



Jack and Wilma Rowe with daughters, Yvonne and Jennifer.

Photo courtesy of Julie Oliver.

Rowe, Jack William George (1915–1946) and Wilma Eva (Allum, 1917–2012)

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.

Jack and Wilma Rowe were medical missionaries to Fiji.

Early Life and Education

Jack William George Rowe was born in Armadale, suburban Melbourne, VIC, on October 2, 1915, to Arthur and Alice (Booth) Rowe.¹ He received his elementary and academy level education in Melbourne, winning a scholarship to attend university. He chose, instead, to enroll at the Australasian Missionary College and study science.² This proved to be a beneficial preparation for the shorter two-year nursing course at the Sydney Sanitarium, from which he graduated in 1940.³

Placing his medical science training to one side, Jack accepted an appointment to assist with evangelistic programs in the South New South Wales Conference in 1941.⁴

At the same time, he was able to strengthen his friendship with Wilma Allum, who was a fellow nursing graduate of 1940. She was the daughter of Francis Allum and Eva Allum, former missionaries to China. She was born in Shanghai in 1917. On January 12, 1942, Jack and Wilma were married by her father in the Wahroonga church, Sydney.⁵ During their first year together Jack assisted Ormond Anderson with evangelism in Ipswich and Harrisville near Brisbane, QLD.⁶

Mission Service

In 1943 Jack and Wilma were appointed to medical missionary work in Fiji. They sailed in November⁷ and located in the Tavua district on the northwestern side of Viti Levu. For two years they ministered to the local people, many of whom were Fijian Indians.⁸

Early in 1946 Jack and Wilma transferred to the mission station in Buca Bay on Vanua Levu in order to take up work as district supervisor. He first made an extensive itinerary among the outlying stations⁹ and Wilma was called on to treat some sufferers nearer to hand.¹⁰

On Friday morning, August 2, 1946, Jack set out in the mission's small launch to make a weekend visit to Vurevure station on Taveuni Island and conduct the ordinance services. On board with him were Albert Baglee, mission schoolteacher, Semiti Gade and Paul Fua, Fijian teachers, together with Isikeli and Emosi as the boat's crew. The vessel was driven by a petrol engine, which exploded when they had just navigated past Kioa Island, approximately halfway to their destination. An attempt was made to quench the flames, but the heat was so intense that all had to abandon ship. The dinghy trailing behind had flipped over, and Paul, who was the only nonswimmer among them, clung to it while Isikeli valiantly tried to push it to shore more than two miles (three kilometers) away. He became exhausted and was persuaded by others to strike out for the shore himself and leave Paul to drift until he could be rescued later. Jack led the swimmers, but eventually tired, and Emosi gave him a hatch door from the ship that he himself was using as a floatation aid. Emosi then noticed Semiti was

struggling, so he went to his assistance. He then returned to help Jack again, but in the meantime Jack had lost his grip and drowned, possibly as a result of suffering cramps. Emosi saw only the hatch door bobbing in the ocean. The remaining four men reached Kioa Island, and Paul was later rescued drifting offshore near Nawi village on Vanua Levu. Sadly, search parties never located Jack.¹¹

Wilma treated burns to Semiti's arms and torso before he was transported to hospital. Within a short time arrangements were made for her return to Australia with her two little children, Yvonne and Jennifer.¹² Eighteen months later Wilma married widower Mark Foots, who had a daughter, Lynette.¹³ In time Wilma and Mark were blessed with a son and a daughter, Robert and Pam. Mark predeceased Wilma in 1985. Wilma herself died in Gosford Hospital, NSW, on December 2, 2012.¹⁴

Six years of active and dedicated ministry seemed all too short when long-term prospects were so evident for Jack and Wilma. Tragedies leave conundrums. Only the assurance that God is victorious over death generates hope in our hearts for better outcomes.

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NOTES

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3. E[dmund] B. Rudge, "To Do His Will," *Australasian Record*, January 20, 1941, 1, 2.
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 5. F[rancis] A. Allum, "Rowe-Allum," *Australasian Record*, March 9, 1942, 7.
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