospital in Yangon. After the program launched, he was called to Mawlamyine to strengthen the work, which had been disrupted by local unrest for some time. Anderson supervised the construction of a church building and mission headquarters. In addition, he visited groups of believers throughout the region. Following the completion of the church in 1958, the Andersons' visas were not renewed by Myanmar, forcing them to return to the United States. Sadly, they only worshipped in the new building one Sabbath before their departure.<sup>27</sup>

## Ceylon, Canada, Ethiopia, and Retirement (1958-2015)

The Andersons remained in the United States for two years after their return from Myanmar before another mission opportunity was offered to them, this time in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). They were stationed in Kandy where Eugene Anderson oversaw the mission and church for a year as an evangelist missionary. He then became principal of Lakpahana Training School in 1960. Due to political unrest, their time in Sri Lanka was short. Upon their return home, Anderson was called to pastor in Alberta, Canada. After a term in Alberta, they were called to Ethiopia, where they spent seven years. Anderson served as president of the West Field for one term, and then the South Field for a term.<sup>28</sup>

Anderson was not the only missionary in the family. His wife and children were also involved in mission work. Lois taught various classes and carried different responsibilities in their churches. For several years in Ethiopia, she served as treasurer. Of their four sons, David, Leslie, Daniel, and Vernon, three served the Adventist Church in different countries. David taught French language at the school in Galway, Rwanda. Leslie pastored in Ethiopia

and Yukon Territory, In the latter place he also established flying service in each of his pastoral districts. In Papua New Guinea, Leslie served as director of the Adventist Mission Aviation Service for four years until died in an airplane crash on May 3, 2002, just two weeks before he planned to retire and return to the United States at the age of 58. Daniel served disadvantaged children in Ukiah, California. Vernon served in Pucallpa, Peru, as mission pilot and mission director in the mid 1980s.

## Later Life

Upon their return home to the United States, Anderson served two churches in California before his retirement in 1980. He was a staunch supporter of the Ukiah Seventh-day Adventist Church until his final rest in Jesus on November 2, 2015, at age 97. Reflecting on his life as the only Seventh-day Adventist missionary to the Chin people, and much loved by them, Anderson said,

...as I look back on my life, I can only give my God all praise and honor as I truly believe it was God who has directed in my life. Without the blessing and guidance, He has provided during my troubled youth, and in blessing in all the different places where He has called me, I could never have accomplished anything. But I know He has led and guided and blessed and He deserves all the praise. I can only say that I am so thankful for the opportunities that He gave me to be of small service to Him and His cause.<sup>29</sup>

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## NOTES

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